

#1427 The Consequences of Everyday Racism

JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT: [00:00:00] During today's episode, I'm going to be telling you about a new podcast I think you should check out. It's called *Unf*ing the Republic*, but they don't censor their words or their politics. So hear me out in mid show when I tell you all about it.

And now, welcome to this episode of the award-winning *Best of the Left* podcast, in which we shall take a look at racism on a more personal level than usual, with a focus on individual lived experiences that still speak to the systemic nature of racism more broadly. Clips today are from *helpmefindparents* on YouTube, *Even More News*, *Refinery29*, *Sonyareneetaylor*, *Code Switch*, *Glad You Asked* and *Hidden Brain*.

What kind of Asian are you? - Helpmefindyourparents - Air Date 5-23-13

SCOTT BEEHNER: [00:00:41] Hi there.

STELLA CHOE: [00:00:43] Hi.

SCOTT BEEHNER: [00:00:44] Nice day, huh?

STELLA CHOE: [00:00:46] Yeah. Finally, right?

SCOTT BEEHNER: [00:00:47] Where are you from? Your English is perfect!

STELLA CHOE: [00:00:51] San Diego. We speak English there.

SCOTT BEEHNER: [00:00:54] Oh... no... Where are you from?

STELLA CHOE: [00:00:58] I was born in Orange County, but I never actually lived there.

SCOTT BEEHNER: [00:01:03] I mean, before that.

STELLA CHOE: [00:01:04] Before I was born?

SCOTT BEEHNER: [00:01:05] Yeah. Like, where are your people from?

STELLA CHOE: [00:01:07] My great grandma was from Seoul.

SCOTT BEEHNER: [00:01:10] Korean! I knew it. I was like, "She's either Japanese or Korean." But I was leaning more towards Korean.

STELLA CHOE: [00:01:16] Amazing.

SCOTT BEEHNER: [00:01:17] Yeah. There's a really good teriyaki barbecue place near my apartment, so... I actually really like kimchi.

STELLA CHOE: [00:01:23] Cool...What about you? Where are you from?

SCOTT BEEHNER: [00:01:26] San Francisco.

STELLA CHOE: [00:01:28] But where are you from?

SCOTT BEEHNER: [00:01:30] Oh, I'm just American.

STELLA CHOE: [00:01:32] Really? You're Native American?

SCOTT BEEHNER: [00:01:34] No, just regular American. I guess my grandparents are from England.

STELLA CHOE: [00:01:38] Oh, well [In cockney accent] "Hello, guv'nah! What's all this, then? Top of the mornin' to ya! Double double, toil and trouble. MIND THE QUEUE! BEWARE JACK THE RIPPER! BLOODY HELL! PIP PIP! CHEERIO!"

I think your people's fish and chips are amazing.

SCOTT BEEHNER: [00:02:01] You're weird.

STELLA CHOE: [00:02:03] Really? I'm weird? Must be a Korean thing.

USA Still Leaving Afghanistan, Still Shooting Unarmed People w/ Christopher Rivas - Even More News - Air Date 4-16-21

KATY STOLL - HOST, EVEN MORE NEWS: [00:02:07] Chris, you've done a lot of wonderful things and you've got some cool projects coming up and a lot of it deals with being a body of color, the pressures of being a body of color in entertainment in Los Angeles, or even just out and about in the world. And I would love to hear you talk about some of these projects and the stories and experiences of what brought you here and the things you're working on.

CHRISTOPHER RIVAS: [00:02:33] I want to use the term in this for now -- I like putting this term on blast, and so this feels like a good opportunity -- Resmah Menakem says this beautiful thing, he says, "bodies of culture," not bodies of color, which I really like; bodies with history.

Yeah. I work in story and in telling stories. And a lot of my stories use the word "pressure", the pressures of being a body of color or a body of culture. But I think what I'm more interested in currently is -- sure, there's pressure, you know, but I believe one of the things I can do through my writings or my essay, or, like a film I make, is I can allow someone else to -- I don't need them to feel my pressure. I just need them to realize how in simple acts, I'll take two films for example, I have that New York Times one, the Calm Your Curls one, how simple acts like cutting your hair for some people can just be cutting your hair. And for some people it can be years of self hate, years of doubt, whether you should have hair that curly or that thick. Sometimes such a simple act as cutting your hair carries so much weight. Or this other film I made for *Outside* magazine, how a simple act like running for some people is just a jog in the park. And for some people it's a jog that you have to smile through. And you have to keep your head and who's around you, right?

Something that guides my work a lot, everything I do is James Baldwin. He says "the great plight of man is man's inability to imagine another man, to imagine his existence, to imagine

his weight." And so I hope that I'm making art and telling stories that allow people to imagine another person's existence.

I have a moment in this show *The Real James Bond was . . . Dominican!* -- because yes, James Bond was based on a Dominican man.

KATY STOLL - HOST, EVEN MORE NEWS: [00:04:33] Yeah, I want to come back and have you tell us a little bit about that too. That's important, but yeah.

CHRISTOPHER RIVAS: [00:04:38] And I have this moment where I tell people that when I was a kid, my grandmother used to tell me to sleep with a clothespin pinched to my nose, to help keep it thin. But that's what they would do back in the comfortable. But you know, every night you would squeeze your nose with a clothespin. And I --

KATY STOLL - HOST, EVEN MORE NEWS: [00:04:56] Does that work?

CHRISTOPHER RIVAS: [00:04:58] It did not work. Trust me, trust me. It didn't work. And then I tell the audience, we hide clothespins under their chairs. And so everyone takes out a clothespin. There's a lot of awkward giggles, and like "ha ha ha." You'd also be surprised how many people were told the same thing. And then I asked people to put it on. We share that moment together. And that's it. I move on with the show. We take it off. We go forward, you get to keep it as a souvenir if they want. And after the show, we do a talk back. And before the pandemic, this was the last time I did it live before I'm heading to New York right now. This man sixty year old white man said, I'm really sorry, but I zoned out for the rest of the show after the closepin moment, because for the first time in my life, I could actually understand that I never had to think about my body. So he says, I missed the remainder of your show.

KATY STOLL - HOST, EVEN MORE NEWS: [00:05:56] Because he was thinking about that.

CHRISTOPHER RIVAS: [00:05:58] He was feeling it. He wasn't thinking about it, he was feeling it. We can think all we want. But until we feel it, it doesn't change. We can think all we want. We can talk about systemic stuff. We can talk about it. We can talk, but like, and this is why it takes time. And this is why it challenges hope. People have to feel it. Someone has to not be afraid of a young black man. They have to feel it. Someone has to not be afraid of a young black man. Someone has to not be afraid of a large black man with a fake \$20 bill. They just have to not be afraid. They have to feel it. Oh, this is a person like I'm a person.

KATY STOLL - HOST, EVEN MORE NEWS: [00:06:32] You recognize the humanity in another person like themselves to understand that we are not different. Our circumstances, society, all of these things have made us think that we're different. Do you find that you're reaching a lot of people? That's one story. Have you had similar experiences in taking this work around?

CHRISTOPHER RIVAS: [00:06:52] Yeah, I mean, I have a lot of stories like that. When I tell this is not a white body, but a young Pakistani kid in New York, pay student. And, the same play, *The Real James Bond was . . . Dominican!* And after the show, he said, "My whole life, I thought I needed heroes and superheroes who look like me, but I just needed regular people telling their story."

