



Hey Nigger – Can You Spare A Dime?

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Ira Glass, Host of NPR's *This American Life* is either very naïve, which I doubt, or very sneaky. I'm betting on sneaky. Good sneaky; maybe, even very good sneaky. Here's what I mean.

His program *Notes of a Native Daughter*, originally aired July 28th 2000 and re-aired May 16 2014, which featured Americans living in Paris was quite instructive – and here's where the sneaky part comes in.

He actually popped the race relations bubble - on the air - to an audience of millions. Millions of people who maybe didn't even know the bubble was being popped.

Now we all know all about the “Left” in today’s America. If there are evolution deniers on the Right, well, there are reality deniers on the Left, a whole bunch of them. Very intellectually manicured, but, deniers none the less. The Progressive Left – or just Progressives, you know those silly folks who think they know something, which is all they really know – something.

Well, anyway, I was listening to his program, and there it was – confirmation of everything that some people have been thinking and saying. Not just hinted at, or insinuated, but right there in your face.

Now, I don’t generally agree with everything from the “Right,” and even much less from the “Left.” But, there it was. And, Ira Glass broadcast it.

The episode featured the now deceased, author Janet McDonald, graduate of both a Brooklyn housing project and Vassar College, recorded at the time she was working as an attorney and living in Paris. As the narrative progresses, one understands that Ms. McDonald, who is emblematic of much of what is wrong with race relations in the US, is not to be denigrated for her racial perspective, but, rather to be admired for her frankness, through which we see a large segment of contemporary American Blacks.

As part of the broadcast Ms. McDonald relates a story from Paris.

“I was going to the movies with a friend of mine from Yale who is Black also – and like there’s a long line and we were like “Let’s jump the line – these White people, they’re gonna be scared of us – we’ll just jump the line. We’ll get to the front. So, of course we walk to the front of the line, “Yeah you wanna try me, I’m Black.”

“That usually works in New York.”

“These people were ready to rip our hair out, and they were White. I couldn't believe it. They were like – in French ‘What are you doing? The line starts back there. You can't just walk to the front of the line.’ – They were like ready to kick our butts.”

“I was shocked. These are White people – and they're not scared of us. (*Laughing*) That's when I realized I wasn't in Kansas anymore. It made me realize that the whole Black / White game just doesn't work outside of the United States.”

Later on Ms. McDonald explains that she was treated better when she was perceived as an American, rather than a French Black person. She also finds it difficult to believe that French Blacks think of her not as Black, but as American. And, although I doubt she would have wanted it, one must have a bit of sympathy for a New York City born kid, who graduates from an Ivy League college and can't feel that she's an American. That is really Ms. McDonald's problem, albeit a response to American Society.

”And I noticed as my French got better and better, that sometimes I wasn't as well received as I would be if I played up my American accent. Like French people if I walk into a shop and the people would think I was just, basically what I say – just another nigger – like one of their own – from Martinique or Guadalupe...”

I am not really surprised when Ms McDonald describes herself as she sees at herself. For me it was rather refreshing to actually hear someone say nigger rather than use its one letter acronym.

I may live in Tennessee, but I was born in the South Bronx and grew up in Brooklyn. We moved from Longfellow Avenue to Queens when the neighborhood changed and my sister started dating Sammy Caratini, a very nice young man, a Puerto Rican, in those days frequently known as a Spic. I liked Sammy. He wasn't a gang member. He didn't have a shiny black and green satin jacket with “Centaur” embroidered on it, like one of my older sister's other boyfriends. He was just a nice guy. In fact my mother regretted my sister having broken up with Sammy after she married her first husband in Brooklyn,

a local semi-hood, who grew up to become a detective captain in a south Florida police department. Anyway, Sammy was part of the reason we moved to Queens. We also moved because everyone was moving. I guess my parents thought it seemed like the thing to do. We didn't stay in Queens too long. Our neighborhood in the South Bronx was changing, but Jamaica High School in Queens hadn't changed. It was a bastion of anti-Semitic Jew haters. Not that you can have anti-Semitic Jew lovers, but how else do you describe a high school that gave my sister nothing but grief because she was Jewish?

