

All my life, I have been surrounded by two seemingly opposite worlds, each very much defined by race. Ironically, my worldview is defined by everything except race. For I have never viewed my world with such narrow glasses that would focus solely on someone's skin color to the exclusion of all other qualities. Instead, my first friends were those with whom I shared common interests, not necessarily common skin color. I have always believed that the definition of a good person, the definition of a potential good friend, has everything to do "with the content of their character" and nothing to do "with the content of their color." In my experience of the world, a good person will not suddenly turn bad for having a different skin color just as a bad person will not suddenly turn good for having the same skin color. Unfortunately, I soon learned, the world, in general, does not share my point of view. There were those who thought I needed to choose between living in a "black world" and living in a "white world" when all I ever wanted to do was live in "my world," a world that incorporated both white and black friends. And, while I may have been a child while I formed such opinions, I now know there is nothing childish about believing in a color-blind world.

I decided fairly early on that I would not change who I was, nor would I change who I chose as my friends. As a result, at times, it has been quite difficult, over the years, for me to navigate between my two worlds. It is even hard for me to understand why other people seem to be obsessed with such an irrelevant detail about a person as the color of his or her skin. In order to cope, I have had to develop a tough skin myself, one that tells the world I am indifferent to their slights. But inside, the one place where I do allow myself to reveal the truth, I feel enormous pain and hurt. Pain for me, but also pain for those other closed-minded individuals who never allow themselves to have the same types of wonderful mind-opening experiences I have had in meeting the extraordinary individuals I have met thus far. And to think, all because of race, an entire group or groups of individuals are excluded from someone's list of potential friends. To me that is truly sad.

In life, we all make our choices, and must face the consequences of those choices. During my life, I have chosen to select my friends based not on race, but on our common interests, basketball being one of them. Part of these consequences for me is having to deal with ignorant individuals, even, at times, from the ranks of my own extended family, who have either asked me why I do not have more "white" friends, or why I look "ghetto." Again, on the one hand, it is extremely sad to think about how limited their world is, how many missed opportunities to meet extraordinary people. Still, I soldier on because on the other hand, I am extremely proud of the decisions I have made in my life, not to mention the support I feel from this extraordinary collection of friends who never thought I was trying to act black. For the both of us live in a color-blind world. I think about how fortunate I see the world in the way I do. With that in mind, I can handle the most ignorant of questions, comments, or people for, in the end, I am proud of who I am: an open-minded person.