

BLACK LIVES MATTER

STEPPING INTO OUR DISCOMFORT

In the midst of the many unknowns of the pandemic, life had begun to slowly rematerialize to a loosely shaped semblance of return. Events were being planned – a trip to the New England shore, camping in the Utah mountains, a long weekend away with parents. Anything to get out of the house and get 100,000+ Covid-19 deaths off our minds.

A murder shook us awake. As the video of George Floyd's death went viral, the nation gasped. Like the roller coaster starting its drop, we plunged down into the pit containing America's original sin: racism.

The 'new normal' will be informed by anti-racism as well as effects from the pandemic and recession. As protests grew, we turned our *Navigating to a New Normal* one-on-one conversations to racism and prejudice. The participants were very willing to discuss these sensitive topics as it weighed heavily on everyone's minds.

Conversations on race involve exploring the pain and suffering of humans at the hands of other humans.

It's uncomfortable. It's necessary. **We need to listen without judgment in order to understand the problem.**

From that perspective, we can finally work to fix what's been ignored for far too long.

While all the respondents had stories to tell of racism, we're focused here on the Black participants: Gail and Dajon. Nearly forty years apart in age, they both have stories of the cruelty of racism in America.

I'm not going to lie. For me, parts of these stories are hard to read. It's important to get uncomfortable and keep reading and listening.

We've heard from many people that racism is a difficult topic to bring up and discuss. Please consider using the stories here as a starting point for your own conversations.

We feel that empathy is key to overcoming racism in America. In the slides that follow, I've included our Five Steps to Build Empathy, followed by Gail and Dajon's sometimes painful accounts of their experiences with racism. Finally, we have thoughts about where we go from here, both as a society and what we in the corporate world can do. I'd like to hear from you about what you are doing so we can learn from each other on this journey to a just world.

–Rob Volpe, CEO

“
That roller
coaster?
It just went
straight down.

–Marco, 20, describing the feeling of life since George Floyd was killed on Memorial Day, 2020.



HOW TO BUILD EMPATHY

“People judge books by the cover. They don’t read the content.”
– Marco

One of the great things about reading stories is that they help develop empathy. Real conversation also helps build empathy. Yet the word empathy often makes people uncomfortable. Why? Because it can deal with icky things like emotions and feelings which not everyone can access or process.

The good news is ... we’re all born with the ability to have empathy! Regardless of capability to handle the feelings of others, the empathy that we need to access today is cognitive empathy. Being able to see the point of view of someone else.

Get started with *The 5 Steps to Empathy*.

1

Dismantle Judgment The first and hardest step. Judgment is comprised of biases, stereotypes, and past experiences. It gets in the way of how we hear other people. Recognize when judgment gets in the way. What’s causing it to be there? Try putting it to the side.

2

Ask Good Questions Broad, exploratory questions are better than closed “yes/no” questions to understand someone’s perspective. Use How, Where, When, What to start your questions. Use “Tell me more...” to follow-up and dive deeper into a topic.

3

Actively Listen Use all of your senses, including your intuition. Be present to what is being said. Pay attention to what’s being unsaid. What is body language and the environment telling you? What does your gut or intuition have to say?

4

Integrate into Understanding Start to incorporate what you have heard and seen into your thinking. It doesn’t mean you have to change your own views, just make room in your mind for another person’s way of thinking.

5

Use Solution Imagination Now you are ready. Step into that other person’s shoes. Imagine what it might be like to be them. How do they respond to a situation? What would they say about a topic? Try to exhibit that “I can see your point of view...” That’s empathy!



“I think we all have empathy. We may not have enough courage to display it.”
– Maya Angelou

For more information, [please visit this post](#) or check-out [this recording of a webinar](#) we held on how to build empathy.

50 YEARS OF RACISM AS TOLD BY GAIL AND DAJON

On the next pages you will hear from Gail and Dajon and their experience growing up and living today with racism. We begin with Gail's story - growing up in the 70s. Then, Dajon shares how racism has impacted his life as a member of Gen Z. We then conclude with how Gail is living with racism today. Here is an overview...



Early 1970s

Gail experiences bussing. "I was the only black child in my 3rd grade class"

–Gail



Late 70s

"When we were the minority, nobody cared about making us feel represented"

"As bad as he treated me, he still wanted to have sex with me."

–Gail

1980



2012

"Walking home from school, this guy yells the N-word at us"

–Dajon

1990

2000

2010



2015

"Why do I need to step out of the car?"

–Dajon



June 2020

"I became invisible to him"

–Gail



Today

"My experience is different than yours"

–Gail

GAIL GREW UP IN A SMALL TOWN IN NORTH CAROLINA.

Now 62, she has recently retired from a career working for the government.

Her last job was helping prep for the state elections. She is looking forward to retirement. “I have to make a conscious choice to take the slow lane and not rush through life.”

She said she’s doing all of this in honor of the memory of her parents. “This is my gift for them. African-Americans don’t get this opportunity. They did so much for me and worked hard and now I’m experiencing something they couldn’t do. I refuse not to be happy.”

Gail grew up in the midst of the integration of schools in the early 70s and then Affirmative Action programs after she graduated high school influenced career opportunities.

The death of George Floyd and the resulting protests struck a chord. She opened up with us about her own experiences with racism, going all the way back to 3rd grade.

This conversation took place over the course of two interviews with Ignite 360 Senior Insights Associate, Tori Palmer-Kern.

"ONLY THING THEY DID WAS FOUND A BOOK..."

Gail begins to share her story...

"During (de)segregation, I was the only Black child in my class. There were twins. Kay and Ray. As I said, I was the only Black child in their class of White kids in the third grade.

They wasn't afraid to be my friend. They act like I was no different. And I always could never figure out why that they wasn't afraid. They wasn't afraid of me. They wasn't afraid of the other classmates thinking that you're friends with a Black child. And I always said, okay, **so children can change it, because they're not afraid until you put fear in them.** So that's why I thought the next generation behind me would change. But looks like it was two generations behind me has changed.

To see the diversity of people coming out to protest, and not be afraid, because I think if it wasn't for the diversity of it, more African-Americans would have got killed in the last nine days. I think the strength of young people of, not of color, coming out and showing their face and being in the front. They were on the front lines and passionate. And one sign I read today said, 'I will never understand, but I do stand.'