I'm really passionate about media and proper representation, responsible representation as I like to call it, societal responsibility that we represent what colors and shapes and people

actually look like in the world. Because then it's possible, if we keep it in this conversation of a white officer being afraid, if white officer had more images of when *Harry Met Sally* who happened to be Brown and Black, white officer might just see that person as a *Harry Met Sally*, not as a villain.

KATY STOLL - HOST, EVEN MORE NEWS: [00:07:51] Yeah. Yeah. I mean, it's a big part of this, our cultural representations for sure. And the fact that our current media landscape, although better, I guess, than in the past, does not, like you said, accurately represent our aiming anything globally, but especially here in America, who we are and how diverse we are.

You know, Chris is also an actor. So he has lots of experience auditioning in LA and I'm sure you've had your share of white actors complaining about --

CHRISTOPHER RIVAS: [00:08:24] Being white? Yeah. Like how hard it is to be white right now. Yeah. That's exactly what I want to hear.

KATY STOLL - HOST, EVEN MORE NEWS: [00:08:31] It's so fucking frustrating. I had a conversation with somebody, a white actor, who was like, well, the truth is, is that there's just more white actors. Like there's less black people competing for a role versus there are white people competing for the roles. So it's hard and it's frustrating. There should be more roles because there's more. And I was like, Ooh, I'm going to stop you right there. Oh, are there too many white actors? Is it because you grew up feeling entitled to like you should be on TV because you saw lots of white people on TV and you're like, yes, I can do it. So like, how come there, aren't more black characters? We'll just go with that. How come? Is it because that there aren't a lot of opportunities and they haven't been raised to believe that they have a place in the media landscape? You know, the conversations like that. I just get really frustrated.

CHRISTOPHER RIVAS: [00:09:20] How did he absorb that?

KATY STOLL - HOST, EVEN MORE NEWS: [00:09:22] And you're just like, well, yeah, fair. You know, didn't want to confront that.

But I want to hear a little bit about how James Bond was Dominican, because you told me about this before and I thought it was very cool.

CHRISTOPHER RIVAS: [00:09:36] Yeah. Uh, his name was Porfirio Rubirosa. He was twice the richest man in the world when he was married to Barbara Hutton and Doris Duke. Those are two of his five marriages.

KATY STOLL - HOST, EVEN MORE NEWS: [00:09:46] Was he married to them at the same time?

CHRISTOPHER RIVAS: [00:09:49] Separate times, but, very short brief times, but, yep. And he was a Dominican diplomat and he was stationed all over the world.

He was stationed in Hitler's Germany where he smuggled thousands of the Jews out of Germany, into the DR, by selling them fake Dominican visas and stationed in Hitler's, uh, not Hitler's, Castro's Cuba during the revolution and smuggled guns from Meyer Lansky, Bugsy Siegel, and the New York City mob, best friends with Sinatra and Kennedy and the whole Rat

Pack. And also best friends with Ian Fleming, and would spend months together at Ian Fleming's Golden Eye, stayed at casinos in, Monte Carlo. Ian Fleming is on record saying I based the character of James Bond on this man. And I read this *Vanity Fair* article that said this, and my world was shattered. And I wondered why isn't everyone as obsessed with this? How did this article not go viral? Like what am I missing? Like, why is this not the biggest news topic in the world?

And that was the first time in my life I asked the question, because I grew up, I'm a huge James Bond fan and I wondered how would my life had been different if the character I love most look like me, looked like my father. If I wasn't running around in my tighty whities with my Nerf gun, putting on a fake British accent, what would I have thought about myself?

The Struggles Of Being An Asian American - Refinery29

- Air Date 5-31-18

SARAH LEE: [00:11:08] I'm a Korean American.

ZAYNAH AHMED: [00:11:09] I'm Bengali American.

EMILY MUN: [00:11:11] Chinese American.

MAE DECENA: [00:11:12] Filipino American.

MICHELLE LI: [00:11:13] Chinese American.

MARIA JIN LING PITT: [00:11:14] I'm a 1.5 generation American, a third culture kid, and an Asian American.

EMILY MUN: [00:11:19] I'm proud to be Asian American, because this is the only face I have. So I might as well be proud.

As an Asian American, I struggled with everything and everyone... and myself.

MAE DECENA: [00:11:30] When I was younger, my mom would always, like, pack me Filipino food for lunch at school, and I never wanted to eat it in front of everyone, because I just didn't want to go through having to explain it.

SARAH LEE: [00:11:40] People would ask like, "Oh, how come Asians always stick together?"

Growing up, I would be embarrassed if it was like a whole bunch of Asians, like, outside a library. I'm like, "Oh my God, how Asian of us..."

MARIA JIN LING PITT: [00:11:49] I think for me, there's always been this sort of struggle with being too White, or too Asian; not White enough or not Asian enough.

ZAYNAH AHMED: [00:11:57] A lot of the conflict came from both sides. My peers, people in my community.

MAE DECENA: [00:12:01] My parents' accents, or foreign food...

I have come to appreciate and understand how where I've been determines where I'm going to go.

ZAYNAH AHMED: [00:12:08] People definitely don't ever think about people from Bangladesh as being Asian. They don't even think about people from Bangladesh.

MARIA JIN LING PITT: [00:12:13] Who really am I outside of these categories that people know.

ZAYNAH AHMED: [00:12:16] I don't wear hijab, I used to, but it's my choice. I'm covered inside and internally, I don't need that statement outside to show you that I'm a Muslim,

MARIA JIN LING PITT: [00:12:24] When it comes to AAPI folks, there's such a diversity of where we come from, and who we are, and our family histories, and ties.

MAE DECENA: [00:12:31] There are over 40 countries in Asia, and every family and every person is unique and different.

ZAYNAH AHMED: [00:12:36] People are always telling me that I don't look like the stereotypical Bengali, because I don't like a Bollywood actress. And I know that; I look like me. All Asians don't look the same.

EMILY MUN: [00:12:45] That micro aggression stuff from even strangers, like: "Ni Hao," "Where are you from?" Why don't you just say, "Hi" to me, like you would with anyone else?

MICHELLE LI: [00:12:54] Dating guys with, like... goal was to, like, date every Asian girl. Don't fetishize Asian girls because we're not all the same.

SARAH LEE: [00:13:02] Oh, are you from the north to the south? And like, I know that's, like, a legitimate, maybe, curiosity, but, if I am here, then I'm probably not from the north...

MARIA JIN LING PITT: [00:13:11] It's like, people, they're like, "Oh, we give you a platform for Asian Americans." And yet, all it is the, sort of, lunchbox stories of saying, you know, "All I had growing up was people not understanding me. The White kids didn't get me. They didn't think I was White."

And I think that is a larger question of who do we want to accept us, and us accepting ourselves first.

MAE DECENA: [00:13:28] I started to really appreciate and value my Filipino heritage when I started hearing from my parents and my family how they uprooted their entire lives to build something new... gave me a whole different perspective.

MICHELLE LI: [00:13:43] I'm proud of being Chinese because of the sacrifices my parents made, and their resilience to push our culture forward.

MARIA JIN LING PITT: [00:13:50] Asian American, No Hyphen, was created for us, by us, to claim our stories and our time.

MAE DECENA: [00:13:57] So many different and diverse cultures to learn about, and be excited about, that we shouldn't narrow our viewpoint to just one or two cultures in Asia.

