

My name is Jennifer Bacon – from Denver Colorado – American Black
Today I share my observations and experience as a Black policy leader and elected official.

I have found my Blackness is at the center of what I do because it is at the center of how people place who I am and my power.

Black people have always served as a permanent mirror to this country, reflecting in our experience what Americans will and will not tolerate when it comes to the human condition; what Americans do and do not fundamentally believe when it comes to our American ideals.

When “whiteness” looks in the mirror that is American Black, they turn away, try to cover it or try to break the mirror.

Often when they look they do not see that ‘these truths are self-evident,’ that all people are created equal. The Black experience is a reminder of how close we are to succumbing to what may be our actual nature – that is one of seeking power and privilege or comfort — and not the ideals enshrined at our nation’s founding.

I am constantly told that in the few short years since the term Black Lives Matter came to prominence white people are tired of hearing they have privilege because they believe they do not. Privilege is creating and maintaining a world which is comfortable for who you are.

Too many who have power are uncomfortable right now. They do understand privilege, because they are fighting so hard to keep it – even at the expense of hallowed American ideals. They comfortability is their identity.

That is why today in America –the global beacon for free speech and freedom of expression – they are banning books and our histories out of fear of our power.

The strides you see Black policy leaders making are coming at great pains – as we push for ideals like reparations, the ‘comfort seeking’ has become more insidious and rooted in racism than we have seen since the Civil Rights Era. As I speak today I am receiving hate calls and threats telling me to go back to Africa because of my policy work. It has been made plain to me that this behavior is meant to inform Black people that we will be punished for leading.

As a policy leader, my Blackness demands that if we are only 4% of the population we should not be 20% of the incarcerated population or 30% of the unemployed population. These results are bc of system and policy created to uphold others’ privilege. As Black leader I urge you to be deliberate in rectifying these wrongs- they will not naturally correct. Our Solutions must be deliberate in action. Solutions must be fortified with policy anchors of accountability that counter the default notions of others’ comfort.

– In 2020 I removed police officers from our schools and wrote and passed the Black Excellence Resolution for Denver Public Schools. It held that Black children’s underperformance was the responsibility of the school system, that implicit bias is real and we must intentionally train to undo its harm. Further it set tangible goals to increase student performance, decrease their presence in discipline and special education – and that the Black community is included in defining excellence for its children.

Through the tribulations, I've learned that if oppressive systems can be made by man then a woman can un make them..! Your work is necessary and must continue - to find and set examples even for the U.S.

Thank you for your time.