

The effects of race

[Science](#), [Social Science](#)



The paper "The Effects of Race" is an outstanding example of an essay on social science. The race is a defining trait for many people throughout their lives. Both Zora Neale Hurston, author of "How It Feels to Be Colored Me," and Brent Staples, author of "Just Walk On By: A Black Man Ponders His Power to Alter Public Space," realize that being black will affect their lives; however, they take it in stride and don't dwell on it. They grew up in different places that shaped them both differently; however, in the end, it didn't matter to them as they both found ways to fit in with others of different genders and still be productive in their lives. Hurston was raised in Eatonville, Florida, a quiet black town with only white passer-by from time-to-time, while Staples grew up in Chester, Pennsylvania, surrounded by gang activity from the beginning. Both Hurston and Staples share similar and contrasting views about the effect of the color of their skin, the different ways of coping with discrimination, and the time that they realized they were different. The effect of the color of their skin affected both Hurston and Staples in similar ways. They coped with the effects of the color of their skin by removing themselves from certain things that are related to their color. For Hurston, growing up in a predominately black neighborhood, she saw white people, but only as they passed through the town. She loved interacting with them and even says that "The front porch might seem a daring place for the rest of the town, but it was a gallery seat for me," in reference to when the white folks passed through her house. (Hurston 45). The native blacks to her community never did this as "they deplored any joyful tendencies in me," (Hurston 44). That's not to say they didn't want her to have fun, they just didn't believe that it was right to interact with the

whites who traveled through the town. Similarly, Staples also removed himself from key parts of his childhood. When most of his buddies were joining in on gang activities, he was what people considered “one of the good boys,” (Staples 141). He calls himself shy, and perhaps this is why as an adult he doesn’t realize why people take such offense to him. Hurston and Staples also share both similar and contrasting methods on how they dealt with discrimination. They both had been faced with some kind of discrimination or stereotyping and each had come up with their own ways to deal with it. Hurston keeps a positive attitude all the time and doesn’t blame others for her skin color. She gave the analogy of people being brown paper bags (46). Each is filled differently and that is what makes people different and unique. Each bag contains things that are both “priceless and worthless,” and the varying quantities determine your personality (46). On the other hand, Staples went about the discrimination directed towards him a little differently. While he does try to keep a positive attitude, his main coping strategy is whistling. By whistling classical composers like Beethoven and Vivaldi, even the hard people of New York relaxed a little and passed him with a little more ease. He paid attention to his surroundings, and when he would notice that someone was skittish, he would take precautions to keep from people viewing him as a threat. Clearly, Hurston and Staples have had to learn to adjust to being black, and in dealing with discrimination, they have defined a part of themselves. Lastly, Hurston and Staples share similar and contrasting views on the times they realized they were different. Hurston never thought she was different until she left Eatonville to go to school in Jacksonville when she was 13. Up until that time, the only white

people she saw were those who would just pass through her small black town. However, when she began school at Barnard, she became the “dark rock” among all of the other white students (Hurston 45). Similarly, Staples also realized the impact of his race when he went to school; however, he was older, at 22. Before that, he lived in dangerous neighborhoods that were filled with violence and gangs. In Chicago, where he went to school, the variety of races introduced him to the fear people associate with his color. In the big cities of Chicago and Manhattan, he had come to realize that many consider him to be a possible mugger or worse (Staples 140). Both Hurston and Staples realized the difference that their skin color made when they went to school; it was just at a different age. Clearly, Hurston and Staples both went through many challenges in their lives, some of which are due to their color and others are simply just a part of life. To me, Hurston has a much more positive attitude and her outlook on life is positive and upbeat no matter what the obstacle is. Hurston feels that she is “surged upon and overswept,” when she was at Barnard, but she is still able to remain true to herself (45). That type of self-confidence is extremely rare to find. I think that if you had a chance to befriend Hurston, you would have a true friend for life. Staples, on the other hand, seems a little more stand-offish. Where Hurston is more in-your-face, Staples prefers to stay in the shadows. He is very concerned with others’ feelings and will go out of his way to make sure they are comfortable. While I applaud his selflessness, I could not do it and I feel that no person, regardless of skin color, should be forced to go out of their way every day to make others more comfortable. Overall, I learned the

difficulties that black face in the world today and how it has affected these two people's lives.