



When Racism Knocks On Your Door

By Dr. Maura Cullen

This article is discussion of the following news item:

<http://mic.com/articles/100242/white-mom-s-lawsuit-over-black-baby-exposes-ugly-truths-about-white-privilege>

A white lesbian couple chose to have a baby through artificial insemination. What they didn't choose was for the donor to be a black man. The donor was supposed to be white, blond hair and blue-eyed. The sperm bank made an error. The couple is suing the sperm bank. What are the implications for all of the players involved? What toll will it take on the biracial daughter?

This case has many layers of complexities that go beyond a breach of contract. Perhaps the most interesting part of this story is how the white moms are dealing with the reality of having a biracial daughter. This reality leaves the couple contemplating racism in a different light.

One way to frame this discussion is using the Evolving Ally Model (EAM) (Cullen, 2014). To become better allies and advocates for their daughter, they will likely journey through the two initial stages. The birth mother, Jennifer Cramblett, has shared her experience and perspective, which fall into the Entitled and Enlightened stages.

1. ENTITLED

This is the starting point for people with dominant identities. People from dominant groups spend most of their time unaware of the privileges afforded them based on their real or perceived social identity. It is not unusual for people to remain at this stage their entire life.

In the law filing submitted by Cramblett, it is clear she was unaware of her sense of entitlement because she is white. She wanted her baby to look like the rest of her community (white) and when that was no longer possible she had to make a decision. She felt her best option was to move out of the community where she lives because as she states, "Her community is "too racially intolerant" and "Family members, one uncle in particular, speaks openly and derisively about persons of color." "She told the Today Show that she wants to use the money (from the lawsuit) to underwrite expenses for the family's relocation to a more inclusive environment." (Derrick Clifton)

If only everyone had the privilege to move to neighborhoods they want to live. The truth is one cannot escape the realities of racism no matter where you go in this country. No matter where you

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move, racism will be there. White privilege has many white people believing that if they move to a black neighborhood they will escape the realities of racism.

2. ENLIGHTENED

The Enlightened stage is typically the first step to challenging the status quo. Like many identity development models, there is a precipitating event or encounter that propels dominants into further exploration and action. This event or encounter creates a dissonance with their previously held beliefs or experiences. This dissonance forces the dominant member to make a choice between going back to the Entitled stage or move to the Engaged stage.

She admits to having a limited level of cultural competency and thus has a “steep learning curve”.

For these two white moms, it reveals the unfamiliar and inconvenient truth of racism they have avoided up until this point because they are white. After all, they didn't sign up for this, literally. But no matter where they move, their daughter will never escape the reality of racism. Unintentionally, they have provided their daughter with a personal, poignant and powerful example of how racism works.

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