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Racism... an Unfortunate River of DENIAL in Arizona

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Perhaps this qualifies for, “What on earth could they be thinking?” Less than one month after signing the divisive Senate Bill 1070, which addresses the treatment of persons suspected of being in the country without authorization, Arizona Governor Jan Brewer signed into law Arizona House Bill 2281, banning public schools from teaching ethnic courses to ethnic students. This bill had been pushed for more than two years by Arizona State School Superintendent Tom Horne, who said that his goal is to prevent Latino American students from believing that they are an “oppressed minority” and thereby unable to succeed in America.

I’ve often heard the adage that “denial (“the Nile”) isn’t only a river in Egypt.” It seems to me that denial has found itself coursing through the state of Arizona. In fact, I will unashamedly call this river what it is: a hot, dry bed of RACISM. In a recent interview on CNN’s, *Anderson 360*, Tom Horne and African American scholar and professor, Rev. Dr. Michael Eric Dyson, hotly debated this controversial issue. Horne stated that teaching such classes promotes a “radical separatist agenda.” Really! Mr. Horne, I believe you have confused this matter with the crazed rantings of the Tea Party.

Clearly Horne was out of his league when trying to share his pathetic points during his encounter with the dynamic Dr. Dyson.

Superintendent Horne feebly attempted to base his argument on Martin Luther King, Jr.’s prophetic statement that people should be “judged on the content of their character” and not on their race, a statement which he had taken out of context. King’s declaration is true; yet denying students knowledge of their ethnic history is sheer madness.

Some of my greatest learnings about my ethnicity, as a young man, occurred in my Black Studies class in school. Sadly, many of these learnings had been excluded from the text books in history or social studies classes. For me, as an African American, understanding where my people come from, what they endured, and how they’ve overcome has always been important. Superintendent Horne: I am no one’s VICTIM, despite that I have been the object of many racist laws and oppressive behaviors of people wielding such laws.

In fact, you are wrong when you say that we live in a land of opportunity and that all American people can achieve their dreams if they work hard. Superintendent Horne, for you to make such statements clearly reveals your white privilege. If you are unaware of your own privilege, then you are reckless and dangerous. Heaven forbid you are aware and are wielding your privilege intentionally to boast about it. This would qualify you as a racist. Either way, you are perpetuating an oppressive system that contrasts starkly with our nation’s stated ideal of “liberty and justice for all.”

So what’s next for the residents and citizens of Arizona? Furthermore, what is this going to do to some of our states who are wrestling with similar issues? Time will tell, especially since this is merely Phase One of a hot button political issue marching toward the next presidential election in 2012.

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