

It's NEVER about race!

Until we can say with evidence that **it is never about race**, it is dishonest and shortsighted to state that "**it is not always about race!**" Such framing is harmful and yields zero solutions towards fairness and equity.

Think about it! Power and social norms are the conduits through which race operates.

- Do you belong to the dominant race?
- Do you identify as white, or do you pass for white?
- Does the dominant race influence your upbringing?
- Is your skin shade perceived as a threat?
- Is your native tongue English?
- Do you have an accent often called "broken" English?
- Do you communicate in a monotone, lacking facial expressions, sudden hand movements, and emotion?
- Is your sense of curiosity welcomed?

If you possess one or more of these traits, you are not in the position to decide if it is about race. Hint: Nobody is in the position to state, "it is not about race"!



Have you taken an unconscious bias training? Do you know that in some countries, including "America", Black and Brown people are more likely to have their skin color perceived as threatening, their accent is referred to as "broken", or their communication style is interpreted as aggressive, evasive, or suspicious?

These perceptions and biases show up in traffic stops, hiring decisions, school discipline, healthcare outcomes, and the discretionary power of disturbing the peace. They show up when the measure of discretion expands from a verbal warning to a permanent record, such as a mugshot, or when a brown elected official's

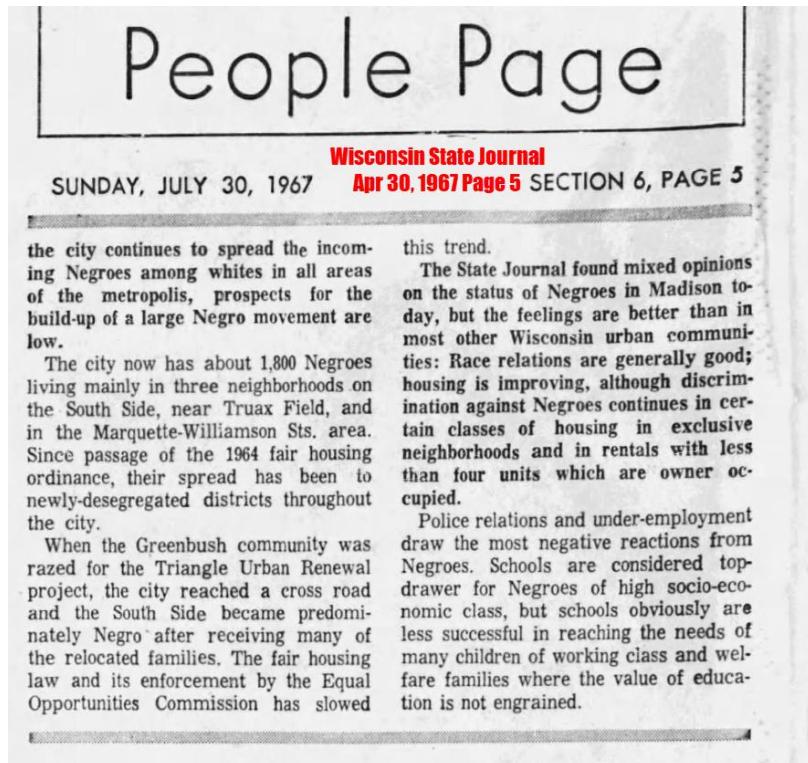
demand for answers is deemed aggressive, and her peers feel obligated to chastise her as the angry black woman.

These perceptions and biases show up when a man accused of harassment himself is allowed and encouraged to seek "accountability" on the backs of black women, without solid evidence or proof for his accusations, and while his harassment is elevated and celebrated. Or when density and affordability equate to the belief that future tenants, people we don't even know, are less than us, and unwelcome in our neighborhoods. Race need not be explicit to operate in every aspect of our lives.

That is why statements like "it's not always about race" completely miss the point and ignore lived experiences and supportive data, especially when it comes from those of us least exposed to racial scrutiny.

Accepting that race may be a factor is not an accusation; it is an acknowledgment and the opening for honest conversations and the key to turning systems into equitable policies and to eliminate Jim Crow social norms. Affirming, that "It is not always about race", doesn't settle the race question and discards the black and brown people's daily experiences when navigating systems that are not inclusive and culturally competent.