When they don't understand what it's like to be of color, but they're standing with people of color. And I just thought that

was the most awesome sign. And so that's what I'm seeing. **I'm seeing that people that's not of color are not afraid anymore. And they know that we're the same.** We bleed the same. We smile the same. We want to be happy. We want to be successful. It's so awesome to see. It just gives me chills. So that's what I see, just people supporting one another.

The only protest we did was in the eighth grade, they had put me what they call the smart class, where two classes intertwine. I was in the seventh and the other class was in the eighth. They supposedly took the seventh-grade smart people and the eighth-grade smart people and put them in the same class. And one of the things we fought for is African-American studies. And that's the only thing we kind of fought for. But then, because we were, the schools were ran by, let me say, people not of color, **only thing they did was found a book.** I don't know where they found the book at, and they gave us the class. But it told us not to trust Martin Luther King and not to trust Malcolm X, not to trust Marcus Garvey. What we were asking for, we thought they were going to give it to us, but they didn't. **They made it worse."**



Integration and equality in education has been an issue in the US for over 200 years thru waves of segregation then integration and currently, back to segregation.

This New York Times/Pro Publica interactive piece illuminates the issue.

HOW MUCH HATE CAN ONE PERSON TAKE?

“So, the protests that I see the young people doing today, I think that they just couldn't imagine what happened to Mr. Floyd would really happen to them. But when they saw it with their own eyes, they realized it could happen to them. So, with all the educated, and I mean awesome young Black kids, sometimes it makes me want to cry when I hear them speak because they are so smart. And so, ... I think that's why I have confidence that their protest is going to (bring) change. As it did in the sixties with us. When Martin Luther King died, we was at an all African-American school and we all went to ... the auditorium. And we watched this funeral. It's ironic because it was such an awesome thing, but we were young. We didn't know how awesome it was to be able to see this. We were in real time. And, but as we grew older, we understand how significant it is to have lived at that time.

But one very important thing, as I said, we could not be vulgar, but we also could not hate. If someone hated upon you because you were Black, short, tall, heavy, whatever, you couldn't hate them back. You had to understand that you could defend yourself, but you couldn't go to their level.

If someone hated you, you couldn't hate them back.

That would mean that you were just worse than they were.

I remember going to an all-Black school, but being a child, you don't even notice all-Black schools, you never seen a White school. You just know everybody at school was Black and first through 12th, then desegregation happened and let's say the school I went to was five miles away. The White school is one mile away plus a better education.

So my parents chose to send us to the White school, then desegregation happened and we left the all-Black school and **they did not have a clue how much we got beat up.** And we didn't tell them because we couldn't figure out why that we've been treated so badly. I mean, we just... it just didn't dawn on us as children because the discipline that mom and dad gave us was, if you mess up at school the teacher could whip you, and then when you got home, they will whip you. So the control was, you got to be a good student. So when

we were sent to the White school and the kids were spitting on us and calling us the n-word and just crazy mean... we thought it was something we were doing. So we

would go home and we didn't tell our parents how we were getting treated. They thought we were fine and until it just got so bad that they decided... we did it one year in the third grade and after the third grade, it was so bad they sent us back to the Black school and we were happy to get back to the Black school.”

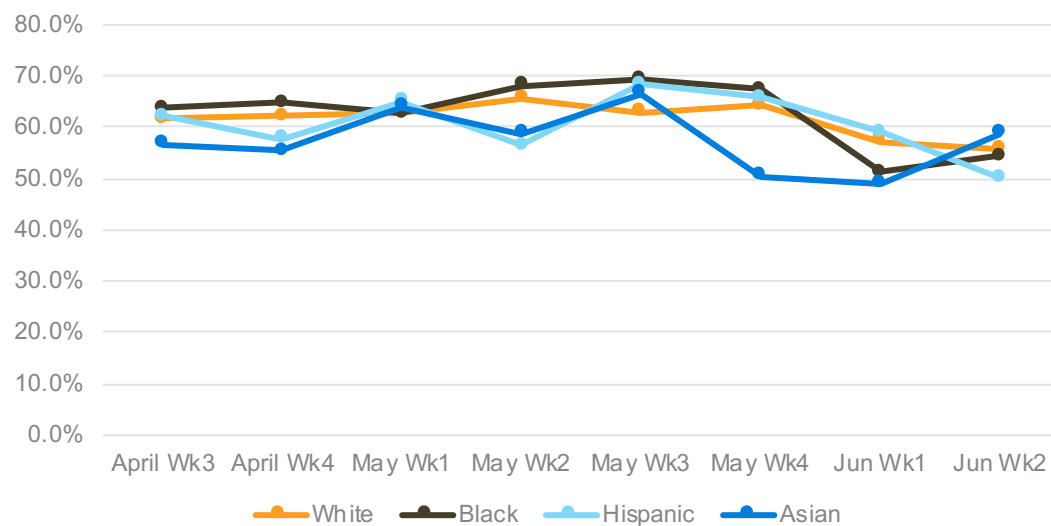


Racially-motivated hate crimes continue to rise on college campuses, leading to racial trauma which studies have shown is a more powerful risk factor than life events for psychological distress.

