

I FEEL MY SKIN: =PF

There's a belief that race doesn't exist, that it is a social construct, and that the greater part of our society holds to it. I have heard so many debates about the scientific proof that race is not real, and that all of humanity is one. On the other hand we have had, "scientific evidence" to support the contrary. For instance, "The *negro* is not a whole man, or the *negro* female has the capacity to endure more physical abuse because her, "race" equipped her for it." With all that's been said about race in our history, it can leave one feeling like the conversation is a completely arbitrary thing. In today's world, the reality of race is a hot topic, between Donald Trump fueling extremist ethno-phaulism and discriminative ethnocentrism and ideology, and our society refuting it by measures like, *Black Lives and Matter* or Unite the Right. The convo is louder than ever. With all that's happen in more recent years on terms of race, personally has led me looking for where I sit in this conversation.

Race has been a factor in my life since I was a child. I grew up in two very dominate communities, South Los Angeles and West Los Angeles. The realities of these places can be the total opposites compared to each other, for myself they were night and day. I was born in South Los Angeles, a community of African American and Hispanic American majority. This is the inner-city in the 1990s, and it is everything one may know of these types of places. The point that I'm making is that because this place reflected a perspective with nothing to contrast it, I grew up to believe things about race that molded my experience. For instance, I can remember only seeing white people in positions of power. In my home, Jesus was white, the President was white, the admirable people on television or movies were white, and to add to that, landlords, social workers, police officers, were all white. I knew unconsciously that being white was like a luxury, it was the pinnacle of positivity, power and success.

Now, this is not a narrative of a *White-out* by any measure, because in my community, the people who held the local business were Black—but rarely, they were often Korean or of Latin descent. The examples of Black people in positions of power in my experience were the outlaws, gang members, and dope dealers; because more times than none the cultural definition of power was validated in material wealth or violent expression. Even at a young age I knew these things were a *façade*. Because, when the police took them away in some cases never to return, I knew we were inferior. The interaction with other races were in a power and privilege dynamic, and the African American hardly led in *righteous* power or privilege. Among my own race was an evident negative construct as well, being told what black people did and didn't do. Likewise, the perception of what the media depicted about Black lives was confirmed by my parents, or neighbors, warning me and my siblings about other black people: "Niggas are not to be trusted, up to no good, dangerous, violent, low life's, "Fast," hyper sexual, crack heads, and everything else negative. By the time, I was ten-years-old race was a reality and I was immersed in it.

From eleven-years-old, I would move to the Westside of Los Angeles, a community that is as diverse as America itself. A complete cultural shock because black was a multiplicity of things due to my grandmother's teachings. Previously, what I learned about the African American narrative in school was that slavery happened, then Jim Crow, and the Civil Rights era. After that, the Black narrative took a halt somewhere in the crack and mass incarceration epidemic. My grandmother taught me that being a decedent of African slaves meant we came from a people of resiliency, and it we were united by our collective struggle. I looked at places like little Ethiopia on Fairfax Blvd. and felt connected to a larger African experience. My perspective of

blackness had been broaden, but as I was stepping into pre-teenage existence, the world had its own perspective of me and race.

I attended school in the Westwood area, which is predominately a community of Caucasian, Arab, and people of the Jewish tradition. As I walked among the streets of these neighborhoods I was, Black and Black was less than welcomed. I can remember going into a local book store and being watched intensely as I browsed the pages of Spiderman comic books. When I walked out, I was greeted by a large security guard who checked my backpack for stolen goods that where not there. Every situation like this left me feeling defeated and unaccepted. As I grew older inside West L.A, I wanted to experience other cultures, but was met with closed minds and doors. The Black community giving what they perceived as advice, said things like, “It’s just like that in this county for us.” I felt this to become truth, and adopted the perspective.

But still because I lived in such close proximity to other races and cultures, it gave me a different perspective about the world, I was privy to understanding things like, *Passover* in the Jewish tradition, or just using a more expansive vocabulary or using words properly. Among other Black people I grew up with in South L.A, I was thought of as “uppity.” I was bullied and ridiculed because, “blackness is a linear experience.” Through time I adopted many of the outside definitions and my reality reflected what I had spent a short lifetime learning. Being Black was something I couldn’t grasp correctly, from going to places in the city, viewing other Black men, and feeling fear because, “niggas will kill you in this city.” I couldn’t grasp walking inside Taco Bell in the Beverly area, with everyone inside being white, watching them— watch me -- and clutch each other because their perspective of Black was negative. Through my experience of having friends of other races, there was still bits and pieces of the misunderstanding about race and relationships, be it, false stereotypes or preconceived notions, or closed-mindedness, which wasn’t handled with proper communication skills. These experiences made me feel alone. I wasn’t not Black enough and not understood by others . Race has become subjective to where I am in the world. It’s unfortunate, but race is a powerful concepts that has manipulated the world. I share these narrations because it’s not that race is real but the reality of feeling, “*I am a race is real*,” and that it’s not a completely individual experience. What I learned about these things is that even being aware, race in the minds and hearts of others are real. *Conflict Perspective*, *Systematic Racism* and Racial phobias on both ends of the spectrum is a reality, and most of our society is caught in-between one end of it. As a young man, I couldn’t see that being Black, white, Brown, yellow, red, has led us all to make errors against each other and ourselves. Even in understanding this about race myself, I feel that being Black is still a part of me and a hard concept to drop, I feel Black in this world. I have sacrificed by being Black, it’s a part of my experience. But—I must ask myself, and others this question, **what has “being a race” done for us?**

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Key terms

Ethnophaulisms: Ethnophaulism or ethnic slurs is the expression of prejudice through derogatory words/statements, which include derisive nicknames and speaking to or about members of a particular group in a condescending way.

Ethnocentrism: Ethnocentrism is the tendency to believe that one’s culture and way of life are

superior to all others'. The ethnocentric person judges other groups and other cultures by the standards of his or her own group. Ethnocentrism is usually associated with viewing other cultures as inferior.

White-Out: The domination of white existence in other cultures.

Façade: corrupted Public image

Systematic Racism: Organized bigotry, prejudice intolerance bias based on racial or ethnic identity.

Biological Race: Is based on the mistaken notion of a genetically isolated human group.

Conflict Perspective: Assumes that the social structure is best understood when conflict or tension between competing groups exists. Which resulted in significant economic disparity and structural inequality in education, the labor market, housing, and health care delivery. A struggle between the privileged (the dominant group) and the exploited (the subordinate group)

1Arrogance 2Selfishness 3Transgression 4Denial 5Anger 6Clarity. Six levels of humility