SARAH LEE: [00:14:07] I am happy to be in America and I want Asian Americans to be able to be a part of all spheres of life and industry, and highlight those voices that just don't often get included in the conversation.

EMILY MUN: [00:14:22] We really are just like a whole rainbow of, like, beautiful cultures.

MARIA JIN LING PITT: [00:14:26] People from the Asian and Pacific diaspora are not a monolith. We're all so different, and we have so many different stories to tell.

As immigrants, as children of immigrants, being ourselves is worthy, and that we don't need some kind of levels of success, pre-determined by somebody else, to determine who we are and who we get to be.

EMILY MUN: [00:14:44] I think that the most beautiful part about being human is that we're all different.

That Sad History That Led to Ma'Khia Bryant's Death & Why We Blame Her - sonyareneetaylor (Instagram) - Air Date 4-22-21

SONYA RENEE TAYLOR: [00:14:49] What's up y'all? Today's been heavy day for me. I feel devastated about the death of Ma'Khia Bryant and devastated about the ways in which we tell... We, Black folks, are buying into the narrative that somehow this is different because she had a knife and these sorts of things, and so I want to talk a little bit about that. I want to talk a little bit about the fallacy of that argument. And then I want to talk a little bit about why we buy that argument. This is true for Black people about why we buy the argument. For white people it's a different reason, and then for other POC I think it depends on where it is that they are navigating their own internalized white supremacist delusion.

Here's the deal. For a significant portion of my life I've worked with youth in group homes. I worked with youth in locked facilities. I worked with youth in therapeutic wilderness programs. I have had all manner of youth fighting, youth pulling knives on each other. When I worked at camp, the kids stole axes! Like when I worked at camp, the kids had saws and hammers and axes, and they threatened. Threatened each other, threatened to beat each other with logs. Threatened to do the things that children, particularly troubled children who are navigating emotional and mental trauma, abuse, often show up and act out in. So that's not actually unusual. It's not shocking.

There's a way in which we have really allowed the criminalization of Black bodies, and the adultification of Black bodies to have us manage Black bodies, the bodies of Black children, to manage the bodies of Black children with the lens of adulthood. And this started in the 80s with zero tolerance policies, where we were suspending Black kids for taking butter knives to school in their lunch. So get into it, the 80s and 90s when the zero tolerance policies began in schools, which again, these are one of the institutional ways in which we slide the carceral state on the lives of Black children. And so what ended up happening was that we criminalize child behavior. And we criminalized child behavior when the child behavior was just child behavior, and then we super criminalized child behavior when the

child behavior was coming from children who had particular mental health challenges, or trauma, or other particular issues that they were navigating.

Now, somehow in the many years that I spent working in facilities with kids with behavioral and emotional challenges, who threatened to harm themselves or harm others, et cetera, we never ever shot anybody. You didn't even have the option to shoot anybody. It was never even an option! You learned how to deescalate behaviors. So there is no excuse is what I'm offering. There's zero excuse. There is zero excuse to shoot a child four times in the chest.

And part of the reason that we think that there's an excu- So part of the reason, the logic behind a police officer shooting a child four times in the chest is that it's not a child to them. All Black bodies, and specifically Black bodies coded in certain ways. She was a fat Black girl. So immediately she was a big Black woman. A big Black woman with a weapon in the imagination of the police state. No different than Mike Brown. No different than Eric Garner. No different than George Floyd. Because we already know that it doesn't even take you to be that big for the police to decide to shoot you. Tamir Rice was small. Adam Toledo was small. But the justification inside of the violent white supremacists delusional imagination of the police state is that the Black body is danger. The Black body is already a danger. The Black body is already disposable and the larger, the body is the more dangerous and the more disposable we need to render it.

And that is one thing. So there is no excuse. There's no excuse. Every day in group homes and foster care services, grown ass adults learn how to deal with and deescalate children with emotional and behavioral problems, who sometimes even have weapons. And historically we did it, always. No, there is no excuse, but let me tell you why someone might align with that. Particularly why Black people might be aligning with that argument. And it allows me to access a level of compassion. Cause I saw my friend Yaba Blay post the other day, she said, I learned how to fight white people, I don't know how to fight my people, and I can't believe that somebody would be on my page excusing the death of this child.

And, I want to tell you what trauma does to you. Trauma makes you figure out how you might not have to be yet. The trauma of watching Black death all the time, indiscriminately, will make us try to find ways in which we can say it won't be us. Otherwise, we'll be living in constant fear, constant activation, constant cortisol surges, all the time, which we already are. But every time there's some possibility that we can make this some outlier, that we can make police murdering us something within our control, we will try to grasp that,, because it is so much easier to think that there is something that, that little girl could have done to keep herself from getting killed than it is to think it doesn't matter what you do, police are committed to murdering your body, because that is what that system says you do to Black bodies.

And it doesn't matter if you comply, if you've got a knife, if you've got a nothing, none of it matters. And we actually know this, because you can look at the list of Black folks who have been killed and it doesn't matter what they're doing. They're just living and they're dead now. But because the need is to regulate our own trauma response. We're constantly trying to figure out how I might could have not ended up in this situation. If we can make the deaths our own fault or the phone with someone else, then it means what happened to them, won't happen to us. That's the logic behind that thinking. And it's a trauma response y'all.

So I understand it, and I have compassion for it, and it's a lie you're telling yourself. And I understand why you're telling yourself, because you're afraid, because you're afraid for your children, because you're afraid for yourself, and you'd like to think that there might be something that you could do that would keep this state from taking the life of someone you love or your own life. And I hate to say, but it is true, that there is nothing that you can do inside of the conditions of the state to keep the police from killing you beyond abolishing the police. It's the only thing that will stop that system from murdering Black people regardless of what they do, is that system ceases to exist.

So, if you can access that in you, when you hear it, and if you can access the honesty in yourself when that response comes up, " she had a knife", I'm like my aunt pulled a knife on me as a child. This is not unusual, it's really not, but we have allowed decades of conditioning us to carceraly treat young Black people so that now we believe that everything, every interaction we're seeing is criminal, when some of it is just the irrationality of childhood.

And if you're a white person making the argument she had knife, then you're just a white person who's deeply committed to try- Here's the deal. I'm going to also offer an in of compassion to the thinking behind whiteness in this as well. I would assume that if you are a white person who actually proclaims to be on the side of any kind of justice and you find yourself trying to rationalize why the police might've killed this child, there are two things happening. One of them it is underneath it absolutely is some white supremacist delusion that makes Black bodies less human than other bodies. And whether or not you've brought that to consciousness or not, I assure you it's running in the background, because it is the conditioning of whiteness.

But the other part of it is the desire not to align to that which is the most terrifying outcome or the most terrifying possibility, because if the most terrifying possibility is that whiteness will just continue to murder Black people because that is the only way in which whiteness knows how to exist, and you feel impotent around that and you also feel like it is gross to be aligned with whiteness in that way. So, instead of dealing with the discomfort of that, you make excuse for why this could have been resolved had she done something different. And what I would offer to you is be in the discomfort of, yes, this is indeed whiteness and the structures the whiteness has built, and what it will continue to do to Black bodies. And then align yourself to the movement and work of abolition. If you are still telling yourself that we need police, you're on the side of the fucking enemy at this point. Anybody who's still telling themselves that we need police when we keep seeing what police do, and I ain't seen yet what the fuck police do that is in service of my protection and my wellbeing or the wellbeing and protection of the people that I love, I ain't seen that shit, but every day I watch the motherfuckers kill somebody. If that's the shit you're still saying, we need you're on the side of the enemy!

