

Essay by: Samiah Williams

Growing up was difficult for me. After losing our only home in the country due to a terrifying fire, it was hard. My mama didn't know what we were going to do. She had a man, but he wasn't no good. All he cared about was himself. So, after washing outside and getting dressed, my mama sent me and my seven-year-old brother to live with my older brother and his side of the family. His dad was African American and his wife was a white woman. Her name was Leslie, so of course, they had mixed kids. Leslie was adopted. She didn't know her real parents and still don't till this day. The parents that she grew up with were white and biased towards the kids. All together, there were six kids living in the house. LJ, who had to be twelve. Kayla, who was nine. Javaris, who was eight. Adrian, who was three. Jalyn, who was maybe seven months, and myself, I was eight. That was a lot of mouths to feed, so Leslie worked long hours. She had a good job and was able to provide for all of us. She threw parties for all of our Birthdays, and so on. Anyways, her foster parents treated only one of the kids in the house better than they treated the rest and her name was Kayla. I don't know the reason behind it, but that's how it was. Every Sunday, they would come pick her up and not the others for the whole weekend. She would come back with new

clothes, shoes and other things. They never did any of that for the rest of us.

When they came to the house, I would notice the way they acted when they were around Pops, Leslie husband and everybody else. They would act as if we had germs. They were very rude. I didn't know what they were telling Kayla when they had her until one night. Kayla was upset for some reason and I was worried. I asked her and that was when she opened up to me. She was even crying about it. I will never forget the feeling that ran through my body that day. Why didn't they like black people? We never did anything to them. My feelings were so hurt knowing that someone that looked different than me, didn't like me. Even though I was nine, I did know about how African Americans were treated. To be honest with you, it made me feel ashamed of who I was. I started to hate the skin I was in. I wanted to be to the place where I was accepted. I felt like it was a bad thing to be a African American girl. It made me feel so bad because Leslie foster parents said some hurtful things to us. They looked at us as if we were criminals. I can't sit here and describe the feeling I felt inside. I was really ashamed of being an African American because of the way the grandparents acted towards us. I am just going to skip to the good stuff now. I grew past that, thank God. I am proud to be a black African American girl and I will never let anybody tell me otherwise. I've through hell and high waters to let somebody come up in my life and try to

make me feel bad about who I am. The devil is a liar. I am going to embrace this almond joy smooth skin. I am going to keep a beautiful smile on my face. Even though there are still people out there who still doesn't like black people, but I'm here to tell you today to pray for those people. I don't understand how people can just walk around knowing they got hatred in their heart. That is only making them ugly than they really are. People like that are just miserable. Maybe they had a rough childhood or it's just because of the way they were raised. I am going to encourage that it don't matter what race you are, you are still able to achieve anything you want in this world. I'm here to tell you that you can. I'm talking to African, Mexican, Jamaican, you name it. Don't let what people think about you change the way you view yourself because at the end of the day you are worthy of anything you want in this world. You are beautiful regardless of what people say. God didn't create us to all look the same. He made us different because he the man and he can do what he please. So, I am thankful for Mrs. Leslie's foster parents because if it wasn't for them and how they treated me, I wouldn't be so confident and wise today. They only pushed me to appreciate who I am and my race. They showed me that nobody's opinion about me doesn't matter. I am thankful because it wasn't for them, I wouldn't be able to write essay and share this story with you.