

The founding of this state as a white utopia and the laws created to sustain it have had lasting effects on my black family. I love my city, but at times I have found that my city regards me with suspicion and disdain. My skin color and the skin color of my family members invites unnecessary scrutiny, assumptions, and bias. The incident described herein happened nearly 20 years ago, but I still tear up when I think about it. I will not name individuals or organizations.

My niece was born in November and a few months later our mother died. So my niece brought so much comfort to all of us as new life often does. My sister's daughter, my niece, less than a year old for sure came down with what we later learned was croup- a common ailment of babies. Her father, a big black man over six feet tall with dark chocolate skin took her into the emergency room of a local hospital as he was caring for her while her mother, my sister, worked. So the context is set. A few hours after their arrival, I get a frantic phone call from my sister. "Come to the hospital!" she screamed a new mom on the edge of a breakdown.

I arrive at the hospital disheveled and worried. The hospital had called CPS on our family because an X-ray showed my niece's ribs were broken. She clearly had experienced violence according to them. All persons known to care for her were to be interviewed, including me. I often had my niece in my care. She was the first baby of any of my siblings, my mother's first grandbaby.

We sat there for hours, nervous, sad, and suspicious of each other. I found the claim outrageous as we are and have always been gentle loving people. We have cared for so many children, nurtured so many children. We don't believe in hitting our children. We could not fathom the rough handling of a baby that would result in broken ribs.

Hours later another doctor looks at the X-ray. The original medical professional misread the X-ray. He made a mistake that he never checked, one that wasn't called into question. He made mistakes that led to assumptions that went unchecked and caused trauma for me and my family. At every step of a simple emergency visit for a baby with Croup, they failed us.

Even though my niece is a college student at an HBCU in the south, I am still hurt. I am sobbing simply from reflecting on that horrific experience. We must repair the wrongdoings of the past and it all starts with acknowledging the truth about everything that happened, everything that has brought us to this point. We can do it. We can be "a shining beacon of hope" for the rest of the county. Oregon stand up and acknowledge the pain inflicted on people of color and especially black people. I swear we just be living our daily lives and out of the blue- bam bias and bigotry slap is in the face.

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