

Week three, August 20 to August 26

I feel a lack of fear or judgment for being black in places of service, something which, unfortunately, differs in the United States. Around the time I entered high school, I started to notice how black people can be perceived, and how someone who doesn't know me can immediately see me and feel threatened. There are definitely a lot of times when I go into stores or walk down a street and notice white people giving me nervous stares or constantly keeping track of my location.

At this point in my life, I expect this to happen when I walk into a store where the staff serving is predominantly white, and I'm always paying attention to those paying attention to me, and make it a point to not appear suspicious in any way.

For all the weeks that I've been here, I have carried that some awareness of workers around me at service facilities, and have noticed very little stares that would allude to the ones I've encountered in the past. Every time I've gone shopping or out to eat since the end of the first week, I haven't had to worry about what I was doing while operating in a normal manner, something that has been beyond comforting.

Now, no place is racism-free, and my observation of the lack of negative perception of me doesn't mean it wasn't there, not to mention there could be a negative perception of me just for being American, let alone black. However, I've always been one to pay attention, and as a person of color and a gay man, you always have to be attentive to those around you, and so far, I feel an ease that I haven't felt since I came of age to start seeing the notions of black people in America.

— *Marquis Wright*