Stop. You don't have to imagine something new because other people have already been doing that work, align yourself with them. Nobody's asking you to figure out what we do without police, we're already working on that. Find the people who work in on that and align yourself with them. This has got to stop. Take care of Black people this week. If you're a Black person, take care of Black people this week. If you are a white person, a person of color, a non-Black POC, figure out how you can offer care and love to this incessant trauma we are experiencing.

All right, bye y'all.

'Where We Come From': By Any Other Name - Code Switch - Air Date 6-26-21

ANJULI SASTRY: [00:26:19] So Kumari, all month long folks from these communities have been answering that question: how do you define where you come from? And video and audio stories have aired across NPR all month answering that question.

And people have answered in a bunch of different ways, like talking about their jobs, their families, the food that they ate growing up, the languages they do and don't speak.

But a huge part of answering that question, before we even get to all this other stuff, is actually about our names.

KUMARI DEVARAJAN: [00:26:48] Yeah, that doesn't surprise me, because as someone with a name that you don't hear very often in the U.S., the simple act of introducing myself becomes this like whole thing. And people are like, "That's such a beautiful name. What does it mean? And where is it from? Where are *you* from?" It's like, it gives people license to be super creepy and nosy.

And then, with my last name, they really make sure that I know just how difficult it is for them to say it.

ANJULI SASTRY: [00:27:14] Yes.

KUMARI DEVARAJAN: [00:27:15] I just have so many awful memories of childhood, when people would call me calamari or they would, like, punch me in the arm and be like, "Sorry, Kumari! Sorry, Kumari!" like, they love saying, "Sorry, Kumari!" 'cause it rhymed or something.

And, just, all this just made me feel super weird about my name, and I didn't want to say it, and I didn't wanna introduce myself. And it's just been a whole adulthood process of unpacking that, and learning to love my name.

ANJULI SASTRY: [00:27:40] Yeah. I'm so sorry you went through all that. And, yeah, it's so othering, like, when I was in college, I remember personally, like, I'd be in like a loud place, like at a party or something. And people thought I was stuttering, like, "Julie?" And at one point I actually started going by Julie at Starbucks, but then my brother gave me a ton of crap, 'cause, of course, brothers. But he's like, "Why aren't you being true to yourself? And, like, the name that our parents gave you?"

KUMARI DEVARAJAN: [00:28:03] Yeah. 'Cause I feel so... I also go by Kuku a lot. And then I feel like a lot of people have a lot to say about that, like, they think I'm selling out or being a traitor to myself by not saying my beautiful given name, but...

ANJULI SASTRY: [00:28:16] Yeah.

KUMARI DEVARAJAN: [00:28:17] People in my family call me Kuku, and it's... it doesn't have to be this huge loaded thing. Like, if I also feel like Kuku. But I feel like a lot of people just have a lot to say about how I want to call myself, or what they want to call me.

ANJULI SASTRY: [00:28:28] Yeah. And I think ultimately it is up to us.

Which brings me to the conversation that you're going to hear in this episode. It's between two friends: Luuvie and Tiffany.

LUUVIE AJAYI JONES: [00:28:38] I am Luuvie Ajayi Jones. I am a New York Times bestselling author. I am, or a speaker and a podcast host, a lover of words and stories. So Tiffany, who are you?

TIFFANY ALICHE: [00:28:51] First of all, TWO time... TWO time New York Best... Girl! Two times, for clarity.

I am Tiffany Aliche, much better known as the Budgetnista, America's favorite financial educator, self-proclaimed. You know you feel me! Yeah. And I am a friend of Lovett's.

ANJULI SASTRY: [00:29:14] Lovey and Tiffany have been really close ever since they first met years ago.

LUUVIE AJAYI JONES: [00:29:19] I just remember seeing you pop up on social and thinking you were hilarious, because I was looking at you, like, "She sounds like my cousin, or my sister; this is how we talk to each other!"

So I really connected with your personality on line. Yeah. By the time we met, I'd already felt like I'd already known you for a long time.

TIFFANY ALICHE: [00:29:36] I remember that.

LUUVIE AJAYI JONES: [00:29:37] And the one thing we left out is that we are both Nigeria girls. We were both Nigerian. You know, rocking the green, white green in our blood.

ANJULI SASTRY: [00:29:45] While Luuvie was born in Nigeria, Tiffany was born and raised in the U.S. Her parents immigrated here from Nigeria.

They've both experienced some deep identity questions around their given names. And when people can't say your name correctly, you do things to take back ownership of that name. You might change your name to a new one. You might shorten it. You might only go by your given name with people that you trust, for survival.

Here are Luuvie and Tiffany.

LUUVIE AJAYI JONES: [00:30:13] Ife Olorun, that's like my first name, my family calls Ife. My name means "God's love." So the Ife part is the love. My aunt, you used to call me Lovette as a nickname.

So when I was nine, we moved to the U.S. Downtown Chicago is where we moved. So most of the kids didn't even look like me, and they, for some reason, thought Jamaica was Africa.

And I remember the principal walking me to my class and, kind of, like, pushing me in the class and the teacher being, like, "Oh, welcome to our new student! Introduce yourself."

And nine year old me was instantly, like, "My name is too different. The way I'm talking is too different. It's not gonna work. So, I instantly. instead of saying my name, when the teacher goes, "Introduce yourself," I go, "My name is Lovette." And of course it came out real Nigey: "My name is Lavette." Because... it came out real extra strong because I was this girl.

TIFFANY ALICHE: [00:31:15] Yeah.

It's funny that you said at nine is when you made that transition, because that's when we made our transition from, like, the small little town Roselle, mostly working class Black and Brown families, to Westfield New Jersey, which was a bigger town and almost completely White.

And I, too, made a transition with my name during that time. So, up until nine, everyone, friends, everyone called me Adochie, which means God's gift, Ado, is gift and Chi... So in Igbo, Chi... Chukwa like, this is God, I know, in, in your, about...

LUUVIE AJAYI JONES: [00:31:48] Alowa is God.

TIFFANY ALICHE: [00:31:49] Right. And so, so Adochie was my name, "God's Gift" or "God's Present."

Right. And, so I remember we were going to move to Westfield. And my father decided, he said, "We're moving to this new town. And I'm wanting it to make it easier for you guys. You can choose another name to add to your name."

And I was excited, you know, I didn't think anything of it. I was like, "Yes!" So he literally let everyone choose their name. And he said, "You have the summer to decide."

So my sisters and I would try out names. And I would say, "Okay, This week, call me Jenny." That was one of... that was a viable option, Jenny! Oh, you would be calling me "Jenny the Budgetnista!". And I was like... but then I was like, "Ooh, I don't like it." like, "Hey Jenny! Hey!" And I was like, uhm uhm.

And then I remember I wanted Renee. I liked Renee. I could see myself as a Renee, you know? But then, like, there was another Renee in class, and when I told her she was like, "You tried it. That's my name."

And then... (Oh, thank goodness. My dad said no, but) I wanted Symphony. I was like, ooh... I said, "It's different." He said, "Too different."

And then, but... I always liked the name, Tiffany. And so I told him, "I think I like Tiffany." And my friends loved it. I loved it, and so Tiffany I became. But it took me, I would say, a good two years to answer to Tiffany, because it just was not my name. So people would call the house and say, "Can I speak to Tiffany?" And, literally, my sisters and I would say, "There's nobody here by that name."

