

Interracial Relationships

I judged (negatively) my daughter's black boyfriends without getting to know them... different story with the white ones.

In the 1970s, my father told me he would disown me if I ever brought a black boyfriend home. I was shocked to learn this about him. Over the course of his life, he became increasingly tolerant, loving, understanding, and respectful of racial and ethnic differences. I think of this as the power of hearts to change.

One of my sisters and my brother attended a black university as exchange students with a small Lutheran college. My sister dated a black student and my mother expressed concern that he was "using" my sister to move up in society – I was confused and said nothing – but would today.

In 1970, my black boyfriend that I lived with and I, made an appointment to rent a house. When the owner arrived as saw us, he headed back to his car and left. I didn't chase after and confront him, as I thought living together, unmarried, was illegal (it may have been). Nonetheless, I wish I had peacefully confronted him.

Police

Summer 2015. I was in a rented van with my whole family, which includes black and Latino boys and girls. We were travelling east to a vacation on the beach. My daughter's partner (a black man) was driving. And he was driving like he does in Chicago – constantly changing lanes, passing on the right, and speeding. A police car signaled him to stop on the side of the road. As the white policeman approached the van, I immediately rolled down my window – to show an elderly white face to the police officer. He saw me. And nothing beyond a warning to the driver happened.

Talked with a PhD/JD on campus – he had been stopped multiple times for driving while black.

Going to a Rotary meeting with a fellow member, also a University administrator, and a retired governor. As we got off the interstate at our destination, we saw a state trooper. My companion commented on how his stomach tightens when he sees a police. While the conversation ended, I'll never forget this experience as one person's opening up to the hurt they live with. This is not a bruise that heals, but a persistent assault on his being.

Several cars on my block were ransacked. While talking with the police officer about youth on bikes doing this all over town, I caught myself assuming that it was youth of color.