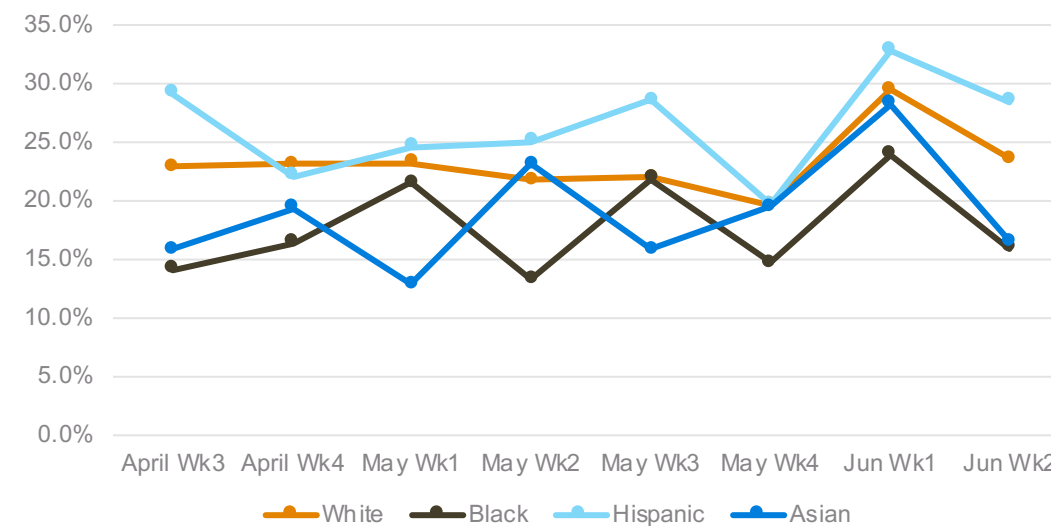
Historical trauma is a theory based on the impact the build-up over time of racism or prejudice has on an entire community or segment. The community has a collective response when any one member experiences the trauma.

REGARDLESS OF RACE, WE ARE ALL FEELING THE INCREASED LEVELS OF STRESS FROM GEORGE FLOYD'S DEATH AND SUBSEQUENT PROTESTS

Did You Feel Happy Yesterday?



Did You Feel Anxious Yesterday?



Racial injustice has affected everyone and how we are feeling. This means that everyone around you is being impacted. We are all in a state of discomfort.

WHEN YOUR CHILDHOOD TORMENTOR BECOMES YOUR ADULT WORK COLLEAGUE

Gail continues her story...

“The funny thing I learned about that third-grade year, two guys, one named Jim and one named Billy. They were so mean to me. I mean, they were so mean to me and I never could figure out what I had done to them. And then 15, 20 years later, I'm working at a factory making good money and guess who get hired beside me? Billy!

And do you know, **he remembered me because I was the only Black child in the classroom.** But he did not remember how bad he treated me. That's when I realized someone who dishes out the pain, they don't remember. They do not remember when they dish out pain. And I... That's when I started saying, I'm not going to let... Because I was so angry when he started working beside me that **he did not remember how bad he treated me.** But then I realized, why would he? Because it made him a bad person. Nobody wants to be a bad person. And I wouldn't... I remember that... He don't have a clue how bad he treated me and I... That's what taught me that people who are mean to people, they don't think that they're not going to remember. It's not going to bother their life. It's like when you fall in love with somebody that hurt your feelings, they go about their business.

You all hurt because they don't love you no more. They don't care. And so it's the same thing, when people hurt you, it doesn't bother them. You need to learn how to let it go.

So I let it go that he didn't know and I didn't tell him how it had made me feel because I realized he was not going to believe he was that bad. Because he didn't remember being that bad, he thought it was funny, but it wasn't funny. And the only thing my saving grace was, I knew that I was not bad as he was. And I knew I was going to be okay.”

Tori: How did you go about working with him every day?

Gail: The thing is about being an African American at that time in history, your parents teach you how to be safe. Your parents teach you that a White person says something, that's just them being White. And you have to think about what's best and then... but **the thing I did not, was not prepared for, as bad as White man treated Black people, I'm a female. They still want to have sex with me.**

You know, it was so weird. I mean, I saw the way they treated older Black men, the White men I worked with and I'm thinking, the Black man is holding their own. I'm going ... it ain't none of

my business, but I see how they treat. Because Black men, when I started working at this particular company, they wouldn't even look at a White person in the eye. They would look like that because they come from that generation. So, as I worked there and I'm working like a man, because President Carter made him hire minorities. So, I'm working like a man and I got clothes on like a man. So, I'm working. But then as they got to know me, they started saying things that weren't proper to me. And I'm like, 'No, I'm not dating no White man, no.' Then they got mad at me, but you hate me because I'm Black. But if it come right down to it, you'll sleep with me. And that's confusing. I'm going, 'No,' and being from a small town, very racist town, when I told him, 'No, I will not date a White man,' I thought he'd just take it and go oh well. They treated me worse. **It was crazy. They treated me worse.”**

Gail's reference to President Carter making him hire minorities is based on Affirmative Action which was **designed to promote opportunities for minorities including Blacks and women.**



THE RULES OF THE GAME ARE ALWAYS CHANGING

“But, that’s what I’m saying, the parts that we have to deal with. It’s hard to navigate when **your parents are trying to keep you safe. Then you’re put in situations where it’s confusing** because you’re going like, wait a minute, I know you hate me. I know you don’t like me, and you treat me bad, but then you want me to do something so disgusting with you because you’re a man and you think I should do it just because I’m Black? That I should appreciate you wanting to be intimate with me because I’m Black? Are you kidding me? But now, I dated outside my race, don’t get me wrong. As I got older, I realized that a small town with racist people, you come to a larger city, it’s not like that.”


Tori: What do you remember about being in the third grade and having all that happen?

Gail: I remember caring about my teacher, Miss Collins. She was a pretty White woman, had the biggest legs and she was fair. And I know it was hard for her. And I remember her treating me fair, like she treated all the other kids. The problem was with the kids. Because what had happened was, the rich White families once segregation happened, integration happened. I’m sorry, integration. Once it happened, the rich White families took their White kids and send them to private school. The White kids who were poor, they had to go to school with us. So they were already angry. The parents was angry, the kids were angry and they were angry because they knew they could not afford not to go to school with us. And so that anger came in every day. That even though they poor, at least they not Black. So, they would express that and the teachers didn’t know what to do with it.

The White teachers, poor things didn’t have a clue, because **they didn’t want the White kids to think they were favoring the Black kids.** But like I said, I was the only one in that particular class. But they also wanted the Black kids to feel like they were a part [of class]. So, the teachers didn’t know what to do. They didn’t know whether to chastise the White kids for being mean or chastise the Black kid for maybe being out of place. They didn’t know what to do.