But I just think it's so interesting how...

LUUVIE AJAYI JONES: [00:33:19] We take on these new names!

TIFFANY ALICHE: [00:33:21] Yes. But in a, in an effort to protect what we held dear, which is our true idea.

LUUVIE AJAYI JONES: [00:33:27] Yeah, because for me, it wasn't even a matter of, I was ashamed of my name. It was that I wanted to protect it from other people trying to make it ugly.

You know, like, the moment they will see it, they'll instantly think, "I can't say it." So then, they will add burden to the name. And for me, it was my protective measure. It was a sacred space that I honored.

It was also one of those things where, because I'd already been the person I was for nine years, I didn't change who I was when I got here. I still went home and spoke Yoruba. I still ate pounded yam and egusi; at home, I was still Lovette so all of that did not change. And then, when I stepped outside the doors, it changed,

But really, kids are really adaptable.

TIFFANY ALICHE: [00:34:19] Yeah, we are. And I... when I lived in Roselle, people had a hard time. They would say, "Odie," and I'm like, "No." Like the dog from Heathcliffe, right?

I'm like, "It's a, you know, Adochie, or Ado, for short, if you're going to say it." And...

And, but one thing I do love about Adochie and having that name is that, if you call me Adochie, then I'm like, "Oh, you know, me. 'Cause you're either family or friends, or you knew me in elementary school,"

You know, sometimes I'll rekindle with an elementary school mate on Facebook and they'll say, "Oh my God, Adochie I'm so proud of you." And I'm like, "What? Oh, snap! Monica! Girl! I haven't seen you since third grade." I shouldn't like... I have to double take, like, who is Tiffany? That is not Tiffany, that is Adochie..

LUUVIE AJAYI JONES: [00:34:58] That's real. The name people call me tells me exactly what part of my life they met me in.

TIFFANY ALICHE: [00:35:07] No, I love that. I think that's beautiful.

I think that... I don't know if you ever tried to transition back... in college, because in middle school and elementary school, it was not cool to be other, right. It was not cool to be African, haitian, Jamaican, it was not... they made fun of you, you know?

So, but in college it became very cool to claim, you know, like, oh, this is my heritage. So I tried to go back freshman year to having people call me Adochie. Okay. So I was like, Hey, come on. You know, these people don't know me, so let's start off on the floor. Like, my name is Adochie.

After a month of hearing people butcher it day in, day out, teachers, friends like "Ah... duh... buh... duh..." Literally, it's A-do-chie. It's three syllables, super simple." And I said, I actually wanted to take it back. Like, it's like, it's almost like I wanted to take it from people's mouths and put it back in my heart. Cause I was just like, "No, let the people that no and love me call me by my name, the correct way. You can just call me Tiffany."

LUUVIE AJAYI JONES: [00:36:04] That's a great point. Because, when people see our names, no matter how simple we think our names are, people instantly ascribe difficulty to it. My last name is Ajayi or now it's Ajayi-Jones, but they will see Ajayi and be like "A-lie? Ajay?"

Alaji?" . And I'd be like, "Yo, there's no tricks. It is literally as it is spelled." And people will stumble over themselves with difficulty that doesn't really need to be there.

So, it's like, people really see our names and instantly will attach burden that does not belong to it. Because they can say Tchaikovsky, Schwarzenegger but you can't say Ajayi? When I got married and I knew I was going to take on my husband's name, I didn't want to drop Ajayi, because, one of the reasons, because I was like, "I spent my whole career trying to teach y'all how to say this. You're not going to be off the hook."

Is Racism Making People Sick - Glad You Asked - Air

Date 4-3-21

CHRISTOPHER HAUBURSIN - HOST, GLAD YOU ASKED: [00:37:03] So I have this map. What I would love to do is map out what life expectancy looks like in New York, depending on your neighborhood. That kind of works. So we're going to use green for anything that is above the New York City average of 81.2 and pink for anything that is below.

DR JAQUELYN TAYLOR: [00:37:21] Okay. What is Washington Heights?

CHRISTOPHER HAUBURSIN - HOST, GLAD YOU ASKED: [00:37:24] 84.4. East Harlem 77.9 77.9. So Upper East Side, that's where we are right now, 86.4. Okay. And this already is like almost a ten-year difference. Yeah. Thank you.

DR JAQUELYN TAYLOR: [00:37:40] 86.3 Murray Hill.

CHRISTOPHER HAUBURSIN - HOST, GLAD YOU ASKED: [00:37:43] One thing I think is really interesting with these numbers is like if the Upper East Side were its own country, it would be like the second best place to live for longevity in the world.

DR JAQUELYN TAYLOR: [00:37:53] Look at this as you're clustered here in east Harlem and central Harlem is not a good place in terms of life expectancy.

CHRISTOPHER HAUBURSIN - HOST, GLAD YOU ASKED: [00:38:01] Right. And people in a white majority area are living almost a decade longer than people in a majority non-white area. Huge difference. Can you explain why that is?

DR JAQUELYN TAYLOR: [00:38:13] Think about the socioeconomic differences between these two communities. That difference in income would affect access to quality healthcare, food, transportation, all of those factors play a role in life expectancy.

CHRISTOPHER HAUBURSIN - HOST, GLAD YOU ASKED: [00:38:26] Yeah. So does socioeconomic status explain the whole thing?

DR JAQUELYN TAYLOR: [00:38:31] No, I may be stressed for other reasons. You know, I'm, African-American, maybe I'm having stressors in my workplace. Or maybe I'm having stressors finding quality health provider. Or maybe I feel like I'm being discriminated against.

Whereas someone that is not a minority in the same socioeconomic status may not have those same stressors.

CHRISTOPHER HAUBURSIN - HOST, GLAD YOU ASKED: [00:38:53] Your race plays a huge part in how long you can expect to live. If you were Hispanic, you can expect to live to almost 82. Almost 79 if you are white. About 75 if you're Black. That is a three-year age difference between Hispanic people and white people, and a four-year gap between Black people and white people.

Even when you control for education and income, even the health behaviors, they're still a gap.

FABIOLA CINEAS - HOST, GLAD YOU ASKED: [00:39:19] I feel like this all makes sense. It's just never something easy for me to accept.

CHRISTOPHER HAUBURSIN - HOST, GLAD YOU ASKED: [00:39:27] So those longevity counts don't really explain the full story. So if you look at the percentage of people who report being in very good or excellent health among people who self identify as white and are also socially assigned white, that number is 58%.

FABIOLA CINEAS - HOST, GLAD YOU ASKED: [00:39:46] What does it mean to be socially assigned white?

CHRISTOPHER HAUBURSIN - HOST, GLAD YOU ASKED: [00:39:49] So that just means that people perceive you as white. And for people who self identify and are socially categorized as Hispanic, the number is 47%. So despite longer life expectancy, fewer Hispanics report being in good health. That difference right there is the health gap.

But if we look at people who self identify as Hispanic, who pass as whites, their health outcomes are almost on par with white people. And we see that same effect for Native Americans, those who pass as white have health outcomes that are almost on par with white people. And that difference is even more drastic for people who are mixed race.

So if you are mixed race, but you are perceived as Black, your health outcomes wind up being much worse.

FABIOLA CINEAS - HOST, GLAD YOU ASKED: [00:40:41] My biggest takeaway from this is just how proximity to whiteness means that you're going to be better off. So that means that if they go to the hospital or they're consulting with some kind of health professional, they will probably get better treatment.

