

Even though our school started two weeks ago, I have already signed up for parent/teacher conferences for my twin 5th Graders. My, how time flies. The children of Ferguson finally started school today because the unrest in their neighborhood made it unsafe to do so. I remember the desperation as a single parent scrambling for child care so I could go to work when school should have been in session. I also remember being stuck in my house when the electricity was out for five days from a massive ice storm. I don't know, however, the hardship of trying to get to my night shift job when my neighborhood was subject to curfew or what it's like to worry that my hair might be too "ethnic" for my conservative work place.

There are a lot of ways in which the lives of people within a given community can find common ground, and some that they will never fully appreciate about each other.

I'm confident the children of Ferguson learned some important life lessons the last two weeks anyway, despite not being in school. Lessons about the value of life, that proper grammar on protest signs matters, what it is like for a tragedy to capture the national consciousness, the protection and betrayal of skin color, to distrust strangers bearing molotov cocktails, exactly what an assault rifle looks like, what tear gas smells like. I also hope they learned that they aren't alone, that the rest of their city hasn't abandoned them. That everything that has happened in the last two weeks in Ferguson has made a profound impact not only on their community, but to their country, and even the world.

That black life matters to people who aren't black.

My 10YO daughter and I attended the NAACP Youth March for Peace this weekend. It was hot as balls. We joined about 400 profusely sweaty folks in Ferguson, MO to march silently down W. Florissant Ave. to Canfield Drive, the street where unarmed black teen Michael Brown was killed by white Ferguson Police Officer Darren Wilson. Also in attendance was Missouri Highway Patrol Capt. Ron Johnson and Ferguson Police Chief Thomas Jackson as well as a slew (or is it a gaggle?) of media. There were ample opportunities for positive public relations in a community who could use all they can get.

There are strong differences of opinion about a lot that has happened in Ferguson. Many questions remain: whether Officer Darren Wilson was justified in killing Michael Brown, whether the protests (and rage that followed) did more harm than good, whether the local police overstepped their bounds with an aggressive militarized response, whether the media helped shine a light on the events or reacted in an all too familiar feeding frenzy. So many questions with complicated answers. One thing that we should all be able to agree on is how tragic it is to lose a child. For that, my heart aches for my grieving city.

I don't understand any parent, no matter what color, not being able to relate to the universal truth that we all want the best for our children. We all want to keep them

safe. Perhaps I can relate a little because I know what it's like for strangers to judge you without knowing anything about you other than what is right before their eyes. I've been in public situations with my son with autism when he has attracted every eye in the restaurant throwing a tantrum like a lunatic on a mechanical bull. I don't know what it's like to feel the terror of a police officer stopping me for no good reason in violation of my constitutional rights, but I do know the agony of being on the receiving end of ignorance.