

There are some things you see that stay with you long after the moment has passed. Not because you were personally affected, but because you suddenly see just how ugly the world can be when you least expect it.

I feel racism is often spoken about as if it is something distant – something that only happens in the news, history books or somewhere else. But it is happening on ordinary streets in front of ordinary people.

On Saturday night I was in Glasgow and walking home with my boyfriend when we witnessed two white, middle-aged men kick over a delivery driver's bike and push him. From the way they spoke to him it was clear that his race was the main reason he was targeted. He was just trying to do his job.

A nearby bouncer came over to defend him and after a bit of a brawl the two men walked away. Unfortunately, the same way we were headed.

I heard them behind us talking about how “class” their violence was and genuinely saw them high five. I cannot even begin to detail how angry, embarrassed and upset I was. It was disturbing to witness such hate for another human being just because of the colour of their skin.

As we walked away, I heard them stop and begin shouting at another delivery driver, again, because of his race.

I keep replaying the event in my head. I feel utterly guilty. I keep thinking: *Should we have done more? Should we have stepped in?*

The truth is, we were scared. Neither of us knew what those men were capable of. Walking away felt immoral, even though it was probably the safest thing to do. Though, I am utterly embarrassed.

I am a young, white woman and I know that I will never experience racism the way those men did. I know I move through the world with privileges that so many other people don't have. And seeing two people that look like me use that privilege to intimidate and humiliate others made me feel ashamed.

I don't believe being white makes me responsible for the actions of other white people. But I do believe it gives me the responsibility to speak up when I see racism. I wish we had done more to help or support those targeted men, but who could have known what may happen if we did.

However, this is not about me or my boyfriend. It is about those men who were threatened just because of the colour of their skin. And, as controversial as this may be but I am going to say it anyway, I bet those two white men who inflicted violence on someone just because of how they look would be the first to accept help from a Muslim doctor when they are hurt. I bet they would be the first to happily be treated by a nurse who moved here from another country. I bet they would order in food without thinking about who may be delivering or cooking it.

I bet they rely on foreign scientists developing medicines, engineers keeping our infrastructure running, carers looking after the elderly, teachers educating children and literally everything far and few between. They would accept all of this without questioning where these people came from — until suddenly, a person's accent, skin colour or religion becomes something to hate.

That is the contradiction I cannot understand. You cannot decide that someone is a valued member of society when you need their help, but less deserving of respect when you see the colour of their skin.

If we want a world where women can demand respect, equality and safety, we must demand those things for everyone.