

## 21st Century Race Matters

by Bentley de Bardelaben

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Maybe it's me, but it seems we who consume news in the many ways we prefer are being exposed to more coverage regarding acts of racism in America. Could it be that media outlets are deciding that it's time to shine a brighter spotlight on this vile plague that continues to try to strike fear at the heart of U.S. citizenry? No matter the cause, people worldwide are able to have access to these reportings. As many a person of color can attest, the United States of America is currently not post-racial. Nor has it been in its recent past as had been reported after the election of former President Obama.

American actor, comedian, and filmmaker Jordan Peele brilliantly depicted his musings concerning race matters in the 2016 box office hit, "Get Out." Get Out is being lauded as a "social thriller" in the same vein as "The Shining" and "Rosemary's Baby," among others. While on the surface this horror film may rightfully scare its viewer with suspenseful music and intermittent jolts from characters on-screen, more deeply imbedded in this movie are greater racial truths as experienced by African Americans.

Oregon-based millennial actor, Seth Rue critically addresses race in 21st century America. *"Part of what makes the American iteration of white supremacist patriarchy peculiarly powerful in its destruction is that the mechanisms it employs to constantly assert and reassert its oppressive hegemony have been crafted and honed over hundreds of years to be invisible. These mechanisms all collude to be extremely effective together, and it is incredibly hard to identify them at all, let alone fight to protect against and ultimately break them. It is even more difficult to find any mainstream popular media that is allowed (by the industry) to highlight them. Get Out does this, and in a fashion that is equally stunning and satisfying."*

Chicago-based millennial activist and illustrator, Bianca Xunise has this to say about race in America. "I really enjoyed how Get Out portrayed what it is like to see the world as a black person. Often we get told (by white people) that we are exaggerating or that what we see is just us being paranoid, but microaggressions are apparent and prevalent throughout our day to day. Though in this film it is pushed to the extreme, it does still capture that overwhelmed feeling." She

further states, “*Get Out offers a great opportunity to gain some understanding to the plight of people of color and offers those who are curious a moment to walk in our shoes. Plus the movie is also pretty funny!*”

Sadly, what is not funny is the reality that people of color do regularly experience aggressive and microaggressive acts perpetrated by the dominant culture which are meant to terrify and subjugate those already marginalized. This is typically done as a measure of control.

Recently Cleveland Cavaliers basketball phenom, LeBron James, spoke out at a press conference intended to address the 2017 Basketball Finals that his L.A. home had been vandalized by someone (or a group of someones) who spray-painted the “N” word onto the side of his property. James soberly stated that “*no matter how many people admire you, you know, being black in America is – it’s tough.*”

As an activist and minister for more than three decades, I could not agree more with each of these featured voices. It is tough! Fortunately, there are many people, old and young, who are not fearful to use their platforms to share experiences and truths as it pertains to race in America. What makes me equally appreciative is that American media has become less hesitant to let the world know what is happening in our own backyard. For this willingness, I am grateful.

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Bentley de Bardelaben is Executive for Administration and Communications for the United Church of Christ.*

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