

Dyonne Diggs

August 24, 2016

ENGL 300

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It was February 26th, 2012 and I was scrolling social media as I normally did. I checked Facebook, Instagram and lastly was Twitter (my favorite). I checked to see if I had any interactions and then I checked to see what was trending. I kept seeing the name Trayvon Martin over and over again with a hashtag in front of the name. I saw major news outlets also tweeting on their official page about a shooting in Florida of an unarmed black teen. I believe it was then that activism began for me. After reading the details of the shooting, listening to Zimmerman's 911 call, going to vigils for Trayvon, I believed (before the actual court proceedings) that justice would be served.

After the shooting, I followed closely until the trial. It was a given to me, Zimmerman was guilty. After I watched news analyst demonize mothers who let their children walk around at night with hoodies on (insert Scooby-doo confusion). I watched as the race of the jurors rolled out. I foolishly wondered why any of this matter, race, hoodies , etc. I thought that by adding these factors in they were obscuring the point that a child was murdered by a man (not even a police officer) that stalked him down, was advised not to pursue and did it anyway. I watched the trial unfold, witnesses, mock scenarios etc and when I heard "Not guilty" I had never been so hurt in my life. My mother called me crying, social media was outraged and in disbelief. The

system had failed Trayvon and as a whole, it had failed us as a black society. That's when I knew, this was something deeper, something bigger than myself. That is when my activism started.

I used to be so oblivious to all things race, until I saw the way this case was handled. People on Facebook that I actually considered decent human beings were on the side of wrong. Calling Trayvon Martin a man, saying he got that he deserved and then it came, Hashtag All Lives Matter. I was invigorated and infuriated. After that, I made it my duty to become an activist on and off social media. I've read specific studies that say more than half of white people armed or unarmed are taken alive in police custody, while with black people apprehended by cops you are more than likely to be shot, hurt or killed. Taking into consideration all I know about systematic racism and the prison system I felt and sometimes do feel helpless. I do believe an entire system was built for only one kind of person to succeed in this country and that's a white male.

I've seen first hand the jargon used for people of color versus white people. Ryan Lochte for example, News analyst keep referring to this 32 year old man, as a kid and these same news analyst referred to Tamir Rice as a man. Tamir wasn't even a teenager. White mass shooters get their Facebook cruise photos as their news story pictures and his neighbors saying how the shooter was a quiet man and people of color either get their mug shots if they have one or the most menacing picture "journalist" can dig up. The media controls the narrative. This is the reason that I take that every news station reports with a grain of salt. I know people first hand who have been to the Black Lives Matter protest in Baltimore and Ferguson. They marched for weeks and social media activist were posting live videos of police interaction with protesters. I was flabbergasted, and I was more upset because they had protested for weeks without media

coverage and hadn't gained media coverage until people began rioting. There were Twitter videos of police officers not reading protestors their rights. One night members of the KKK came to where Black Lives Matter activists were protesting and the police stood in front of the KKK to protect them. I just couldn't believe it. During a protest I saw a sign that read "We live in a world where trained cops can panic and act on impulse, but untrained civilians must remain calm with a gun in THEIR face." This is a problem and though I'm not as powerful as many great activists, I do what I can within my scope of ability to shed light and create change.