

Hello. My name is Ellice Park. I have three stories of how racism is harmful, to share today. I have so many experiences, but I want to demonstrate not only racism's harmfulness to the public, but also how it is conveyed within families—and to show that families need social support to work through racism. Two of my stories can be found in central Ohio's police and court records. My third story is private, and may be in the school records of Winchester, Massachusetts, if the principal there took notes and archived them.

The first story I will testify is to convey how racism is bred through family systems, and is taught to innocent children, and is then perpetuated in a way that can truly break and prevent personal friendships and relationships. I grew up in a predominantly Irish Italian Catholic town and elementary school. My friends and I played until dusk; our mothers had to call us in; it was a semi-charmed life. When I was in first grade, a new girl came to school who looked like Shirley Temple to me. Blonde hair, blue eyes, chubby cheeks. She came over to my desk one day, during art time, to borrow some crayons. She returned to my desk, and then asked the color of my skin compared to the crayons. I could not give her an answer, because none of the crayons matched my skin. She insisted I give her an answer, so I did. I picked up a handful of crayons and told her, "a mix of these." She wanted me to narrow down my choices, and she would not leave me alone. So I narrowed it to pink and white, because I was very pale at the time. She insisted I choose one, so I chose pink. She told me I could not be pink, and I replied that I am much more pink than white. She said her daddy said I am yellow, and he is always right. I showed her the yellow crayon, and asked if I look like that yellow crayon. She said no, but her daddy is always right. She insisted that I agree with her. I could not. How could I? She herself said I am not like the yellow crayon at all. Then art time was over, and I was very frustrated and upset with this girl. I was the class artiste at the time, and I valued art time. She took my favorite part of the day from me. Now she was being stubborn and preventing me from cleaning with the rest of my friends and classmates; I did not want to get in trouble for not doing my part. She prevented me from cleaning. So, I recalled what I saw on television, on how to deal with frustrating characters. I punched her. She began to cry. The teacher asked why she was crying. She said it is because I hit her. The teacher asked if it was true, I said yes. The teacher asked why I hit her. I told her, as I held up the yellow crayon, that it was because that girl called me yellow. Now in retrospect, I suspect she thought this was above her pay grade. And it was in the 90's, when the term politically correct was born. She immediately sent us to the principal's office. The principal seemed overwhelmed by our story of what happened as well, and he called our parents in. They discussed it behind closed doors, then called that girl and I into his office. The principal asked us to recount the story again. We did. He said I should apologize for hitting her, but she need not apologize to me. My father is a US Navy veteran. He made it clear that if the principal does not handle the situation equally and fairly, then my parents would inform the district superintendent in writing and make the issue publicly known. The principal quickly backtracked, and her parents gave a fake apology. My parents responded saying, We are Christians, the girls are too young to understand, perhaps we can help them become friends to overcome this. They agreed. The girl came over a couple times, and I went over her house a couple times. The last time she came over, she accused me of being a boy dressed in girl clothes. She was stubborn yet again on her stance. It did not matter that I showed her my closets full of dresses, or even my girl underwear, in my pink bedroom. She told me the only way I could prove this was by taking off my underwear. I thought that was a very easy way to prove it, so I took it off. She took hers off too, which I did not ask for. Then she reached over and touched me. I did not understand what was going on, and fortunately my mother walked in at that moment. She told us to put our clothes back on, and she sent that girl home. When I later shared this story with a college professor, he asked if I became interiorly insecure and a school loser. I was surprised he asked this because he himself nominated me to be the student representative of the department he chaired, and was in student government leadership by unanimous vote. I told him I became the cheer squad captain, and she did theatre, if stereotypes matter at all. I do realize that my response to adversity is atypical, especially racist bullying among children. I feel that I

have a responsibility to help given my unique internal strengths, so I am now a counselor with a trauma specialty and work with individuals, couples and family systems with children as young as 3.

My second and third stories are from central Ohio, here in Columbus and greater Columbus. I believe it is important for folks to know that racism is a public health crisis for blacks, asians, biracial persons, multiethnic persons, — here in Columbus, here in Ohio.

In the late 2000's, my mother and father moved to Ohio for a job at OSU Wexner Medical Center. My father was hired not only as an anesthesiologist, but also to help manage the finances of Wexner Medical Center. Previously, he worked at Harvard, Beth Israel Deaconess Center, and in California. He held a relatively high position at OSU WMC. My mother drove my youngest brother to some college-level classes while he was in high school, and she would park in the parking lot during his classes. One day, while she was parked in the public parking lot – a car suddenly rammed into her stationary car. She was shocked, and wondered what in the world happened. She got out of the car and saw the other driver of the car come out of his car. She asked what he was doing. He came at her with the metal end of his key exposed in his fist. She was uncomfortable and afraid. He told her that he knows she is a terrible driver, because she is Asian. She was in shock. He then took his key, and keyed the side of her car. She was afraid of what he would do next. But she tried to remain collected, because she knew she needed information to at the very least, pursue damages with insurance. She asked who he was. He very proudly stated that he is a professor of foreign languages and culture, so he KNOWS what Asians are like. The entire situation reeked of racist stereotyping, and he made sure it was known by his violent behavior. My father had that individual come to his office, to speak 1:1 since they both work at OSU. My father is a veteran; he is committed to order and following protocol. So he started internally. That did not resolve anything. Then, my parents sued him, and their opponent and perpetrator of violence neglected to show up for court, or to follow through on paying remediation. The judge and the court, the officials who my parents went to, did nothing to make sure my parents had justice — there were ZERO consequences for that perpetrator. People often perpetuate the stereotype narrative of how Asians are the model minority, and have privilege as “fake whites”, but this story demonstrates that is simply not true. It is a fallacy created by white supremacy to pit people of color and black people against each other. My parents had no privilege in the court of law, and they had no equality, despite serving the country, and working hard to overcome poverty. They started with cardboard boxes for furniture.

