

The School System Underestimated Us

Just imagine you being told you did not come off as a black individual over a phone call. "What does that mean?" you would ponder. What if your friends all come to the same consensus that the way you dress does not fit the standards of how a black person should dress? Do the high-achieving grades you have achieved baffle your friends and or teachers? Just the thought of being in the academic stream is puzzling enough, but now you are not only part of the competition; you are the competition.

Society's ignorance is the underlying factor as to why Blacks are so stigmatized. Members of the community are so ignorant they would not be able to tell what left is from right, or what good is from bad for that matter. We are marked with titles such as "low-class", "incompetent", "delinquents" and "under-achievers". These assumptions are past their expiry date. It is 2018 for God's sake, individuals should learn how to be more non-judgemental, leading to an all-inclusive environment. Disavowing and eradicating all negative energies to better themselves and everyone else. The ethnic background should not define any aspect of any one's character, nor should it influence how one should judge another.

Microaggressive comments are where ignorance and racism stem from. Those little comments such as "That's not very black of you to do!" or "I don't see you as black!" are very accurate phrases that do represent ignorance and close-mindedness. These comments are not to be brushed off or disavowed, they should be faced head-on and tackled. The cycle starts like this: microaggressive remarks are made, they are then brushed off and disavowed. The same comments are consistently expressed and engrained into the young black child's mind. The powerful and capable young black star is so numb to the microaggressive remarks that they cannot even stand up for what they believe since those comments have put them down. Further allowing their oppressors to continue as they wish. Allowing these comments to be made over and over again does pull the individual away from what they like the most, from what they love doing the most, from what they like wearing the most and from smaller things like what kind of music they want to listen to.

These judgements must be known beforehand and then squashed if any change is to happen. But, these comments are only made when intimidated, scared that the dark chocolate-skinned individual is superior since they can get high grades, wear different clothes every day, and speak well when engaged in conversation. Why does my ethnicity continue to intimidate others? Perhaps because of the many Black trailblazers such as the famous Martin Luther King Jr. and Barack Obama. And then the unrecognized that will forever stay in the history of my heritage, such as Emmett Till.

Yet I am not allowed to be apart of the consensus that dictates what colour my shoes should be or what brand t-shirt I should wear. But I can control how I want to dress. Since being judged based on the colour of the skin is not enough, the hardened exterior that is impermeable to derogatory terms cracks when comments about how I choose to dress are made. " I didn't know you could wear that brand!" has been uttered time and time again.

Apologies for not conspicuously buying apparel and accessories, but when did brands become exclusive to one ethnicity? Is it because my prominent nose is not able to sniff out the latest fashion fads? That my four-finger forehead literally has the words "can't afford nice clothing" plastered in a legible font. I hope to reach the standards set for me, how I should, you know, tie my shoes, wear my Champion and Çomme Des Garçon collaboration hoodie, or if I should or should not wear my 24-karat plated watch on either arm. You know as well as I do that I do not want to scare the competition, I want to leave them in awe, no even better, leave them in utter regret for doubting my fellow brothers and sisters' capabilities.

What I am capable of is not to be scrutinized by people who are not willing to be progressive and leave insulting comments out of their little brains. Having to get tests back from other students since the teacher believed it was not possible that the student with the short, coarse and curly hair actually achieved a high mark. Feeling pleasure that they had let other students look at how low I "may" have scored as they passed my paper around to me. Just being ignored when I raise my hand, not that I have already answered so many questions, but I did not understand the question. The way I took my education into my own hands is what has most individuals puzzled. "Never have I ever seen someone like you so passionate about school!" people say as if I have done the impossible.

Is it so hard to accept that black people can do so much more than expected of us? Without our contribution to historical events, such as getting a man into orbit, would never have happened. Thanks to Mary Jackson, Katherine Johnson and Dorothy Vaughan for setting the bar and allowing Americans to pride themselves on getting a man into outer space. I would love to continue what they have done and get a man to the Moon but me, I have already done it. I have amazed so many people that their faces are out of this world, they might as well be already on the Moon.

It is safe to say that my skin tone is what gives me power because, in the end, I can stand in the sun for a prolonged duration without getting burnt, ready to chew through the toughest of meat, play brass musical instruments and compete in an eight-hundred-metre dash. But what would I know? I am just a high-school student that did not ask to join the competition without ever knowing beforehand that there was one.