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Racism continues to tear the West apart, with No Solution in Sight

The BBC reported on 27th July that US actress Anne Hathaway has urged white people to ask "how 'decent' are we really?" after a black teenager was stabbed to death on a California train. Nia Wilson, 18, was killed after she and her sister were both knifed in the neck on Sunday night in Oakland [California].

"She was a black woman and she was murdered in cold blood by a white man," Hathaway wrote on Instagram.

She continued: "White people - including me, including you - must take into the marrow of our privileged bones the truth that ALL black people fear for their lives DAILY in America and have done so for GENERATIONS. We must ask our (white) selves - how "decent" are we really?" she added. "Not in our intent, but in our actions? In our lack of action?"

Oakland Mayor Libby Schaaf raised the subject of race in response to the killing. She said that although the attacker's motivation is not yet known, "the fact that his victims were both young African-American women stirs deep pain and palpable fear in all of us who acknowledge the reality that our country still suffers from a tragic and deeply racist history".

This is simply the latest in a continuing stream of racist events happening in America. As always such happenings evoke much discussion and debate among ordinary people who are looking for explanations, understanding and solutions. So deeply rooted is the tendency to discriminate that some just accept such racism as natural human behaviour. Most, however, have accepted the status quo and propose ways to lessen the incidents and navigate the racist minefield that is life in today's Western societies.

The recent World Cup brought to the fore the racism that is present in European societies, even for its sporting heroes. German player Mesut Ozul has spoken frankly about the racism that he experienced and a few years ago French player Karim Benzema explained it well when he said "If I score I'm French...if I don't, I'm an Arab."

Such racism still pervades, despite decades of legal reform and attempts to promote positive changes to overcome it.

The BBC also reported this week that the Welsh government has done little to change the white bias in schools. A group that consults with the government explained that there is a lack of ethnic diversity in the material pupils study in schools.

"Evidence presented... suggests that most pupils see few representations of non-white role models in their curriculum despite the fact Wales is becoming an increasing ethnically diverse nation."

This is despite the fact that more than 10% of pupils across Wales are from an ethnic minority background - accounting for 32% of pupils in Cardiff, 24% in Newport, 14% in Swansea.

However, the dominance of white culture and absence of diversity is not simple to change, partly due to already present entrenched racism. For example, just 2% of those in Initial Teacher Education were non-white in the 2015-16 academic year, a Welsh Government report showed.

Uzo Iwobi, chief executive of Race Council Cymru, said racism and bad experiences in schools had put people off from becoming teachers. "We have been encouraging people to get involved in educating children because we feel racism and lack of tolerance comes from a lack of exposure to people who are in positions of authority or who impart knowledge," Mrs Iwobi said.

The simple fact is that the secular Western societies embraced divisive beliefs and values centuries ago and these are unlikely to change through legislation, until the foundational beliefs and values themselves are addressed.

Even those who are appalled at the evident racism, its perpetuation in society and its dire consequences, essentially address the problem on the basis of accepting the racial focus and not the basis of thought and belief.

The debate about white people accepting their “white privilege”, that “white fragility” allows white people to continue to dominate and not accept their hidden racism, or the view that promoting positive ethnic and black history and culture will change the status quo, all of these proposals are built upon the foundation of identity being essentially racial in nature. Despite the historical ethnic majority viewing others only in terms of race, so ascribing for them an ethnic identity, such solutions don’t address the root problem, even if they do offer some symptom relief through the hope of a more equitable society. But, they also require the acceptance of the ascribed ethnic identity in order to promote it, so that it can compete with the dominant ethnicity in the society.

A real solution to the problem must not rely upon an acceptance of the status quo. Just like a solution to the oppression in Palestine cannot accept the occupation as its basis, as it recognises the lowly status given to the people of the Blessed Land - Palestine by their occupier. When the American president Lincoln freed the slaves, African American identity continued to be defined by slavery. To then adopt that ethnic identity and turn it into a positive identity is still adopting the divisive identity based on colour and ethnicity that the oppressive dominant Europeans had ascribed long before.

A genuine solution to the problem of race starts with an acknowledgement of the problem, but not an acceptance that the status quo must remain. Rather, it must accept that the heart of the problem is that identity is currently defined in racial terms in the West, while human beings have been given a mind to think and carve out their own identities based upon thought.

It is through thought about human kinds status in this universe that one realises that we have all been created as slaves of Allah, and as such our essential identity is that of created slaves. Ethnic and other differences are not an essential aspect of our identity, even though other oppressive people may have emphasised that aspect and treated us according to it, however that is only their oppression and their behaviour should not become adopted as a new standard.

Muslims have uniquely adopted a Deen that does not treat such differences in ethnicity with any great importance, but rather emphasised the role of the mind in determining a person's identity. Moreover, among the believers their status is determined by factors that each individual can personally control, which is their taqwa before Allah. The Islamic view of humanity is devoid of any racial focus, and the Islamic State which is established on the way of Prophethood will insha’Allah show the world that ethnicity and colour do not define its citizens as it does in the West. In the Khilafah (Caliphate) the door for ethnic and racial division is firmly shut, leaving people to focus on what brings them together rather than what divides them.

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ﴾

“O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted.” [Al-Hujurat: 13]

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