

More than a few 'bad apples'



By Nate Smelle

It never fails, every time I write about racism there is always some form of pushback from a handful of individuals who feel the need to justify their hatred of others by supporting others' hatred. In most cases, this predictable few write in to defend the almost always white male perpetrator of the latest hate crime to make the news.

This was the case when I covered the murder of six worshipers at the Islamic Cultural Centre of Quebec City by a 27-year-old white supremacist on Jan. 29, 2017 while working for a newspaper in the Niagara Region. It was also the case after writing about: the public murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery; the attempted murder of Jacob Blake; the thousands of missing or murdered Indigenous women and girls in Canada; and, now the 215 Indigenous children found buried beneath the former Kamloops Indian Residential School in British Columbia.

When discussing why no lives matter until Black, Asian, Muslim, and Indigenous lives matter, there is no avoiding the fact that every hate crime in modern history has been the product of an economic and political system that is rooted in racism and inequality. As anyone paying attention knows, this system of ours provides a select few with an obscenely opulent standard of living by exploiting the quality of life and basic necessities of the majority.

As our track record has proven since the beginning of colonization in Canada, this advantage inherited by the most wealthy hoarders also reveals a pattern of systemic racism that is still ruining lives today. For some reason, the words "systemic racism" seem to be a trigger point for those who rush to speak out in defense of hatred. Instead of looking at how the system guiding us capitalizes on divisions of colour, religion, gender, nationality, etc. this tiny faction often chooses to blame the most undeniably hate-motivated crimes on what they label as "a few bad apples."

What is missing from this analysis, however, is the fact that almost every one of these "bad apples" has bought into a system which encourages us to distrust other cultures.

Again, before I could finish my reflection on the origin what was the latest hate crime to hit the headlines - the 215 Indigenous children killed by our government and the Catholic Church's residential school system - another act of racial hatred has entered our national conversation.

On Sunday evening, another white supremacist decided to snuff out the lives of an entire family while they were enjoying a walk together. What would motivate someone to kill a family, one might ask. Well, in this instance it was the family's Muslim faith. According to police, the 20-year-old family killer hopped the curb with his pick-up truck to run down Salman Afzaal, his wife Madiha, their daughter Yumna, their son Fayez, and Salman's mother. Only nine-year-old Fayez Afzaal, survived the terrorist attack.

As expected, there are already more than a few bad apples attempting to justify this evil by making excuses for the cowardly racist responsible for this disgusting hate crime. Questioning their motives, I can't help but wonder if these individuals realize that they are among the bad apples spoiling our bushel.