

Race in my community essay sample



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

My name is Katherine Peredo. Much of my formative years were spent in south Florida which is truly a melting pot of ethnicities, and I loved it. I am a “ German American”, my children are Spanish and Portuguese as well as German, my husband is Bolivian, and my closest friends are Jamaican and Cuban. In my opinion one of the most exciting things is learning about different cultures and enjoying their differences. My husband and I moved from south Florida to southern Louisiana ten years ago. After first moving to Louisiana we suffered a bit of culture shock because of the lack of ethnicities.

Living on the “ North Shore” (across the lake from New Orleans) we encountered a small number of Mexican Americans and a few African Americans, but that was about it for different ethnicities. It seems that Louisiana has its own blended culture “ Cajun”. However, after some time we discovered that a large percentage of people claiming to be “ Cajun” really were not. It seems to me after much contemplation that there is a great chasm where true cultural history should be in southern Louisiana. Other than those of us who moved to the area in the last decade and those with a more distinct cultural history (Blacks and Mexicans) there is mostly the culture of the great pretenders. That is not to say that there are not true Cajun people just that many who claim they are, are not. Why, what happened to the true cultural or ancestral history of these pretenders?

After settling in our new home in Louisiana we set about trying to make the community our home. We quickly made friends at church. But being used to much more cultural diversity we started seeking out ethnic restaurants, this mostly in hopes of becoming acquainted with people of other cultures. At

this time I thought to check it out on the good ole internet for some cultural education. Just exactly what are the demographics of race and ethnicity here in southern Louisiana, I wondered. What I found was 31% Black, 2% Hispanic, and 1% Asian at the time (Louisiana. Gov). It was hard to believe these numbers because we saw very few people of any race other than white. What we ended up discovering is that the area was very segregated, our area was around 87% white not Hispanic, 10% Black and less than 3% made up other races (U. S. Census Bureau, 1997).

Upon further delving into the matter we found that the original demographic data we found was based on the South Shore. A huge percentage of the Black population was in New Orleans. But we learned quickly that New Orleans was not a place we wanted to be, not unless absolutely necessary. The culture here is based on drinking, drinking, and more drinking. Half naked women hanging onto open bar doors, little children dancing for coins as their parents sit in the bar watching and spending their coins on alcohol. And unfortunately that is when we started seeing the prejudice. We are intelligent fairly well educated individuals so we are aware that prejudice exists, but we were both disappointed to feel as if we had stepped back several decades in prejudice levels. I had never experienced such obvious bigotry in my life. Many of the Blacks we encountered there wanted nothing to do with my friendly overtures and some were downright hateful.

After finally accepting that it was not our imagination we settled in and decided just to stay away from New Orleans. We made friends with Filipino Americans, Puerto Ricans, one Cuban and a Bolivian family, no blacks. When our “ liberal” church group visited a church in New Orleans our spirits soared

with the brotherly love we were able to share with this predominantly black church. We thought, “Awesome, we found people who are not bigots”. When we invited this church choir to perform for our church and stay for lunch, almost everyone outside of our group left. I was horrified, embarrassed and spiritually broken by this. There was no doubt that my church family, outside of my small group, were bigots also. I was broken-hearted; if one cannot escape bigotry in the house of God was there any hope?

Then hurricane Katrina happened. For a very short time no one had the heart or the time to hate. Hispanic, Black, White, all races were devastated in this area. The hurricane did not pick and choose by race, although at times the media would have one believe so. And the demographics started changing very quickly. And the politicians were playing on what the media started. The mayor of New Orleans made several inappropriate comments to get his voters back. Probably Nagin’s most ridiculous statement was a call to, “rebuild a chocolate New Orleans, You can’t have New Orleans no [sic] other way” (Cable News Network, 2006). When a community has politicians spouting such ignorance it is not hard to see why there is so much racial discord in New Orleans. (And this fool was voted back in; many of us believe that absentee voters made this possible). Since many people were content to let others do the work for them and to subsist on FEMA assistance local businesses could not reopen, restoration crews could not get enough manpower.

Mexican workers started flooding in the area. Many people had hateful things to say about them, but they should have been happy that some were willing to do the work. We knew a lot of people in the construction business since

we just finished building our house five months before the hurricane, so we were able to communicate with many of them and to get them out to repair our damages pretty quickly. These Mexican workers were working from sun-up to sun-down and living in tents in the sweltering heat of southern Louisiana. I thank God for them, as should anyone with a bit of sense. One man working on my house fell when the 20 foot ladder tipped over. The man got up with his face all bloody and scraped up and went right back to work. Had that been an American, not only is the probability of his having gone back to work very slim, but the chances of a lawsuit would have been huge. Now the whole atmosphere in our community, the North Shore, is different. Many of these displaced bigoted people moved to St Tammany Parish.

According to information FEMA provided to the Census Bureau the change in demographics following the hurricane made the new numbers: White 66%, Black 31%, Hispanic 3% (FEMA, 2005). Now the parish not only has a major change in racial balances but many the Blacks who had moved here are the ones who had no use for white people. One only need visit the local McDonalds, Wal-Mart, Winn Dixie or any other grocery or fast food restaurant, anyone having lived here before the hurricane can see a totally different atmosphere. One is more likely to have his change dumped onto the counter (or if lucky a hand) than to have it counted out; and more likely to hear a snap of gum than a " have a nice day". As much as I have looked into it I cannot find a reason for the exceptional and blatant amount of Black on White hatred here. Nor have I seen the " race-card" played so frequently and without cause. Consider the incident in Jena Louisiana. In this tragedy some ignorant white high school boys put nooses in trees.

The next day six black high school students gathered around one white student and kicked him to within an inch of his life, even after he had fallen unconscious. Of course the batterers were arrested. What followed was a travesty which unfortunately is very common here in southern Louisiana. Blacks gathered from all over the country to say the only reason that these “boys” were arrested was because they were black and the only reason that 17 a year old, who had prior violent offenses on his record, was tried as an adult was because he was black. Anyone with half a bit of common sense should be able to see that it was nothing more than lies created to incite racial unrest and hatred; this country has tried 12 year old white boys as adults. Heather MacDonald wrote in The Jena Dodge for the City Journal Online and she says: “The race industry will try to keep Jena in the media and political spotlight for as long as possible, and to reinforce the notion that this episode exemplifies blacks’ [sic] situation in America. But if there were many other instances of (arguable) overcharging for black crime, we would have heard about them by now. The orgy of Jena coverage will not just fail to improve the lagging performance of blacks; it will *impede* such improvement by strengthening the victim mentality” (MacDonald, 2007).

What happened to the community colorblindness following the hurricane? How can it be that one sees in a fellow human being as a brother of the highest order at one time and then, soon after, that same fellow human being is a Nigger, Spic, Kike, a Slant Eye. In their book Tizzard and Pheonix write, “The genetic difference between races, for example, Europeans and Africans, is about the same size as the genetic difference between from different European countries...Biologically, we are all of us multiracial”

(Tizzard, 2002). How can intelligent people not see we are the same in the ways most important. People need to realize that there is joy and beauty in the differences, other cultures have a lot to share and even teach if given the chance. Consider what Ellen Rice wrote in “ Racism Can End”. Regarding ending racism she wrote, “ What needs to replace it is not the feeling that the difference of another person is somehow tolerable. What is necessary is the seeing and feeling that the relation of sameness and difference between ourselves and that other person is *beautiful* ” (Rice, 1997).

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