We moved again; this time to safe Brighton Beach. For me, well I missed The Bronx and the things I did, like running my homemade skate box decorated with bottle caps, shooting my cardboard firing wooden zip gun, playing tops and meandering through the concrete ruins of the Metropolitan Baths adjacent to the Bronx River on Whitlock Avenue under the East Side IRT at the bottom of a block long hill that was Lowell Street. In the winter we sledged down Lowell Street, and somehow, even with someone at the bottom, miraculously we missed the oncoming traffic.

If anything that Ms. McDonald said bothered me it is because so much has changed since my youth. So much effort has been made to allow Black culture out of the shadows. So many Whites worked alongside Blacks to support their progress once the racial inertia of segregation was overcome, in spite of the momentum of civil rights being met so often with bloody resistance. It is obvious that Blacks still suffer prejudice at the hands of individual whites. Prejudice will always exist, as long as different races and religions exist. And, prejudice might even surface in a one color society without religion. People will always find a way to aggrandize themselves at the expense of others or simply find discomfort with other people for whatever reason. But, far too many Blacks today luxuriate in the suffering of their forbears, whose pain makes contemporary discomfort pale regardless of how bad contemporary Blacks perceive their situation. To hear the complaint from a successful Black describing the racial game she plays saddens me. It also saddens me that among those hapless New Yorkers whom she has played there may be the children of Whites who at one time worked to help Blacks move into the greater society. To see Whites as an enemy is to create a continuing alienation,

just as the old alienation is really just beginning to end. Playing the race card post 2000 is of no help to anybody other than getting ahead in a movie line.

But what Ms. Macdonald was doing was not new to Black and White relations in America, and it should change. It goes back to the divide between Stokely Carmichael and Martin Luther King. King looked at a future with equality of opportunity. Carmichael looked at replacing White rule with Black rule – at least to get the White Honky power structure out of the way. It was a difference of inclusion versus exclusion. It was a difference of equal power versus Black Power. King was Zen in his approach; more classically existential in his philosophy. He understood that neither extreme in the racial divide was headed in the right direction. He understood that in beginning to look forward one must first stop looking back. He understood all too well the hatred aimed at him and his race by many White people; he wanted to share the liberties and happiness that the White man had in America, not fight him for it - only to create more animosity. He understood that the hatred that Carmichael expressed was not an ending to the past, but a continuation of it; a postponement of the coming to fruition of the vision that he had.

Ms. Macdonald, with all the success that she shared with White Americans, wanted more. She wanted their place in line, if only because she was Black and thought she could take it – even if she didn't deserve it because she arrived later. Having attended an Ivy League school alongside Whites and having gotten a good job alongside Whites wasn't enough. Being included wasn't enough. Like Carmichael she wanted to replace the Whites wherever she could. Taking a White person's place in line was more than just a prank at a movie house. It represented a deep felt resentment that personal success couldn't displace. That Ms. MacDonald felt this way must make us ask how the Black kids in the urban ghettos who haven't gotten their place alongside Whites must feel. I fear the answer is not very pretty – and if we dare to look, the answer is all around us.

This past week a vote in Europe brought to the surface the ever existing strain of anti-Semitic hatred. It is hatred that is aimed at Jews and Blacks, but because of the previous number of Jews in Europe and the evolution of Jesus from Judaism, it was and is

traditionally aimed at the Jews. These same anti-Semites also hate many other groups. Some groups, as they become more common throughout Europe because of recent immigration, are added to the list of hated people. As Ms. McDonald learned in Paris – prejudice is not reserved for Black Americans. It is reserved for Blacks in many places around the world. But, as we see through recent events it is not just reserved for Blacks.

