

BEING BLACK IN AMERICA

by Acyrah West

Being born black in America was a gift and a curse. I was born in a country that was founded on white supremacy, and I live in a world where I can never escape the racism that surrounds me, like I'm in a glass box being filled continuously with the negativity you receive all because of the color of your skin.

Racism, I believe, is taught. Being told as a little kid that black people are below the white people, that whites are the superior race. But I was taught to put my hands on the dashboard when we get pulled over by a police officer so I don't get shot or my parents don't get arrested. I was taught I was gonna experience racism as a little girl just because I was experiencing it in daycare because of a toy. I was taught I wouldn't be accepted because of the color of my skin. I was taught that I would experience challenges growing up and going into the real world because of the way I look. But I also was taught that I had to be proud to be black, to feel beautiful in my own skin, to ignore all the comments I receive and to avoid the hate I'm given, that I'm born with. All because the ones around me don't accept me like they accept their own.

But being a little kid and seeing your parents acting in a certain way to other races will make an impact on you. How your parents grew up affects the way you were raised. And how white people only value the culture because of our music and the "street, black, negro style" and are obsessed with how we look, which is fantasized about, like we are fictional characters in their movie, in their book.

Simple ignorance. But they were taught this way. They were told that these things aren't wrong. Now I'm not giving an excuse for being racist. Because most of my peers and teachers know what's right and what's wrong as well as any grown adult. But it's in their mindset if they can physically see and observe all the articles about police brutality and reports on the news about how a black man, woman, or child was shot.

Even in today's society I could be called ni**er in school and there wouldn't be a good enough consequence at all, for a change to happen. Or a teacher or students making constant micro aggression comments and knowing you can't say anything because there won't be a change is suffocating.

Where peers of mine post something on social media about black face or a simple "white

lie" party saying "BLM." Now please tell me how this makes any sense, tell me how this is acceptable in our world, our now "amazing society," in our generation. See, racism is carried down multiple generations and it's not even all racism towards just Black and African Americans, it's also racism towards Asians, Hispanics, any POC (Person Of Color). I still cannot go out to a grocery store without experiencing racism. White women clutching their purses to their side as you walk by or holding the top of the purse thinking you're going to steal anything from them. White people thinking you will move out of their way like they are royalty as if I should bow down to their feet.

It's so sad that even at school racism happens. Every. Single. Day. I can't remember one day where I didn't experience racism at school. Sure, they teach in school about slavery, the CRM (Civil Rights Movement) and have you read books like "To Kill A Mockingbird," along with watching videos on how the slaves were shipped and taken from their home and brought to plantations. They all got murdered because they would disobey their "master." But we never talk about the real deep history of racism.

We never talk about how racism affects our daily lives and mental health. We never talk about how the justice system does us wrong and has affected millions of black lives. We never talk about how we are viewed as violent, aggressive, angry people.

I want you to imagine being the only black person in a classroom. The teacher talks about the slaves being taken and treated in poor conditions. While you're sitting there everyone looks at you when they see something graphic about the slaves or being black. Anything about being black. You're stared at as if you're a foreign creature. Or people just sit waiting for a reaction. This is what school is for me: constant hate and racism surrounding me like a swarm of bees.

You can't peacefully change a person who in their core only respects wealth and power, and the conquering of land and people by the way of violence. To them, we are weak because we refuse to do what is necessary to be free. Fight by any means necessary. That's the only thing they respect outside of money.

Our voices need to be heard.