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White life, perspective, and values have been centered so readily throughout history that white Americans now have an identity, ego, and vanity built entirely upon their historically assured dominance. Superiority is a “fact” fed to whites, and constantly reinforced for them throughout their daily experiences despite there not always being individual qualities beyond race justifying such comfort at the top. Since white self-image is predicated on this racial status, other identities, like being American, are also influenced and become an extension of this fragile logic. In the article “As America Changes, Some Anxious Whites Feel Left Behind,” Michele Norris navigates white anxiety within Hazleton, Pennsylvania and the manifestations of varying racism that occurs amongst white townsofolx who seek to preserve their previous way of life, or rather their existing power structures.

Those in Hazleton feel pride for their community and America because they recognize the values and institutions within these places as being a reflection of their whiteness, and thus a reinforcement of their place in the majority. Subsequently, they view people of color’s culture/existence as not just different but oppositional to their own, and thus, a threat to all that gives them power. As Brian Glover states, “the whole notion of whiteness as we know it depends on not being a minority” (Norris 4). In Charlottesville, the chant “you will not replace us” showed whites are afraid they will be removed from their role as the god-like standard, which has been the source of their pride and unwavering confidence for centuries. Over and over again, we see phrases like “outnumbered” or “they took over the city” used to recenter whiteness and the white experience of loss or victimhood in discussions about Hazletown’s new immigrant population (Norris 1). This vanity, and self-conceited desire to be centerstage, is so poignantly

apparent in the statements made by one woman in regards to Governor Landrieu's removal of confederate statues as she says, "You ruined my life, you destroyed my life" (Norris 6). What she means is he acted against the fantasy of "white is right" that has gone largely unquestioned until now; he acted against the idea that being white is something all POC should yearn to be.

White identity is hollow due to "white racial invisibility," that allows for whites to not recognize their race unless put in a situation in which they are the minority group (Doane and Bonilla 6). This conditional sense of self, has meant white racial identity is often only asserted "when whites [feel] threatened by social changes, immigrations and challenges from subordinate groups" (Doane and Bonilla 8). As we saw with Yale in the article, she felt lost in an increasingly Latinx Hazleton community, simply because her feeling of belonging was hinged on a comfort only felt when surrounded by other whites. When whites do not have racial awareness, then the institutions, traditions, and values dominating mainstream America, that were made for and by whites, are instead viewed as separate from race.

I have seen how "being American" is a title that whites are the gatekeepers of, despite not actively seeing it as so. My white grandparents, in speaking about how media outlets are focusing on disproportionate deaths amongst African Americans due to COVID-19, employed rhetoric along the lines of "this is an American issue, not a race issue" and "this disease is the great equalizer, they would never feel the need to report that specifically whites are dying." My grandparents are only willing to extend the privilege of being American to African Americans when it is being used to deny their suffering at the hands of systemic racism. More importantly, my grandparents were angry that the media chose to highlight any story other than their own white narrative, because for them and those in Hazleton, that *is* the American narrative.