

Displaced Without a Name

By Smokey Robinson

I love being Black.
I love being *called* Black.
I love being an American.
I love being a *Black* American,
But as a Black man in this country I think it's a shame
That every few years we get a change of name.
Since those first ships arrived here from Africa that came across the sea
There were already Black men in this country who were free.
And as for those that came over here on those terrible boats,
They were called niggah and slave
And told what to do and how to behave.
And then master started trippin'
And doing his midnight tippin',
Down to the slave shacks where he forced he and Great-Great Grandma to be together,
And if Great-Great Grandpa protested, he got tarred and feathered.
And at the same time, the Black men in the country who were free,
Were mating with the tribes like the Apache and the Cherokee.

And as a result of all that, we're a parade
Of every shade.
And as in this late day and age, you can be sure,
They ain't too many of us in this country whose bloodline is pure.
But, according to a geological, geographical, genealogy study published in Time Magazine,
The Black African people were the first on the scene,
So for what it's worth,
The Black African people were the first on earth
And through migration, our characteristics started to change,
And rearrange,
To adapt to whatever climate we migrated to.
And that's how I became me, and you became you.

So, if we gonna go back, let's go all the way back,
And if Adam was Black and Eve was Black,
Then that kind of makes it a natural fact that everybody in America is an African American.
Everybody in Europe is an African European; everybody in the Orient is an African Asian
And so on and so on,
That is, if the origin of man is what we're gonna go on.
And if one drop of Black blood makes you Black like they say,
Then everybody's Black anyway.

So quit trying to change my identity.
I'm already who I was meant to be
I'm a Black American, born and raised.
And brother James Brown wrote a wonderful phrase,
"Say it loud, I'm Black and I'm proud! Say it loud,
I'm Black and I'm proud!"
Cause I'm proud to be Black and I ain't never lived in Africa,
And 'cause my Great-Great Granddaddy on my Daddy's side did, don't mean I want to go back.

Now, I have nothing against Africa,
It's where some of the most beautiful places and people in the world are found.
But I've been blessed to go a lot of places in this world,
And if you ask me where I choose to live, I pick America, hands down.

Now, by and by, we were called Negroes, and after while, that name has vanished.
Anyway, Negro is just how you say "black" in Spanish.
Then, we were called colored, but shit, everybody's one color or another,
And I think it's a shame that we hold that against each other.
And it seems like we reverted back to a time when being called Black was an insult,
Even if it was another Black man who said it, a fight would result,
Cause we've been so brainwashed that Black was wrong,
So that even the yellow niggahs and black niggahs couldn't get along.
But then, came the 1960s when we struggled and died to be called equal and Black,
And we walked with pride with our heads held high and our shoulders pushed back,
And Black was beautiful.

But I guess that wasn't good enough,
Cause now here they come with some other stuff.
Who comes up with this shit anyway?
Was it one, or a group of niggahs sitting around one day?
Feelin' a little insecure again about being called Black
And decided that African American sounded a little more exotic.
Well, I think you were being a little more neurotic.
It's that same mentality that got "Amos and Andy" put off the air,
Cause' they were embarrassed about the way the character's spoke.
And as a result of that action, a lot of wonderful Black actors ended up broke.
When we were just laughin' and have fun about ourselves.
So I say, "fuck you, if you can't take a joke."
You didn't see the "Beverly Hillbilly's" being protested by white folks.

And if you think, that cause *you* think that being called African-American set all Black people's
mind at ease.....

Since we affectionately call each other "niggah," I affectionately say to you, "niggah Please."
How come I didn't get the chance to vote on who I'd like to be?
Who gave you the right to make that decision for me?
I ain't under your rule or in your dominion
And I am entitled to my own opinion.
Now there are some African Americans here,
But they recently moved here from places like Kenya, Ethiopia, Zambia, Zimbabwe, and Zaire.
But, now the brother who's family has lived in the country for generations,
Occupying space in all the locations
New York, Miami, L.A., Detroit, Chicago —
Even if he's wearing a dashiki and sporting an afro.

And if you go to Africa in search of your race,
You'll find out quick you're not an African-American,
You're just a Black American in Africa takin' up space.
Why you keep trying to attach yourself to a continent,
Where if you got the chance and you went,
Most people there wouldn't even claim you as one of them;
As a pure-bred daughter or son of them.

Your heritage is right here now, no matter what you call yourself or what you say
And a lot of people died to make it that way.
And if you think America is a leader on inequality and suffering and grievin'
How come there so many people comin' and so few leavin'?
Rather than all this 'find fault with America' that you promotin',
If you want to change something, use your privilege, get to the polls! Commence to votin'!
God knows we've earned the right to be called American Americans and be free at last.
And rather than you movin' forward progress, you dwelling in the past.
We've struggled too long; we've come too far.
Instead of focusing on who we were, let's be proud of who we are.

We are the only people whose name is always a trend.
When is this shit gonna end?
Look at all the different colors of our skin — Black is not our color. It's our *core*.
It's what we been livin' and fightin' and dyin' for.
But if you choose to be called African-American and that's your preference,
Then I 'll give you that reference.
But I know on this issue I don't stand alone, on my own;
And if I do, then let me be *me*.
And I'd appreciate it if when you see me,
You'd say, "there goes a man who says it loud,
I'm Black. I'm Black. I'm a *Black* American, and I'm proud,
Cause I love being an American. And I love being Black. I love being called Black.
Yeah, I said it, and I don't take it back."

Sources:

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