

LIFE

Fighting against racism starts with recognition

Imagine that, while riding the bus, a passenger approached you and told you to "go back to your country".



Jocelyn Eikenburg
Second Thoughts

That's what happened to a friend of mine during her brief stint living and working abroad in the United Kingdom, a time that shattered the idyllic notions she once harbored about the West.

The animus behind this and other similarly racist encounters she experienced had shocked her. She had never thought people could be

capable of behaving like that in public.

Her story, however, didn't surprise me — and not just because I had seen many reports over the years on racism in the UK, or that I had read *Why I'm No Longer Talking To White People About Race*, British journalist Reni Eddo-Lodge's award-winning deep dive into race relations in her country.

Rather, it was because I had lived a version of it in the United States with my husband Jun, when we resided there for nearly eight years. That period served as a painful education in just how widespread racism and discrimination was in my own country. I saw the many ways, both covert and overt, in which people treated

him worse than his white peers.

I shouldn't have needed an education like this to realize that the scourge of racism and discrimination still thrived in the US. And my friend shouldn't have had to spend time in the UK to discover the truth there.

The protests that have emerged in the wake of the deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery and countless other people of color have made it impossible to ignore what has been dubbed the pandemic of racism, an epidemic that didn't begin in 2020. It has infected societies like the US and the UK for hundreds of years — and it is not a relic of the past that has magically disappeared.

In *The Psychology of American Racism*, a recent article in the respected journal *American Psychologist*, the authors observed how "American racism is alive and well" and that, contrary to what many believe, "Racism is a system of advantage based on race. It is a hierarchy. It is a pandemic. Racism is so deeply embedded within US minds and US society that it is virtually impossible to escape." The greatest factor that perpetuates racism is what the authors call passivism or passive racism — indifference to such systems of advantage based on race or even a refusal to believe they are there.

This moment in history has witnessed a seismic shift in public opin-

ion, where more people than ever are acknowledging the problem of racism. For example, a recent Monmouth University poll revealed that 76 percent of respondents considered racial discrimination as a big problem in the US, up 25 points compared to 2015. While making progress will ultimately require taking concrete action against racism, none of that is possible until people around the world recognize how pervasive and serious racism really is.

I've seen signs of encouragement while reading recent media reports about Mona Wang, an Asian nursing student in Canada who says she was physically abused and emotionally scarred during a police wellness check, with video showing her being

dragged facedown on the ground, with the officer at one point even placing a foot on Wang's head. Netizens, who have largely condemned the incident, have also stressed the need to see this as racism — and to speak up. One commenter wisely wrote, "People might think, what does this have to do with me? Don't affect my ability to earn money. But next time, it might be you."

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Candid camera: Ace it



A boy with a hairstyle in the shape of an ace of spades plays with crushed ice used for freezing seafood at a market in Xiamen, Fujian province, on June 22. The market is a popular focal point of the local community. CHEN ZHONGQIU / FOR CHINA DAILY



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Young Party members relish helping campaign to eradicate poverty

CHANGSHA/URUMQI — When Huang Tianlun decided to return to his village deep in the mountains to start a business after a decade working in a city, his father discouraged him. But he insisted on pursuing his dream — to change the fate of his fellow poverty-stricken villagers.

He made it. Two years after he served as Party chief of Jiaoxi village in Yongshun county in Central China's Hunan province, Huang, 38, has successfully helped villagers shake off poverty and move into new homes in a displacement program for poverty reduction.

Huang, a native of Jiaoxi village, graduated from college in 2005 and became a journalist for a newspaper in Changsha, the provincial capital. In the same year, he joined the Communist Party of China under the influence of his father, also a Party member. Becoming Party chief of a village has been his ideal since he was young.

During his college studies, Huang says, he was deeply moved by a TV drama series based on a true story, featuring a doctor who went to the Pamir Plateau to help treat the sick in the northwestern Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, from the eastern coastal province of Jiangsu in the 1960s.

"The doctor made great contributions to people living on the plateau. I thought the Party was really great," says Huang.