In the last 5 years, I had a series of experiences that completely changed my life. It challenged every aspect of my worldview, and whether I can survive in this state, in this country, in this world. I met someone who is mostly half german, half white, and born/raised in central Ohio. At the time, we verbalized to each other that we had a great connection. I felt like we knew each other in a pure way, and that he could see into my soul. Then I had a jekyll and hyde experience of him that was difficult to reconcile. I saw so many guns behind a panel in his closet wall. He then called me racist names like “Hoe-Ma”, laughed about bruises he left on my legs, verbally stated “I enjoy degrading you”, told me that his family donates money to the police and he can get away with some things, pointed a gun at my body, accused me of sleeping with other men and then sexually assaulted me. He also told me that he would never let me go, and force me to have his children—and that he also intended to make them forget their Asian identity as biracial persons. He said and did other things that were equally horrendous, but it would make for a longer story than I wish to share today. I took the first exit I could find. I had reason to be afraid of him, he had sexually and physically harmed me, he stated racist things to me, and he said he would never let me go. I told a few friends. Two of my very close white friends heard the story and insisted I tell the police. One of them is like a second mom to me, and the other amongst my closest

friends as well. The one who is like a second mom is a Cleveland Clinic trained chaplain, and the other friend at the time was a pastor at St. John's UCC in downtown Columbus. Both are licensed professional counselors. They went with me to Hilliard Police Department to make the report. The police on staff were white males. They looked at me quizzically and skeptically. My two friends vouched for my sanity, and my credibility; they demonstrated that I am not speaking out of delusion, vengeance, or psychosis. Finally, the police gave me a form to write my story. I wrote it and shook from fear. A white female police followed up with me about my report; she let me know she had reviewed it, noticed the address that the perpetrator and my opponent lived at. She stated that people who live in that area are wealthy and tend to get away with things through money; she told me she feels I should go on with my life, and not worry, and also, not expect any due process of justice. I felt very afraid, and acted nicely to her in response, because her behavior confirmed what my perpetrator said to me – that he gets away with things, and perhaps it was indeed because he gives money to the police. My friends were livid, and also very concerned for my safety. I hired a white female attorney to help provide the assurance of safety. My friends came to every court date to make sure I'd be safe. My opponent/ the perpetrator, and the court dragged it out, even though my lawyer appealed to the judge that she had an entire suitcase of documents proving my concerns and experience of physical, mental, emotional, sexual, harm from that person. The judge refused to look at any of the documents that filled her entire rolling suitcase. He refused to give the matter attention. And he verbally berated me. My white lawyer, who initially said she could help me win safety, and then maybe pursue full justice after– she changed her tune and accused me of not wanting to pay her even though I already paid more than she had done work for. She talked about quitting the job I hired her to do. She made up a pithy statement that I do not have to worry as she saw me sob. My friends who filled that room saw that conversation between her and myself. They stood by me, and focused on caring for me. I did not receive justice: We legally settled it on a mutual stay away order– which is not reflective of reality at all. That day, my lawyer looked at the room full of my friends, verbalized aloud that I have a lot of friends, and then literally ran away. She knew we did not get the justice I deserved. That perpetrator never apologized. I no longer felt safe in my own town.

The racist behavior and harm I experienced from him personally were based on racist stereotypes of the hypersexual and submissive asian female, as well as an internalized racist stereotype that he has the white power to harm–he not only internalized these stereotypes but acted upon it, and demonstrated with his own words “I enjoy degrading you” that he enjoyed using his white power and privilege to harm. The racist behavior and harm I experienced from the community when I tried to create safety for myself, were the police and courts looking at my suffering as invalid, invisible, and not even worth hearing fully, nor giving equal due process. I am a US citizen by birthright, and my father is a US military veteran who served in the Gulf War. Yet because of the color of my skin, my suffering did not matter.

This experience initially affected me to plummet into complex PTSD and even suicidal ideation. It was a logical response, if you think about it, a logical response to the personal and systemic racism I was directly confronted with. IT is logical to feel hopeless about survival when the odds are directly stacked against your right to live safely and peacefully. It is logical to then take the next thought to decide death by your own terms if better than by a racist person's decision to take your life and quality of life from you.

I did intense work for my own survival. I believed in my core that God is still out there – even if for a while, God seemed sadistic. I worked hard at therapy, until my therapist told me repeatedly that I am done with therapy because I no longer qualify for any mental and emotional disorders, and she backed it up with a battery of diagnostic assessments. I fully credit this healing not only to my own willpower to heal

and become stronger, but also to God, whose extraordinary grace and strength was with me through it all. This completely changed my life. I also did the work, on a secondary motivation, because I am a healthcare worker which means I took an oath to do no harm. And, as a healthcare worker, I am responsible to my license which requires that I advocate for my populations.

Racism does harm to individuals, families, and communities. I am testifying today to advocate that we work together, to include all people of colors voices at the table of racial justice and a table for racial justice, racial reconciliation, racial healing. I advocate for racial healing and intersectional creativity, to help each other “do no harm” and make a better world for each other and for our children.