

“An incident . . . that really changed my life”

The Bethlehem Gadfly Jacob Blake August 27, 2020

 Latest in a series of posts responding to the Jacob Blake shooting 

I'm so often . . . reminded of my color.

Doc Rivers

Why did Rivers say that?

What did he mean?

Many white people will probably not understand.

That's what it means to be white, to be privileged. White people do not think about their color.

All Rivers wants to do is be a coach, just wants to go about his life as a coach. Yet he must always deal with his color.

White people in city government should be trying to understand that fully as we reckon with a worthy city response to the events with George Floyd, Rayshard Brooks, and now Jacob Blake.

Gadfly as well as several other white followers have in the recent past chronicled here personal narratives of racial awareness.

Listen now to Councilman Callahan describe his first recognition that he was white, that he was different.

Audio files not available in this archive

Bethlehem City Council minutes, July 7, 2020, p. 23

Mr. Callahan thanked Councilwoman Crampsie Smith and Councilman Reynolds for bringing this forth. He does not know what the will is of the rest of Council and if they maybe want to table this and get more feedback from some of the people that spoke tonight. He had an incident

probably around 1984 that changed his life. Like many white people we just walk around and think there is no racism in the world and we do not know that it can be felt without even a word being said or an act. His oldest brother was a basketball coach at Syracuse University and he went there when he was in college and he had been at parties and meetings up until that point in his life many times with one African American person or one Hispanic person but never in his mind did he think that there was any racism in the room. After there was a basketball game someone took him to a party that night and he told his brother that he was going to take him out because they were the same age and they were going to a few parties. Before the party they stopped by another party in a little condo and when we walked in he was overwhelmed with an uncomfortable feeling, not because anything was said or anything was done to him, we walked into an all-black party. Mr. Callahan noted that was the first time in his life that he was the only white person in a room with all minorities. There were some really nice people who came up to him and introduced themselves and offered him a beverage. But there were some who just gave him a look, there was nothing said but there was the feeling that maybe he was not really supposed to be there. His friend went upstairs and he was basically left alone in this place for 15-20 minutes. He knew no one in the room and they were all African-American but that changed his life forever because he never will forget that feeling he had or just feeling that there are feelings of racism out there. From that point forward anytime he is in a room with anybody that is not of the majority, whether they are African American or Hispanic or Asian, he always tries to go out of his way to welcome them and make them feel as comfortable as possible. He again wanted to congratulate the Council Members that brought this forward.

July 7 was the meeting at which the Reynolds/Crampsie Smith resolution was adopted.

Do you have a story to tell?