

Brent staples essay sample



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

While surfing the web, I found out some very informative information about the life of Brent Staples. Brent Staples was an intelligent man, not just an ordinary man from Chester, Pennsylvania. He earned various degrees at different universities and colleges like a BA from Widener University in 1973, and a PhD from the University of Chicago in 1977. He was a professor of psychology at various universities in the states. Writing is one of Staples' specialties and he has been a reporter at the Chicago Sun-Times and the New York Times. He writes editorials about culture and politics. Staples also put efforts into other things such as; periodicals, including Literary Cavalcade, Columbia Journalism Review, and the Los Angeles Times. "Among his frequent topics are race relations, the effects of the media, and the state of education. His memoir *Parallel Time: Growing Up in Black and White* (1994) won the Anisfield-Wolff Book Award in 1995. "Just Walk On By: A Black Man Ponders His Power to Alter Public Space" takes a look at the effect some of his nighttime walks have had on people. This essay was first published as "Black Men and Public Space" in 1986 in *Ms. Magazine*."

Knowing that Staples has had such experience in writing, and has lived in the states since 1951 when racism was a prominent issue, I understand how important his story is. I never really realized how well written his article was until now actually. Knowing all of the stuff about Staples, makes me feel like this piece of writing isn't just some 'sob story' (not really what I wanted to call it but I couldn't think of anything else) written by a man yearning for attention, but it is written by a man of experience in both life and journalistic writing. It makes the story more believable in a way I guess.

I found out that this article was originally published in Ms. Magazine in 1986 under the title “ Black Men and Public Space.” Staples says, “ I’m writing about universal themes–family and leaving home and developing your own identity–which all Americans can understand. Being black enriches my experience; it doesn’t define me.” He changed the original title of his article later on because he felt it fit more with his story. In it, he was talking about walking by people and trying not to notice all the stares or eyes of fear of the people around him and watching them walk by and look at him with fear in their eyes and their minds.

Brent originally wrote this article/story to make more of the public aware of the racism that was and still is occurring. He wanted to point out the fact that people were singling out black males and assuming they are bad people. Not only were people caught in the stereotype that black males were bad, but they also believed them to be dangerous. He wanted to point out that the white woman he mentioned in his story was his first victim, not because he did anything to her, but because she was the first one who was afraid of him without knowing him or anything about him. She seemed to be the first woman that he had affected by walking by her or being near her.

This article was not only published in Ms. Magazine, but it has been published by many other people/companies as well since 1986. Ms. Magazine just happened to be the first place that Staples’ story was published. I didn’t find the exact places that this story was published, but I know that it was published in various books, newspapers, magazines and journals throughout its years of existence. This story/article is not some one-occurrence piece of writing, but in fact it is still around to this day.

Finding out all of this information about Staples really helped me understand the meaning of his article. When I first read the article/story, I actually thought that he had done something to that woman because he called her his “ first victim”. I now know that she wasn’t his victim in the sense that he did something to her but because she was the one who stuck out to him as being afraid of him because of his race.

For some reason, I take this article completely different now. I know why he wrote it, when he wrote it and the story behind it. He wrote this story as a man of experience who was just trying to get his point across that, essentially, black males were being accused of crimes that they didn’t commit, and they were objects of stereotypes that, in fact, are not true at all. Yeah maybe there are those few black males that commit crimes and are dangerous, but there are just as many white males that do the same and in some cases worse things.