

Sick and Tired—and Proud

By Stacy L. Douglas



My name is Stacy Lynne Douglas. I am the daughter of Dr. Clarence Everett Douglas and Mary Kearney Douglas. My father was born in 1928 and raised in Jefferson, Texas, a small town located in East Texas. My father served his country in the United States Army. My father served a country he watched lynch people simply because they looked like him; he served a country that denied him the right to sit at the front of the bus; he served a country that denied him the right to vote; he served a country that denied him the right to attend integrated schools and the liberty to drink water out of a fountain reserved for whites. Despite all this, my father served this country.

After leaving the Army, my father put himself through college (Southern University, a historically black college) and medical school (Meharry Medical College, another historically black school). After he graduated from medical school and relocated to Iowa to do his internship at Mercy Hospital in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, my father met my mother (who, like my father, was also born and raised in a small town, Clutier, Iowa). Their amazing love story, which took exception to the notion that interracial marriage was illegal, is for another day. I am sure you can imagine, it comes with its own host of discrimination, prejudice, and disapproval.

In 1958, my father was approached about replacing a doctor retiring from a small farming community in Iowa, an area with a population of about 2,600–3,000 and an all-white community. For most people, the chance to replace a doctor with an already existing and thriving medical practice would have been the opportunity of a lifetime—one that they would jump at without second thoughts. However, my father did not have that luxury. He had to think long and hard about how—and if—he could survive in this community as the town’s only black man.

Because of these concerns, when my father first considered assuming this practice, he met with the wealthier leaders in the community and secured their financial investment in his practice. He would come and serve as the doctor for this community only if the powerful influencers in the area were financially tied to the success of his practice. This was the business savvy of a man who had experienced racism front and center and knew that without the support

of influential community leaders, he would never obtain the support of the broader white community.

My father spent 33 years in this small town and became a pillar in the community, including serving as president of the school board. He was recognized statewide for his contributions to the athletic teams in Iowa and ultimately had the local football field named after him. It was a journey, and it was not always easy, especially for the black children he raised in that town. The children of Dr. Douglas would hear negative references to black people, the casual use of the word “nigger,” and were often bullied by their peers and made to feel like outcasts. Paradoxically, all this was being done to the children while the community unconditionally loved and supported “Doc.” Despite all the negative experiences, it was also a special upbringing: special because there was family, there was love, there were amazing parents, and there were true friendships. When you grow up a small community like this, the real friendships are incomparable and last a lifetime. However, you also learn to see much more clearly the not-so-real friendships: the people secretly hiding their disdain for your race.

I say all this because last week I read my dear friend [Ricardo Wood’s installment](#), where he eloquently voiced his concerns as a Black Man in America. As I read it, all I could think was, “I am tired,” “I am exhausted,” “I am worn out,” “I am spent,” “I am enervated.” If I am being truly honest and keeping it real, the truth of the matter is that I am not simply tired—I am sick and tired.

I am sick and tired of turning on the news and hearing about another black life lost. I am sick and tired of the constant reminder that the lives of my beautiful black Kings and Queens do not hold the same value as a white life. I am sick and tired of the delays associated with the filing of charges when these murders take place and sick and tired of the lives lost where charges are never filed.

I am sick and tired of the double standard in criminal investigations. I am sick and tired of my black family being “guilty until proven innocent.” I am sick and tired of crimes such as “driving while black” and “running while black.” I am sick and tired of innocent black boys and girls, our beautiful babies, being taken too soon because they appear suspicious in a neighborhood they actually live in.

I am sick and tired of worrying about my husband every time he leaves home. I am sick and tired of the anxiety I feel when my cousins call me and I worry, before answering, that there is some bad news coming from the phone. I am sick and tired of law enforcement treating my family differently from how they treat the neighbors. I am sick and tired of people making assumptions about my family based upon the color of our skin.

I am sick and tired of looking at my children and wondering what challenges they will face because of their brown skin. I am sick and tired of worrying about my children getting their driver's licenses, not because I fear their inexperience will cause an accident, but because their skin color will cause them to meet their fate at the hands of police. I am sick and tired of teaching the severity of this country's history of race and discrimination to my young children because the school systems do not take it as seriously as they should.

I am sick and tired of explaining why #BlackLivesMatter does not equate to "Black Lives Matter More." I am sick and tired of hearing about the criminal records of the black men murdered by men sworn to serve and protect them. I am sick and tired of seeing the senseless social media posts mocking the tragedies the belie the beautiful black souls that have been murdered.

I am sick and tired of the hypocrisy. Please do not tell me you have a black friend, and then equate that with the notion that you cannot be racist or prejudice. Please do not tell me that #WhiteLivesMatter as if that was ever in doubt, or that #AllLivesMatter, while being unwilling to affirm that #BlackLivesMatter. Please do not tell me that police need protection and then show me the one video you searched forever and a day to find on the internet of a police officer losing his life to a black man or woman. I do not support that loss of life, so please do not insult my intelligence or my integrity by implying that comparison pertains to the movement I support.

I am sick and tired of educating people on racism, discrimination, prejudice, and hate. I am sick and tired of constantly explaining my viewpoint. I am sick and tired of having to convince people what is clearly wrong is wrong. I am sick and tired of people who, despite the clear video evidence, are not willing to say that George Floyd's death was wrong. I am sick and tired of being challenged about affirmative action. I am sick and tired of explaining why women of color face similar, yet more difficult challenges, than those of white women.

I am sick and tired of the disparity in this country relative to healthcare for my brother and sisters versus that of White America. I am sick and tired of my people dying at a faster rate than their white counterparts because of the color of their skin. I am sick and tired of the stereotypes that black people cannot escape no matter how many serve their country, get degrees, excel in good jobs, buy homes, raise productive children, or become president.

I am sick and tired of not being allowed into places that have met their "quota" for black people. I am sick and tired of people assuming I cannot afford to buy something I can.

I am sick and tired of being treated, like my father was, as a token Negro.

However, regardless of how sick and tired I am or how much more I may become in the future, like my father, I will never be sick and tired of being Black. Words cannot express the love I have for my Blackness. I am part of a community that is always there to pick me up when I fall. I am part of a community that has demonstrated extraordinary resilience and I feel grateful to come from a people who endured and continue to endure tragedy while fighting for what is right with grace. I love the undeniable historical influence my community has had on music, art, dance, and food. I love the unspoken understanding when I walk down the street that I must acknowledge any brother or sister of mine I see, as a sign of solidarity and respect for who we are and where we come from. My strength comes from my Blackness. My compassion for others comes from my Blackness. My drive and ambition comes from my Blackness. It is my safe space—a where space I can let down my guard and be me without fear of retribution. For me, being Black is a privilege, an honor, and the best gift in life I have ever received.

In memory of Dr. Clarence Everett Douglas (1928–1996)

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