But, most of this wasn't news to me. Maybe it's my background. Growing up in New York and dealing with the mix of people on a subway. Maybe it's my having traveled, or witnessing segregation in the South when I was a kid on our first road trip to Miami Beach in our Kaiser sedan, and seeing a Black man terrified when we pulled over to ask him for help. Maybe it's having been on the edge a few times, being the outsider. Working in Europe and seeing anti-Semitism first hand in Barcelona. This time I wasn't a seven year old and it was aimed at me. And, I told the anti-Semitic fag hag lesbian just where she could put it. Before you judge – the fact is that she probably was less tolerant of me because I was straight more so than because I was Jewish. She ran the modeling agency I was working through, and it was the modeling agency house I was staying in. She was French – originally from Russia. I was American from Russian decent. But for her I wasn't a true Russian, and her "people used to kill my people." Well, that bitch wasn't gonna get anything over on me, and I told her so. And, before we go on – I have nothing against gays. I don't have anything against lesbians. It's just that some people wear their "colors" on their sleeves like gang members. And, well, maybe I outgrew gangs when I was a kid. I don't like cliques. I really don't even like groups. I don't even like the "N" word people - you know "NAZIs." You see, being Jewish, I'm still hung up on NAZIs. Those are the "N" word people that get my gut.

And as far as Blacks go, Willie Mays was my hero when I was growing up. First there was Captain Marvel and then there was Willie Mays. Willie was way cooler than Captain Marvel. Willie grew up in the segregated south and was forced to travel back there during segregation even after he had reached the majors. He loved baseball, and made everyone that watched him, love him. He was never Black Willie. He didn't wear his race

on his sleeve. He was Willie Mays, and all of New York and most of America had a love affair with him.

Willie didn't play games on White people. He just played baseball as well as he could, and that was pretty good.

One might think that someone who graduated from Vassar would think they had it pretty good; that they had played the game pretty good, and wanted people to share in their success. But, that doesn't seem to be the case for Ms. McDonald. I guess in spite of everything she achieved alongside a whole lot of other people of several different races – she's just Black. Major league baseball may have made Willie a successful person, but Vassar and a law degree and a great job in a great city, just left Ms. McDonald a nigger. What a shame.

But, you see what Ira showed us is not just about Ms. McDonald. It's about a whole group of successful Blacks. It's about recent American politics. It's about an entire Presidential administration. It's about an entire group of Black sharpies that's playing Whitey for a fool.

Maybe, it's because of my admiration for Willie, or my having already been around my own set of bases, and everything else that was part of my growing up, I see it for what it is – a bad play. I haven't been fooled a bit by Obama's race game. And, neither has the political Right. But any time the Right mentions it, they're shouted down by politically correct jerks. You know the type, they use the "N word" when they'd rather say nigger. Very interesting, while the Left and politically conscious hoi polloi bend over backwards about Blacks, and choke on saying even the "N word", their "N word" not mine - while the PC Left choke on their "N word" - Ms. McDonald didn't have any trouble enunciating the word nigger in a very clear tone - to a national audience.

But, there are complainers, like Eric Holder, who complains about how he's treated in Washington – because he's Black. I'm sure there are a whole bunch of White people

who wouldn't mind being the Attorney General of the United States, even if it meant being subjected to the kind of treatment that Eric Holder is receiving. Treatment, according to him, is much worse than that given to other White Attorney Generals. But, it was White people that treated Attorney General John Mitchell to jail.... Certainly a bit more harsh treatment than being disparaged... And, Janet Reno did not have an easy time of it suffering the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune after Waco. And, as I recall, the press and congress made Alberto Gonzales' life much less than a bed of roses. He complained, but never said it was because he was Hispanic. He was honest enough to know it was his boss's politics that caused him his grief. Ironically, Holder, who was born in The Bronx, never complained publicly about his racial treatment when he was a student at Columbia Law School, or a Federal Judge, or a federal prosecutor or deputy Attorney General. It is now under Obama that his race is a cause for his being mistreated and it is that which explains his being held in Contempt of Congress – not the fact that he has had major disagreements with Congress and has been less than forthcoming with information they have requested.

But, it's not really about Eric's treatment; it's about playing the race card and playing Whitey. It's about letting White people know that you'll scream prejudice if you're seriously criticized. It's a threat to make White people back off. And according to Ms. McDonald it seems to work.