In 2014, he quit his job at the newspaper and returned to his home village, which is located in a national nature reserve, to start his own business. He developed greenhouses, sightseeing agriculture, and sold produce. Three years later, he was elected to be a member of the Party branch of the village, and director of the villagers' committee, because of his high education background and experience. He was later appointed Party chief of the village, where nearly 70 percent of the village's 655 people lived in poverty due to its harsh natural conditions and poor infrastructure.

Though Huang's father did not support his decision to work in the village, the young man insisted and stayed.

"A poverty-stricken village needs people to come back. To eliminate poverty and vitalize the rural areas, young people are needed to do things. I wanted to take the initiative," Huang says. "I felt obliged to accomplish the mission assigned by the Party."

He said he had worries that he would meet with various difficulties as he lacked work experience in rural areas, and it was no easy task to handle villagers' affairs.

In pushing the targeted poverty reduction measures, he encountered a small setback. Precise identification meant that unqualified households would be removed from the registered list of poverty-stricken villagers. That means they would get less or no poverty relief fund and could not enjoy other policy support for poverty-stricken families any more. He faced opposition and obstruction from some villagers, including his relatives, but he stuck to his sense of fairness. "I kept my principles and original aspirations," Huang says.

Thanks to a government-funded relocation program, the villagers

moved to their new houses in a township from their reclusive village. They also tried to plant herbs to increase incomes.

Last year, the per capita net income of villagers reached 7,600 yuan (\$1,075), and the village shook off poverty overall. "We plan to increase the planting of the herb, and develop e-commerce to expand sales," says the village Party chief.

Like Huang, the vast rural regions have become a land of dreams and opportunities for hundreds of thousands of young Party members to serve the people and realize their value by helping farmers shake off poverty and live a better life.

In Oqar county, Xinjiang, 28-year-old Zhou Long is devoted to poverty alleviation work.

Zhou, deputy government head of Boritokay township and also a Party member, has been working in Xinjiang since graduating from a teachers' college in Sichuan province, in southwestern China.

The township shook off poverty in 2018. "We have done a solid job in poverty alleviation in recent years," Zhou says, adding he cares most about the families on the verge of poverty.

It is his routine to visit households, go to the fields to chat with villagers, and discuss solutions with other officials to increase the income of herders and farmers.

Last year, villagers were mobilized to plant tulips, roses and other flowers. "The sales of these have already been booked out, and the revenue is much higher than that of vegetables," Zhou says. "One of our key tasks is to strengthen the coordinated development of agriculture and husbandry."

Hua Mengli is busy at her family farm in Jurong City, Jiangsu province. The farm covers an area of 72 hectares and has an annual revenue of 8 million yuan. Yet the landscape was totally different a few years ago.

This 25-year-old girl chose horticulture technology as her major at the Jiangsu Vocational College of Agriculture and Forestry, where she joined the Party. After graduating in 2016, she gave up the opportunity to work at the college but instead chose to work in her father's farm, which was at a loss then.

She and four of her classmates now work together to operate the farm differently from her father.

"People in cities have a huge demand for rural farming experiences," Hua says. She began to shift the traditional management model to a service-oriented one. The farm provides services such as produce picking, fishing, catering, and delivery of fruits and vegetables for tourists and customers.

They even built a plant cultivation lab to foster flowers and seedlings. Last year, the farm received orders for seedlings worth 4.5 million yuan.

The farm has provided stable jobs for 12 college graduates and dozens of villagers nearby.

"Affluence is not the only criterion for success. Through our example, farmers can master more scientific planting knowledge, and protect the ecological environment, which is the greatest comfort," Hua says.

Mountain concert expected to be height of entertainment

By CHEN NAN
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Huashan Mountain in Shaanxi province is one of China's five most famous scenic mountains and is known for its steep and perilous peaks. On Saturday, the Xi'an Symphony Orchestra will hold a concert on the mountain's west peak, at an altitude of about 2,000 meters. The concert will be streamed live.

