

Blackness and the black experience



The experience of being black, like the experience of having any other skin color, is left wide open to the personal viewpoint of the individual. Still, with the black race, there is a legacy of being forcibly removed from their homeland and enslaved, and this legacy probably affects the outlook of every black person in some way. In the ancient world, an individual with “black” skin was not considered inferior. The Greeks, for example, did not regard skin color as an impediment to coordination in social order.

They instead judged a man based on his integrity, his word, and his ability. “What is blackness?” “What is the black experience? Blackness is defined as the property of being black in color, but that is a raw definition that has no context in human experience. While the ancients seemed to have little or no problem with color, the idea of race difference has been a struggle for modern societies everywhere. Scholar W. E. B. Du Bois calls it “the problem of the twentieth century.” Du Bois contends that the supposed ugliness exists fundamentally in the psyches of the cutting edge spectators. What that means to me is that, whatever prejudices may exist in the minds of leaders then translates to the attitudes, and more critically the laws, of everyday citizens.

In England color turned into the premise of segregation. In the United States, the institution of slavery was the central argument in a states’ rights debate that erupted into the bloodiest war of the 19th century. Even after the Civil War, racial segregation, violence, the KKK, and the struggle for equality marred the next one hundred years. How black people perceive their own “blackness” today, as opposed to 1863, when the Emancipation

Proclamation was signed, is sure to be different. Blackness must have a completely different meaning in 2013.

In fact, the very word “ black” is no longer used as often, having been replaced with “ African-American. ” The idea of “ blackness” must have made drastic leaps for the better when this country elected a black president. This is a sharp contrast to the self-image blacks had during the years of slavery (in this country and others, including their own native continent). As the decades pass, one would hope that the legacy of slavery, mistreatment, bigotry, and inequality has waned, and become a historical acknowledgement rather than an influencing factor in the psyche of modern individual blacks in the world.

I believe that this trend will continue. In dealing with the black people I know, I don't hear them talking about being mistreated or discriminated against as much as what I've read about in our country's history. Black people seemed to be more present in prestigious jobs and government positions. At least in America, black people are being given more and more opportunity, and society continues to try and fulfill its promise of equality and equal protection. If this continues, I hope that the idea of “ blackness” is one of promise, hope and pride, and not despair.