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I'm a writer. I pretty much live in a notebook with my fountain pen. I also write poetry that mak...
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It's Not About Race!

Why do Black people think that everything is about race?



Image captured by William Ukoh

This is a speech that I wrote for a local event. I thought I'd post it on Medium because it might help explain some context to white people.

Recently, I was the only person of color in a discussion group about race.

Always fun for us. During the first meeting, I introduced myself by saying that talks about race are emotional.

"I speak with a lot of emotion," I said, "and sometimes that emotion is anger. That should be allowed, because anger is a valid response to oppression. I'm not angry at you as an individual, but at a system of injustice."

Sometime later, a man said that he hoped we could "rise above emotions." He wanted an "intellectual discussion" using logic so we could "really get to heart of the matter" without getting "derailed by emotions."

Now there is a heck of a lot of subtext there, and I really want you to understand it. But I need to lay a bit of foundation. So we're going to step back in time a bit so I can explain how a guy beating up his cousin a thousand years ago still affects how we act differently in the dining room.



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A long time ago, there was this French cat named William.

One day, he jumped in a boat with a few hundred of his buddies and crossed the English Channel to pick a fight. That was when Norman France conquered Anglo-Saxon England.

Now when you conquer a people, you gotta make damn sure they know you're in charge. One of the best ways to do that is to make them speak your language. So French became the official language in England. Royalty spoke it, lawmakers spoke it. English was even outlawed in some areas. The French said their language was refined, proper, and that Anglo-Saxon was a crude, vulgar language of the unwashed rabble.

Total scam, of course. Anglo-Saxon English was just as refined, as beautiful, and it was hella poetic. But Billy and his boys had to convince "those people" that the French were "better." After awhile, the people started believing him.

Here's the crazy thing: We still do.

A damn lot of our words in English come from this period, and pretty much all of them seem... more refined, proper. This is why we "dine" at a fine restaurant but "eat" at a Barbecue. This is why we "drink" a beer, but might "imbibe" a 30-year-old bottle of Châteauneuf-du-Pape.

You need this to sink in: A dude makes up a bunch of crap about his cousin's language to justify three generations of oppression, and a thousand years later we still believe him.