

Small Town Life: A Study in Race Relations

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Moving to a small town in Ohio was not a choice, but a necessity. I needed a job. I wondered what it would be like to go from the East Coast to the Midwest as a single African American woman. My musing was soon ended. I quickly became aware of who I was, where I belonged, and how I was received in this community. From my daily greeting in the morning by Princess, the rottweiler, to hearing about the O.J. trial, I found myself writing notes on my kitchen calendar daily to keep abreast of what I was learning about the community I lived in. I found not only different ways of seeing the world, but how members of my community saw me and my worldview.

Although I thought the issue of race was behind me [us] and class was the remaining battle, I found that race, gender, and sexuality were issues in this community from my first day until the present. I came to the conclusion rather quickly that I was an “outsider” in this all White gay-partnered community, despite the educational credentials and achievements I held. My marital status was a question as well. Not only did I not fit into the mix of the community, I was a reminder of what they did not want where they lived.

Despite the fact that my "outsiderness" made me an exception (as told by many neighbors), subtly expressed comments and lofty intellectual ideas during discussion implied I was not much different from the rest of “them.” I felt the weight of bigotry and discrimination, not openly, but delicately conveyed. This paper describes my awakening to race, gender, and sexuality issues in this community, while I learned more about myself.