So it went on for quite a long time. In fact, my graduation year, going to the prom, we were celebrating the bicentennial or whatever, 1976. It had got so bad that we had become the majority. Black people had become the majority. White people were the minority, poor White people. I don’t think we treated them any different because we were the majority. I think they were still just so uncomfortable and we had to have a Black man and a White man, Black queen and a White queen, because they wanted to make it fair. But the weird thing about it is, when we were the minority, they ain’t care about us having no Black... they didn’t care about the fairness of it. But when they became the minority, that’s when everything, the Black leaders at the school, the principal and the vice principal and the teachers, they want to make sure the White kids was represented. But **when we were the minority, then nobody cared about making us being represented.** So that’s a fascinating thing. But hopefully it’s better, it was a small town.”





GROWING UP IN CALIFORNIA GAVE DAJON DIFFERENT EXPERIENCES THAT HAVE HELPED PUT THE PROTESTS AND RIOTS IN PERSPECTIVE.

Working in telecom sales, Dajon, 23, spent part of his high school years in Louisiana living with his grandparents who he remains close with.

The pandemic has forced Dajon to live in the moment. “It’s allowed for a factory reset. We’ve been so immersed in tech and now we’re slowing down and getting to know people better.”

He thinks of himself as a family man and looks forward to creating a family and having the resources to help them achieve whatever they want.

About 40 years younger than Gail, they have had similar experiences with racism despite the decades that distance them.

This conversation took place over the course of two interviews with Ignite 360 Senior Insights Associate, Tori Palmer-Kern.

FORTY YEARS LATER, RACISM STILL REIGNS

Dajon recalls some racist incidents that have happened to him since 2010...

“I was in high school and I was walking home from school. **A guy called me the N word.** A bunch of my friends were African-American. Some of them didn't take to it lightly. I usually just let that stuff roll over the shoulder, 'cause I don't want them to get me in trouble. I usually try and keep my head clear and just... I can let that stuff go easily. But some of my friends couldn't, they said the guy said it from his screen door, some of my friends ran up, kicked his door in and then said, 'screw you'. We proceeded to walk back out.

And then those guys came out, four or five grown men deep and were getting ready to fight high school kids. I mean, me and them were probably freshmen in high school. And obviously I had to sit there and protect myself. It was three of us and four or five of them. Had to fight. I kicked the first dude in the kneecap, put him out of commission and then my two other friends fought two guys a piece.

And then, that's when, this was literally maybe three or four blocks from my high school. Once we protected ourselves, we were able to send them off enough and then they decided to just leave us alone. And then we got up, walked away from the home, told my mom about it, and she basically from that point on, said, 'this is the route you're going to take. You're not taking any... **do not deviate from this route. I know this route. I know every person on this route.**'

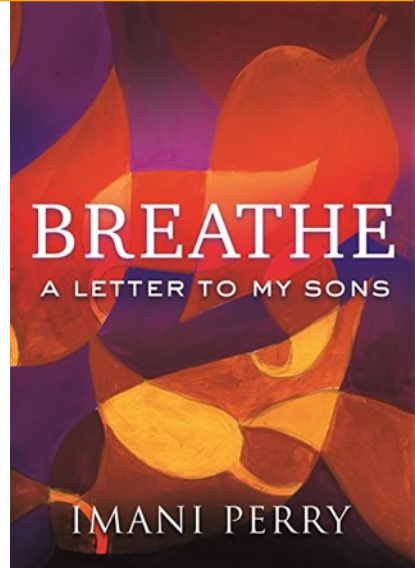
She immediately went and got me a cell phone from Boost Mobile and said I had the chirp phone she had... I could instantly message her, and it was like

a two-way radio essentially. I could instantly message her or I could give her a call, whichever one I had the time for. But basically I had to call her when I was leaving school and call her halfway, when I made it to a halfway point and then obviously if she wasn't home from work yet, I would have to call her then, or if she was home, she would let me know and be like, all right, well I'm expecting you in 10 minutes. Like she timed out the walk from home. And if I took any longer than that, she was calling me.”

Tori: What do you remember about how you dealt with that as a kid?

Dajon: For the most part, I remember my mom always bringing me up saying, 'Hey, things like this are possible, hopefully they don't ever happen to you.' But growing up, she experienced these things and then she always coached, **'Hey, just to let you know, you're a Black man in America.**

Sometimes you're going to have to act differently and by act differently I mean, you need to be on your best behavior at all times.' But at the same time, that was just my mom instilling me to be a good person. She was like, 'honestly, if you're just being yourself and being a good person, don't be a deviant, you have nothing to worry about. But if you do get into a situation where you are getting in trouble and you don't believe you did anything, just go along with it and we'll worry about it later. Don't get all huffy and puffy. Don't dispute it. Just take whatever punishment it is, and then we'll address it when it comes to that point.'”



For more on a Black mother's concern for her sons, [check out this review of the book Breathe by Imani Perry.](#)

Or support the Black community and buy it from [one of these Black-owned independent booksellers.](#)

"THE TALK" IS REAL

"And another situation happened in high school, and it was my junior year of high school, and I was in Louisiana. I drove maybe three or four blocks with my sister in the car. I stopped for a motorcycle cop. He was pulling out of an apartment complex. He was kind of rolling forward, and then backing up. Wasn't sure if he was coming out. There was a lot of school traffic, so I just stopped. Waved him to come out, and waited. And then somebody behind me honked. He still didn't come out, so I assumed he wasn't going to come out, and he was just watching there. So I kind of watched the flow of traffic. I slowly coasted past him, and as soon as I coasted past him, he pulled out, lit me up behind me.

I pulled over immediately, with my sister in the car. I rolled down all four windows. Hands on the steering wheel. Pretty much, I just typically know how to deal with law enforcement, with both of my grandma's brothers being in the Army, they had pretty much taught me the whole process and everything, so I was comfortable with the situation. He asked for license and insurance, registration. I provided him with all that information. Had my sister get it out, and then hand it to me. Which I handed over to him. And then he asked me to step out the car, and I basically asked, I said, 'What do I need to step out the car for, if you don't mind me asking?' I said it in the calmest voice. He said, 'Just because you have me out all in the street.' I said, 'Well, we're in a parking lot.' But I stepped out of the car. I said, 'The door's unlocked. Feel free to open it.' I had my sister unbuckle my seat belt, so he could see my hands at all times. Stepped out the car slowly. He turned me around. I faced the car. And he was like, 'Stand there while I go and check your license, and make sure everything is good.' So then I was like, 'okay.'"

