

Sage Rowe  
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Dear Cheryl Willis Hudson,

Confidence. Confidence in who I am, and who I will continue to be. These are just a few things that your book Bright eyes Brown Skin taught me. Your book taught me to have heart in who I am inside and out.

Growing up in a rural predominantly Caucasian area, my sister and I were overjoyed to see a person of color at our local supermarket or when pumping gas. More than anything, we wished for a reflection of us in our classroom. Our wish wasn't granted until we were older.

When I was younger being "different" never dawned on me; I never even realized I was different. In second grade I realize how much the world uses our differences to alienate us and to define our mood. Our attitude, and how we dress.

When I reached the age of nine or ten I came to often hear smart remarks. On the bus a girl one day expressed her gratitude that she wasn't born a "dirty" skin tone. I was often asked "Why are your hands two different colors?".

In kindergarten we held a class vote for president. My whole class except a few people chose the then Democratic nominee candidate Barack Obama. By fourth grade when we voted kids made racist jokes and at lunch many referred to him as a "animal" or "burnt"(referring to his complexion). They started out just as the kids in your story, carefree and a hate for nothing, until they were molded by the people and world around them. Prejudice is a learned trait. These were my closest friends saying these things, so they must have thought the same about me, I later realized.

At that point in my life, I realized this is what society simmers into people of darker skin tones' minds. Our world makes us feel as if my skin tone is a burden we are born with. Too many times I have heard, "You shouldn't wear dark colors because of your skin tone." As if our skin tone is holding us back. My cousin was once told "Aw, you're chocolate but that's okay." This is not just the case for African Americans. In India people buy over the counter skin bleachers; in Japan you're least likely to land a modeling gig because of darker skin.

I said all this to say this: Because of reading your book at an early age, I am proud to be who I am. Flaws and perfections. Bright Eyes Brown Skin has taught me that being a minority is not a burden nor a privilege, it's simply who I am. Since when has pigment defined who we are, what clothes they wear, or how much money we make? All the kids in your story did the exact same thing, live just like everyone taking a breath at this moment is doing. We are all the exact same on the inside.

Living every day knowing there are groups dedicated to hating you, people thinking less of you, and constant judgments is hard, but rising above them all by being true to you and soaring above them makes it worthwhile.

Sincerely,  
Sage Rowe