Madison has come a long way in many ways, but the race conversations are no different than the opinion pages of the Cap Times and Wisconsin State Journal from the '50's and 60's. The discussion has evolved from Negroes to labels such as Blacks, African Americans, or BIPOC. The opinion pages of the newspaper have extended to keyboard warriors and saviors hiding behind smartphones and computer screens.



But the issues remain the same: racial disparities in education, employment, housing, and in our justice system need resolving before being able to claim that **it is not always about race**.

This article is from the Capital Times, published on Friday, September 23, 1966. The birds discussed in this article are not endangered species; they are still fighting to remain relevant.

By Miles McMillin

The Capital Times: Hello Wisconsin (Madison, Wisconsin) · Fri, Sep 23, 1966 · Page 1 & 3



By MILES McMILLIN

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MR. STEWART preceded to classify this flock of birds as follows:

1. The Lily - White Prevaricator, a shrill - throated warbler which can be distinguished by its continuous argument that it has nothing against black birds "but that you can't legislate equality, especially when it comes to nesting privileges in its neighborhood." The prevaricator, unlike common birds that warble "to-weet, to-weet," emits a cry that

(Continued on Page 3, Col. 1)

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2. The Fork: Tongued Employer, a snowy-hued bird that spends long hours chirping about tree enterprise for birds of every color but has only token integration in his nest. If any. Often seen accompanying the Employer the Yellow-Bellied Discriminator, which likes to

roost among the musty rafters of union halls camouflaging itself in red-white-and-blue colors, but which will neck and assail every black bird seeking entry.

3. The Red-Winged Educator is one bird which appears to be multiplying rapidly. It has a deceptively sweet song about democracy in the classrooms but flies about parceling out more food to white birds than black birds. This decoy usually is terrible shocked to learn that more black birds than white birds keep dropping out its nest each year.
4. A cousin of the prevaricator is the Black-and-Tan-Grouse, the new Uncle Tom of the bird kingdom. This rather cowardly but noisy bird likes to take shelter from any storm on the windowsills of newspaper offices, where it can whistle over to white editors that black birds don't need any special help if they will only straighten up and fly right.
5. The most common and saddest bird reported among the new finds this summer is the Long-Necked Hesitator. The plumage of this gentle creature ranges from chalky-white to jet black and is commonly found sitting on fences or fence posts. This fowl would like to do right but just hesitates and hesitates, uttering its plaintive cry of "to-Wait, to-Wait" even when a fox or cat is seen approaching. Because it's extremely long neck, the Hesitator has difficulty holding its head up and the mortality rate among these poor droop-headed creatures has been terrific.

IN ADDITION to Mr. Stewart's aviary, I have discovered a la Darwin other birds that manage to remain hidden in the flock. They are classified as follows:

1. The Ivy Tower Goose—This bird has received a foundation grant to study the effect of the 1954 Supreme Court Decision on School Desegregation. He is considered an expert on racial problems by all of the other birds. He cruises alone at 750 MPH and at an altitude of 35,000 feet honking that the solution is that the problem would disappear if every Negro man, woman and child had a PHD.
2. The Militant Road Run — This bird believes that the Civil Rights movement started when he was a college sophomore (1960). He believes that both militancy and non-violence were discovered by him and that Martin Luther King is nuts and that the NAACP and the Urban League are dead. He got his tail feathers singed when fearlessly examining a burning cross at close range. Experience is sure to make him a wiser bird.
3. Cock of the Mountain — This bird is usually a Governor or Mayor who feels that the US Government and the NAACP should do all of the fighting in the Civil Rights arena. He is highly suspicious of the Supreme Court; is likely to go into a swoon at the sight or sound of anything black. He believes that the country owes its existence to second and third generation citizens in suburbia. He doesn't seem to be related to the traditional, magnificent, Fighting Cock at all.

I THINK WE can look forward to freedom, equality, and opportunity when the birds we have describe are extinct.

I am sure Marshall won't object to adding this description to the list: The Black and White Striped Headline Hunter — This bird often attracts attention to itself by making loud noises in public about wrongs done to Black birds, which, if eliminated, would make little or no difference in their woeful plight. Their conduct is typified by a hearty disdain for the harm they may do to those genuinely trying to do something about the real problems of the Black birds."

Hello, Wisconsin

(Continued from Page 1)
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Frank Johnson
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