

Jowon Dorbor

English

Ms. Pahomov

### **African American Lifestyle**

Being an African American is very hard. We have to fit our lives into the American lifestyle. It will not and can not be the other way around just because of how this society think about other cultures. When I say african american I mean exactly that, my family is from Monrovia, Liberia and I was born here on US soil in St. Paul, Minnesot, but doesn't mean I'm any less of an african than my parents. My parents both came to America in 1999. They met the year after while my mother and older sister were in St. Paul. Once I turned 3 we moved to Philadelphia "the city of brotherly love", (the irony) and 2 years later I started kindergarten at my neighborhood school.

A very important event happen to me when I began kindergarten. It was the creation of my *american* name. No I didn't change my name, but the people around me did and I allowed it to happen just so my life could fit into the "American lifestyle". It was the first day and teacher, Ms. Fisherman took attendance. Once she got to my name she pronounced they way any American would say it, but I didn't answer because it was so unusual to me. When she said my last I then noticed she was calling me. "Present!" I said. I actually really liked the way it sound. I thought of how that my name didn't sound so *african* like.

Struggles of being an African American is being your parents and sometime grandparents personal translator. They still have their thick accents even though they've been in America longer than I have. When 4th grade came strolling along I started to feel embarrassed about

being an African. I was hanging around people that hypnotized me into thinking that Africans were dirty and were poor people who lived like animals and I knew I was none of those things. So I thought of myself just as an American and my reason for that was because I was born here. Oh how stupid I was.

People still asked the infamous questions about Africa. 'Do you wear clothes or just walk around naked?' 'Do you walk bare footed?' 'Is there plenty of food and resources?' It always end with 'I'm not trying to be rude or anything. I'm just curious.' like it's not going to make someone yell at them for the bullets of insults that they've just shot.

When 5th grade came, identity was a huge topic I stopped caring about what others think. I noticed other african students denying who they really are. I began to think of how crazy they must be, but I couldn't judge them because I did the same exact thing and was in their shoes before. Being teased for something you can't change is arduous journey. I made sure everyone knew I was african because it's a huge part of my life and I can't change that or take it out of my life.

The language/accent transition between home & school, and family & friends can be overwhelming. At school I have my american accent (yes there is a accent) and at home I have my african, specifically liberian accent. It's not only at home, anytime I'm with my family or friends I can switch it on and off. My character is different and just by being raised in america gave me two cultures to despise and adore dearly.

The American society needs to learn and understand the different cultures that there isn't only one. Also they need to understand the difference between stereotypes and reality. The

differences between joking around and being serious. It crazy how everyone wants to be mixed with a race but don't want to understand it. A message to you my readers is be proud of who you are. Of people will have their opinions about you, but it don't matter because it's not affecting your life or your identity. It is only affecting their character, showing you that they aren't worth your time of day or even getting to understand about your culture. Being anything other than American is very difficult.