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It's Not Because I'm Black

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In the fall, I had the good fortune to be invited to meet with Beverly Tatum at the President's house. More recently, I received the opportunity to go back to the President's house to meet another esteemed guest. Instead of being happy for me, someone I knew asked me about the selection process for who was invited to attend. I began to explain that it is the influential, passionate people who are ready to use their voice that get invited and he replied, "I don't think that is why you got chosen," alluding to the color of my skin. It put a damper on the invitation and made me angry. All of my achievements that got me here didn't matter to him. It is so easy for people to see the brown skin and to think that I used the race card to get ahead, however it is the things you can't see that fueled me. It is my intelligence, my voice, and my passion that got me here. Those things can't be seen at first glance so they get overlooked. As I left his room, I knew that I needed to calm down and not explode. So, I started writing and it became everything that I couldn't say before. After I finished, I went back and edited and shaped it so that it not only spoke to my situation and every person who has faced something similar.

This piece is my way of responding to the accusations that a lot of minoritized peoples receive. Too often, they are asked to explain why they are offered an amazing opportunity. They do not owe anyone an explanation as to why they were chosen any more than their white counterparts would. It takes away from the joy of their success and can motivate them to avoid opportunities for success in the future. I don't think it's fair. If it was a white person invited to a prestigious dinner, or a chance to a paid internship at a competitive Fortune 500 company, there would just be "Congratulations" filling the air. However, when it is an African American person, the first responses are usually "How did you get that?" and "It's only because you are black."

It's Not Because I'm Black

"No Judith You only got it because you're black"

Wow... can I just say that that's fucked up and that you're reasoning is whack?

Since when did every opportunity I receive become dependent on the color of my skin? Since when did people stop taking into account the intelligence, wit and charm that I nurture from within?

You see, not everything is handed to me, nor "donated" out of pity;

I'm not a charity case, a student from the inner-city.

Yes, I struggled and no, of course it wasn't pretty.

Coming from the womb I didn't have it all.

Shit, all I had was my mamma's titties

But it was enough.

Enough for me to know that I'm extraordinary.

You see, I got something to say and hell yes, it's my story,

Untainted by someone else's words.

My soul yearns for success.

However, I knew that I had to learn ... so I did. Truth
be told, in the beginning I was the dumb kid
And when other students laughed and judged,
It was into another book I hid.
I was a coward, but it turned out, in the end,
I was ok with being my only friend,
But I knew that I was special because every time my teacher assigned my 5 pages,
I would find myself striving for 10.
And look at me now,
I'm back on track.
I got to where I am because I have strength. I've held my enemies at length in order to drive
myself the closest I can get to success.
It is that simple, yes.
Don't believe me?
Doubt it? Mentally count the positive attributes I lack. I'm a
hard worker, I strive for honesty;
If I do a favor for you, I don't look back.
I'm attending Roger Williams University on a full tuition scholarship and I worked hard for the things
I've earned, that's a fact.
I leave impression on everyone I meet which always opens up multiple doors, more doors than a normal
person would see in a lifetime.
And no, it's not because I'm black.