

I Am a White Woman

Category: Racism

written by Sharon Dobie | June 20, 2020

I am a White woman with privilege. My parents preached that all people are created equal, but we lived in White communities. Talk is easy. When I was in high school, my father was transferred and we moved. With many more Black persons in Virginia, Maryland, and D.C., my mother's true views emerged. It was 1962, and as we drove places, her talk was a stream of stereotyping racism.

1964: Friends—two years ahead of me—went off to UVa and Mary Washington College and then to Freedom Summer. They returned and talked at our high school. I awoke, choosing to stay in Virginia for the work I could do. My experiences included the following:

- With only two Black students at my college, guess with whom they were roommates?

- Driving one night out in the country with four friends, one Black, we happened upon a Klan rally. We quickly retreated.

- The Civil Rights Act was passed in 1965 and Brown v. Board of Education in 1954. Fredericksburg schools were not integrated 1968. Curriculum materials offered graphic demonstrations of separate is not equal.

1970, California: A Black friend and I went for a drive in his red sports car. We were pulled over but not charged; we just didn't look "right." Last week, we talked. He didn't fear being shot, if that's any consolation.

1993: My younger biracial son was in kindergarten. Doing self-portraits, he stood with a wad of crayons in his hand, yelling, "How can I do this? Nothing is my color!"

2000: My older biracial son was a high school freshman. He and a White buddy were jealous of a guy selling weed from his locker; they each pinched a bud from him, were caught, and so was the White guy—with a scale, baggies, and a pound of weed in his locker. My son was expelled. The other two got probation.

2015: I was about to go on vacation. Both my kids would be using my car while I was gone. A day before leaving, I realized my taillight was out and my tabs would expire while I was away. How many mothers would need to worry about that and handle it before leaving?

2020: My younger son missed renewing his tabs while deployed in Afghanistan. I flew to North Carolina to handle it for him. Would I have needed to do that for a White child?

I am White and privileged. I could go on with this smorgasbord, but it's nothing in comparison to others' experiences.

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