

# Just Because...

## **Just because I'm Black**

Doesn't mean I'm ghetto  
Doesn't mean I like rap  
Doesn't mean I eat fried chicken,  
watermelon, and drink  
Kool-Aid.

Just because I'm Black  
Some people think I'm not smart  
Think I fight a lot  
Think I'm on welfare  
Think I'm fast.

Just because I'm Black  
I know  
It will be harder  
There will be challenges  
I have to exceed expectations

But I also know  
Harriet Tubman didn't free slaves for  
nothing.  
Rosa Parks didn't give up her seat for  
nothing  
Martin Luther King didn't have a  
dream for nothing

So I will sit at the front of the bus  
instead of the back  
And NOT pay no mind to people who  
try and bring me down!

## **Just because I'm Hispanic**

Doesn't mean I don't know their  
language  
Doesn't mean I'm an immigrant  
Doesn't mean I'm never going to fit in  
with other races.  
And it doesn't mean  
I'm Mexican!

Just because I'm Hispanic  
Some people think  
I have no manners  
I'm a bad influence  
I'm stuck with no future:  
I will get pregnant early  
Drop out of school  
Do drugs.

Just because I'm Hispanic  
I know  
Not everyone is fair  
I have to work hard to succeed  
I can achieve what they say I can't.

And I will  
Never give up,  
Never be ashamed of my race,  
Never forget where I come from.

## When it Happened...

When it happened...  
I wanted to hit him  
He was suppose to be my friend  
Because my name is Islamic  
He called me a terrorist  
I'm a middle school student  
Who likes alternative rock music  
Like AudioSlave  
I wanted to hit him  
But I didn't

When it happened...  
It was my first time in the U.S.A  
I didn't know his name  
He was black  
He called me bad names  
I didn't speak English then  
When I went to lunch people tripped me  
A lot of people did it  
It made me really mad  
I wanted to eat but I couldn't  
I threw my lunch in the trash  
One nice girl gave me an apple  
That was five years ago.

My mouth was watering when it  
happened...  
French fries, chicken, burgers  
I didn't know you could look  
At a person and tell if they spoke  
English  
The cashier thought she could  
As she tried to explain to me in  
Spanish  
What a hamburger was  
Babbling on and on as I tried to tell her  
What she never asked  
I do speak English and yes  
I know what a combo meal is

When it happened...  
It made me mad and sad

At the same time  
Maybe he thought it was funny  
To say to me as we walked through  
the mall  
That my brother and I  
Could stop by the food court  
Get some chicken and watermelon  
I asked him why he said that  
He said that's what black people eat  
I don't even like watermelon

When it happened...  
I wondered why the annoying person  
Asked me if I liked Kool-Aid  
Was it because I'm Black?

I was at lunch when it happened...  
You could smell the pizza  
A boy came up to me  
And said I looked gangster  
Maybe because of the way I dress  
Maybe because of my corn rows  
In a way it made me feel cool I think  
But I'm not a gangster

When it happened...  
I got in trouble at school  
The white kid in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade  
With curly hair, said my parents were  
immigrants  
Said my mom and dad have crappy jobs  
That I'd be stuck in that school  
The same school he was in  
My mom and dad have good jobs  
And I like my school  
When the teacher called me in the room  
I slammed the door  
I just meant to close it  
That didn't matter to my teacher  
Didn't matter to her that it happened  
And I don't know just maybe  
Because it didn't happen to her.

# Is it Really Necessary?

It happens all the time  
At Wal-Mart, the playground, in math  
class,  
the lobby, in gym, at the swimming  
pool.

Eyes staring at me because I'm Black,  
Hispanic, African-American, Latina,  
different.  
It smells like chlorine,  
like cotton candy,  
like sweat  
like the gapping difference between  
me and them  
It smells like racism;  
It smells like hate.

They asked me if I was Chinese  
because my eyes are squinted.  
I'm Mexican and what does that  
have to do with my eyes?  
That right there made me feel  
ashamed.

Is it really necessary?  
It smells like racism.  
It smells like hate.

Hanging out with my friends one  
spring day  
That smelled like flowers  
"Why do you talk like that?"  
Cause English is not my first language,  
and I'm learning.  
They said no matter how hard I tried  
I would never be one of them.

Is it really necessary?  
It smells like racism.  
It smells like hate.

At the pool, they stared at me and  
rolled their eyes  
Was it my bathing suit, my hair,  
or how I didn't match the white  
person I was with?  
You never know.  
I just wanted to get out.

She explained the assignment once  
but I didn't understand  
so I asked for help.  
"Are you serious? You still don't get  
it? Wow."  
Then she started speaking really really  
slowly  
as if I were stupid.  
Not to the white kids who needed help.  
Just me.

This stuff is as old and as complicated  
as cobwebs;  
Gym teachers, assistant principals,  
cashiers, girls on the playground,  
people at Wal-Mart:  
Is it really necessary?  
It smells like racism;  
It smells like hate.

# Brown

Brown is a shopping bag  
Brown is hope  
Brown is the pencil I use to write these  
words.



Brown is the roads on my barrio  
Hard work  
Brown is a world cup championship.

Brown is the cement walks that know  
everything you say  
My failing, my success  
Brown is an autumn night in the  
neighborhood.

Brown is feet dancing  
The smell of dust, a waterfall  
Brown is the sand washed into the wet  
shore.



Brown is the smell of cinnamon; the color of  
a pie crust  
Bigger than the universe  
Brown is the smell of pancakes.

Brown is the bark of trees, smooth wood  
The people that one day need justice  
Brown is a seed.

Brown is our roots,  
the plants, the people  
Brown is my family, my life.

Brown is the color of history  
the hope the world has been looking for  
Brown is the people united.

Brown is the color that has made me the  
person that I am today



# I Am the Difference

I respect  
but do not define myself  
by the color of my skin,  
Because the me that you see  
Is not the me that I am.

## **Let me introduce you to myself:**

I am graceful, optimistic, and rad;  
athletic, courageous, and kind;  
Creative, persistent, curious, and fun.  
Every day I learn the truth of my story.

And whether you think I can make a  
difference  
Or not  
Is beside the point.  
The point is not what you think  
But what I do.

Because once, when I was at the  
movies,  
In the mall,  
At a restaurant,  
In school,  
Once, when I was anywhere at all,

A teacher  
A mentor,  
A counselor,  
A coach,  
Said to me: You have potential  
Said: I'm proud of you  
Said: You will succeed  
Said: Never give up your dreams  
Said: You can do it, you're unique,  
you're talented, you matter,  
And all the other words we use to say:  
**I love you.**

I still remember.  
It made a difference.  
And I can pass it on.  
I can make a difference  
Because once I  
Saw a student being bullied  
Heard a kid who didn't speak the  
language  
Saw someone on crutches  
Met a homeless person  
Saw undocumented students fighting  
for their rights

And instead of looking away  
Or laughing  
Ignoring it  
Or acting like I didn't care  
Pretending I was different

Instead of all the things I could have  
done  
I calmed everyone down  
Offered to translate  
Carried her bags  
Handed the homeless person my  
taco.  
Stood up and said,  
**"I'm undocumented, too."**

You can keep power for yourself  
Or you can pass it on  
I know which makes you stronger.  
Keep moving forward.  
I have a purpose here.  
I can make a difference  
Because it's something I've already  
done.

**How about you?**