

Shrink the Ocean

Adrian M. Baker

“Let us build a bridge!” Many of us have heard this provocative catchphrase time and time again at “conversations” about race relations between various leaders and the communities that they serve. Many embraced the first notion of “building a bridge” with eyes wide open and hope welled within. The nobility associated with such actions of building has found its function turned off and hijacked. Such building has delayed freedom agendas and distracted from needed interventions. Building has proven to be a pacifying agent for “good” white folks who have taken their time to “talk” to black people about the black experience in America. It has been just talk. No building. No bridges. All talk.

So, lets talk.

Why use a metaphorical bridge as a reconciling agent for racial justice in America?

Can there exist two safe points on the racial river that anyone can traverse?

In the words of Bassist Randy Jackson... “It’s a no for me, dawg!”

I declare that the nature of a bridge as a racial remedy is central to the acceptance of distance between white and black persons in America.

Months ago, feeling alienated, disenchanted, and disheartened by silence of my white “friends” as it relates to the repetitious assault on unarmed black bodies, I wept. Like Jesus of Nazareth, I wept. Often, I still weep, without tears. On a morning that seemed as ordinary as the day before, I was awakened by a phrase that kept resounding in my soul. “Shrink the Ocean! Shrink the Ocean! Shrink the Ocean!” This proverbial playlist beat in my heart as a drum. A vision was born.

Forget the notion of building bridges. Bridges are too long. Bridges are too stationary. Bridges take too long to build. Bridges are intended to keep the distance. We, on the other hand, are called to shrink the oceans that divide us, the oceans of disparity, decay, and degradation.

I protest, I resist, I invest, I support, I lead, I inspire, I teach, and I preach. Now, I do this to shrink the ocean in the world around me. I aim to shrink oceans to the point that they become mere puddles that we can joyfully jump over together.

I need to abandon the existential metaphor for a moment and become clear on the how-to-guide for shrinking an ocean.

To shrink an ocean, we must be intentional on building equity.

Inequity in the education system, the healthcare system, the housing mix and market, employment, and the financial sectors abound. Each sector was deliberately designed to empower and endow a certain segment of America, “White America.” “Black America” was to remain divested and disassociated from the American Dream. This is unacceptable and I plead

for a commitment from White America to go beyond the talk, go beyond the bridge, and be about the business of Shrinking Oceans in all facets of American Society. The winds of history and herstory are crying out to you to shorten the bridge, repair the breach and shrink the ocean.

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