

So You Want to Talk About Race

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CHAPTER 6—Is police brutality really about race?

"Those who demand the smoking gun or a racial slur or swastika or burning cross before they will believe that an individual encounter with the police might be about race are ignoring what we know and what the numbers bear out: something is going on and it's not right. We are being targeted. And you can try to explain away one statistic due to geography, one away due to income—you can find reasons for numbers all day. But the fact remains: all across the country, in every type of neighborhood, people of color are being disproportionately criminalized. This is not all in our heads."

What did you think about the statistics Oluo shared in this chapter? Do you think that people of color are being disproportionately targeted by police? Why do you hold this opinion?

"From our books, TV shows, and movies, to our crime focus on news programs—the narrative of the black brute is as strong now as it was when *Birth of a Nation* was released to wide acclaim in 1915. We hear this repeated in the language of our TV pundits and our politicians."

How do you think TV and online media influence the way we view people of color? Can you think of some examples? How has this changed over your lifetime?

Implicit bias is the beliefs that sit in the back of your brain and inform your actions without your explicit knowledge. In times of stress, these unexamined beliefs can prove deadly. And a large portion of police encounters with people of color are high stress situations where that implicit bias is more likely to take over at a hint of unpredictability or escalation and fill an officer with irrational fear."

What do you think of the concept of implicit bias? Can you think of an example where you saw this at work in your own life?

"Communities with higher poverty, fewer jobs, and less infrastructure are going to have higher crime rates, regardless of race. When the average Black American has one-thirteenth the net worth and the average Hispanic American has one-tenth the net worth of the average White American, and when the poverty rate among Native Americans is over three times that of Whites, it is a strong bet that neighborhoods of color are more likely to be poor neighborhoods with higher crime and that higher-priced neighborhoods with easier access to jobs and more funding for education that lead to less crime would be more likely to be populated by comparatively wealthier white people."

In our last study, we talked about the concept of **intersectionality**, how does it come into play in this quote? How do these dynamics help to perpetuate stereotypes against people of color?

CHAPTER 7—How can I talk about affirmative action?

What did you think about Oluo's story of her education and employment experience? How was it different/ the same from yours?

"Affirmative action is supposed to combat bias in work and education by mandating a certain amount of hires and admissions from minority groups. It is supposed to force a more level playing field. But it's in our ignorance of the details that we lose the entire plot."

What is your understanding of affirmative action? Did the book provide any new insights into this concept for you?

CHAPTER 8—What is the school to prison pipeline?

What did you think of Sagan's story?

"Black students make up only 16 percent of our school populations, and yet 31 percent of students who are suspended and 40 percent of students who are expelled are black. Black students are 3.5 times more likely to be suspended than white students. 70 percent of students who are arrested in school and referred to law enforcement are black...When I look at these numbers, there are two possible explanations. I can assume that there is something fundamentally wrong with black and brown people, something fundamentally broken that is sending our kids out of school and into prison. Or, I can assume that the school system is marginalizing, criminalizing, and otherwise failing our black and brown kids in large numbers."

The **school-to-prison pipeline** is the term commonly used to describe the alarming number of black and brown children who are funneled directly and indirectly from our schools into our prison industrial complex, contributing to devastating levels of mass incarceration that lead to one in three black men and one in six Latino men going to prison in their lifetimes in addition to increased levels of incarceration for women of color."

Pastor Dave says he's learned a lot from both Gary & his son Jason who have taught many minority students in their careers as teachers. Their experiences give validity to what Oluo is saying. Thankfully, both of them have excellent records when it comes to helping minority students do well in school. What do you think we can do to improve the educational experience of black, brown and indigenous children?