

## Catcher in the Rye by Brandon Bober

The Black Lives Matter movement is a collection of ideas stemming from repressed rage due to the acknowledgement of an unfair society. I myself am a Caucasian male, who grew up in a quiet and safe suburb with a majority of surrounding white peers. Even so, I've also witnessed the perpetuating injustices committed on individuals of a stigmatized group. I live in a nation where at least half the population is proud to have witnessed a president with dark skin complexion. Obama certainly brought change to America. However, I argue not enough, because if the foundations of our American institutions, policies, laws, mentalities and so on don't progress, then racism will never become a phenomenon of the past.

As a tike I attended the Granby school system. The vast majority of my classmates were white and the environment resembled that of an 'American Pie' movie. Cliques of particular groups became more apparent with every passing school year. Bullying was an offensive tool used as a defensive mechanism by many. I, unlike most, wasn't able to situate myself in a niche. Associating with others was often difficult and holding onto friends was even harder. I became accustomed to being the outsider. Until ninth grade, where I changed high schools.

I left my hometown school system for University High School of Science & Engineering. At the time, a brand-new magnet school located in Hartford, Connecticut. Most children participating derived from Hartford, but a percentage were bussed in from neighboring towns. I'll never forget my first P.E. course at this school. Our class walked to a public park and students were allowed to play a game of their desire. A large sum chose to play basketball and I as the only white kid obliged. A couple of pump-fakes and easy layups gained me a little attention. Quickly I noticed being praised for my mediocre skills. From that moment on, I realized that most judged me based on my athletic ability and playful spirit. Barely anyone

commented on my goth-like attire, the heavy metal music I listened to, the acne on my face or who I befriended. It became apparent later in life that it was the first school environment where I felt true acceptance. It's shocking to become aware that I received extravagantly more respect from classmates who had a different skin color, spoke a different mother-tongue, worshiped another god and embraced an entirely different culture or lifestyle than of my previous white counterparts.

I'm proud to say that my classmates at that high school were the embodiment of Martin Luther King Jr.'s words. Unfortunately, I didn't acquire this sense of approval again until my year abroad in Germany. A collection of adolescents from various backgrounds coming together with the understanding that we are all here to learn and have fun. Putting aside our non-negotiable differences and emphasizing our mutual willingness to party together seemed instinctual. French, Indian, Chinese, Dutch, American, Russian or Nigerian. It didn't matter. Our mutual focus of acceptance and tolerance developed into some of the greatest memories that I hold dear.

The combination between these two experiences as a pupil in a new high school and as an exchange student has ingrained a principle in my heart. The notion that integrating the youth of our varying cultures should be an epiphany to all. I can't speak for others, but I can say for myself that the Black Lives Matter symbol isn't a movement just about police reform or bringing racial injustices to light. To me, it's a conversation highlighting the failed attempt by our ancestors to truly assimilate our communities. The United States has become so entrenched in polarization, that references of the American Civil War is a reminder of our current divide.

American diplomats constantly bicker with Russian diplomats, because they have different views of the world. Yet, their failure to negotiate or compromise is because they've

grown-up from varying backgrounds; isolated from each other. Much like the black and white youth of USA. Many white kids are raised in small suburbs and a number of black children live in metropolitan areas or within cities. The differences in lifestyles provide complications for both to purely understand each other. The following generations are the future, and they hold the key to bringing heaven on earth. But a prosperous utopia will never come to fruition, if we keep our children segregated.