P&G broke ground in 2018 with the award-winning commercial "[The Talk](#)" – bringing to light the conversations Black parents have with their children about the realities of racism.

Black people are stopped by San Diego police at a rate 219% higher than Whites [according to a 2019 ACLU-sponsored study](#). And 13 of the 100 largest US city police departments kill Black men at a rate higher than the nation's murder rate.



DOING EVERYTHING YOU ARE TAUGHT BY YOUR PARENTS IN ORDER TO SURVIVE

"I stood there with my hands on the hood of the car. On the roof of the car. And then, he came back and basically said, 'I'm citing you for failure to obey an officer's signals.' I was like 'Okay. **I've never heard of that one before.**' Thinking to myself, I'm like, 'I've never heard of that.' I said, 'What signals did I fail to obey?' And he said, 'You didn't hear my sirens or see my lights?' I said, 'Officer, with all due respect, I did. I pulled over. If I didn't, we wouldn't be here right now.' That's when **he told me to stop being a smart ass.** I understood and I just deescalated the situation. I said, 'Understood, Officer. Didn't mean to cause any problems. Feel free, give me the ticket. I'll take whatever punishment is due at the time, if I committed a crime.'

He gave me this ticket, wrote out the court date, said, 'Have a nice day,' and drove off. By the time I went to the DA's office with my grandpa? The DA basically dismissed it, within like two seconds. He read the ticket and said, 'What is this? Why are you here?' I said, 'All due respect? I don't know. I pulled over.' He said, 'I've never even seen a ticket like this before.'

I mean, the entire police department knew me. I did volunteer work there, and they knew I was a good kid. They knew... I mean, the

principal knew me at the school. Knew me by name and everything. I did a lot of work there. I was in DECA. I was involved a lot with the campus, but for some reason, I guess he was just having a bad day and decided to pull me over right at night, gave me a ticket. I don't know if it was just to meet a quota or just because I was being discriminated against, but I didn't take it that way. No harm, no foul. The DA dismissed the ticket. And as I walked out, I saw him and he was like ... I said 'Hey, how's it going?' And then basically he knew that the ticket got dismissed because I wasn't walking out with a frown on my face or discouraging look."

Tori: Had you been pulled over before?

Dajon: No.

Tori: So what was going through your head when that happened?

Dajon: Just to **follow the steps that I was told to do by my mom, my grandparents, my great uncles. I basically just did everything.** I was like, all right, I'm going to pull over. I'm going to be respectful. I had never been personally pulled over, but I've been in the car when my grandpa and my grandmother got pulled over before. So I saw how they interacted with the police and mirrored it."

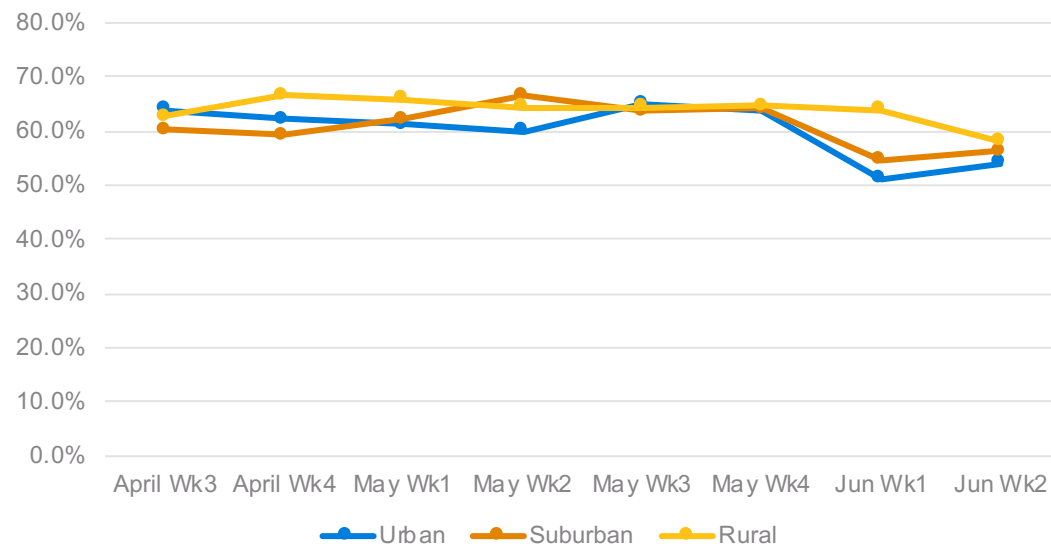


Taking action on the awareness of police brutality against Black men and women, PBS affiliate WFYI in Indianapolis put together this guide: [Get Home Safely – 10 Rules of Survival if Stopped By the Police.](#)

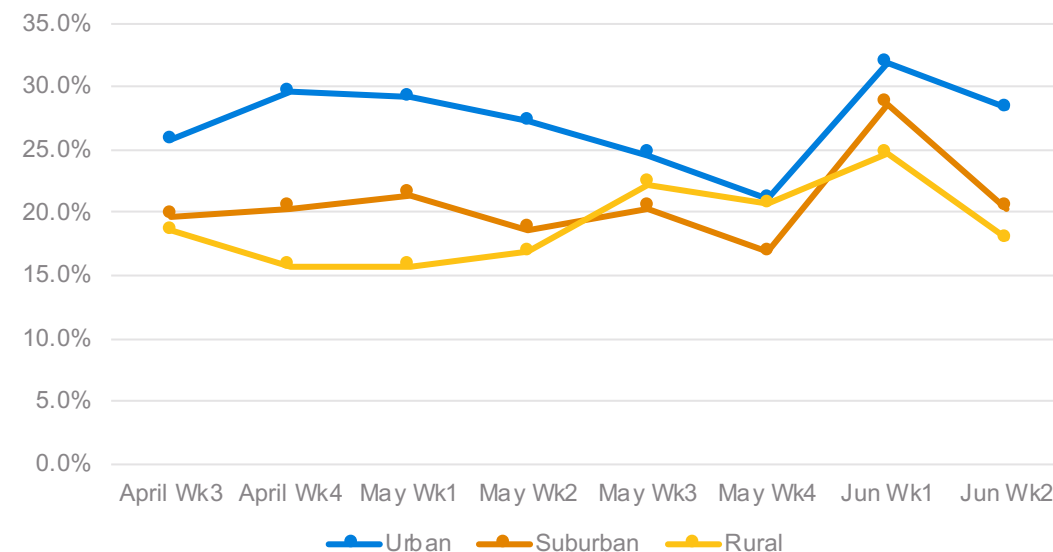
URBANIZATION DID NOT INSULATE PEOPLE

WE ARE ALL LIVING IN DISCOMFORT

Did You Feel Happy Yesterday?