It's fascinating the way whiteness works when it comes to health outcomes.

CHRISTOPHER HAUBURSIN - HOST, GLAD YOU ASKED: [00:41:00] Regardless of your background, the way that you're seen when you walk into a hospital or you're walking down the street. Yeah. That's what makes the biggest difference.

FABIOLA CINEAS - HOST, GLAD YOU ASKED: [00:41:07] This plays out for me personally. I generally try to avoid having to go to the emergency room because I'm just always afraid about, again, how I'm going to be perceived.

CHRISTOPHER HAUBURSIN - HOST, GLAD YOU ASKED: [00:41:17] Yeah. I never really thought about how my race personally affected me as I walk into a hospital room, for example. My absence of understanding, absence of knowledge is the point that shows

something about the privilege of ignorance and of unawareness of these things that I've been able to have.

But discrimination varies from place to place. And that led me to this.

In 2015, a team of researchers led by this professor named David Chae looked at the proportion of Google searches across America that used the N word, specifically the N word ending in E R S, so that gets rid of any music lyrics, things like that. It's not a perfect measure of racism, but it provides like a good proxy measure of like the people who were more likely to do that are more likely to have a negative racial sentiment.

So, what they found is for every one unit increase of area of racism in each media market, that corresponded with a 5.7% increase in black mortality.

FABIOLA CINEAS - HOST, GLAD YOU ASKED: [00:42:18] Racism kills. Like this is the first time I'm hearing of racism being quantified in this way. This is like really interesting.

CHRISTOPHER HAUBURSIN - HOST, GLAD YOU ASKED: [00:42:26] These three different studies seem to show that interpersonal racism might be this overlooked factor in negative health outcomes in this country.

FABIOLA CINEAS - HOST, GLAD YOU ASKED: [00:42:34] When someone says something racist to you, it's a comment that goes to the core of your being. Like, I can not change the pigment of my skin. And it makes sense that like with every single incident that you have to deal with every racist encounter, like it's taken years off your life, like, that's crazy.

CHRISTOPHER HAUBURSIN - HOST, GLAD YOU ASKED: [00:42:54] Not to mention that the perpetrators of those treatment gets to forget about it.

FABIOLA CINEAS - HOST, GLAD YOU ASKED: [00:42:57] Truly forget.

CHRISTOPHER HAUBURSIN - HOST, GLAD YOU ASKED: [00:43:00] You know, the people on the receiving end of that treatment don't get that privilege.

We're about to call David Williams. He's a professor at Harvard who studies the relationship between race, racism and our health. Let's give him a call.

Hi, Dr. Williams. How's it going? How does discrimination influence people's health?

DR. DAVID WILLIAMS: [00:43:21] So we have known for a long time that stressful life experiences adversely affect health. And over the last 25 years or so, we have expanded the types of stressful life experiences that we study to include experiences of discrimination, little indignities that seemed to chip away at the wellbeing of individuals on a day to day basis.

What we found is persons who score high on experiences of discrimination, they're more likely to get diabetes, breast cancer, heart disease. And the cumulative impact of the psychosocial stress and the economic stress and the discrimination leads to physiological deterioration, to weathering. They're literally aging more rapidly than the rest of the population in the United States.

CHRISTOPHER HAUBURSIN - HOST, GLAD YOU ASKED: [00:44:16] And how specifically does the anticipation of a racist encounter impact the health of people of color?

DR. DAVID WILLIAMS: [00:44:24] Often people are taking steps before they even leave home to minimize the occurrence of these experiences. And I'll be honest with you, I feel physiologically, my blood pressure goes up anytime I see a police car driving behind me. And I've had good experiences with the police, but I've had bad experiences with the police. And it's that reality, that threat has a physiological cost for me.

CHRISTOPHER HAUBURSIN - HOST, GLAD YOU ASKED: [00:44:51] And how does discrimination affect people from one generation to the next?

DR. DAVID WILLIAMS: [00:44:54] There are studies of survivors of the holocaust that documents changes in gene expression that puts those persons who have the experience at higher risk of mental health problems, such as PTSD.

And that epigenetic change is evident also in the offspring. We haven't done that work yet in studies of discrimination, but women who report everyday discrimination while they are pregnant are more likely to give birth to lower birth weight infants. But after the child is born, there are a number of studies that find experience of discrimination by the father or by the mother has negative effects on the development of the child.

People Like Us - Hidden Brain - Air Date 6-3-19

SHANKAR VEDANTAM - HOST, HIDDEN BRAIN: [00:45:38] When Owen Garrick was a kid growing up in the south Bronx, he lived across the street from a bunch of relatives, including his uncle Bobby.

OWEN GARRICK: [00:45:45] So he was the one that you could always hang out with, to the mall, or to the store, or to some friend's house. You can go swimming with him. He's a guy. You can just jump in his car, come back at all hours of the evening. And he was your excuse. Right. You know, mom, uncle Bobby let -you know, had me staying out all night.

SHANKAR VEDANTAM - HOST, HIDDEN BRAIN: [00:46:01] But when he was 66 years old, uncle Bobby found out he was dying of prostate cancer.

OWEN GARRICK: [00:46:07] So he started having bone pain due to the metastases to his bone. And that brought him and the pain, brought him in. And so then he was diagnosed. He probably died a few months after he was diagnosed.

SHANKAR VEDANTAM - HOST, HIDDEN BRAIN: [00:46:20] In Owen's opinion, it was a preventable death.

Prostate cancer is usually slow growing. It's easy to detect.

OWEN GARRICK: [00:46:28] He could still be very much alive and still very much active in his community and with his family. But unfortunately wouldn't go in for his preventative services.

SHANKAR VEDANTAM - HOST, HIDDEN BRAIN: [00:46:39] Owen says many of the older men in his family were the same way. They didn't trust doctors.

They didn't get preventative care. This is the kind of story told over and over again in black America. And it's a story reflected in a grim statistic. The average life expectancy of black men is 72 years, about four years shorter than the average for white men,

OWEN GARRICK: [00:47:04] it's not just prostate cancer It's cardiovascular disease, stroke it's diabetes.

Most of the death is due to preventable or chronic conditions.

SHANKAR VEDANTAM - HOST, HIDDEN BRAIN: [00:47:14] This is something Owen wants to change. He's a doctor and researcher. He runs bridge clinical research, a company whose mission is to make the medical system work better for black Americans. Owen is tired of the bad news about black men and health care in America. He's tired of talking about the disparity in health outcomes.

What Owen wants is a fix, A way to get black men, particularly low-income black men to go to the doctor for preventative care. He wants doctors who will listen to patients and patients who will listen to doctors. [SOUNDBITE OF MUSIC] So Owen and his fellow researchers, Marcella Alsan and Grant Graziani designed a field study to try to answer one simple question.

OWEN GARRICK: [00:48:06] Will Black men take more preventative care services. If they're randomly assigned to a black doctor,

SHANKAR VEDANTAM - HOST, HIDDEN BRAIN: [00:48:12] is it possible that the race of your physician matters in terms of your own health

[SOUNDBITE OF MUSIC] to find out Owen and his colleagues rented a medical clinic in Oakland, they recruited 14 black and non-black doctors to staff the clinic during the study for patients, they turned to flea markets and barbershops in and around the east bay places like wrist action, where Marlon Wade likes to hang.

out.

