

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

I Am Not Invisible

Nancy Blackman · Tuesday, June 16th, 2020

She interviews for the same job – the nicely dressed Black woman. You hire me instead. You feel good. Equal Opportunity. You sleep in your bed dreaming dreams while the Black woman's dream is to find a job — any job. I am a feel-good number. You don't look at me. You don't want to know who I am.

I am tired of being stuck in the middle. My half existence. I have my own battles of trauma and racism. I don't need yours too. I do the work and keep my head down. You give me a paycheck. I put food on my table. You don't know who I am.

You're not sure where I'm from. My eyes make you wonder. I see it when you look at me. You want to put me in a box, but don't you know I'm always the Other?! You cautiously approach me with your curiosity. It is not good what comes out of your mouth. I was born here, just like you. You want to tell me that you're curious and I want to tell you that your curiosity is not kind. Shut your mouth! You don't know who I am.

I need insurance. Here, fill out a form. Where do I place my X? My half existence doesn't fit. You tell me with your boxes that I am invisible. I give you the form. You erase me with your stare. You don't know who I am.

I walk through Ktown wanting naengmyun or bibimbop. They are afraid. Does the shape of my eyes and the color of my skin repulse you?! I hear your souls crying for your country. You wish I would go away. You don't want to know who I am.

My God says I am Beloved. You call me trash. My half existence pains you. The DNA proves you are not pure blood either. Still you look away. The shame of my existence reminds you of the war—the war that ravaged your soul. You had to leave so you came to the land of dreams. I remind you of your suffering. You don't want to know who I am.

Now you follow me in your stores. You lock the front door as I approach. I am pushed to the outside. Your words slash my heart. Your actions crush my spirit. My body starts to break down. I am so tired. I don't know who I am.

I ask my mother. You brought me into this world. Who am I?! She stares at me too. Her tears are not new. I am a bad mother she says. I just wanted you to be safe. Her tears. She cannot hold back. I have made a mistake, she says. I say no. They made a mistake. They don't want to know who I am. They want to dignify their oppression. To keep me down. I am not your token. I am not your

confusion. You don't want to know who I am, but I know I am me.

My father said you have two strikes against you. What do you mean? You are a minority and a woman. You must learn to speak. You must learn to have a voice. You must speak. Your journey will not be easy. Stand up. Use your voice. You know who you are!

My White father said don't submit to the White man. He carried my oppression in his soul. He carried my grief on his back. He helped me stand up. Use your voice he said. Use your voice.

I try to stand up. I try to use my voice. I try to tell you who I am.

You tell me to sit down with your sideways smile and your glances at the clock. You are not interested but I tell you that you are. You want to date me, but you don't want to know me. Your curiosity is not kind. Your mother is surprised. She says at least she's not Black. Your words are not kind. Enough! I am not your curiosity. You don't want to know who I am.

You call two months after the breakup. I am surprised. Was my no not enough? You try to lure me back into your oppression. I tell you I'm done. I know who I am. I am not your token. I am not your confusion. I am not your oppression. I am me.

Now you want to know who I am.

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