

Growing Up Transracial



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I have a confession to make. As it turns out — I am not a short, 45-year-old, 150 pound white man. In actuality — I am a tall, 68-year-old, 285 pound Black man. It is my right to be recognized as such. From here on out I'd appreciate it if you'd honor my bravery by calling me by my new name.

Anyone who does not now acknowledge me as “Leroy” is a racist, ageist, fat-shamer by default. It’s not up to anyone else to judge me. After all, do you know what it feels like to be uncomfortable in your own skin?

See, I grew up in the lily white suburbs of Atlanta outside of the perimeter — you know, hicksville, where all the racist xenophobes live. In my youth I endured a vast cultural wasteland of tranquil neighborhoods, tidy buildings, manicured lawns, and low crime rates. Growing up I felt like I just didn’t fit in. I was always the “freak.” Ever the outsider. I remember how, as a boy, I made friends with the one Black kid in grade school. By the time I reached high school I craved the authenticity of the Black experience on the city streets, and was thrilled when I left home and moved to a predominately Black downtown neighborhood where I could be myself. I made friends with a local crack dealer. I dug gansta rap. I hung out on weekends with construction laborers who shared their whores with me. For all intents and purposes I was a “brother” too.

Everything was all good in the ‘hood, and yet still I was different. I loved James Brown, but I couldn’t dance. This caused me great emotional pain. I never fit in with my white co-workers, and only felt truly at ease when I was the lone honky on an otherwise all-Black crew. When I worked at a large corporation my manager used to tease me about the Malcolm X books I read. When a

cracker coworker asked me how I would fare when the Blacks took over, my boss sneered, “He’ll be fine.” I didn’t feel so fine.

I began to feel that deep inside of my pale, skinny, uncoordinated frame was a large, athletic Black man just waiting to get out. I had finally decided to get my transrace surgery. Sure, a few friends wondered about my mental health, but they were just close-minded racists who refused to experience the real me. Who needs them? I want to be authentic.

It wasn’t easy. I suffered panic attacks for days after undergoing the 12-hour facial-racialization surgery. Daily discrimination and violence are still the norm for thousands of transrace Americans — especially white-to-Black. The rate of violence against transrace women, especially transrace women of color, is alarming.

According to the National Organization for Trans-Racial Integrity and General Health Treatment (NOT-RIGHT) an organization working to reduce violence against trans people, 66 percent of victims of racial homicide were transrace women, and 89 percent of victims were people of color. According to the same report, transrace people were also more likely to experience violence at the hands of law enforcement. Trans people experience higher suicide rates than the general population. They also face more discrimination and harassment when seeking health care.

One-fifth of people who identify as a race other than the one they were born as have reported being homeless at some point in their lives. It's not surprising there are so many health and safety issues in the transrace community — in many places, particularly in the South (and we all know how stupid those inbred rednecks are), there aren't laws to protect them from housing or workplace discrimination. Hate crime legislation is nonexistent or doesn't include transrace people as a protected group.

People continue to act as if there is something wrong with transracials — as if it wasn't normal. Well, it is! And there is historical precedence for us, too. The noble native Americans recognized “transients” among their tribes, and even protected them as magical beings.

Studies have shown that racial fluidity is a biologically based fact.

Call me Leroy. If you don't, I will organize a boycott of your business and shut you down. Call me Leroy. If you don't, I will tweet your phone number and home address and you'll endure harassment by the transracial community until you do. **Call me Leroy.**

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