OWEN GARRICK: [00:48:41] And if you go to a black barbershop, you will have. All sorts of black men in the barbershop.

MARLON WADE: [00:48:47] Not much, but how You doin'?

OWEN GARRICK: [00:48:49] You'll have folks who like me you'll have my kids at that barbershop. You'll have folks who didn't graduate from high school and their kids.

SHANKAR VEDANTAM - HOST, HIDDEN BRAIN: [00:48:59] The first step was asking patrons in these places. If they'd answer some basic questions, some 1300 men agreed to fill out a short survey about their socioeconomic status, health, history, and level of trust in the medical.

system. For these efforts, they received cash or a voucher for a free haircut, plus a coupon for a free health screening. About half the men showed up at the clinic for that screening. Before their checkup, the clinic staff showed the men a picture of the doctor they'd been

randomly assigned. They also asked them to select from a list of preventative care services That they'd be willing to receive

OWEN GARRICK: [00:49:38] Height and weight, to check body mass index, blood pressure cholesterol, which was total cholesterol and a diabetes screen, which is hemoglobin A1C.

SHANKAR VEDANTAM - HOST, HIDDEN BRAIN: [00:49:47] At first, the men made similar choices.

OWEN GARRICK: [00:49:50] They all accepted generally the same level of preventative services.

SHANKAR VEDANTAM - HOST, HIDDEN BRAIN: [00:49:56] In other words, seeing the photos of the doctors did not change patients' decisions about what services.

to accept. Typically the men would choose some of the services, but not all they might agree to get their body mass index and blood pressure checked, but forgo the tests for diabetes and cholesterol that come with a needle stick. But what happened next changed their choices.

OWEN GARRICK: [00:50:21] The doctor then comes in and says, OK, Mr.

Smith, you've only selected these three. You know, you've only selected height and weight and blood pressure. We really recommend that you take all five because they're all recommended. They're all good for your health.

SHANKAR VEDANTAM - HOST, HIDDEN BRAIN: [00:50:36] As I said, some of the black patients were randomized to receive this advice from a black doctor, some from a non-black doctor, did the race of the physician affect what patients.

did?

OWEN GARRICK: [00:50:48] The black doctors were able to convince more effectively of the patients to take more of the preventative services.

SHANKAR VEDANTAM - HOST, HIDDEN BRAIN: [00:50:57] And not just by a little, by a lot, the black doctors were about 20% more successful than non-black doctors at getting patients to have their blood pressure and body mass measured. They were even more effective at persuading their patients to have invasive tests. For diabetes and the flu shot, the black doctors were about 50% more successful than non-black doctors. And then came the cholesterol results.

OWEN GARRICK: [00:51:24] There was a 72% difference in the ability of the black doctor to recommend and have the black male patient take cholesterol screening compared to the nonblack doctor,

SHANKAR VEDANTAM - HOST, HIDDEN BRAIN: [00:51:37] Seventy-two percent. Now the real-life implications of these results might be significant high cholesterol, for instance, can lead to heart attacks. Strokes. What if black patients in the real world responded to their physicians like their counterparts in the study? Owen Garrick says the gap in the United States between blacks and whites in cardiovascular disease outcomes might shrink by nearly 20%,

OWEN GARRICK: [00:52:05] That could be 20% of the people living to see their grandkids graduate from college and high school. Right. That's how I think about it.

[SOUNDBITE OF SIR EDWARD ELGAR'S "POMP AND CIRCUMSTANCE"]

SHANKAR VEDANTAM - HOST, HIDDEN BRAIN: [00:52:27] These Results suggest they might be an easy, low-cost way to save the lives of black men. Owen and his colleagues wanted to understand what was going on. Why were the black doctors so much more effective? The researchers didn't think prejudice was at play because the patients rated all the physicians black and non-black as equally good.

But then they discovered a clue. It was in the notes. The doctors had written about their patients.

OWEN GARRICK: [00:52:55] We found that the black doctors actually wrote more notes compared to the non-black doctors about their patients. And often those notes talked about their non-health care issues. A wedding is coming up, will the Warriors repeat as NBA champions.

Like so nonmedical issues.

SHANKAR VEDANTAM - HOST, HIDDEN BRAIN: [00:53:15] The black doctors and black patients were connecting as human beings. They were talking about family sports life. It's the kind of chitchat that says, I know where you're coming from. I hear you. Marlon Wade from the barbershop made the very same point about his doctor.

MARLON WADE: [00:53:34] She gets me, I get her, we talk about life.

We talk about our religion. You know, if something wrong with me, she going to let me know.

SHANKAR VEDANTAM - HOST, HIDDEN BRAIN: [00:53:41] Owen's research is part of a growing body of work that suggests Matching patients and doctors by race can make a difference in health outcomes. In another study, researchers found that Florida patients assigned to physicians of their own race were 13% less likely to die.

while in the hospital. These results were driven almost entirely by black patients matched with black physicians.

[SOUNDBITE OF MUSIC] the research raises difficult questions about our medical system, our society. And our biases, the clearest takeaway from the research is that warm and empathetic communication matters. Owen Garrick believes that doctors might be taught to bridge some of the differences he observed in his study,

OWEN GARRICK: [00:54:25] because if communication is the mechanism, You can train or you should be able to train non-black doctors to more effectively communicate with their patients. [SOUNDBITE OF MUSIC]

SHANKAR VEDANTAM - HOST, HIDDEN BRAIN: [00:54:39] There is a more daunting takeaway if you want better outcomes in health care, especially among the most vulnerable patients, having a more diverse pool of physicians is crucial. Owen says what he wants is for patients to have a choice.

If they want to see a black doctor, they can choose one. But right now that's often not possible.

OWEN GARRICK: [00:55:00] Four percent of physicians are black blacks represent 13% of the us population. So an under-representation

[SOUNDBITE OF MUSIC]

SHANKAR VEDANTAM - HOST, HIDDEN BRAIN: [00:55:10] it's important to note that choice is not just something blacks might prefer in a follow-up survey, Owen and his team found that both black and white respondents indicated a same-race preference. Sixty-five percent of blacks surveyed said a black doctor would better understand their concerns. Seventy percent of whites said a white doctor would better understand them.

There is a third implication of Owen's research and it feels radioactive. Given the results I asked him should hospitals and medical centers match patients and doctors by race. Particularly when it comes to black men. Owen challenged the notion that this needed to be a radioactive idea.

OWEN GARRICK: [00:55:53] Fraternities and sororities self-select by gender.

You could argue that that's segregation. I wouldn't argue that that's segregation, but you know, someone might, you know, a pessimist might. And I think in the pessimists of the world, might argue that recommending black physicians for black patients is segregation. I don't see it that way.

SHANKAR VEDANTAM - HOST, HIDDEN BRAIN: [00:56:16] Still owen acknowledges he would be uncomfortable with the .idea that hospitals would deliberately steer black patients to black doctors and white patients to white doctors.

After all we struggled as a nation for decades to overcome segregation. How would patients react if they were told when they showed up at a clinic you're black. So we're sending you to the black doctor. There is some tension here, right? Because there are two values. I think that are in conflict with one another here.

I mean, there is one value that basically says, you know, we should all essentially treat one another the same. We should all get along. We should all, you know, as Dr. King would say, look at each other's character and abilities and not the color of our skin or our gender. I mean, so that is an ideal.