Did You Feel Anxious Yesterday?



Learn how to get uncomfortable with others. Take the risk to start a more open conversation.
People are more receptive to talking right now because we are all impacted.

GAIL TODAY

Racism isn't something that happens only to the young. Gail told us of incidents she is currently experiencing as an adult woman.

“Like I said, it's been a very hard week. I heard a psychologist say that it can cause trauma that lasts for three months watching things like this. I'm trying to wrap my head around this. I'm trying to take this information in that can help me get through this time. It's been very, I'm usually pretty positive and upbeat, but this has been a tough one.

Today I spoke with a friend of mine. I hadn't spoken to them in months and she's White and a beautiful person. She's scared because somewhere the protest is happening, and I couldn't help her. I didn't even try to make her feel better because I didn't know what to say. I heard in her voice, her fear. Everybody is experiencing different emotions. I done been mad. I done cry. I don't think I cursed yet. I'm probably getting there, but just so many emotions and every day is something different to a point.”

MAKING DECISIONS TO PROTECT MYSELF

Gail believes in the possibilities of Gen Z to help change the current state, but she recognizes that voting is critical in order to enact change. She then shared what she had once learned in a class about the voting system and how slaves were treated.

“They counted slaves where they counted them as three fifths of a human. Three fifths of a human being. I think that's what triggered me now. **Those who dislike us think that we're not human.** That we were not human, we're three fifths of a person. I always had hoped that would change in this. I can't even watch a lot of stuff anymore on TV. I want to be entertained by people that look like me now. I can't watch slave movies. I can't watch anything like that since *Roots*, I learned right there, it brings up too many emotions that I can't watch those types of movies. I'm finding out that I'm going back and watching *Living Single* and *Martin*. They're bringing me laughter now for some reason. They're old shows, but I'm more comfortable now watching shows that looks like me.

Then the boycotting of different businesses. The restaurant next door that I often get little snacks from. It's real quick. They put out a list of those people, those businesses who are investing in the Republican campaign and the restaurant next door is one of them.

Now, I can't even walk in the door. It's a weird. You're not going to appreciate me as a person, **I'm sure not going to spend my money with you if you're not going to understand certain things.**

You want to be successful, but how many cars, how many houses, how many trips, how many vacation homes, how many do you need until you understand that **other people got the right to want to have those things too in life.** But if you are steady, not letting us have access, and not even thinking that we want these things or we're three fifths of a human being, but you would take my money. So, it's been a rough week. I'm sorry.”



“*I'm finding out that I'm going back and watching **Living Single** and **Martin**. They're bringing me laughter now for some reason. They're old shows, but I'm more comfortable now watching shows that looks like me.*”

—Gail

HBO's comedy series, *Insecure*, features moments of White privilege and systemic racism as an ongoing part of the characters daily lives. It's an honest representation of what Blacks have to deal with and how they have to adapt behavior as Black people in a White world. *Insecure* is rated TV-MA.

RACISM CAN MEAN BECOMING INVISIBLE IN YOUR OWN NEIGHBORHOOD

"I am conscious of where I'm spending my money, and whether people are in tune with that if I'm spending my money with you, I want to have respect. In fact, one store, I'm not going to go shopping, which is not a name brand store. It's a local market. I think he had just arrived from one Asian country about a year ago. I noticed that he didn't speak that much English, but I'm going, 'Okay, that's cool.' But when he says something to me that I didn't appreciate, he said something about I'm not spending enough money in his store or something. I'm like, no, I come by here all the time. **And then he acts like he didn't understand English.**

So, it kind of puzzled me on that when he did, I said [to myself] 'He just said something to me in English.' When I respond to him in English, he's like, 'No English.' I'm like 'What'd you just talk to me in English, what, where?' So I'm going to, well, I'm not going to hold that against him. I'm going to just, I'm just going to, be respectful. I don't mind spending my money with him. I know he just, I think he just arrived in this country. He's trying to learn the language.

He's trying to learn things and he's working. And he's. And I think, when I got to come by more often, I noticed that he's, they're good people.

But I always knew he had this thing ... he didn't know how to communicate with African-Americans and that he wasn't uncomfortable. I could see it when, when a Caucasian or White people would be in there. I could see, he could communicate really. He was really smiling and 'Hahaha' laughing. And he was very comfortable, even though he won't speak English all that well, [and doesn't] even know what they were talking about, but he was happy and talking to them.

So anyway, I had been, been going by his store now for three years, very short conversation, nothing that deep, very respectful. And when the first protests happened on the street, that his store is on. And [the next morning] I walked by and his door is smashed. The glass is smashed out. And he's picking up stuff. And I look at him and say, 'Oh, I'm so sorry'. I said, 'Your glass got broken out.' 'Yes,' [he said]. 'I'm so sorry,' [I said].

I'm standing there expressing my feelings that I'm so sorry this happened to you. **And [then] a White lady comes up.**

She's like, 'Oh my goodness'. I said, 'Yeah, his store'. And when she came up, he no longer paid any attention to me. He absolutely went to take his whole attention to her. And I was still saying to him, 'You didn't deserve this.' You know, 'I hate this happening to you,' I'm still trying to let him know and she's talking and everything. So as I'm noticing, I guess I just, just walk off because when she arrived, **I went invisible to him.**

He wanted her condolences. He didn't care about mine. So I said, 'Well, listen,' I said to him, before, I walked off. I said, 'Well, this may not mean anything to you at all.' I said, 'But I do. I do hate that. That happened to you.' I said, 'This may not mean anything to you.' He's still didn't comment. And the White lady looks at me very nicely and said, 'It *does* matter that you feel that way.' And she was very, very passionate about that and saying that to me. And so then I just walked off, but I realized something.

