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Our America

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Racial Autobiography

From when I was a young age to right now, I do not remember many memories of race being in play with my life. The one memory that I can recall that had to do something with race towards me was when I had gone and bought food at a Burger King. It was just a simple thought on buying some food for the day and I did not expect much from it. If I am going, to be honest, this moment might not have even been because of race. Anyways, I went to the cashier and one of the employees looked over to the cashier to see if there were any customers. Sure enough, I was there, and they gave me the face of someone who does not want to deal with anyone right now. They seemed to ask someone else to handle the register and someone else took my order.

Moments like these do not come off as racially motivated. I do not recall any racial moments towards me. That story just seems like one that can be associated with it. I have seen moments like this toward other people. This moment happened around Manhattan, and as I was walking with my family, a black man had been walking past some white man. The white man seemed drunk and I am not sure if being drunk was what made him do the following or if it really was just the guy being racist, but regardless, he turned around and called the other man a racial slur. We did not want to be around the argument but they started to go at each other after we left. It is such a shame that these moments can still happen out of nowhere and people still think these kinds of ways.

Around the age of 13 is when I became aware of race and what it meant for people. I realized that people were different because of their backgrounds and that the world had a whole view of people based on that. It was strange but later on, I would learn about how this worldview has negatively affected lives and it was such a weird thing for me to understand back then. The way I learned about race was through videos on the internet and the news. Seeing people being harassed, or videos just talking about the topic was how I learned. The stages that I have gone through in life are Stage 1: Conformity, Stage 2: Dissonance and Appreciating, and Stage 4: Introspection. The first stage is where I was for most of my life, because most of my life, I have not had such encounters happen to me. Stage 2 happened when I began to realize that a lot of the good that has happened to my family and me is because of our race and how we were able to connect with people. The fourth stage was when I began to realize that at any time, I could be judged by my color and race, regardless if I have encountered a moment as such.

The stuff that has concerned me about my racial past is how I could be seen as something I am not because of my race. As I am Hispanic, I have seen the assumptions that people can put on Hispanics and it hurts to see. I believe that I am lucky to have lived in an environment that acknowledges Hispanics and respects everyone. This was the case for most of my life, if not my whole. Just because I was able to not be affected by this does not mean that anyone else was not affected. What encourages me about my racial past is how my parents were able to go from nothing to having a great life which I am very lucky to live alongside. They show me what is possible from someone, regardless of race. For what I do as “racial justice”, I simply just put myself out there. I know that I am a pretty friendly person and just being kind to someone can have a major impact on how they can view something, so that is what I try to do. It lets me connect with other people and helps other people connect with me and my race.