

## **Racial Autobiography**

Dorothy Owusu

Alliance University

SOC 147

Dr. Perez

February 6th, 2023

## **Racial Autobiography**

For as long as I can remember, the concepts of race and racism are among the most controversial and troubling topics in my life. I am African American living in the Bronx, NY, despite spending most of my childhood in Ghana, Africa. I was born and raised in Bonwire Town, the home of the famous Kente cloth, located in the Ashanti Region, Ghana. Both of my parents are Blacks of Ashanti origin, whose native language is Twi, a dialect of the Akan language spoken in southern and central Ghana. They have lived in Ghana all their lives, making the country my ancestral land.

The people of Ghana and the rest of Africa are generally considered Blacks. As a result, those living in rural African regions have minimal exposure to racial groups other than their own. In addition to learning about diverse racial and ethnic groups from my averagely educated parents, I was introduced to the concept of race and its significance during my high school education in Ghana. At the age of fifteen, I was aware that I was Black and that there were other races across the world. However, I had no prior knowledge that race can determine one's perceived dignity, value, and position in the social hierarchy until I moved to the United States.

Although I grew up in Ghana (Bonwire), I have been in the Bronx, NY, for more than fifteen years. It is worth mentioning that I am a first-generation college student in my family and joining a college in America was quite challenging. Unlike my all-Black high school in Ghana, the majority of American colleges are multiracial, having students from diverse ethnicities, including Whites, Asians, Blacks/African Americans, Native Americans, and many more. The first few years of college were the hardest during my study and stay in America. Before I could fully understand what racism entails, I was already a victim of stereotyping and systemic discrimination at the individual, institutional, and societal levels. Due to the color of my skin, I

identified as an African American woman rather than just a Ghanaian. Unfortunately, my racial identity could not prevent discrimination and racism endured by other minority racial groups in schools, neighborhoods, and other public places.

There is no place that is safe in this country (America). Anyone can be killed in their own house or outside. According to “How to fight Racism”, a young beautiful black woman, Breonna Taylor, was killed by police in her own house. The author continues to speak about different incidents that have been going on in this country against Black/African American. The Black Lives Matter Movement took the world by storm when the deaths of Michael Brown, and Eric Garner, in New York City stamping 2014 with the well know hashtags “#HandsUpDontShoot and #ICantBreathe.” Subsequent to the Ferguson challenges, members of the development had exhibited against the deaths of various other African Americans by unlawful police activities. All this makes me feel scared to walk outside without thinking or being afraid of someone going to kill or harm me wrongly. Another example, Michael Brown was murdered in cold blood by someone who was supposed to protect him against criminals. This whole situation started the Black Lives Matter movement and soon the whole nation understood it.

In addition, Sandra Bland committed “Suicide” in a police holding cell on July 13 2015. She was placed into jail for refusing to get out of her vehicle when the officer asked. This case was personal to me because it showed me that anything can happen to any woman or man. It made me speak out that police brutality is serious and needs to be stopped. Lastly, Freddy Gray died on April 12 2015 this young talented man was born in Baltimore, MD. This took the whole city by surprise when these young boys died in the hospital of spinal injuries that were caused by police.

After several nasty racist experiences, I almost subscribed to the notion that my skin color makes me inferior in a predominantly White nation. I could spend most of my time thinking about how I would survive and succeed as a Black woman in America. In addition to my skin color, my “not-so-good” spoken English further complicated my effort to live the American dream. I can recall some of my classmates complimenting me that my written English was too good “for a Black person.” I had mixed feelings about such compliments. They had me wondering why society cannot allow or accept individuals to be who they are without imposing unnecessary stereotypes and unfair standards. Although I have lived in the US for more than a decade and a half, I often find myself torn between embracing my African ethnicity and assimilating to thrive in American society.

We live in a racially divisive society, yet deep down we all know all people are inherently equal regardless of their race and socioeconomic status. Racial discrimination and inequality have severe consequences in society, regardless of one’s ethnicity. We all need each other, and it is about time for individuals to exercise discipline, cultural appreciation, and respect toward other people and their respective sociocultural backgrounds. As for me, I will always view and treat people appropriately as long as I am not pressured to change my cultural identity, values, and beliefs as a Black or African American woman.