Racial Injustice by Tashauna Parker

“Hands up, don’t shoot” echoed throughout the streets of Ferguson on this eerie evening in August. I remember a massive crowd of angry civilians, a blockade made of policeman, and myself standing in the middle of them all. On my lower right side stood my 9-year-old daughter, looking completely confused and terrified to see what was happening around her. I tried to keep her calm and explain to her why it was important for us to be a part of what started out as a peaceful protest. Nothing could have prepared us for the events that took place shortly thereafter.

Earlier that afternoon, an unarmed teenager named Michael Brown was shot and killed by a Ferguson Police officer, named Darren Wilson. I will never forget where I was when I learned about the murder. It was a normal work break of scrolling through Instagram, when I came across a post that shook me to my core. Mike Brown’s stepfather was holding a sign that read “Ferguson police just executed my unarmed son!” At that time, I couldn’t quite fathom what had happened. I initially believed that there had to be a misunderstanding, and the statement I read was being blown out of proportion. I soon learned that what I read was true.

On the afternoon of August 4, 2014, Michael Brown was killed in cold blood, then was left lying in the street for hours. The images of his body will forever be engraved into my memory. I was absolutely horrified and saddened by what I was seeing; and could not stop thinking about my 2-year-old son. I felt like that could have been him on that ground or any of my family members in the area. I grew up in Ferguson for most of my life, and patronized the store that Michael went to frequently. I was confused, sad, and extremely angry that something like this could happen, present day, in my community. I planned to go to the protest that evening to show support in my community. Apparently, I was not alone in how I felt, in fact the surrounding community was enraged as the news quickly spread throughout the city.

After work I gathered my daughter and her father, and we headed towards the site where Michael was killed. We parked and joined the massive group of protesters that were chanting and expressing how they felt. We marched from one end of West Florissant towards the other, but we were stopped by a blockade of policeman with protective gear, shields, and large guns drawn. I remember feeling my daughter clench my arm and leg extremely tight, in fear of what would happen to us. She couldn’t understand why the police had guns, and why they looked at us with such anger and disgust. I continued to try and comfort her as the tension between the crowd and the police grew. We left the scene right before all the violence erupted. This was our first conversation about racial injustice, unfortunately it was not the last.

Quotes:

“Of course, innocent mistakes occur, but the accumulated insults and indignations caused by racial presumptions are destructive in ways that are hard to measure. Constantly being suspected, accused, watched, doubted, distrusted, presumed guilty, and even feared is a burden borne by people of color that can't be understood or confronted without a deeper conversation about our history of racial injustice.”   
― **Bryan Stevenson,**[**Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption**](https://www.goodreads.com/work/quotes/28323940)

“Prejudice is a burden that confuses the past, threatens the future, and renders the present inaccessible.”

**– Maya Angelou**