

Shemar Johnson

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Our America

My name is Shemar Johnson, I am so happy I was able to take this course. I am happy mainly because it really encouraged me to not just judge a book by its cover and be able to ask questions first rather than just jumping to conclusion. I am from a culture where its national motto is “Out of Many One People” which means just this one country can be so diverse surrounded by many. Many have migrated to that country then eventually adapted to the culture and the native language. Growing up my parents always encouraged me to always accept people for who they are no matter where they are from, I’ve moved around a lot. I had the opportunity to meet different people from different cultures, which is one of the reasons why I love to travel because I’m then able to get out of my comfort zone, learn a different language, culture and just be able to experience someone else’s way of life.

Throughout this semester I was able to learn about different social perspectives of different groups of people. I was able to learn about a few different terms which allowed me to have a better understanding of how the stereotyping of other cultural groups can be. Some of the terms were: Racial Reconciliation, Model minority, Jim Crow laws and the Civil rights movement. Racial reconciliation refers to the process of bringing together people of different races to address and heal the historical and present-day wounds caused by racial injustice and inequality. This process involves acknowledging and addressing the harm caused by past discriminatory policies and practices, promoting understanding and respect between people of different racial and ethnic groups, and working towards creating a more equitable and just

society. Model minority, on the other hand, is a term used to describe a racial or ethnic group that is perceived to be successful and achieving above average. This term has been used to describe Asian Americans, who are often stereotyped as hard-working, academically successful, and well-behaved. They are continuously blamed for several diseases we encounter which is so ignorant the way people can stereotype others. However, the model minority myth overlooks the significant barriers and discrimination that many Asian Americans face, as well as the diversity within the Asian American community. Additionally, the myth can be harmful to other racial and ethnic groups by creating unrealistic expectations and perpetuating stereotypes. On the other hand, the church also played a role with racial reconciliation and racial justice. Regardless of your skin tone if you are a true Christian, you shouldn't mistreat someone else because they are darker than you, everyone should be accepted and leave every judgment to GOD. The churches were segregated either having whites at the bottom and blacks at the top where there's usually no seating or having two separate churches for both black and white. I believe the church should have played a better role for justice and equality this would have allowed both black and white to be able to come together and it could have possibly eliminated the injustice amongst African Americans and other groups.

During this semester it was expected for us to go to the museum to learn about the different groups of people. These groups were African American, Asian American, Indigenous/ Native Americans, Latinos, and Undocumented Immigrants. I was able to learn about some history about African Americans by visiting the African Burial Ground. During my time in the African burial museum, we watched a short film. It informed us about how it was for the slaves where once they were able to pick up a broom and sweep, they were considered property. If slaves tried to escape, there would be consequences. Once captured or traded Africans were

chained or bounded with others in wooden yokes. Some Africans kidnapped people and traded them to white traders to demand cheap labor. The museum also informed me about all the slaves that died all their bodies were stacked on top of each other where some of their remains was then further discovered in the 1990s.

Several groups were always discriminated against and racially profiled based on the color of their skin. African Americans for example have always been characterized as violent, uneducated, easily provoked, dangerous, criminals, just based on someone else's interaction with another individual. Everyone is not the same and wasn't raised the same so it shouldn't be fair to compare everyone the same way. In 1950s and 60s many African Americans struggled for social justice that took place and for black Americans to gain equal rights under the law. There was an uprising of discrimination, racism, and white supremacy. We faced segregation amongst the white which was always considered superior. We had separate schools, restaurants, neighborhoods, bathrooms, buses, African Americans had to sit in the back while whites in the front. We marched nonviolently just to get rights and to be seen equal yet all that we fought defeated the purpose. Instances such as Trayvon Martin, George Floyd these were African Americans that were targeted being at the wrong place at the wrong time. Not only not giving the chance to breathe but having another human take your life from the people we should look up to the most for protection.

Other groups I got the chance to learn about also is the Native Americans and Undocumented Immigrants. I had the chance to visit the National Museum of the American Indian which was a great museum to visit. I was able to gain a shared experience through a more informed understanding of Native Americans. Going to the museum, it provided me with a point of view to discuss the history and culture of the native people. I was able to learn about the

different tribes that they have, the 300 plus languages that they speak, tribal clothing and instruments that they use and what each represents. The natives also faced slavery and they had to consistently fight to secure their land and territories. Undocumented immigrants on the other hand, are people that a foreign-born people who entered the United States without inspection and possibly stayed longer than their temporary visa permitted. These individuals are described as always having many jobs to sustain their living and assist other family members, they are hardworking and determined people.

During class we were able to watch several videos of different people from different backgrounds to gain a better understanding of their perspectives on race and inequality. We were able to meet missionaries who described their experiences with racism when they moved to a different country, and how their perspectives changed once they experienced it for themselves or just seeing other friends go through this. We also watched interviews, one was Dr. Julio Orozco he is from a Hispanic background, his family is from Nicaragua. He spoke on the struggles his parents faced migrating to the United States. How life was in Nicaragua and the challenges his parents had to face moving into a new environment. He mentioned that it took his mom 2 years walking on foot from age 5 to age 7 to finally arrive to the land of opportunities. He spoke on the things we take for granted in the states and how people in other countries will be so grateful for it. His parents faced changes moving here now having to learn a new language English which they failed and continued with their native language Spanish within the household. In comparison to Dr. Julio's family's experience, I was also able to have a different perspective of people in another country. I had an opportunity from volunteer work to go to Nicaragua. I experienced life with the natives. It was very hard adapting to their lifestyle; they were so grateful for the little they had, and they were able to share amongst one another. I was there with

other friends to build a school for the community, it was a great opportunity, and I will forever remember. The host family I lived with only spoke Spanish and throughout my time there I had to learn some Spanish to try to communicate with them. They didn't have any television, it was a small community, only two houses had television, and everyone would gather on the weekend to watch the games that played. I eventually adjusted to this lifestyle. I was able to forget about my phone, Wi-Fi, just life within the United States and focus on finishing the end goal in starting this school for these children. This experience opened my eyes to a lot of things, to be grateful for what you have because there is always another individual that would love to have the opportunity that you have and might be living in worse conditions. There are so many children around the world that don't have access to a proper education mainly because their parents can't afford it. Their parents might not have a job that can sustain the household or can only sacrifice to send one of their kids to school. This is why in these communities' children grow up so fast, not being able to enjoy their childhood. Having to work at a younger age because their parents might be too old, or they need to help their younger siblings to go to school. This is the reality that we live in.

In conclusion, as I mentioned before it was a great experience in this class it was even better including the museum visits. I've expanded my knowledge learning about someone else's culture and these other groups that we focused on. Being able to get different perspectives from the speakers and videos also helped in responding to questions that I might have wanted to ask but then was clarified after our interaction with the speakers. I'm hoping to use my knowledge to help someone else expand their perspectives and eliminate stereotypes of other groups of people.