Titled *XSO Meets Huashan Mountain Summit Clouds Rhapsody*, the concert will feature more than 200 musicians from the Xi'an Symphony Orchestra and its chorus under the baton of conductor Tang Muhai.

According to Cao Jiwen, branding director of the Xi'an Symphony Orchestra, all musical instruments will be transported to the west peak by cable car.

"It's exciting to imagine musicians performing among a sea of cloud on the peak of Huashan Mountain. The audience will enjoy classical music with a stunning vista of nature," says Cao, adding that the idea of holding a concert on Huashan Mountain was suggested a year ago. Due to the coronavirus pandemic, the concert had been postponed until July.

He notes that Huashan Mountain is also a holy site in Taoism and is associated with the birth and practice of traditional Chinese martial arts.

Therefore, the repertoires of the upcoming concert will showcase the mountain's rich significance and local culture.

One of the highlights of the concert is the opening piece, which will have musicians and the orchestra chorus perform with a local troupe of *Huayin Laoqiang* (Huayin ancient tune), a traditional folk song, titled *Jiangling Yisheng Zhen Shanchuan* (The General Commander's Order Shakes Mountains and Rivers).

Considered as the oldest version of rock-and-roll in China, *Huayin Laoqiang* was born in Huayin city, where Huashan Mountain is locat-



Artists of *Huayin Laoqiang* rehearse at Shaanxi Opera House on Tuesday. They will perform at a concert to be held on the west peak of Huashan Mountain on Saturday. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Tang Muhai, renowned conductor.

ed. The traditional opera form is a genre developed from a folk storytelling art in Shaanxi province, crafted at the end of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) and early period of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911). It was listed as a national intangible cultural heritage in 2006.

In 2015, Chinese pop singer Tan Weiwei and five senior artists from a troupe of *Huayin Laoqiang* jointly performed on a TV show, which caused a sensation among viewers. The performance brought *Huayin Laoqiang* into the spotlight and attracted many audiences.

"When I was commissioned to adapt the piece, I was surprised and excited. It felt like a good cook having the best ingredients, which will give birth to a great dish," says composer Sun Chang, who adapted the

old piece into a 3-minute-long work for the concert. "I didn't know much about *Huayin Laoqiang*, but when I read the material, I was impressed by its history and culture. The adaptation has to be loyal to their tradition and the combination of classical music and the ancient opera should be creative while preserving their distinctive features."

Graduating from the Shanghai Conservatory of Music with a master's degree in 2011, Sun, who is also a pianist, has been teaching at the university's conducting department since then. He has adapted lots of music pieces both from China and from the West, including Chinese folk songs, *Jasmine Flower* and *Lion Dance*, both staged at the Palace of Versailles in 2014 during a concert marking the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and France.

"I have done lots of adaptations which mix Chinese and Western music pieces together. I used to combine two different music styles and minimize their differences. But now, I want to present their differences and to showcase their own styles," says Sun, adding that Western classical music is based on beat while the high-pitched and powerful *Huayin Laoqiang* is centered on

the rhythm of local dialect. "The musicians of the orchestra and chorus look at the conductor but musicians of *Huayin Laoqiang* don't have to look at the conductor. They have their own rhythm."

Other music pieces to be staged during the concert will include Chinese composer Zhao Jiping's *Symphony No. 1*, Beethoven's *Egmont Overture* and composer Tan Dun's violin concerto for Chinese director Zhang Yimou's film *Hero*.

Founded in 2012, the orchestra has recruited musicians from around the country, mostly younger than 30.

It's not the first time that the Xi'an Symphony Orchestra performed outside concert halls. They've played at various locations in Xi'an, including the Shaanxi History Museum and the Emperor Qinshihuang's Mausoleum Site Museum.

Cao says that the Xi'an Symphony Orchestra has been finding creative ways to engage with their audience amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Since Feb 21, the orchestra chorus has presented about 80 shows through live streaming and the symphony orchestra has performed 11 online shows. The shows have attracted more than 23 million viewers.