

Because their energy is being applied inside a framework designed to absorb it.

## Seeing the Script Is the First Break

You cannot remove what you cannot name.

This chapter does not ask you to reject everything you were taught.

It asks you to distinguish between wisdom and limitation, between protection and control, between culture and conditioning.

Some beliefs still serve you.

Others have expired.

Clarity begins when you stop asking whether a belief feels familiar and start asking who benefits from it remaining unquestioned.

## Where This Leaves Us

In Chapter 1, we reclaimed focus.

In this chapter, we identified what that focus was trained to overlook.

Once you see the script, you cannot unsee it.

And once you see it, the next step becomes unavoidable.

Noticing is not enough.

Removal is required.

Chapter 3 examines how these scripts shape identity, stress, health, and behavior at the psychological level. Because beliefs do not live only in thought.

They live in the body.

The weeds were planted.

Now we examine what they do below the surface.

## Chapter 3 – The Psychology of Racism

### The Programming of Pain

Racism survives not because of hatred alone, but because it learned how to reproduce.

It no longer depends on open hostility.

It moves through narratives, institutions, habits, and expectations we were trained to absorb long before we had language for them.

You already know racism exists.

What most of us were never taught is how it keeps working.

Not just between groups, but inside us.

Not only through laws or visible conflict, but through repetition, permission, and normalization.

Not only as something we respond to, but as something many of us were trained to live inside.

This chapter examines why racism continues, how it adapts across generations, and how it quietly shapes behavior, stress responses, identity, and self-perception, even when we consciously reject it.

Because lasting dominance is sustained through habits, incentives, and beliefs, not brute pressure.

They rely on psychology.

### Racism Is Not a Feeling. It Is a Program. It is Operational

Racism is often explained as hatred, but that explanation is simple; it misses the mechanism.

Hatred is emotional.

Racism is operational.

Feelings flare and fade. Programs persist.

Racism survives because it does not require constant hostility. It runs whether people are angry or calm, conscious of it or not. It operates like software, installed through repetition, reinforced by authority, and normalized through everyday life.

Think about how software updates work.

You do not design them.

You do not vote on them.

You do not even read most of what they change.

They are pushed out, downloaded automatically, and suddenly your phone behaves a little differently. Not because you chose it, but because the system requires it to keep operating.

Racial narratives work the same way.

Stories get pushed.

Images repeat.

Certain groups are framed as problems to manage, while others are framed as defaults to protect.

Over time, those updates stop feeling like updates. They start feeling like reality.

That is how racism stays alive without anyone needing to announce it.

## The Body Learns Before the Mind

Racism does not begin with belief.

It begins with the nervous system.

Long before we argue about fairness or intent, the body learns patterns:

- Where caution is rewarded
- Where silence feels safer
- Where being seen too clearly comes with consequences

What looks like weakness was survival under pressure.

The nervous system's job is not justice. It is protection.

So when you walk into certain spaces and feel watched, not tense, not panicked, just aware, that awareness did not come from nowhere.

The nervousness does not end at the register.

You still have to walk through the anti-theft sensors, holding your breath, hoping the cashier removed every tag, hoping there will not be that sound, the one that turns you into a spectacle for doing nothing wrong.

And when you hesitate before relaxing, before speaking freely, before trusting how you will be received, that hesitation was learned.

Not taught in a lesson.

Taught through outcomes.

The body reacts first. The story that explains it comes later.

That is how racism operates without ever announcing itself.

## When Harm Is Made Normal

There is a reason these patterns live in the body. They were formed in environments where Black life was publicly violated, witnessed, and normalized without consequence.

When harm is repeated and unpunished, the body learns before the mind has a chance to object.

This history does not live only in photographs, textbooks, or documentaries. It settles into posture, vigilance, restraint, and the quiet calculations people make about where it is safe to exist fully.

Individual blame misses the issue. The real question is how structures trained entire populations to accept, excuse, or ignore harm.

Dehumanization does not require cruelty to be effective. It only requires repetition, authority, and time.

When something is made ordinary long enough, empathy does not disappear violently. It fades quietly.

That fading has consequences for everyone.

## What Fades and Why It Matters

When harm is made ordinary, something essential begins to fade.

Not memory.

Not history.

Not pain.

What fades is the felt connection.

Empathy does not disappear all at once. It thins. It dulls. It becomes selective. And that fading reshapes everyone it touches.

For those who benefit from the system, empathy fades into abstraction. Suffering becomes something understood intellectually but not carried emotionally. It becomes history, policy, debate, or unfortunate circumstance, something to be explained rather than felt.

This allows life to continue without reckoning. It protects identity and comfort, but it comes at a cost. When empathy fades, moral clarity weakens. The capacity to sit with discomfort erodes. The relationship becomes defensive. Humanity becomes conditional.

For those who carry the cost of the system, something else fades. Not awareness. Not vigilance. Not memory.

What fades is expectation.

Expectation that harm will be acknowledged.

Expectation that empathy will show up.

Expectation that dignity will be protected without negotiation.

Over time, that fading hardens into posture. Into restraint. Into self-policing. Into emotional armor that looks like strength but is really survival.

Neither fading is healing.

One side learns not to feel too much.

The other learns not to hope too much.

And when that happens, harm does not end. It simply moves. It relocates from public outrage into private bodies, behaviors, and inherited silence.

This is why the consequences are collective.

