

My name is Chancelor Pele Daniel, and I have been dealing with issues of race and racism for my entire life.

My White mother moved from her hometown/college-town of Clearwater, FL to San Francisco because she wanted to experience life in a more liberal area of the country. My Black father moved from his hometown of Port de Paix, Haiti to San Francisco because he wanted to pursue his dream of becoming a doctor. They met on a streetcar while she was working as a medical transcriptionist and he was pursuing his biochemistry degree and playing soccer at San Francisco State, then got married at City Hall, just a few years after the US Supreme Court declared anti-miscegenation laws illegal.

After my father finished his residency at Martin Luther King Jr Community Hospital in Los Angeles, we moved to Huntington Beach where our family stuck out like a sore thumb. I always did well in school, had lots of friends, and enjoyed the beach, playing soccer, etc., but we always joked that our house was the “Black Neighborhood.” When several of my mostly White friends started playing club soccer together my parents encouraged me to join a club of mostly Latino kids in nearby Costa Mesa, which I had often heard my White friends refer to as Costa Mexico.

The club team I joined was made up of kids whose parents were from Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Colombia, along with two White kids from Newport Beach. We carpooled to games because lots of our parents worked weekends, worked recreational soccer tournaments at UCI to help cover our playing fees, and taught each other about the nuances of our different cultures. Looking back, it was everything soccer was meant to be - a place for people of different backgrounds to come together in the pursuit of a common goal.

A significant contingent of my teammates started working early in their teenage years in order to help their families make ends meet, so those of us who could afford to keep playing club soccer started to splinter off to other teams. At that point, I rejoined a lot of my school friends with Wolfpack Soccer Club where the racial makeup, the culture, and the overall experience were very different. I usually felt accepted and supported by my teammates partly because I wasn't as bothered by the odd microaggressions that made the experience less fun for my parents who were keenly aware of every instance of covert or overt racism.

After graduating high school, a sizable group of my soccer friends decided to play together at nearby Orange Coast College and I was invited to start coaching with the

U12s at Wolfpack. As I embarked on the journey of a socially conscious college student I delved deeper into topics that were discussed openly in my house but were rarely breached in my high school classes. Using a Critical Race Theory lens, I studied the history of nearly every continent, took various Women's studies classes, and earned my degree in Black Studies and Political Science. All of which helped me develop a deeper understanding of how racism in particular and systemic oppression in general impact everything in society - including soccer. Living in Huntington Beach, I had always dealt with the potentially deadly threat of skinheads and neo-nazis, but I started to realize the more nuanced ways that less overt racism had affected me as a youth player.

I started to recall every time someone asked me where Black people's extra muscle was, or how come I wasn't super fast like Black people, or told me I did well in school because my mom was White, and so on and so on. I also started to realize why my parents wouldn't let me go toilet papering with my friends in middle/high school when I started getting pulled over, handcuffed, and questioned by the police for no reason more often. Consequently, I became more outspoken and aware of how I could positively impact the world around me.

I stopped letting friends and colleagues get away with insensitive and/or racist comments by helping them understand why they were wrong and the impact their views had on society. I was able to have productive conversations with well meaning people because they had never seen the world through the eyes of a Black person, or understood their own biases - because why would they? The world around us (school, media, family, friends, etc.) didn't challenge us to do better, it just spoke in platitudes about equality and understanding without acknowledging/discussing how to get there. The progress I made with people around me inspired me to infuse these lessons into my coaching style.

I'll never forget the first time I heard the parents of a mostly White team I was coaching started screaming "SPEAK ENGLISH!" at a team of mostly Latino kids. At halftime I could see my team was frustrated with the way the game was going and how easy it would be for them to start internalizing the racism their parents were projecting. I asked them, "if those kids are so dumb, then how come they can speak two languages but you all only speak one?" We had a laugh and I started to see the light bulbs turn on. I explained to them the other team wasn't using some brilliant secret code, they were saying the same things we were saying in words that we could learn pretty quickly if we cared to.

Lots of kids I coached at Wolfpack went on to have impressive soccer careers, but I am even more proud to see them out protesting and posting on social media in solidarity with Black Lives Matter. They had a coach who was comfortable having difficult conversations with them, held them accountable, and they became the change I want to see in the world.

