

Trump supporters think my life is worth less than theirs

## **Even if people voted for Trump for economic reasons, they ignored the consequences of their actions on the lives of others.**

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(RNS) The high school I went to on Long Island taught me a lot about race. I learned about overt racism, and what we now call microaggressions.

Over a quarter of a century later, I am under no delusions that we live in a postracial society.

The movement for, and resistance to, Black Lives Matter reminds me every day that racism is part of our national DNA. Even with all that experience, hearing the results of our presidential election shocked me.

I knew, from a policy perspective, that Donald Trump had a large constituency. Were my concerns about him only on policy, I would be disappointed in his election.

However, my fear comes from his language. He removed the thin mask of civility of our country's original sin, and made obvious that so much of politics is driven by fear of black and brown bodies. He made clear and direct racist, sexist and ableist comments. His running mate treats gay and lesbian people as lepers.

Therefore, when a large number of my fellow Americans vote for Trump, they say unequivocally that they consider my life worth less than theirs.

I do believe a significant number of individuals went to the polls because they support Trump's rhetoric. I find arguments around economic malaise important, but unconvincing. Most of the poor working class, regardless of race, voted for Hillary Clinton.

The average income of a Trump supporter is \$76,000 per year, and they are overwhelmingly white. The casual acts of violent racism we are witnessing since the election of Trump are not manifestations of economic anxiety, but of racism. The media's use of "alt-right" was a euphemism for white supremacy; the Ku Klux Klan endorsed Donald Trump because its members believe he represents their interests.

However, let us take the premise that Trump's supporters are suffering from economic displacement, a specific, targeted displacement that only affects white people, and not the far more numerous people of color who work in those same disrupted industries.

An individual had to go into the voting booth and say that her tax break was more important than the possibility of people being put on a national registry simply because of their religion. Or worse, she did not even consider that a presidential candidate declined to condemn America's use of internment camps during World War II. In the first case, her savings are more important than my life. In the second case, my life is not even worth her consideration. Either calculus is based on racism.

People may not have had racist intent in their voting, but the result is racist. The framework in which they made their decision is racist. That they could not open their eyes to see the consequences of their actions on other Americans is racist.

It is true that Muslims are not a race; they are the most racially diverse religious group in the country. Yet, every time people speak about Muslims, it's like we are a race, and like we are easily recognizable.

Despite the fact that African Americans make up the largest racial group of Muslims, as a country we imagine Muslims to look Arab or South Asian. Black bodies are hated in a different way than brown bodies are, but they are hated.

It takes a nation of millions to hold us back, and those millions showed up to vote. They are trying to hold us back, American citizens with inalienable rights endowed by their Creator. They are trying to straighten the arc of history away from justice.

What they fail to realize is that carrying the weight of injustice means we will always be pointed to justice.

Imam Ali, the successor to Prophet Muhammad's authority, said that if we are not angry when we see injustice, then we don't deserve to be called human, but if we

are ruled by our anger, then we are no better than an animal. I know I am a human being. No one can take that away from me.

I am not alone in recognizing my humanity, or the humanity of all those whose very existence is questioned by the results of the election.

After the election, I also got an outpouring of support from other citizens of all races, religions, genders, sexual orientations, abilities, and classes, who checked in with me, to say they were there for me. I was able to say I am here for them as well.

And so, I know how brutal this country can be to its marginalized citizens. I also know what it means to build with others for a greater good. I am grateful for my friends, my colleagues, my comrades, my companions, my family, and my students. They give me hope. Today is mourning in America, but soon it will be morning. I have hope.