

The Problem with Whiteness

by [Armando Simón](#) (July 2024)



Walking at Night Downtown, Jesus Estevez Fuertes (2014)

The mother and daughter, the latter in her early twenties, entered the hospital and anxiously asked the person behind the Information desk where they could find their hospitalized friend, May. They were informed which room the patient was in and the directions to find the room in that expansive, expensive, hospital.

After much navigating the numerous identical passages, typical of all hospitals, they found themselves at the right one. They

did not have to stop at the nurses' station to inquire since they could see May's husband quietly standing outside a room. The balding man was in his fifties, and on approaching him they could see that he had been silently crying. On seeing them, he quickly wiped the tears from his face.

"How is she?" they both asked at the same time.

"She's paralyzed from the neck down. The doctors said she'll be that way for years." The two women gasped in shock.

"How did it happen?" her mother switched to Mandarin, and he answered in kind. Although Valerie understood and could speak Mandarin, like all of her generation, she preferred speaking in English.

What had happened was that May had gone shopping, but before she entered the store, a black man had assaulted her with full force and for no reason at all, all the while yelling racist insults during the attack. Mr. Yu used a derogatory term for the black assailant, which made Valerie wince. She would have preferred he used the term "noble African-American" to describe him, or "marginalized Person of Color," but a youngster simply does not chastise an older person, especially one who is not family, not even if the youngster is Americanized.

They looked up to see three of their friends also arriving, concern evident on their faces. All three were women, their men being at work. They immediately asked about May. They did so in English since Mrs. Park, a Korean, did not speak Mandarin.

Mr. Yu repeated what he had previously said, and Valerie had to endure hearing the epithet directed against the noble African-American. All the women had tears in their eyes, all but Valerie who was fuming over the epithets, which she considered to be a greater injury than being paralyzed for life.

The crying became more intense once they entered the room and saw the elderly woman lying on the hospital bed.

A few minutes later, muscular brothers Rob and Sammy, sons of Mrs. Park, arrived and the narration was repeated once more.

Slowly, the grief was transformed into indignation, and they all began to recount, one after another, dozens of instances of racist attacks in the past year by blacks directed against Asians.

"There was this lady riding in the subway, sitting down, and this black man started insulting her out of the clear blue and then spit in her face," said Mrs. Park.

"That's nothing!" said Mrs. Gao. "An old guy, a Vietnamese, was walking his dog and two blacks rushed up to him and hit him. He fell on the sidewalk, and they started beating him—for no reason! No reason!"

"And have you noticed how they always target women and old people?" Sammy now asked rhetorically. "These ... 'brave Mandingo warriors' don't want to mess with guys our age," he added in a sarcastic tone while motioning to himself and his brother, "just helpless women and the elderly."

"Well, that's not true," his brother corrected him. "Sometimes they do, but when they attack someone our age it's twenty of them at the same time."

Sammy being her age, Valerie quickly rose to the defense of the noble African-Americans, addressing Sammy, but in reality delivering an enlightening lecture to everyone in the room, including the unconscious woman.

"Look, the root cause of the problem is *rasspwhiteness*," Valerie prefaced the word with a rasping of the throat, accompanied by a jerking forward of her head. "*Rasspwhite* supremacy is everywhere, and African-Americans just absorbed

rasspwhite racism and are directing it towards Asians. If true equality is to happen *rasspwhite* supremacy must be dismantled. But African-Americans are *not* the problem, *rasspwhiteness* is the problem, and African-Americans and Asian-Americans are both victims.”

Valerie halfway expected a round of applause, but her audience was stunned into silence.

Mr. Yu was the first to speak, clearly irritated, but, oddly enough, he did not address the content of her tirade.

“What’s wrong with your throat?”

“And why is your head acting like a catapult?” Rob asked her.

“Hang on. So, you’re saying white people are to blame?” Sammy asked rhetorically and with a malicious look on his face. “That’s odd. I haven’t heard or read of a single case of a white person attacking an Asian just for being an Asian.”

