

Seeing Color

by Maura McCormick

Sometimes I forget that I live in a bubble; that my perception of the world is *far* from reality...

On June 7, 2000, I, Maura McCormick, was born into a simulation; a picture-perfect universe my white, middle-class parents worked hard to create; a Disney Land, far more magical than the real thing.

Throughout much of my childhood, Santa never missed a gift on my Christmas list, dinner was always followed by desert, and bedtime was preceded by a kiss on the cheek, from not just one parent, but two.

Yes, I was privileged, but I never bore the stereotypical image of a spoiled child. My parents, both school teachers, primed me to be, what many would assume, is a morally good citizen. I held straight As, I always said my pleases and thank yous, and I learned to treat everyone with the utmost respect.

Matter of factly, the concept of “seeing color” was completely abolished in the McCormick household. From an early age, I learned to regard everyone as an equal, regardless of their apparent differences.

On trips to the playground, my mother and father always encouraged me to befriend other little girls. These memories, although hazy, consist of smiles, hopscotch, and woodchip sprinkled mud pies.

...I can't once recall the image of another little girl; I'll always be blind to her history, her race, her ethnicity; I'll never know whether she wore a crown of beautiful black curls, or wiry blonde pigtails...

Generally speaking, my parents, and my school educators, taught about racism in the past tense (primarily in regard to slavery during the Civil War). As a result, I grew up ignorant; completely unaware that others didn't share my innocent view.

It took years before I began to realize that I was raised differently. And even though I've since removed my rose-colored glasses, I'm still very much out of tune with my surrounding environment.

As a white, middle-class woman, I may never endure racism first-hand. Albeit, just because I've never experienced it personally, and don't believe I'm racist myself, doesn't mean that it doesn't exist.

This past summer's Black Lives Matter movement made me realize that I'm very much naive to the extent at which minorities deal with oppression on the daily. I can't let my upbringing—as a white child, raised spoiled and blind—lead me to believe otherwise.

I'd like to abandon my ignorance altogether and start seeing color.

By "seeing color," I don't mean swapping an "I see you as you are" mentality for racism. Seeing color is learning to understand; it's making a deliberate effort to recognize the complexity in another's history and identity; it's acknowledging all of the attributes, challenges, and beauty that come with being different.

...It's knowing why the caged bird sings.

I'd like to see color and I'd like my parents to as well. I want the three of us to stand hand in hand, with my playground friends. Together, we can encourage the rest of the world to join in and embrace diversity.