

In the Community

At a retail store, a man was verbally abusive to the clerk. There were several others waiting to be served including my family. The man seemed somewhat explosive, so we were hesitant to speak up. A young man of color finally spoke up and the man did become aggressive and threatened violence toward the young man. I felt my power as a white woman and stood between them. I thought it unlikely that he would hurt me, but I was afraid he would escalate even further with the young man, perhaps emboldened by his race. So I stood up. Finally. Other times I haven't been so brave and I'm sorry for that.

I was in line at a bank. A frail elderly black woman with a walker came in. The other black patrons offered for her to come into the head of the line. I saw an opportunity to join in. I helped her negotiate a turn to come in front of me, addressing her kindly, respectfully, and formally. One black man in particular looked at me with smiling eyes. It struck me that this gesture, which should be expected, seemed unusual and special.

I try to smile and greet my black friends anywhere – in the grocery. And I am always overjoyed when I get a response – friendly. Thank you.

A store clerk requested a picture ID when I made a return and the purchase had been made in cash. I refused and requested that the manager come to address the situation. I am African American.

I was standing in a grocery store line. The teen cashier was telling (or yelling) at a black student that she wanted proof he was working (she did not want his driver's license). I did not go get the manager or stop her. I was blown away, but should have stepped up.

In the Community (continued)

Being approached in a parking lot by a disheveled man, I told him he should not pan handle! Assuming that was why he approached my car, I did not give him another chance. Why did I react that way?

I met a young black woman at the bus stop. She said, “A lot of bus drivers are racist”. (I don’t see that.) I heard her out and told her, “I don’t experience racism and I’m sorry you do.”

Social interaction and making eye contact don’t come naturally to me. When I encounter a person, my habitual response is to look away, even if I’d like to engage with them. It wasn’t until I was an adult that I was told that doing this when walking towards a black person could be misinterpreted as racism. I couldn’t help but think of all those I may have unintentionally hurt. 😞

I make it a point to meet and talk with persons of another race whenever I can. But I am also aware that those who look really different from me, I do avoid. I am sorry for that and hope to do better.

When I was in South Korea in 2008 New Year’s day in the evening, I wanted to enter a nearby club (bar) to have fun but when I reached the club, they told me that sorry, they don’t allow black people in the club.