

# Black men and public space

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



It was around midnight on Friday when I was walking down the street. Tired and concern about the time I was walking fast to the bus stop in one of the most impoverished areas of the town. Just when the darkest street approached I saw a man standing by the side as if he was waiting for me to come. My heart started to beat faster and faster as I was walking towards him and my hands were suddenly sweating, I tried to focus myself on the light at the end of the street and walk by him discreetly but my fear was so obvious that I couldn't help but run and hold my purse tight to my chest. The words mugging, raped and even death were crossing in my mind as replacing the lack of air in my lungs. While I was running to be " safe", I decided to make sure that he " the mugger" was not following me but he was! That made the situation even worse. When I finally got to the bus stop I saw him menacingly close, I couldn't breathe nor take one more step then I thought to myself, this is it! I'm done, he will kill me. But to my surprise he was just running to see if I was fine and asked if someone was following me to hurt me. When I realized that he was only concerned about me I felt horrible. Even though I don't consider myself a racist my actions were showing the opposite as I just racially profiled an innocent person. That situation brought me to the realization of something that I, myself probably wouldn't have ever thought of. I never sat down to think how an innocent black man would feel being avoided and even isolated from the crowd just because he is large and black. I imagined and almost felt his pain when I looked into his eyes, his sight was yelling at me as asking me why his physic characteristics would ever cause people such fear. As much as people may want to avoid passing instant judgments on others, it seems to be a part of

human nature to be critical. Stereotyping and making assumptions over a person due to the way they are casually dressed or by their race is a kind of safety utility one uses in order to be more aware of one's surroundings and to avoid burglary or kidnappings. At first glance he is someone that a female like me, whose physical characteristics makes me vulnerable to street violence, would put on their radar to look out for. Even though he had no intention of hurting me, my awareness of his presence influenced me to become apprehensive of him. I realize that people are victims of crimes every day and sadly Black males are involved in some of those crimes but that does not mean that all Black men have the same criminal desires as those select few. This form of stereotyping is also prevalent in other demographics and parts of society. I think everyone has felt personally stereotyped in one way or another. This article relates heavily to the Trevon Martin case that sparked the much needed dialogue about perceptions of Black men in America. This case showed how racial stereotypes and negative perceptions are plaguing the world today and causing senseless deaths every day. With the way women are raped, assaulted these days there is justification in how most female pedestrians have protection or know how to protect themselves from any harm they may come into contact with. But for these women to make a generalization based partly or wholly upon gender is obviously something wrong which makes us realize that racist views are still widely held. Reading Staple's essay has prompted further reflections on my experience. Too often we criminalize people before even getting to know them. It seems unfair that as a good man as Brent Staples is, he has to keep his distance from strangers and make an extra lap around a lobby as not to

alarm anyone. Stereotypes are undoubtedly components of American urban life. It's interesting to read about the situation from the other point of view. Even though the author do not blame people for having this prejudice against him, because he understands that the actions of many black men have created this image, he feels hurt by peoples reaction. It's a behavior we should try to change in our society to evolve as human beings, to learn how to trust one another and to see us all as equals.