

# “Black” History

When I was in seventh grade, even I would say I was racist. I had moved from a place where there were few “black” people (and where I liked the ones I knew and never gave it a second thought) to a place far away, where there were lots of them. And at school, they ganged up on me and treated me *really* badly. For the first time in my life, this made me actually notice them and their apparent differences, and categorize them based on that.

When they would surround me, I was told that since I was “white”, I owed them. Usually, they meant I owed them my lunch money. I didn’t pay because I felt no guilt or obligation. My non-cooperation got me physically assaulted and robbed a few times.

I was told my imaginary debt was because of “slavery” even though no one in my family (of outhouse using, cistern dependent, leaky dirt floor shack-dwelling farmers in the Dust Bowl panhandle of Texas) had ever “owned” a slave, and had probably never encountered anyone who had. Things other people did long before even my grandparents were born aren’t my fault.

I had never encountered this notion before and was taken completely off-guard. Who thought of such nonsense?

But a few months of this treatment from them and I was definitely a racist.

Yet, in seventh grade, one of my best friends at school was “black”. We were in homeroom together and we had a blast every day.

I’m sure we made the teacher uncomfortable because we “identified” as the other’s “race” to make each other laugh. I would copy the local “black” accent and he copied the local “white” accent. He, for one, did an excellent job.

He also loudly called me a “*nigger*”, and I loudly called him a “*honkey*”, constantly– again copying what other kids were calling those of the opposite “race”. We laughed until we couldn’t breathe over all our juvenile jokes. Yeah, we probably offended a lot of people, but I had nothing but good feelings about this guy. I believe he felt the same comradery toward me.

He made me realize that the individual kids I didn’t like were the problem, not the color of their skin. I wouldn’t say I stopped being racist (that faded over time), but I got a lot more discerning because of him. It might not have been automatic, but it didn’t take much to make me decide I liked someone. The blanket hostility I had felt, before I met him, toward those with similar skin color to his, was gone and never returned.

I feel bad for the young people now living under the institutionalized bullying that is so similar to the freelance bullying I lived with. Imagine being told- by supposed adult experts- that you owe a debt to a collective "them" because of your skin color and things done centuries ago, by (and to) people who are long dead. That your skin color makes you guilty automatically, with no way to prove your innocence. That you need to hate yourself to try (and fail) to make up for things you aren't guilty of. That's abusive. The "media" should be ashamed for promoting this abusive brainwashing. Individuals who go along with it should be just as ashamed.