

This I Believe Personal Essay

I remember in elementary school when we would always have to do some type of assignment describing ourselves and our features; I would always identify myself as a brown girl instead of a black girl not knowing that the term 'brown' is typically used to describe a person of Indian descent. I just thought because the color of my skin was brown I was a brown girl, but now I know I am a black girl. In middle school, I relaxed my hair so I could have the long, silky straight hair all the white girls had. I wanted to be as pretty as them so I decided to alter my hair and damage it trying to achieve beauty that I believe was the only beauty in the world. I tried to work out and shape my body so others could like me. I remember looking in the mirror after school and being disgusted with the way I look. The color of my skin. The fact that I was different from the rest. However, I was not doing anything for myself; I was doing things for other people. People that most likely did not care what I did to myself and most likely still would not notice me. I just wanted to be noticed for beauty; however, it would not be my own personal beauty that people would be noticing. They would be noticing the beauty of others' features that I have taken upon myself to make myself look appealing to the eye. The hair was not mine. The skin color that I thought was mine was not really mine. The body I was trying to achieve was not truly what I wanted for myself. I was not myself. Now that I am older and I have seen things people like me have gone through and how they become stronger from it makes me feel proud to be a BLACK woman. I am BLACK and I am proud. I do not want to be anybody else. I do not want anybody else's features. My own features are beautiful: my natural curly hair, my unaltered body, my big nose, my melanin. I am beautiful. My features are beautiful. My features are powerful. My features make me the woman I am today: strong, confident, powerful, beautiful, elegant, intelligent. I am me. I am a black woman. I am a proud black woman. There are so many of us, and they have all inspired me. They have made me realize that there is nothing wrong with being a black woman. Society has created this fixation that black women are "ghetto" or "ratchet"; yet, black women's features are now being stolen and praised on those that they do not have those features. The same features that have been ridiculed for years by those that are now stealing those features. I am deciding, though, to stop listening to society's message about black women being a "burden." I am listening to the positivity radiating off other black women. Strong black women. Beyoncé, Rihanna, Amandla, Willow, Zendaya are all black women who are capable of doing and achieving anything and have created such a valuable message that us black women are not a burden. We are powerful. Our blackness does not inhibit us from being beautiful and intelligent. Our blackness is the *reason* why we are beautiful and intelligent. This I believe. I believe black women are the strongest women; I believe us black women are the radiant revolution of this generation. I am proud to be black. I am proud to be a woman. I am proud to be a BLACK woman. This I believe.