

Report - black like me by john howard griffin

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Black Like Me by John Howard Griffin is a masterfully crafted piece of work which recounts the plight of a black man back in the 1950s. The late 19th century and the start of the 20th century are periods in United States history characterized by extensive activities of civil rights movements. The likes of Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King Jnr criticized the Whites for discriminating and segregating against the blacks. Most books addressing racial prejudices in this period were written by authors who, in addition to being blacks, were the direct victims of racial discrimination. However, Black Like Me is a unique piece because the author, John Howard Griffin, is a White man in a "black skin." As a matter of fact, my interest to read the book stems from the fact that the author was a white man.

Griffin doubles up as the author and the main character in Black Like Me. The setting of the book is 1950s and 60s when racial prejudice was rampant in the United States. Driven by empathy and desire to understand the black experience, Griffin makes a radical step by undertaking a medical procedure that saw his skin color temporarily changed to resemble that of a black man. Sterling Williams, an articulate shoe-shiner becomes the contact person for Griffin within the black community. In his new identity, Griffin sets out to explore what life in America is all about when your skin color is black.

Griffin's narration of his experiences is a shocking tale of discrimination and cruelty. He shoulders the burden of being black when all sort of insults, rudeness, racial slurs, violence among other forms of victimization are directed to him. As if this is not enough, Griffin comes to a surprising reality he is denied access to basic necessities such as place to live, reputable employments, transportation, and restrooms on account of his dark skin color. Perhaps revealing encounters unfold at the end of Griffin's exploration

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when he transforms back and forth between black and white identities. He discovers that he can hardly receive similar positive treatments from both the white and black folks who had treated him kindly a few moments earlier. For instance, as a white man, blacks treated him with indignity and, on the other hand, whites treated him with disrespect when he turned his skin black.

The author finally makes a return to his family in March 1960 and restores his skin color back to white. He then publishes his article that ends up attracting massive attention from both prominent television shows and magazines. While he receives many congratulatory messages from all over the world, his exploration is not entirely welcome by some diehard supporters of racial discrimination. His effigy painted half black and half white is created and burnt down in some areas. While his daring exploration served to expose racial conditioning that was the prevalent in the United States, Griffin and his family had to take refuge in Mexico as they became victim of hateful remarks in U. S. In general, Griffin book is a masterpiece that any person seeking to understand racial prejudice in U. S. in those dark years should not by-pass. It is a story recounted objectively by a person who decided to live above racial prejudice and pursue equality at all levels of engagement.

Work Cited

Griffin, John H. *Black Like Me: The Definitive Griffin Estate Edition, Corrected from Original Manuscripts*. San Antonio, Tex: Wings Press, 2011. Print.