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Race was always issue in Botham Jean case

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Oct 8, 2019

There is a story I tell people that usually gets a laugh.

I arrived at my uncle's neighborhood in Bacliff, Texas. After I parked my car, I walked up to his house, knocked on the door.

When I didn't hear an answer, I turned the knob of the door and walked right in.

"Hello!" I said.

But as soon as I entered, I noticed the interior was not the same. Gone were the stairs and the dining room.

Instead of my Tex-Mex family, I found a black family sitting in their living room.

Their faces were of confusion and (questioning). The looks said, "Who is this woman?" and "Why isn't the front door locked?"

Immediately, I felt my face burned with embarrassment at the realization of being at the wrong location.

“Wrong house. Sorry!” I told them.

I rushed out and headed over to the house on the left, my uncle’s house.

As soon as I entered the correct house, I told them what happened, and we all laughed.

So when I watched Amber Guyger’s testimony through tears on Friday, saying, “This is not about hate, it’s about being scared,” of Botham Jean, the black man she fatally shot because she thought he was in her apartment, it made me think about my “Oops!” moment, when I walked into the house of a black family instead of my uncle’s.

For one, I noticed we had different emotions.

I felt embarrassment.

She felt fear.

My reaction was to apologize and run out of the house. I was pretty sure I scared the crap out of the family.

Her response was to pull out a gun and shoot.

So, I could not feel an ounce of sympathy for her.

First of all, what was she taught growing up? What did she learn through her training with the Dallas Police Department, or from her co-workers?

Where in her life did she learn that a black man was scary? More specifically, what was it about a black man sitting on a sofa, eating ice cream that made her scared?

She claimed he rose up from his seat and said, "Hey, hey, hey!" And that was what made her shoot him, with the intent to kill.

Hate may not be involved, but perception and race were.

It didn't help during the sentencing hearing on Tuesday that the State showed text messages from Guyger complaining about MLK duty and saying the parade would end "when MLK is dead... oh wait..."

Then there were the text messages between her and her former partner and lover, Martin Rivera.

Rivera writes he was with five black officers, and said, "Not racist but damn." She replied, "Not racist, but just have a different way of working, and it shows."

(FYI, Latinos/Hispanics can be racist, too, but that's another column for another day.)

In another text, a friend offered her a German shepherd. The friend said the dog "may be a little racist."

Her response? "It's ok, I'm the same."

It doesn't matter that she has black friends, and she had co-workers who are black.

Guyger had a stereotype in mind about black people, and her prejudice cost Jean's life and a guilty verdict.

Nevermind that Jean followed the law and tried to be a good citizen.

Nevermind that he went to church and preached God's word on Sunday mornings.

Nevermind that he wore Ralph Lauren and dressed up daily, so he doesn't get stopped and have police or people assume he was something he was not.

It was not enough to keep Jean safe in his very own home.

Now Guyger will be serving only 10 years, that's if she serves the full 10 years.

Do I think Guyger is remorseful? Yes, I do.

But if I were her coworker or friend and discovered those text messages, I would be disappointed and think, "So that's how you genuinely see me."

Also, remember his name: Botham Jean.