

Black like me

[History](#), [African American](#)



Issues of race and racism have been a central concern for many decades. Racism, in this context can be understood as, the belief that one race is superior or more important than another. Racism then is when a person believes that they are of greater importance to those of a different race simply because of their skin colour. In the book, *Black Like Me*, Mr. Griffin who resides in the Deep South attempts to better understand such discrimination. His curiosity to experience life as a black man, led him to many undesired outcomes. This paper will aim to explore the issue of racial equality and justice in the Deep South over the past decades, Mr. Griffin's growing desire to momentarily live life as a Black Man and the current status and acceptance of Blacks in the Deep South. More importantly, this paper will prove that there has been moderate improvement between races in the Deep South however there is a considerable amount of work that needs to be done. Although there has been moderate progress and many attempts to further unify races over the past decades, there is still a considerable division. It appears that Blacks will be acknowledged as being less important and treated with little respect in our western society. " He who is less than just is less than man" (55). As we have learned from the history of racism in the Deep South, people treat other races poorly not because of a person's social and moral traits but because of the colour of their skin. This notion is evident in the book, where people refer to it as a " Lack of Unity" (32), showing that there is a clear division between white and black people in all aspects of life. Mr. Griffin's decision to momentarily change the colour of his skin draws many questions on his reasoning and purpose of this experiment. As we learn early on in the book, Mr. Griffin's first impressions of being a

black man came as a surprise and far exceeded his expectations. Through out the book Mr. Griffin struggled to 'choose' his race, and experienced the perspectives of both a white and black man. There were moments however, where race wasn't an issue and Mr. Griffin was trying to understand himself. " I felt the beginnings of great loneliness, not because I was a Negro but because the man I had been, the self I knew was hidden in the flesh of another" (11). His confusion about himself and his race affects the experience he will have with others. What Mr. Griffin later realizes is that he has merely scratched the surface of being a Negro. " Suddenly I had had enough. Suddenly I could stomach no more of this degradation- not of myself but of all men who were black like me" (132), that being a Negro in the Deep South was a lot harder then he had imagined. This ultimately shows that what Mr. Griffin was trying to prove and experience throughout the book. Was it really worth it? During this moment in history, slavery played a major role in the Deep South. It had many roots in the Deep South and the belief that whites were superior was a common misconception. The people of the Deep South similar to many individuals today, needed to understand that blacks should be treated as equals. Where the colour of ones skin does not determine their intelligence, athletic ability or career. As Mr. Griffin learns that the division between races has become nothing more than a vicious circle, " Mr. Griffin, and I don't know how we will get out of it" (40). Through his experiences and encounters Mr. Griffin learned that segregation has been going on for many decades. Looking for examples of segregation in modern society, the District School Board has developed and opened the first ever Afro-centric school, where the curriculum focuses on the experiences of a

black student. Moderate improvement between the races has been made during the recent decades, though there is still a considerable amount that must be done. As this paper explained, the division between the races and that the pigmentation of your skin ultimately concluded the way you would be treated. Mr. Griffin's experience as a Negro, only gave him a portion of the true understanding of what a Negro truly felt during this time. The idea of slavery during this time is greatly attached to the name of the Deep South, which shows the way of thinking was immoral. Mr. Griffin's experience has only concluded to show that, he truly did not experience the life as a Negro, and lead his experiment to failure. After reading the book one might wonder if Mr. Griffin's experiment really allowed him to gain the perspective of a black man? Was his decision to choose races ethical?