

Hate of the Fearful

Emily Janzen - May 2

Why do we hate? In a world where we get the choice every day of love, compassion and friendship, why is there still racism and division? This question is as complex as it is universal, and in my last two Think and Create blog posts, I have aimed to work my way towards an answer. Of course, there will never be just one, but rather a series of interwoven causes and consequences that lead to the perpetual loop of hate. However, every loop has a driving cause that keeps it in motion, and for hate the cause is fear.

This explains why people still commit hateful actions that we thought should have ended in the 1940's. This explains why what we lash out at always follows this similar thread, no matter who it is targeted at. We may think that we live in a civilized age, but as long as we let fear drive us, we are doomed to repeat the loop of hate.

I found a recent example in news article about protests which have occurred in the past month across the United States. Citizens from Washington, Michigan, Texas, Maryland and California have been marching by the thousands, protesting the restrictions placed on them by COVID-19. This may not seem like a noteworthy event at first glance, but they have deep and powerful roots. President Donald Trump recently proclaimed "you can't just come in and say let's close up the United States of America, the biggest, the most successful country in the world by

far” (Trump, 2020). When it is put like that however, it makes sense why these protests are happening; people are afraid of losing their freedom.

This isn't the first time the ideals of the American Dream have caused outrage. In the early to mid 1900's, Southerners from across the country were furious at the increase of rights being given to the Black community. As one reader exclaimed about the Black population in the Washington Times in 1915 “giving them as good cars and service as is given the White people will then give that race the opportunity to develop more racial pride and distinction” (Anonymous, 1915), and later on claims that if this will happen they will “try to be rivals and not equals of the white race”. Even over a hundred years ago, the cause of hate was regularly fear.

Unfortunately, when fear causes hate, the consequence is often irrational, harmful actions. On February 2nd, 2020, a Asian Canadian lady from Vancouver was boarding a plane to return home from a trip to Mexico. She was getting over a cold, but didn't think this would be a problem as other passengers appeared sick on the plane as well. However, she coughed once, and immediately the flight attendant rushed to ask her if she had been to China. When she replied with no, they refused to believe her and told her she must wear a mask. She then refused, and questioned if they were making the other coughing passengers wear masks. The flight attendant replied with “no, people only complain about you” (Anonymous, 2020), as she was the only Asian on the plane.

This event shockingly resembles the famous civil rights encounter of Rosa Parks, where Ms. Parks refused to comply to a transportation officer's

racist orders directed at tending to White passengers needs. The root cause of this action was also fear as a prominent reason that segregation existed in the first place was due to a fear that Black people would dismantle the White society.

These two consequences caused by fear were unfortunately some of the better outcomes of hate. In many other cases, things took a much darker turn. At approximately 7:50 a.m. on April 25, 2020 on a Vancouver skytrain, a young Asian woman was approached by a man who had been staring her down. When she asked him what was wrong, he yelled “you people are why my daughter is sick” (Anonymous, 2020), and then viciously assaulted her. He then proceeded to steal her bag and break her phone, and then exited the train a couple stations later.

The public has been shocked to hear that something like this could happen in the city of Vancouver. Sargent Clint Hampton with MVTP news commented that “incidents like this, they are extremely rare” (Hampton, 2020). Unfortunately, this is only the perception of the general public, as these COVID-19 events are far more common than most of us realize. Days earlier, a 92 year old Asian man with dementia was beat up at a grocery store near Nanaimo Street. There was a report of an Asian woman in New York City being assaulted and called diseased for she was wearing a mask in early March, and there have been numerous charges of verbal assault and racist protesting occurring across North America. The saddest part about all of this however is how these fear-based consequences have been occurring for decades. We need not look further than the murder of Emmet Till in 1955. Due to the fear of Black people being sexual predators

and ruining the relationships of Whites, 14 year old Emmet was beaten, shot and thrown into a river because he allegedly whistled at the wife of one of the attackers. Fear is irrational, and fear can be deadly.

If we learn to acknowledge our fear and the fallacy of it, we can break the loop of hate. It is much easier to make light of it or ignore it however, which is why it will continue to fester unnoticed in our lives. For example, students at Sint Paulus school in Belgium were recently posted on the schools Instagram in stereotypical Chinese outfits with a sign reading "Corona Time". When asked what the motive behind the picture was, the school replied that the "students alluded to the recent events in a playful way". While humour is an excellent source of connection to get people through rough times, when it is used as a means to normalize fear and inappropriate actions it can cause devastating harm. If we look back to the time of minstrel shows in the United States, we can see exactly this happening. White patrons eagerly paid to make fun of Black people and perpetuate stereotypes in order to hide the fear and uncomfortable realities of their treatment. By covering up fear, it is left unaddressed and the cycle of hate is only able to begin again.

Unfortunately the consequences of hate that fear causes have existed as long as humans have lived on this planet. It is in our nature to hate what scares us, but by letting this consume us we create a cycle of endless destruction. Only by understanding the role that fear plays in our lives and how it does not have to define our actions can we break free of this loop. Only when we can answer for ourselves "Why do we hate" can we stop doing so.

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