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Racial Autobiography

Looking back on my life and experiences with race, I think about how racial issues were always so prevalent. When I was in elementary and middle school, I didn't understand fully understand how racial inequality and injustice were everywhere. I grew up in a predominantly black and Jewish neighborhood. After school, I would come out of class and see people with my skin color walking to get home or rushing past all the middle school kids to get to the train station. But as the years passed by, I saw new buildings being constructed as well as new faces flooding the area -particularly new *white* faces. That's when I started to learn about gentrification. The infusion of new faces brought both excitement and apprehension to my childhood. Looking back, I can say that this shift has played a role in my journey to understanding the complexities of racial issues in America.

Growing up, my mother never spoke much about our Hispanic heritage, so I didn't fully embrace that part of my identity. Most of my childhood revolved around church and God. As a result, I was never truly aware of the racial and cultural diversity that existed around me. I didn't pay attention to whether I was Hispanic or Black or Afro-Latina. That didn't matter in my home. It wasn't until high school that I started learning about race and the discrimination that was present in my community. In high school, I learned about the "stop and frisk" policy. I didn't think much of it because I thought the police were trying to get the drugs and guns off the street. But then it dawned on me that police officers were being racist. They were only profiling and targeting black men.

As I grew older and became more aware of the world around me, I saw that I was affected by what I saw on television I recall watching my favorite Disney shows and noticing

that the majority of the roles were being played by white girls. I never saw an issue with that until I realized the lack of representation of people who looked like me. I believe that because I only saw the beautiful, slim blonde-haired girl, that's all I wanted to be. In my heart, I hated my skin color and heavily wished that I was white.

I'm not entirely sure if the TV shows were intentionally racist or just biased, but I'm glad to see that things have changed for African Americans in America. It's unfortunate that it took events like the murder of George Floyd and instances of police brutality to spur change, but at least future generations can have more opportunities than what exists in today's society.

As I think back on my life experiences, I realize how important it is to address racism. Reading 'How to Fight Racism' has helped me see that racism isn't just an individual issue, but a systemic problem that affects everyone. If we want a fair and just future, we need to acknowledge how deeply embedded racism is in our society and actively work to dismantle it. It's not enough to NOT just be racist. We must actively work to be anti-racist, eliminating the systems and structures that cause inequality. This requires collective effort and a willingness to listen and learn from those who have been oppressed. By doing so, we can begin to truly fight racism and work towards a more equitable society.

That being said, I "do" racial justice because although I have not personally experienced it, I cannot pretend that racism doesn't exist. It would be ungodly for me to pretend that racism is not a problem when I see its horrendous effects on my brothers and sisters. Not only that, but although no one has ever insulted me because of my skin color, throughout my childhood I did not feel beautiful and I believe that my favorite TV shows played a huge role in that. By acknowledging the reality of racism, I am taking a step towards confronting the issue and creating a more just society. For me, the pursuit of racial justice is about creating a better future

for the next generation. I want to ensure that my future children, do not have to face the same struggles and inequalities that exist today. I don't want to have to tell my children how to protect themselves from the cops when the cops were supposed to be our protectors.

As I move forward in my life, I am encouraged by the progress that has been made in the fight against racism, but I am also aware of the work that still needs to be done. Racism will always exist in my opinion, but I believe that if we educate more people about race, we can get closer to ending racism, not only in other races but even within our own Black communities.