I'm not spending no more money with him.

I became invisible to him."

"MY EXPERIENCE IS DIFFERENT THAN YOURS"

"And then on my walk yesterday, there's this very, very nice African American guy who works at the 7-11 at the corner. He's very respectful. I'm amazed at his age that he's really, really respectful of people who are older than he is ... [Then] a White lady comes by, she has her mask on and he's, like I say, he's very polite. So when he gets out the car, him and the White lady were maybe about five feet from each other, and he says a good morning to her.

'Good morning ma'am,' and she did nothing, just nothing. He got angry that fast. I see this when I'm getting ready to walk by the both of them. I saw his anger go up because he's trying to say, 'Oh, you don't acknowledge me? I'm being polite.' He was going, 'What's wrong with her?' And I said, 'No, no, no. You got to know that she doesn't know you. Wasn't on purpose that she was doing it.'

But here's a Black young man with big dreadlocks. I don't think old women get the dreadlocks. I think they just don't get it. I said, 'No, honey,' I said, 'It wasn't intentional that she... She just...' I was trying to tell him, 'She just didn't know you well enough that when you spoke to her, she didn't even know you probably was speaking to her.' So then he thanked me and smiled and walked away. But I don't think she did it intentionally.

And that's how intense the vibe is now with what's going on. It's like, no one knows how to act anymore. So I'm trying to digest all this and now come out of it on the better end because it

doesn't feel good at all. And my White friends who are close to me, they don't know what to say. They're afraid they're going to say the wrong thing. And I don't want them to feel that way. So what I told my other White friends, I said, **You got to talk to some other White folks** if I'm there. You got to talk to some more White people, I can't tell you. I said, **'Because my experience is different than yours.'** And so what I tell you, you may not understand, but if you talk together with someone that's just like you, maybe you all can talk more honest with each other, then me trying to explain to you how it feels.' And it was good. They were okay with that.

I wish they could [say something], but all my White friends, I've been trying to get them to be comfortable to talk, honestly. But **they just don't know what to say.** And Tim Wise, I don't know if you ever heard of him, but I love Tim Wise. He's a White guy who's invested in promotion of equality for Black people. He's always on Facebook putting out very good information. He never promotes himself. So for the first time I seen him on TV, and I said, 'Oh my God, Tim Wise, got to watch him.'

And he said, 'Because White people are used to controlling everything and having the power, he says that in this environment now they need to ask Black people on what they should do and for any leadership per se.' But he says, 'If White people should talk to their White friends and tell their experience,' he did a sample of ... He did an example of his experience ..."

Implicit and unconscious bias are learned starting at an early age **but they can be unlearned.**

See more from [Tim Wise](#) and his book [White Like Me: Reflections on Race from a Privileged Son](#)

IT REQUIRES WHITE PEOPLE TO HAVE EMPATHY IN ORDER TO HAVE THE DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS ABOUT RACISM

“He [Tim Wise] says that when he was a young man, he smoked marijuana. He had a scam going where he did fake IDs for people on the 18 so they can drink beer. But he says, ‘A White, young man, he wasn’t afraid that the police would bother him.’ He said, ‘In fact, the police saw the fake ID and knew it was fake and just let him go.’ So, his point is that

White people, if they would talk about their experience when they did something that if a person of color did it, they would get arrested or accused. To let them see the difference of what can happen. And that’s what he was saying. **That’s the conversation White people should have with other White people** to be more comfortable.

The thing I never want my White friends to think, that I think they are guilty of something. I hope they know I’m that I’m more intelligent than like I’m pointing fingers at them.

I want them to know that this is... **this is an experience that is hard if you ain’t walked in my shoes to know how it is.**

I liked Tim Wise. So, I think I tried to tell my White friends when I talked to them that they need to talk and don’t feel guilty or feel like that they did something. Just know that, if you get in an elevator and a White person does this, you get

to see it. I don’t think they know they’re doing it, but I think it’s just a reaction when you’re walking by a family of White kids and they grabbed the kids, like you’re going to steal them. I don’t like children by the way. But just those particular things that we deal with on a daily basis and that they wouldn’t know how that feels.

But I do know White people who have children, who broke the law and got no repercussions. That would be a good example of them understanding everybody can’t walk that path where they can call someone up and say, “Look, can you get Bobby out and erase his record and give him another chance?” Black people don’t get that. And that will be an example for, because I do have a White friend who one family member had gotten into a lot of trouble. They didn’t get no repercussions at all. But if it was an African American person, ... they would’ve got in trouble.

Yeah. I wish my White friends will feel comfortable enough to talk on this with me, but I think it’s just too much. Because they think they may say something to be offensive. So I try to tell them what offends me so that I want them to be as open as possible.

But **it’s hard for White people to think that they have some privilege**, that they have an upper hand because I think it goes to that personal depth, that person, single person said, no, ‘I worked hard for this. Nobody gave me nothing. Nobody.’

But if I go to the bank, [it’s] best to leave. When I’m trying to get a loan, **I don’t see me across that table**. And when I go most likely to get a job, I don’t see me across that table. I just don’t think that they can understand that **if you wake up every morning and 90% of what you see on TV, media is not, people don’t look like you, you learn to assimilate to a point**. And I think that would, I wanted them to say, ‘Just think about it. If you wake up every morning and never see nobody that looks like you on TV or at the store. But that can’t happen because we are just 13% of the population. We’re a small population comparably in this country. So I wish they would be [honest with the conversation].’”

P&G followed “The Talk” ad with **“The Look”** – a spot that captures what Gail talks about with the way some White people look at Black people.

LOOKING FOR THE GOOD IN PEOPLE

Tori: How do all those experiences with racism and prejudice impact the way you view things now?

Gail: I have to pray every day. **I have to pray every day to know that all White people are not alike...**

but you really have to make sure that you are understanding that you don't want to treat people the way you were treated, because they put us all in one lump. They put us all the same. So if I put all White people in a bunch and say, all of them are the same way that other people treated me, I'm no better than the people who treated me bad.

