



I've had a flood of emotions that are hard to explain. They come and go. Monday was especially difficult as I put on mascara, lip gloss and a smile to go to work.

There were awkward moments/glances of those whom wanted to comment or give their opinions and advice, but had no words or were rightfully uncomfortable. I was relieved when my coworkers chose not to comment on this issue right now. Because honestly, people don't have a clue of the daily struggles we live.

The fear, injustice and racism is so strong in our world and communities. This war we fight for our rights and freedom we fight daily. –it is OUR normal. This nation has gotten a small glimpse into our world of being an African American in this country.

We smile to make “others” comfortable as not to be perceived as a threat or too assertive. We are forced to have difficult and unfair conversations with our children—to protect them and prepare them at a young age of this very injustice that we see today.

My daughter was 8 years old when she came home crying. I didn't know to have “the talk” with her this young—I failed to realize that no amount of distance, education, money, age or influence could change how she is perceived by the color of her skin. Suburbs and inner city, racism is still alive and well. She cried, I cried.

I had to talk to her about the color of her skin and what that meant. That is just one of many instances and conversations we have with our children in our homes. Yet we still teach them to love one another and themselves. We reinforce their value and beauty, teaching them to love their skin, despite being hated or discriminated against for it.

Meanwhile, our black men are dying at the hands of police officers. The disappointment, fear, anger and grief has been raw for me. And at times too much. When I see George Floyd (and countless other black men who lost their life at the hand of an officer) --I see my

father, my husband, my uncles and cousins alike. I was told at work twice this week that when they (my coworkers) see me, they don't see the same people protesting in the streets. What? I am "those" people. My husband and father are "those" men. My mother and sister are "those" women. Don't try and have a "black lives matter" conversation with me when you are clueless. And when you see me you don't "see" me. Men and women of color are screaming to be heard, to be seen, to be valued. We have been told to "keep our heads down" and we are tired. We are so tired. I am mentally exhausted.

It's a silent fear for me when my husband walks out the door or if we are out and get pulled over by the police not knowing who is behind the wheel and what may transpire. We're innately aware of the color of our skin. And likewise, we are aware of the good people and good cops. But tell me, are others aware of their racism? Are YOU aware of the way you "see" me, my daughter, my husband??? Decades of African American men and women being devalued, reminding us with each senseless killing, that our lives don't matter (miss me with the "all lives matter" debate).

Not just killings but blatant racism at its finest. We have historically been told to keep the peace, by being quiet, be careful, watch what we say, or mind our business, etc. Our Protests and hashtags are soon forgotten and we go on with life until the next senseless murder of an unarmed black man, and yes...yet another hashtag. History is repeating itself and little change has evolved.

The conversations start at the dinner table in our homes of those who's skin does not look like mine. I am so grateful to those who have genuinely checked in on me and my family and to those who have acknowledged the racial injustice without adding their "but...". See us through the eyes of Christ. Hear us with your heart. Do not minimize the call of action by making the unfortunate violence/riots/looting of some, bigger than the cause. Empathize with us. Pray for us and with us. Protests are not parades, they are hurting people crying for change.

