

When Tim Wise endorses a book, you read it. When Tim Wise "and" Howard Zinn both endorse a book, you not only read it, you are assured that the contents within that book have to do with justice, have to do with truth, have to do with the important baton that is handed down, in this case. Not long before our beloved Howard Zinn's passing, he offered positive commentary on Kaolin's book, *Talking about Race*. This was a gift to this author, inasmuch as it was a blessing on the book and an endorsement of her work on this subject; it was and is a gift to the readers in that, in this book, the readers find pieces of Howard Zinn and his struggle for and work towards the truth. Kaolin does this.

Kaolin is the daughter of an eye doctor, roots in Brooklyn; she shares on a recent radio show, "When I started dating my African American husband. We experienced lots of violence. I began to record all the racist incidents we were subjected to."

Kaolin speaks of her experiences at University of Massachusetts-Amherst, "I was surprised at the racism there . . . reminiscent of the 50s. They were so angry, they were violent."

The author goes on to share, "I wanted to teach a course that would deal with racism in the classroom. I decided to create this course, *Talking about Race*. Confronting racism thru education."

Some people believe that with Obama as president we live in a post-racial society. Well, sadly, and as many realize, though we've had some small but powerful successes, such as seating the first African American president of the United States, and ridding ourselves of the black water fountain vs. the white water fountain era, we have long roads to travel before true post-racial mentality is achieved on a wide scale. Kaolin, on that same radio show, shares the important first step of "recognizing racism; there's a great deal of resistance and confusion, recognizing what racism really is."

This author and educator calls us to the importance and necessity of "resisting racism," of taking responsibility and identifying "white privilege".

She reminds on that radio interview, that one's reading of and working through the workbook, *Talking about Race*, "You go through an entire process including closure about what you've learned." Therefore, this book can be seen as a process, and a therapeutic process at that. It starts with the reader, or the educator, or the student ----- making their own way through this all-important and, sadly, historic topic.

Kaolin identifies the "seven phases of recognition" and elucidates the reality of each and how recognition must precede the healing and change of the unjust racist mind-set.

She sadly explicates, during an interview, and shows it throughout the text, "Racism has been our inheritance."

Having been a white woman married to a black man, Kaolin shares the reality of her experience in this line which she powerfully vocalized on the interview I recently heard, "To me it's been frightening."

Kaolin speaks from a very personal experience of having lived through racial injustice. She feels that many people are in "total denial" and are "very dismissive and totally insulting."

Due to her personal experiences and her bearing two beautiful biracial children, Kaolin personalizes the experience of racism in this culture. She says there is a, "tendency to be so oblivious". She reminds, "There really is not sufficient knowledge of our history or our present."

I believe she is correct. As an instructor as well as a writer, myself, it is obvious that the younger African American generations sometimes must be reminded of the struggles their ancestors bore in order that they experience the level of acceptance they do today. The research must be done. The stories must not be forgotten. And moving forward must be achieved, on a personal and a larger/wider scale.

Having taught much African American literature during our recent presidential election, many students shared with me that they believed we now lived in a post-racial society, particularly after President Obama won. Some felt we had achieved post-racial society status with his mere running, whether or not he ended up winning. We need the workbook/book *Talking about Race* in our classrooms, at the kitchen tables, in our own hands, to make real and obvious the work we still have to do, first on a personal basis, and then on a cumulative group basis. But it starts with each reader.

Again sharing a line from a recent Kaolin radio interview, "Transforming the meaning of whiteness through action." She goes on to explain, "We had an African American maid. And she wasn't very respected. There was censorship around discussing it, and the rejection of them while in the household, this was new to me. Racism is new to us. We're not prepared for racism. We don't get it, we really don't get it."

This author believes there is a frightening reality going on that consists of, "Omission. A silence. A lack of a voice. It [racism] trains you to almost be subservient to it." And then she moves on to say what happens when you take a stand, "You're isolated from your peers and your family, because you are rejecting it. The atmosphere is blanketed with silence."

She goes on to say, "People are so resistant to really hone in on this problem . . . because they are punished for it."

Kaolin urges, not only on her radio interviews, but in her book, urges the public, one-by-one, classroom-by-classroom . . . she urges and demands, in very Zinn fashion, "We have to find ways to disown it."