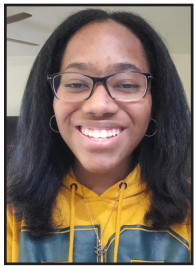


BEING BLACK IN AMERICA



By
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This year has been hard for many of us but especially traumatic for Black people. From the explosive revival of the Black Lives Matter movement on social media due to the deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and many other innocent victims, to the discrimination we live with in our daily lives, we've had, to say the least, a difficult year.

We've had our value as human beings up for debate for centuries, but it's been remarkably loud these past few months. We've had to deal with condescending comments and people demonizing us for demanding equality, reparations and the dismantling of a system that oppresses us. Even peers from our own school have participated in the alienation and gaslighting.

Describing being Black in America simply as "hard" would be an extreme understatement. It is truly a wonder how Black people wake up every day and just live their lives.

I know that I will never live in a world where I'm not oppressed and discriminated against for the color of my skin. I know I'll always live in a world that has my dad working three jobs just to provide for my brothers and me. The same world that has me 613 miles

away from my mom because of a protractive and broken immigration process. The same world that will always hold me at a disadvantage of all opportunities that may come my way.

I know that no matter what country I decide to step foot in I won't be at peace. The trauma of my ancestors, my own experiences with racism and my fears for my brothers will always be with me. I know that being a Black woman means I have a target on my back.

I know that Black members of the LGBTQ+ community, especially Black trans women, have an even bigger target on their back and that we aren't doing enough to protect them from the violent hate crimes being committed against them and that we need to protect them the way we pledge to protect cisgender heterosexual Black men and women.

I know we'll be protesting for years to come. I know we'll be rioting for years to come. I know we'll be fighting for a revolution for years to come.

The difficulties and struggles of being Black in America give me a glimpse of what it's like to be Black anywhere else in the world because the mistreatment of Black people is universal.

The preference for lighter skin tones instead of darker ones is a sick, unethical mindset that is unfortunately shared globally. We've all heard the conversation about representation in the media, but I'm going to mention it again.

Growing up in the early 2000s was hard for a lot of us

due to the lack of representation in the media. As a young girl in Jamaica, the only U. S. show I remember watching on Disney Channel with a black, dark-skinned female lead was "That's So Raven." Barely being able to see people like me on TV was damaging to my mental health.

I grew up with the mentality that lighter skin was better; more appealing and beautiful. I used to be envious and filled with frustration and sadness that I got my dad's darker skin tone as opposed to my mom's lighter one. Simply because I didn't see myself represented in shows, movies or even in the dolls I played with.

Thankfully, I was able to grow out of that mindset and realize that Black is beautiful. I love my dark skin and wouldn't trade it for the world.

It genuinely breaks my heart to know that I went through that at such a young age and that other Black kids, especially Black girls, did too.

Now, it's euphoric to see that a lot of us are being loud about our love for being Black. I think Black people as a whole are in a state of self-love that I've never witnessed before. Maybe it's because now we have access to social media but I've never seen, in my generation, "I'm Black and I'm proud" exemplified so tremendously. With trends like "#BlackBoyJoy" and "#BlackGirlMagic," I can't help but be ecstatic for my people.

(On a side-note: we really need a self-love hashtag like those for non-binary Black

people.)

To me, being Black means being strong, proud, happy, beautiful, funny, bold, powerful and thousands of other adjectives that embody our color, history and culture.

I love being Black.

"We are the most beautiful creatures in the whole world, Black people. And I mean that in every sense," musician Nina Simone said.

**BETWEEN 2013 AND
2019**

1944

**BLACK PEOPLE
WERE KILLED BY
POLICE OFFICERS**

3%

**OF CASES SAW
CHARGES**

1%

**REACHED
CONVICTIONS**

Source: Mapping Police Violence

**GRAPHIC BY EDUARDO
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