“*Rasspwhiteness* is—”

“Stop that!” Rob interrupted her. “It’s irritating!”

“I do it to drive the point home.”

“The only point you’re driving home is that you’re being obnoxious,” Rob countered.

“Now, hang on, I want to understand this! If I understand you right, you’re saying that this *nigger* who attacked Mrs. Yu, here,” he pointed to the paralyzed woman, “he’s the real victim.” Sammy’s anger was reflected in the visitors’ faces, all but her mother, who was dying of shame and wished she could hide in a corner.

Stripped of the jargon, even Valerie realized how she must sound to them. Whereas before she had harbored a faint hope that they would collectively sign a declaration on the spot,

condemning Mrs. Yu's assault on white supremacy, and holding an impromptu march around the hospital holding placards while chanting anti-white slogans, she realized that there was no hope of that now.

"Boy, did they do a number on you," muttered Rob.

But, before she could respond in any way to either brother, Mr. Yu told them to go outside the room if they were going to argue.

As they were beginning to slowly exit the room, Valerie was further annoyed hearing her mother remark to the other adults, "I don't know what's happened to her. She used to be so smart. Ever since she went to that university I don't recognize her, my own daughter. It's like she's been lobotomized." It was said in a pitiable voice.

"What I'm saying," Valerie resumed once outside the room, "is that African-Americans are as much a victim as Asians. It's all due to systemic, entrenched—"

"Don't do it!" Rob warned her.

"—white supremacy. White people are inherently evil and racist. It's in their DNA."

"Whereas blacks are blameless," Sammy helped her.

"Yes. Isn't it obvious? They've been discriminated against and oppressed for years. I mean, what else could it be?"

"Oh, I dunno," the malicious look returned. "It could also be that your precious blacks are in reality subhuman savages who are a cancer in America."

Valerie gasped. She had previously locked horns with the brothers on different topics, but she had never felt as angry towards them as she did now because of their blatant racism. She stamped her foot in anger.

"You just proved my point! You're just exactly what I'm talking about!" she said.

"Well, at least you're proving one stereotype wrong," said Rob.

"What? What do you mean?" she demanded angrily.

"The stereotype that all Asians are intelligent."

"Oh, go to hell!" Valerie retorted, whereupon she stormed down the corridor and into the elevator.

Valerie marched out of the hospital.

Blind! Blind! They're so blind, she mentally told herself over and over. She stopped in her tracks and pulled out her cellphone and told her mother, without going into details, that she was going home to prepare dinner. She would take the subway.

As she walked towards her destination, she continued her mental condemnation. Near the subway station, an arm shot out of an alley and fastened itself to her mouth as another one grabbed her and dragged her into the darkened alley. Her terrorized screams muffled and her struggles ineffective, she was dragged to the farthest point. There, she was thrown to the ground.

Her assailant was a noble African-American.

Valerie was able to find her voice. "Look, you don't have to do this! We're on the same side! Our real enemy—"

"Shut up, you slanty-eyed bitch!" the marginalized Person of Color screamed as he drove his massive fist three times into her petite face, breaking her jaw, teeth and nose. He then turned her over, yanked her skirt and underwear off with one sweep, and sodomized Valerie, rupturing her rectum. She screamed and was again muffled so she would not alert anyone.

Having finished with her, he took out a knife and slit her throat, and left the alley. A white policeman met him there with his gun drawn and the perpetrator was arrested.

Valerie's family was called to identify the body. Even though her ID was found in her purse next to the body, there was difficulty positively identifying her because of her mangled face.

As for the murderer, he had a long rap sheet of numerous crimes. He had just been previously released without bond, because the city's council and mayor had decreed that, since the inmates inside jails and prisons were disproportionately black, the situation was the result of discrimination and racism against marginalized Persons of Color, so no bonds were required, and criminals were just given a court date when they would—hopefully—show up.

Valerie's murderer was released hours after being booked at the jail and given a court date. He went back out into the streets.

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Armando Simón is the author of *A Prison Mosaic*.

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