And I have to always be careful because one of my White friends said to me, he said that when he first met me, **he thought I was a racist and didn't like White people. And I asked him why. He said, 'cause you always talk positive about Black people.'** Cause I'm proud of being Black, and I talked positive about Black people, you thinking I'm hating White people? How does that add up?

Because I am, **in the longest day I've been on this earth, I can never be what but who I am.** So, I can't envy White people and want to be White. That's crazy. I'm proud of all of it because I can't change it. It doesn't make any logical sense that I'm going to hate who I am. But if I love who I am don't mean I hate who you are. That's crazy. You know? And that's the struggle always with the uncomfortable conversation with Black and White. Because I'm pro Black and pro woman, by the way, pro woman to my heart, that does not mean I hate men and does not mean I hate those are not like me. You know what I'm saying? But a lot of people can't have that conversation because they feel like they need to, you ain't got to apologize to me for all the ills of the world. Good gracious, you know? That's crazy. **You don't have to apologize for things that happen to us as African Americans. We know what has happened, but in the midst of it all, we're okay. We're okay.**"



The following week, Gail and Tori continued to discuss the ongoing protests and how the pandemic may have helped the collective outrage everyone felt.

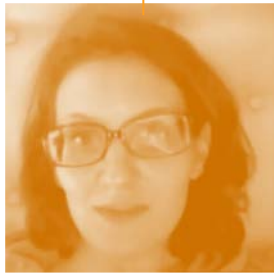
"To be honest with you, I look as the pandemic was part of a bigger plan. **The pandemic and the uprising coincide because if people wasn't at home because of the pandemic, the multitude of people could not have seen the video....** Do you see what I'm saying? So I trust and I pray. I just think this is something that was going to happen. I think, everybody's trying to find a way to have a solution and make things better and I hate to say it, but I think it may get worse before it gets better. **I don't trust this system because this system has caused this.** And no one has taken responsibility because it's ugly... The [young generation] may not get it right the first time, may not get it right the second time, but at least they trying. So, I think it's going to be better. I hope."

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE

“ We asked the respondents for their thoughts on what could be done, and what companies could do to help make a difference.



I want everyone to be talking to each other and saying, "Hey, how can I better understand you?". Because the more you understand someone else. But I mean, you can always just put yourself in their shoes. And it's not always easy to do that if you don't know anything about them. – Dajon



Just being aware that you have biases is the first step to fix racism. – Jenika



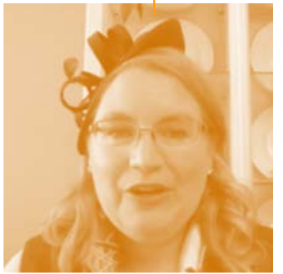
I think just to have an open mind and to... having conversations and having dialogues and doing research and just educating yourself is a big step. – Larry



I'm just trying to figure out how I can be involved and how to react to this. And I think that's the hardest thing for me. And I've always been the one that I want to make sure I do things right and I'm doing the right thing. – Kelsey



Once you start seeking knowledge and you find out the truth of what's really real, this is true. This is false. Now, what's the truth? There's a difference between true and false and the truth. The truth of the matter is, and so I seek truth. I seek to be truthful with myself and looking for truth in life. – Ricardo



I think it starts with one-on-one communication. Just sitting around and sharing experiences, sharing stories, and it's talking about everybody's day-to-day lives. I think that's the only way to change anything is to get that empathy and get people feeling inside to be able to change. – Jennifer SC



Companies should be going in there and making sure there's a balance. We buy a lot of hair, we buy a lot of clothes, we buy music, cars and everything. There should be some type of investment with those who invest in that company to go back into our community. Do you know that they say our money stays in our community for six hours. We can't survive like that. –Gail

ACTION STARTERS FOR YOUR COMPANY OR BRAND

- **Talking is the first step.**
- Consider using **the stories in this document to start conversations** in your circles – read the stories of Gail and Dajon and talk about them. Explore the links provided for further information and understanding.
- Think in terms of “**Listen, Pause, Reflect, Plan, Do**” – start listening, develop a plan, put it into action.
- **Support action in your hallways as well as in the outside world.** Start listening to your employees, customers and consumers to understand how your company is showing up and where there is room for improvement – then improve how you are showing up.
- IDEO has produced [a powerful and inspiring acknowledgment and commitments](#) to changes they are pursuing to become anti-racist.
- **Examine your different points of contact and communication with consumers** – are you fairly representing the world around you?
- Re-examine hiring and promotion practices to **support equality initiatives** and hire more BIPOC.
- Continue the conversation and support it – **this is a journey, not a day-trip**

IGNITE 360 ACTION STARTERS

We are dedicated to the ideal that all men and women are **created equal and deserve to be treated equally, with dignity and respect.**

We're committed to sharing diverse voices of people wherever possible.

We recognize this is just the beginning of our own long journey.



As an organization with a culture of continual improvement, we are taking the following steps...

- Broadening our understanding of racism with an internal reading group – first up is [How to Be an Anti-Racist by Ibram Kendi](#).
- Reviewing how we categorize our recruiting criteria to insure we are hearing from diverse voices.
- Developing guidelines to share with our clients to help them hear from a diverse range of consumers – based on race, income, and geography
- Examining how we further incorporate socio-cultural analysis into our reporting.
- Examining how we present diversity visually in our reports.
- Networking to increase the diversity of our team and vendors.
- Taking action to promote diversity in new talent considering the research and strategy fields.

THANK YOU

Thank you for taking the time to read these stories of the relentless, systemic racism that Black people endure. Listening without judgment is the first step toward finding a solution. – Rob

“I’m hoping that the dialogue will continue. And to me it’s fascinating. Instead of celebrating everybody, people tend to fear someone who doesn’t look like them. I don’t know why people don’t think of it as a plus when you’ve got diversity and you can learn from other people.” –Gail

Previous knowledge shares remain available on [our website](#).

[Chapter 1: Welcome to the Base of Maslow’s Hierarchy](#)

[Chapter 2: A Walk through the Uncanny Valley](#)

[Chapter 3: Now. Next. Future. Navigating Your Business to a New Normal \(video\)](#)

[Chapter 4: Our Scary, Risky, Evolutionary Need to Connect](#)

