

Thenicha Bruny
Love and Unity

“Can you move your Black-ass elbow?” demanded a light-skinned African-American boy in my fourth grade class while we sat next to each other.

As I sat in the middle of the class, a roar of laughter filled the room. My eyes grew wide as I looked around the classroom, and realized even my friends were laughing.

I was so embarrassed I didn't know what to do. Anger took over my body, and I jumped up to grab this boy by the collar of his shirt. The class instantly began to instigate a fight with provoking sound effects. I immediately let go of him and ran out the class to cry in private.

From then on, it was like hell on earth for me. Being bullied put my outgoing and happy personality in the back of my closet like those pair of shoes you could never find. I began to isolate myself from the people I thought were my friends. I became a 9-year-old who didn't smile in pictures. For some time, I lost myself and I kept my feelings bottled up inside.

A year later in fifth grade, I thought I found myself, but in the form of the meanest bully. In a way, I was defending myself so that fourth grade scenario would never repeat itself. When new people came to the school in fifth grade, I choose to make new friends but through a misguided path. I figured others would like me if I picked on certain students, and I could indirectly demand respect. I bullied people on the features of their appearance because I knew those were things they couldn't change in the same way I was teased about my skin color. I was committing the same crime that was done against me a year ago without realizing it. My definition of a bully is someone filled with insecurities and tries to protect themselves by hurting others. Bullying is an act that only creates another bully.

I *really* found myself five years later, in ninth grade, because now I see everything clearly. Thanks to that experience, I've learned to just love and accept myself for who I am and not care what others think. I also treat others the way I would like to be treated. Why? Everyone has insecurities, and having those are okay. Insecurities for the most part are things we don't like about ourselves. We don't like ourselves because of what others think. And people learn about the standards of beauty and admirable characteristics through society. However, does society create our terms and beliefs, or do we set the pattern of destructive name-calling? I hear things from the media like “Team Light-Skin” and “Team Dark-Skin.” Where do those things come from? Who started it? I've come to learn that there's no real answer. All we can do is stop it from happening. Action needs to be taken. We must first look within ourselves. Take a long good look in mirror, and acknowledge and appreciate your best traits and characteristics. Close your eyes and think of all those imperfections you carry – learn to appreciate them and remember each one of them have a story. Our imperfections make us unique individuals with riveting stories.



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If everyone could do this, then all the teasing and nightmares would perhaps go away. And all that will be left is love and unity – things everyone is looking for in the first place.