A society cannot remain healthy when one group is trained to numb, and another is trained to brace. When empathy fades on one side, and trust fades on the other, the connection collapses. Fear fills the gap. People talk past one another. Order is maintained on the surface while pressure accumulates underneath.

Healing does not require forgetting.

It requires precision.

Black people are not being asked to let pain fade. Pain carries information.

Memory carries truth. What must fade is the belief that recognition must come before agency, that survival responses define identity, or that healing must wait on permission.

Those who benefit from the system are not being asked to accept guilt.

They are being asked to recover feeling, to interrupt numbness, to rehumanize what abstraction erased, and to choose honesty over comfort.

When what fades is named, it can be reclaimed.

When empathy is restored to feeling and expectation is restored to dignity, healing becomes possible, not by denial, but by choice.

## Scar Story: Educated Into Chains

In the fifth grade, I learned something about America that no textbook ever explained directly.

Our teacher assigned *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Each day, students were called on to read aloud from their desks, page by page, in order. This was framed as education. This was the curriculum.

I was the only Black child in the room.

The first time we reached the word **nigger**, the room changed.

The student paused. You could see the unease on his face, the recognition that this was a word he had been taught not to say, a word he had also been taught was connected to me. He glanced in my direction. Then he looked at the teacher.

The teacher's eyes were flat. Unbothered.

She gave a small nod. The kind that says, go ahead, it's fine.

And then the word came out.

Out loud.

Clear.

Normal.

It was not my name. But it landed in my body like it was.

At first, the room felt awkward. Heavy. You could hear a pin drop.

Everyone seemed aware that something had shifted, even if they did not know how to name it.

I sat there wondering not just how the word felt, but why this book was being taught at all. What were we supposed to learn from it? What lesson did the education system believe this was delivering, and to whom?

That question stayed with me.

Because I was already learning a different lesson outside the classroom.

Before Utah, I lived in Baltimore, Maryland. Majority Black. Familiar.

Grounded. I had never experienced racism as something directed at me in a sustained way. Utah was different. Everything was new. We were visibly out of place.

When I was with my stepmother, there were moments when people said things, jokes, comments, and remarks meant to remind us that we were not part of the neighborhood. Watermelon jokes. Side remarks. Laughter that lingered too long.

Each time, I would feel something rise in me.

And each time, my stepmother would quietly say, "Ignore it. Do not give them what they want. Just keep moving."

That was the script.

Not because she was weak.

Because she understood escalation.

Because she understood cost.  
So, by the time I sat in that classroom, I already knew how to respond.  
Do not react.  
Do not disrupt.  
Stay quiet and let it pass.  
What made the classroom experience worse was how quickly the discomfort disappeared.  
By the end of the week, there was no more hesitation. No more glances.  
Students read the word without looking up. The room was quiet, not tense, just settled.  
Repetition had done what repetition always does. It made the unacceptable feel ordinary.  
That is when I understood something I did not have language for yet. The word was not just being read. It was being authorized. The system had decided my presence did not require protection. My reaction did not matter. The lesson would continue with or without me.  
I did not go home and protest.  
I did not explode.  
I endured.  
At the time, that felt mature. Practical. Smart.  
Only later did I understand what had really happened.  
That classroom was not just teaching literature.  
It was a teaching hierarchy.  
It was teaching silence.  
It was teaching me how to live beneath a story that was not written for me.  
I am now in my fifties, and I can still remember that week with clarity.  
That is not because I am holding onto pain.  
It is because my body learned something it was never meant to forget.  
It was not the word. It was permission.

## Why Context Changes Everything

Here is the question that matters:  
Would I have felt anything at all if that classroom had been filled with Black students and a Black teacher?  
Probably not.  
Same word.  
Same book.  
Completely different outcome.  
Because the issue was never just the word.  
It was permission.  
It was authority.  
It was who controlled the space.  
When authority allows harm and calls it education, the lesson goes deeper than content. It teaches who is protected and who is expendable.

That difference explains why the same experience can feel harmless in one environment and traumatic in another.  
And it exposes the system underneath.

## Internalized Racism Is Not Self-Hatred. It Is Training

Internalized racism did not begin as hostility toward ourselves or each other. It emerged as a survival adaptation. When safety is tied to proximity to power, people learn to adjust.

When silence reduces risk, silence becomes intelligence.

When correction comes faster from inside the group than outside it, people learn to police one another.

That logic was learned long before we were born.

Over time, it shows up as:

- Judging other Black people more harshly than anyone else
- Mistrusting Black leadership while extending grace elsewhere
- Confusing survival behaviors with character flaws

Blame is not the lens.

It is about inheritance.

What once kept people alive can later keep them limited.

## Why This Still Matters Now

Racism does not survive because people keep hating.

It survives because it keeps running.

Quietly.

Routinely.

Often without being named.

What you have seen in this chapter is not a feeling.

It is a system.

It is operational.

And because it operates beneath awareness, it often goes uninterrupted.

Seeing this does not require guilt.

It requires honesty.

If training shaped behavior, then behavior can be reshaped.

If survival responses were learned, they can be unlearned.

Awareness is not the end of the work.

It is the moment choice becomes possible.

What begins in the mind does not stay there.

It moves into the body.

Into stress.

Into posture.

Into health.

Into what gets carried forward.

Chapter 4 examines how unresolved pain becomes inheritance.