Still, had an educated Black 'projects girl' not admitted on national radio that she and her peers use their race to advantage; in this instance for something so inane as taking cuts in a movie line, just because they could, we may never have had the confirmation. But, we did. And it was Ira that let us in on it.

So, when right wing radio talk jockeys say that the Obama administration is playing the race card, they're disparaged and painted as crazy. Now, there's a whole bunch of stuff for which the right wing talk show hosts should be chastised, but saying that the Obama White House is playing the race card is not one of them.

I hope you understand the import of what was demonstrated on Ira's program – the double standard for Black / White race relations in this country. We haven't outlawed the word "NAZI" In spite of the horror it brings with it. It may be rude and inconsiderate, but one can still call an Italian "wop." In fact, Italians call themselves all kind of names in movie after mob movie. But, hey what the hell! It is word usage insanity and its potential effect on a racial or ethnic group that's running rampant and is leading to the coming age of the thought police. And, yet Janet McDonald didn't hesitate to speak clearly on how a project nigger gets it over on White folks – that is New York White folks.

Just to be clear, were I in that movie line in New York, I wouldn't care if the line jumper were a ten foot green Martian, I'd open my mouth; but, then again I'm from old America, where all creeps were treated equally – regardless of the color of their skin.

But, about the thought police, poor Donald Sterling telling his Black girlfriend not to come to his games with Black men. He never called any of his Black players nigger. He never used the word. He never disparaged them. He dealt with his reality – his perception of how people perceive other people. Obviously, Mr. Sterling has a problem, but it's really not a problem with the Black race. He has an opinion about how his girlfriend should behave. His problem is a control problem; about how other people should live when he's paying their bills. America's race problem is that White people are told they aren't allowed to express their opinions about Blacks. That's what irks all the people that came down on Donald Sterling. He said what he felt – and said it privately. But, on the other hand, that's what's so instructive about Ira's show. Black people know all about the stereotype and use it to their advantage.

You see I learned my lesson about what a White guy could say and couldn't say a long time ago. I lived with a Black family in L.A. for several months in the 1960's. I shared an apartment in Rome a couple of years earlier with my Black friend Henry. Henry had a couple of brothers and his brothers had a bunch of friends. They were always in the basement of the house in the Baldwin Hills. It was a hillside house that had a basement that led out to the pool. Henry's mother was a darling heavy set lady who had learned

about race early on. She and her husband were one of the first Black families to move into the neighborhood in the fifties. Occasionally, I was told, she would answer the door as the housekeeper if the situation demanded it.

Henry's brothers, their friends and I would sit in that basement. More likely than not, a joint was being passed around. The TV was on with the sound down and Motown was on the record player. As people would steam in, they always had a story that usually began, "Man I was coming down Crenshaw and this crazy nigger was" or, "that nigger was doing that." Every Black man was in fact a nigger. In fact they were all niggers. They referred to each other as niggers. "Nigger – hush your mouth. Nigger do this. Nigger don't do that. Nigger – you gonna eat all that pie? Hey Nigger when you go upstairs get me a soda." Anyway there I was. And, one day I came down stairs and began a story with, "Man I was on Sunset and this Nigger was....." Well - silence. Suddenly the laughing and joking around stopped. You could hear the Temps singing. There they were, six or seven niggers all looking at a White boy. Henry grabbed my ass and got me out of there. He said to me upstairs, "You can't call someone a nigger." "Henry", I said, "what the hell are...?" Henry looked at me clearly – "they can call each other nigger. You can't."

You know what I say to that? - "bullshit." Now - I won't go to Harlem and scream nigger on 125th Street and 7th Avenue, because I'd like to get out of there alive. I'm not stupid. In fact, I don't know that I've ever called anyone a "Nigger" as an insult. But, it is bullshit. And, Janet McDonald made it clear. It's not about being relegated to using the "N word." It's about blackmailing the White race on how they have to behave. Now you know that all the Black people that you're so afraid of offending are laughing at and offending you.