And the other ideal is. We should trust the data and we should trust the evidence and we should follow where the evidence leads and it feels like those two values following the evidence and the data. And following this norm that we have about how we'd like our society to be. These two values are in conflict.

OWEN GARRICK: [00:57:21] Right. And they're partly in conflict because we don't live in an ideal world and some might argue skeptics of the world might argue that we profess to live in an ideal world when absolutely the world is not ideal. So given that given the cards you're dealt. The life you live the world, we exist in.

How do you best in our case accomplish improve health outcomes for all populations. And specifically in our research study, the black male population, and this issue of the race of the doctor seems to work.

Final comments on removing the hyphen from hyphenated Americans

JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT: [00:57:55] We've just heard clips today, starting with: Help Me Find Your Parents turning the tables on White guys who ask, "Where you're really from;" Even More News had a wide ranging discussion about everything from the cultural significance of hair, to struggling White actors; Refinery 29, highlighted a variety of voices describing the struggles of being an Asian American (no hyphen); Sonya Renee Taylor laid out an explanation for placing blame on victims as a trauma response and self-defense mechanism; Code Switch held a discussion about the complicated nature of having a name that is out of the mainstream; and Glad You Asked explained how personal stresses stemming from racism structurally create health gaps.

That's what everyone heard. But members also heard a bonus clip from Hidden Brain in which they discuss a study examining the treatment for Black patients, comparing between White and Black doctors... And they did find discrepancies, but probably not for the reasons that you're imagining. For non-members that bonus clip is linked in the show notes and is part of the transcript for today's episode, so you can still find it if you want to make the effort.

But to hear that and all of our bonus content delivered to seamlessly into your podcast feed, sign up to support the show at bestoftheleft.com/support, or request a financial hardship membership, because we don't make a lack of funds, a barrier to hearing more information. Every request is granted, no questions asked.

And now I have, uh, just a little something to wrap up the show. There was a little piece of information that I learned in the midst of producing this episode that was only mentioned... I mean, barely mentioned, and not explained at all. So I wanted to give some detail to that.

In one of the clips talking about Asian Americans, they specify: there's no hyphen. And I thought, "I want to know more about that!" Because, I grew up with talk of the, so-called, "Hyphenated Americans." This is a phrase that was used all through my childhood and into my teens and twenties, and I don't even know when it stopped being used, or really *if* it has stopped being used, because it was really used derisively by conservatives to try to shame people into, sort of, getting rid of their, uh, history and culture.

And, basically: if you want to be an American, you have to be *our brand* of American. You have to drop the identifier that you are Asian American, or African American, or Mexican American, or literally anything else. Get rid of the identifier, get rid of the hyphen; just be an American.

And the implication is... well, you can kind of see where that goes, depending on who's saying it, and what sort of meaning is... is coming behind it. And so this is it's been a long standing conflict, but, sort of, grammatic, uh, culture, war touch point almost.

And the way that works... So, I'll just explain the concept: Asian Hyphen American is a noun. It is, sort of, the grammatical construction of joining two nouns with equal weight to one another. So, a person who is Asian Hyphen American is half Asian and half American, is how you might think of it. But of course that's not what people mean when they say that.

And so, Asian Space American is an adjective describing a noun. American is the noun, Asian is the descriptor. So, an Asian Space American is an American who is being described as Asian.

And the... the history of... of how this came about, and... it was, you know, came out of the, sort of, activist world, trying to find a phrase that, first of all, could replace the really old fashioned Oriental, which was being used as a derogatory term. So they wanted to replace that, and also create a unifying term, because there are lots and lots of people from Asia from lots of different countries who live in America.

And so they wanted a term that was unifying for all Asians to identify with collectively, which does not mean that they cannot then also identify, or more specifically identify, as a Chinese American, or Vietnamese American, or anything else; but, the term Asian American sort of being available for everyone from Asia to use creates a, sort of, solidarity.

And so that, that was the idea behind creating it. And so, to add more nuance and thoughtfulness than I'm capable of doing off the top of my head, I have a couple of quotes for you.

This is, uh, Eric Liu in a 2014 essay, "Why I Don't Hyphenate Chinese American." He says: "Words are expressions of power and identity. And even something as trivial as punctuation can say a lot about what it means to be American. Chinese is one adjective. I am many kinds of American, after all: a politically active American; a short American; an earnest American; an educated American. This is not a quibble about grammar; it's a claim about the very act of claiming this country."

And that's really getting to the heart of it, because the whole concept of a hyphenated American, as conservatives would derisively say, was, basically, a dog whistle, or slightly more polite way of saying, "Not Fully American. You don't *fully* belong here. You are not *fully* a part of this country."

And when that construction is adopted, as someone being Not Fully American, it unlocks the door to all kinds of discriminatory actions, and sentiments, and all of that, that would come along with it.

So, impressively the LA Times has been way ahead of the game on this. So, this is a quick, couple of quotes from an article... (I'm going to link this article in the show notes, because it's... for any grammar nerds, you definitely are going to want to check this out).

It says, that, "In 1979, the LA Times Style Book called for the use of Asian-American in place of Oriental. In November, 1993, the paper removed the hyphen from all such terms, as it distributed wide ranging new guidelines on ethnic, racial, sexual, and other identifications."

So 1993... depending on where you stand, it might sound like a long time ago, or not very long ago at all. But what you need to know is, that the AP and other major newspapers only decided to get rid of the hyphen in 2018.

This is the first I was hearing of anyone deciding to get rid of it. I knew that it was, sort of, problematic, but I didn't look any deeper into it than that. And it was extremely recent that it was adopted in a more widespread way by major news organizations with very influential style books saying "We should not use the hyphen."

So 1993... for the LA Times to be ahead of the game like that... congratulations to them. But this is really interesting. The... as was just mentioned in that paragraph, this was part of a wide ranging change to their style book back in '93.

So continuing that quote, "The listing, some 200 in all, covered subjects including gender stereotypes, sexual orientation, mental illness, immigration status, and religion. They discouraged, for example, the use of 'crippled,' 'handicapped,' and 'invalid,' to describe those with disabilities,"

And then here's the really unsurprising bit: "The guidelines inspired derisive articles in the Washington Post, the Boston Globe, US News and World Report, and other publications. Commentators labeled the Times editors, 'The Thought Police,' and 'Big Brother,' 'purveyors of so-called political correctness.'

"The editor of the paper, Shelby Coffey III wrote to the Post in defense. 'Looking at how language has affected those who have been scorned, ignored, and excluded, is a worthy task for a newspaper."

so, everything that's old is new again, and... I will leave you with the last quote from this article, which should instill some degree of... of hope and perspective:

"Many of the then-new guidelines that drew such ire are commonplace and generally accepted in the wider culture today. The passage of time, in that sense, is the great unifier, more powerful than any punctuation or style book could ever be."

So between removing the hyphen, and socially assigned race, which was also explained in today's show, I ended up learning two things on that day, doing this research. So I was ahead of the average on that day.

As always keep the comments coming in at 202 999 399, or by emailing me to jay@bestoftheleft.com.

Thanks to everyone for listening. Thanks to Deon Clark and Erin Clayton for their research work for the show, and participation in our bonus episodes. Thanks to the Monosyllabic Transcriptionist Trio, Ben, Ken, and Scott, for their volunteer work, helping put our transcripts together. Thanks to Amanda Hoffman for all of her work on our social media outlets, activism segments, graphic designing, web mastering, and bonus show co-hosting.

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