Which brings us to the moment the world is experiencing right now. During this pandemic we have all had to grapple with the fragility of human life that Black people have grappled with everyday for hundreds of years. Something about the way George Floyd was murdered caused more non-Black people to see the impact of racism on police brutality against Black people and in society in general, really listen to Black stories/perspectives, and stand with us. It has even led to random companies and organizations letting us know that “Black Lives Matter.”

In the wake of George Floyd’s death and the subsequent beginning of the protests, I got a call from San Francisco Elite Academy President, Joe Dugan. He wanted to hear my thoughts about what was going on, discuss what we as a club could do to help, and figure out if this was something we needed to address with our members. Above all, Joe wanted to make sure that we were taking meaningful action to support the fight against systemic racism and not just making statements. So I thought about the purpose of the Black Lives Matter movement, its policy goals, and how it applied to a youth soccer club.

Are we constantly taking steps to make our programs more accessible to a diverse group of players? Yes. We do outreach projects, work/partner with groups across the city, and offer financial support with a stated goal of never having to turn players away.

Do we have a diverse coaching staff equipped to support all types of players? Yes. In fact our staff is “majority minority,” we openly talk about issues of race, support for undocumented students, how we can hire more women, etc.

Do we have a diverse leadership group where non-White people have a voice in important decisions? Yes. Although three of our four board members are White men, one of them, Po Bronson, has written a book with a chapter about “Why White Parents Don’t Talk About Race.” Our Technical Advisory Committee includes myself and the Boys Director of Coaching, Leonard Griffin, who is one of the few Black Head Coaches in NCAA soccer, as well as the Director of Player Development, Tom Atencio, who is Latino and also a College Guidance Director with an Ethnic Studies degree, Jeff Wilson.

Knowing these internal efforts, I felt like it was enough that the club expressed solidarity with our coaching staff to make sure they felt supported, and continue with the work our leadership staff was doing to create a safe, progressive, learning environment for our players. However, I failed to realize that we have finally moved into a time where social media or public facing silence - even silence coupled with action - can be viewed with suspicion.

Last weekend, I had a great conversation with parents who are raising a child just like me. An African-American mother and a White father who want to be sure that their club not only stands against systemic racism and violence, but more importantly is going to be able to support and protect their child from racism in all its forms.

I took the opportunity to hear the father's perspective and we discussed how youth soccer clubs and community organizations could and should expressly address the Black Lives Matter movement. I gave him some insight about the internal structure of our club and some of the things we have been doing, even before the spotlight on the movement, to acknowledge social justice. I provided, for example, that we have a diverse staff who not only coach but have leadership positions, and organically address issues with our teams where it makes sense because we want to make sure that we live up to our core values of Respect, Commitment, Perseverance, Community and Excellence.

In the last month Leonard Griffin has done an [interview with USF](#) where he shares his experiences of being an African American head coach at the Division I level, what that means to him, and how the death of George Floyd has impacted his program. I have had a zoom call with our 07 Boys team to discuss the BLM movement and protests, my experiences with racism, and my difficult/scary interactions with police. We have both been engaging with a nationwide network of Black coaches and colleagues in general around the country who are working together to help drive the game we all love forward.

San Francisco Elite Academy takes a holistic view of player development, so going forward we want to take even more concrete steps to address systemic racism and racial inequities in our club. As of July 6, 2020, I will be stepping into the role of Chief Diversity Officer, in addition to my current roles.

We will also implement the following:

- A reporting system for instances of racism, observed or experienced that will be carefully considered for continued education, reform, and policy changes as needed.

- Emails can be sent directly to cdaniel@sfea.org or anonymously through <https://www.guerrillamail.com>
- Anonymous letters can be written to BOD at SF Elite Academy at 4308 Geary Blvd. #302, San Francisco, CA 94118
- Mandatory staff education on anti-racism awareness
 - All coaches will be required to complete training courses on anti-racism starting with courses on Workplace Diversity, Inclusion and Sensitivity, Microaggressions, and Unconscious Bias.

We all can't get it right in the first instance, but the key is communication and action. Through sincere acknowledgement and discussions about these complex issues, we can move forward together and be the change we want to see in the world. I know this won't be easy, but I am looking forward to helping our club and our game be the best it can be.