

Free black like me assignment essay example

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John Howard Griffin in his now famous book *Black Like Me* discusses the issue of racial injustice and is deeply frustrated by his inability, as a white man, to understand what the blacks were experiencing. The book reveals how the author took radical steps to darken his skin in order to look like an African-American. Griffin set out to investigate the cultures and way of life of the African-Americans. Specifically, he set out to know whether the African-Americans suffered from racism and how it affected their day-to-day lives. Griffin was greatly offended by the fact that racism and segregation were omnipresent and rife at that time. He took note of all the prejudices that the whites leveled against the black and also any acts of kindness. Griffin's main goal was to bridge the gap between the whites and the blacks and not to offend the whites in any way. Griffin's, in the book, argued that the blacks and whites did not understand each other at that period of time, a situation that can be observed in the current society, although not as prevalent as during his time.

The stand-out theme in the book is the evil of racism. Racism was rampant during that time and Griffin was greatly dismayed that nothing was being done to understand the victims, who were the blacks. Griffin discusses how painful it is to be discriminated upon based on the color of your skin. Griffin exposes the ugliness of racists and how their personalities are distorted by their hatred for the other races. The issue of white racism is seen like the story of men who destroy the souls and bodies of other men, and in turn destroy theirs. Griffin notes that racism did not only destroy the blacks (oppressed) but also dehumanizes the whites (oppressors). Throughout the book, he endures threats, humiliation, harassment, and humiliation as he

goes on with his business. His experiences greatly move the reader of the text. Griffin is unable to find a job or use the basic amenities simply because he bore the black skin color. He further takes note of the fact that even the well-educated white men portray racism through their choice of words like for the instance of calling a black man " Boy." Racism, as he further found out, also existed among the African-Americans as they tended to prefer the lighter skin to the dark skin. The racism among the blacks is even more disastrous in some ways, as it could lead to the blacks to hating their own skin. Griffin further warns against the issue of black racism towards the whites. He argued that if the African-Americans started preaching their superiority against the whites, it would only worsen the problem of racism. Griffin notes that there are good people on both sides of the divide and that it is only through open and loving communication, coupled with self-awareness that racism would come to an end.

It is also noted that unity among the races was key to their progress and the fight against racism. When Griffins was in New Orleans, he was asked by the black leaders what he thought was the biggest problem facing them. He replied that a lack of unity was the biggest problem and they all concurred with him. One of them responded that " until we learn to rise together, we will never get anywhere." The black leader acknowledged that a lack of unity was their biggest trouble. In one instance he noted that the lighter-skinned African-Americans, who were flattered by the whites, viewed themselves as being superior to the dark-skinned African-Americans. Griffin notes that the pooling together of resources, both mental and financial was the only sure way to progress as a society. He believed that a united people would enable

them gain the respect they deserved. He cited the fact that the blacks usually came together during tense moments to comfort each other. Griffin suggests that unity would be helpful in the fight against problems such as racism.

Over the years, there has been a significant reduction in racism in the country although there are still instances of racism. It is evident that the issue is still rampant in a number of states. The tension between the whites and the people with color is still rife even in Statesboro Georgia. Although many efforts have been put to and are continually being put to end racism and discrimination, there have been instances where the blacks have been subjects of discrimination. This is a clear sense that the whites and blacks still do not understand each other as Griffins argued in his book. On certain instances, the African-American students at Georgia Southern University have expressed their discomfort of visiting certain places such as the plaza because of the racist undertones and in extreme cases the blatant racism. In one case, a local bar changed its name from Rumrunners to Rumrunners Plantation Room which was a case of insensitivity to the African-Americans. This move by the bar made the African-American students quite uncomfortable visiting it. The black students are subjected to constant stares and have to observe a strict dress code before visiting the plaza and the Rumrunners bar. Individuals still promoting such practices and behavior that depict racism clearly have no understanding of the African-American experience.

It is quite clear that there still exists a lack of understanding between the whites and blacks. There still exist many reasons for discomfort between the

two races. Although limited, people are still showing insensitivity and lack of respect to the feelings of others. It is continually being argued whether the black and white people can understand each other, live together in harmony and promote each other's well-being. Understanding would mean empathizing and being able to see the world from the other person's eyes. Clearly a lot needs to be done to ensure that the two races understand one another.

Work Cited

Griffin, John H. *Black Like Me*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1961. Print.