

Amelia



I'm Amelia and I am 27 years old. I am a college student, and I work full time. Which is a lot, but it is what it is. I grew up here in the Inland Empire, and I had a different kind of childhood. I was homeless until I was five. And then we moved around from place to place to place for a really long time. And then, when I was about 15, I ended up in foster care. I also come from a mixed race family. Everyone else in my immediate family looks White or is White-passing. I'm the darkest person, so I am *the* Black kid in my family.

I was probably eight or nine the first time someone told me I wasn't White. The first time someone actually said "You're Black," I was probably 14. It wasn't until I was 17 or 18 years old that it actually hit me, like, I'm Black, and the world is gonna treat me a lot differently than they treat other people.

Millennials grew up where everybody believed racism is over and we're so post-racial, and your skin color doesn't matter, and we're all the same. That's what we were all told our entire childhoods. But you hear the comments that people make, and clearly there's still a problem.

Moving into this world of realizing, okay, you get treated differently because of your color – it kinda comes down on you as this tsunami of emotion. And, it's hard. It's hard to figure out. Because there's this constant barrage of negativity and hostility and hurtfulness, all of the time, and it really gets to you. Like, it really, really does.

I don't even call it racism anymore. I call it anti-Blackness and Anti-Brownness, because I feel like there are a lot of people who think the darker you are, the less human rights you have.

It's not major things, like people running around calling me a "nigger," or anything like that. It's the little things. Every. Single. Day. It's like little droplets of water that are added, and added, and added that weigh you down and make you feel like you're drowning. That's what it feels like. It feels like you're drowning. It feels like you're stuck in a room, and you can't get out, and you're drowning.

At work there are people making negative comments



A pair of headphones used by Amelia to protect herself from hurtful and harmful interactions with others.



“Sometimes I will put headphones in, and there’s no music. I use it kind of as a deterrent when I’m in public and I don’t want to talk to someone or I don’t want someone approaching me ... It kinda tells people I’m busy or I’m listening to something.”

about Black people or Asians or Latinos or whatever the case. And I have to be quiet because I need to keep my job. I need to work. And I need to not be homeless again.

I don’t feel safe in public spaces, because I don’t know what people are thinking or how they feel. It’s like that at school. And in the grocery store. And the bank. And at the beach. And doing laundry. And driving. And everywhere. It’s like that everywhere. I don’t want to move to Redlands, as much as it’s closer to my work, because I don’t want to live somewhere people are going to call the cops on me because I’m walking down the street.

I shouldn’t have to feel like this all the time. But this is the reality of the world that we live in. And it’s just — it’s a lot. Going through the world feeling like that is very, very draining. I don’t do anything over the weekend because I don’t want to be out in the world, and I don’t want to deal with the things that people say and do to other people. I have to do everything I can to ignore the extra droplets so that I don’t drown.

I am very passionate about the things that happen around me, and the people around me. And I’m one of those

people who, if someone says something wrong to someone, or it’s off color, I’m gonna speak up, you know, whether it’s someone saying something to a Black person or an Asian person, or a Latino person, or even a White person. I’ve had friends who’ve made comments like, “Oh, you know, White people are trash.” And I’m like, “It’s not okay for you to say that.” It’s not racism, but that’s still discrimination and it’s still prejudice and it’s not okay. You cannot treat somebody differently because of their skin color.