

It was a normal Saturday night. It was about eight o'clock, and any trace of sunlight was diminished. The moon was out, the warm September breeze lifting up my flannel off my lower back. This part of South Philly was normally buzzing with activity at night. With the basketball courts and projects we passed walking under the bridge, there was never a dull moment. We were used to it, though. "We" being the people in the neighborhood and my companion for the night, Jahmar. I grew up with the poverty, music, cops and drugs in my life. They were a normalized thing that I had turned to turn a blind eye to. Growing up, we were taught to not interfere, there was no reason to start tonight. If you did something, it would end with you either being in the arms of the police or possibly dead. Nobody likes "snitches." Although it's hard not to notice and stare when a crime is being done everywhere you look. With every glance, my eyes widened in shock.

"I got that loud out, that loud out," said a random man walking to the left of me.

I couldn't see his face, it was just a dark silhouette that blended into the shadows of the night. He just about whispered in my ear, sending a chill down my spine. We kept walking, minding our business as we passed along. The action executed by the random stranger basically was an open call to any and every cop in the neighborhood to look my way. They were hoping to make their next arrest, so I could be added to the long list of teenagers for the night. "Why here though? Why look for trouble, in a place where selling drugs and robbery is the only means of survival?" I thought to myself. They stood there on the corner, some in uniform and some obviously undercover. Jahmar explained to me before about their crooked ways, these people who do just as bad things are put into a line of power over us. I asked myself, Who in the end are deemed powerless?

"I wonder what would make you want something from Rite-aid at this time of night?" said jahmar.

I actually didn't know. It seemed right. I thought nothing of it since it was in my path of going back home. We walked this way all the time to get to Oregon Avenue, where I'd catch my bus. The blocks seemed long, but the conversation and atmosphere around us kept me entertained. We turned from the long bridge, onto Passyunk Ave. We crossed quickly, and it got to the point where you could actually see the bright blue lights saying "Rite Aid." I had an odd craving for hot cheetos. The desire for them grew and grew as we got closer. The doors opened, and the cold air from the air conditioning almost seemed as a smack to the face. It was a cool blast, compared to the humid air outside. I looked around, and saw the employees doing their daily task of the store. As Jahmar and I started to Aisle six, where all the snacks were, I noticed we were being followed by the security officer.

"He's following us," I said.

"I know, I saw him staring as soon as we came into the door," said Jahmar.

Jahmar and I grabbed the chips we wanted, and headed over to get candy and juice. We went to the cash register, and the cashier greeted us with a smile and proceeded with check-out. We got our snacks, and headed toward the door. The alarms blared with sound as we passed. The guard was already there waiting to stop us. He snatched out bad, and looked on the inside.

"We always have people like you steal in here, I wouldn't be surprised if you got away with it. Have a good night."

Ever since I was younger, discrimination and racism was always present in my life. As I got older, I always get stares from cops, and people still cross the street when I walk by. This whole system of race affects me greatly, I am treated differently just because of the color of my skin. It is assumed just because I am of darker pigment, I will steal or harm someone. He showed my friend and I that ignorance is still

present even though he saw us pay for our item, and followed us around the whole store. Ignorance is still present in my life. It seems as though I cannot escape it.