

The issue of racism in just walk on by: a black man in public space

[Literature](#), [Books](#)



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\n[toc title="Table of Contents"]\n

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1. [Just Walk on By](#) \n \t
2. [The Paranoid Style of Policing](#) \n \t
3. [Comparison of the Two Essays](#) \n \t
4. [Conclusion](#) \n

\n[/toc]\n \n

Public spaces are made for the public. All people of all shapes, sizes, and colors. In the readings by Brent Staples called “ Just walk on by: Black men and public spaces” and the other called “ The Paranoid style if American Policing” by Ta-Neshi Coates both discussed the unofficial, cultural racism as it is expressed in public spaces. People judge each other all of the time; the way one looks, dresses and acts. I believe that we live in a changing world and people need to change their views on others and put an end to judging.

Just Walk on By

In the essay, “ Just Walk on By: A Black Man in Public Space”, Brent Staples talks about how other people judge and discriminate him and people like him all the time due to the way he looks and his occupation. Brent Staples works as a journalist in a heavily white dominated field. Thought the essay he explains how he first realizes how much his appearance is seen by others and basically scares them; especially white women that are out in the streets late at night. Staples understands the world that we live in and that we live in a culture that becomes more and more violent and dangerous, but he

shows in his writing that he is sad that the people of color, especially men are being judged only based on their appearance. He writes many examples where he is mistaken for a burglar or as a killer. He says that these kind of mistakes are very common amongst his community. Staples writes that when he goes on late night walks, he whistles “white tunes” such as classical music so that other people would feel safer being around him. This essay takes the discrimination of white people to black people and exposes what really goes on from a black persons point of view. This essay shows readers that things have changed, like the end to segregation, but we still have a long way to go towards full equality.

The Paranoid Style of Policing

In the other essay, “The Paranoid Style of Policing” by Ta-Neshi Coates talks about his life as a child as police violence against the black community rises and the diminishing of trust in police force. Coates writes that in his community young people were considered to be dangerous and often would fight. Fighting would mediated by adult and never a police officer. Everybody knew that if the police was ever to be called, someone would be killed.

Coates grew up in a what is considered a rough neighborhood he grew up with not being able to trust the people that are hired to enforce the law and safety. A 19 year old boy named Quintonio LeGrier had a mental illness and was shot by the police for simply holding a bat. Coates writes that police in Chicago were very hard to trust because the police officers judge people only based on the color of a persons skin. People in his community are killed, beat, and tased, they make assumptions that all black people are dangerous,

if a black person even looks at the officer wrong way, s/he is at risk of losing his/her life.

Comparison of the Two Essays

Racism is a belief that one race is superior than another; usually seen in white people against black people. Segregation ended, people of color got their power, but some people's mindset hasn't changed which leads to discrimination. In both of the essays by Coates and Staples show the discrimination from white people to people of color. People like to believe that times have changed and everyone is accepting of one another, no matter shape, size, race, or religion. These essays show that even long after people of color took their freedom the stigma of people of color still shadows them everywhere they go.

In the essay by Staples, "Just Walk on By: A Black Man in Public Space" he shows that white people are frightened of people of color. "After dark, on the warren like streets of Brooklyn where I live. I often see women who fear the worst of me" (Staples 340). This just shows that the stigma of violence that shadows people of color doesn't go away. He later describes how women cling onto their purses and walk with a faster pace to avoid being tackled by a black male. The same goes for the other essay by Ta-Nehisi Coates called "The Paranoid Style of Policing". When he describes people feel scared or threatened, they generally call the police but, the authorities tend to resort to killing when they feel the slightest bit threatened. Coates wrote, "To kill because one was afraid" (Coates 100). The authorities are people too and just like in Staples writing, people are afraid of people of color. But

Coates later went onto say, “ did not really exist among parents in my community” (Coates 100). The second part of the quote symbolizes that people in his community see each other by more than just the color of their skin. They see each other as people and would never resort to killing another. It signifies that even though people say that they have changed and that they don’t discriminate, there is still a fear impeded in the back of a white persons head. My parents constantly tell me to be careful in the city, especially when it gets dark. They bought me pepper spray that hangs off my keys, they tell me not to talk to people. Just by parents constantly saying these kinds of things to their children makes the fear grown instead of accepting all people and to treat humans as humans. I believe that police are one of the worst criminals, some officers abuse their power and resort to killing and don’t even get punished for it. “ The police are supposed to serve and protect us and yet they take the lives” (Coates 104).

Conclusion

We do live in a constantly changing world, but the people in the world are yet to change their ways of thinking and judging each other. In both of the essays, “ Just walk on by: Black men and public spaces” and “ The Paranoid style if American Policing” show the reader that race and racism is learned, kids are taught to fear others that are not like them. People that lived in Coates community were taught not to trust the police force. The authors also show that people that are discriminated against can “ read” the people and places on which racism and racist behaviors are inscribed/ written such as Staples having to whistle white people music so that people around him

wouldn't be scared to be around him late at night. People of color have to be 10 times nicer and proper to be equalivent to a white person. We still have a lot more people to change their opinion and long way to equality.