



Libre with her husband CJ and son, Tristan on the GWB, Memorial day

her fiercely AND she was unequivocally a racist. She is—what some call—a “white Latin”: physically Caucasian, ethnically Puerto Rican with Spanish as her primary language. My paternal grandfather, Papí Quentin, was a Taíno Indian, dark as night. He was so intelligent and strong—he was my hero! They met in the 1930s on the island. Mamí Paca never learned English and she had very negative, ignorant thoughts about black people, including my mother.

Papí Quentin was a merchant marine. He enlisted in order to represent his country, meet other people, travel and provide for his family. He was not a racist. So, imagine that dynamic in his marriage. He was not accepted in the Marines as a soldier; due to his skin color he was relegated to kitchen duty. He often bought his grandchildren toys, books and other gifts from his travels around the world. Throughout my childhood, my family had many hard conversations about the struggles they experienced in their lives racially out in the world while simultaneously fighting that fight in our own homes. Despite this, I never felt anything other than love from either of my paternal grandparents; they still hold a great place in my heart. Mamí Paca eventually saw the error in her ways and

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her thoughts changed through hard dialogue and lots of love.

My mother's parents, Mom-Mom and Pop-Pop, were both African-American, and one generation away from sharecroppers living in the South. Pop-Pop's parents were slaves and Mom-Mom's father was a Cherokee Indian. He had jet black hair down his back and always rode his horse, “Dan” (the grandkids always thought that was a funny name for a horse). Mom-Mom was a factory worker and was so proud to purchase her own home with my grandfather, a veteran and a tailor in Queens, NY. Their feelings towards white people were shaped by how they were treated during their time in the 1930s South.

Their time in the South was vile, terror filled and yet, they survived—a feat in and of itself. They fled the South for opportunities and equality. They learned the hard way that there are also inequalities in the North; the racism and terror are just delivered differently. Thus, growing up, my grandparents didn't want my siblings and I to talk to or hang out with white people. They believed white people might endanger us or get us killed. Luckily, my parents softened the conversations for us, in order to ensure that we weren't programmed to

# Growing Up With Racism—Even In Your Own Family

Under lockdown, a new tradition has spread from one Brunswick office to another: At day's end, a colleague sends a short essay to his or her working-from-home office mates. These are funny, sad, inspirational and philosophical notes, often sprinkled with favorite recipes and TV shows. The Review is selecting a few to share with a larger audience. On June 4, Libré Jones, an Executive Assistant, shared this with her New York colleagues.

I WOULD MUCH RATHER DISCUSS THE FAMILY vacation I was planning to take to Guatemala, or meeting up with my cigar club friends to share a smoke. Instead, over the past few weeks, my world has turned upside down. First with the coronavirus and then with the country literally burning down. But I do not want to discuss quarantine, masks or ... recipes, even.

Brunswick's **LIBRÉ JONES** (center) shares stories from her heritage, including what it was like adoring a grandmother who was also “unequivocally racist.”

**Warning Label:** I will use words that may make some of you uncomfortable: “privilege,” “race,” “black,” “white.” Therein lies a bit of the issue, the words may make some of you uncomfortable, but they are actively and physically tied to my daily reality. More importantly, they are tied to the lives of all who look like me across this country and especially in our offices. I can imagine, many of you may not know where to begin. I have included some resource links at the end of this email.

*I have personally spoken to many of our black colleagues at varying levels within Brunswick—many for the first time this week—and we are not okay.*

**Confession:** I grew up with racism in the world and, more closely, in my own family. My father is from Puerto Rico (Borinquen) and my mom is from North Carolina. My paternal grandmother, Mamí Paca, was my favorite grandparent; I loved

## RESOURCES

### Article recommendations:

**Your Black Colleagues May Look Like They're Okay—Chances Are They're Not:**  
<https://www.refinery29.com/en-us/2020/05/9841376/black-trauma-george-floyd-dear-white-people>

**First, Listen. Then, Learn: Anti-Racism Resources For White People**  
<https://www.forbes.com/sites/juliawuench/2020/06/02/first-listen-then-learn-anti-racism-resources-for-white-people/#43c0805216ee>

**Our Democracy's founding ideals were false when they were written. Black Americans have fought to make them true.**  
<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/08/14/magazine/black-history-american-democracy.html>

### Streaming recommendations:

Netflix - American Son, 13th

**Film recommendations:**  
 Just Mercy  
 I am not your Negro

### Book Lists recommendations:

**Understanding and Dismantling Racism: A Booklist for White Readers**  
<https://www.charisbooksandmore.com/understanding-and-dismantling-racism-booklist-white-readers>

**Looking for books about racism? Experts suggest these must-read titles for adults and kids**  
<https://www.usatoday.com/story/entertainment/books/2020/06/02/books-to-learn-more-anti-racism-adults-kids/5306873002/>

hate others (fun fact: I went to a high school that was 68 percent white, my grandmother was terrified most of the time).

Those conversations proved to me that it is an active, continuing lesson for all people to be anti-racist. We are all responsible. It shouldn't only be the job of those individuals who experience it firsthand. It starts in your home, your circle of friends and at work.

I understand that this is a horrifying time and you don't know what to say to your black colleagues or to each other. At this point, your black colleagues don't even know what to say to each other! However, there is courage in speaking out against things you witness in the store, park, public (and especially private) spaces.

Acknowledgement is a great first step and a willingness to educate yourselves and become anti-racist, is a superb second. ♦