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I say "No!" to the N-word

The n-word has been used since the slave era, used to describe black people as they were being stolen from Africa put into slavery, chained, lynched, raped, beaten, spit upon. The word was created as a tool of oppression.

I was only eight years old when I had the talk, this wasn't like any other kind of talk, like the sex talk, the pregnancy talk or the period talk, you would usually have with a child who has come of age. Instead, this was a talk every black parent and child will have to face in life. When I had the racism talk I knew I'd heard the word before from songs and TV. Just by looking at my mother and thinking back on it, I knew it broke her heart but it had to be done. She told me that many people in this world didn't like the colour of my skin, the texture of my hair and that they would use this word to put me down, and that no matter where I am I should stand up for myself even though it's difficult. She said I should be proud of being a black person.

In school I never say the word but instead use the euphemistic phrase the "the N-word" because I was and still am afraid that if I said the word a non-black person will feel free to use it. But l could not escape this two-syllable terror no matter what. I hated reading the book "To Kill a Mockingbird" because whenever the word was quoted in

class, I felt like a giant spotlight was shining so bright on me. One day a student said the word and within seconds it poisoned the entire classroom environment and everyone turned to gauge my reaction, but I just sat there and pretended like I didn't hear anything while bottling up all my emotions. Not so long after another student casually said "the N-word" in front of me and I asked why he felt the need to say that, and he told me that "It's just a word".

A word that was created by his ancestors and he could say it whenever he wanted. I told him never to use the word again and that it was used to degrade black people. That's all I could say because I never really knew what the word means.

All I knew was this is prevalent in the black community and that non-black people would say it to oppress us. For example, when Colin Kaepernick took the knee, or when Barack Obama became president. I never really said anything because it would be seen as being over-principled or as the New York Times said "insufferably woke." Plus, it is hard talking about the N-word. But why is it really hard talking about it? All I know is that "this six-letter word is like capsule of accumulated hurt" it's not just about "slavery". This word is fundamentally an assault on black freedom, black mobility, and black aspiration. Its historical context cannot be erased; maybe that's why the N-word is hard to talk about.