

Read It And Weep by Gregory D. Hicks

You know, I didn't want to be an Uber driver. Nope, I was fired from my last job and my wife thought that it was a good way to bring in some income. A side hustle.

(Beat)

You know, I didn't think about this until right now...that...this wasn't the first time my Blackness was an issue. Yeah, because I was fired from my last job...basically because I was Black and they needed a fall guy. Yeah, see this was some bull...But that is another story, doc. That is for a whole 'nother session.

(Beat)

Oh, yes. I remember. Yes, I can talk about anything. That is true. And that would be true for anyone...getting paid by the hour...yep. I don't get paid by the hour so...unless I get a ridiculous surge then it would be like I was getting paid by the hour...but that's not the point...

The point is...this is a recurring theme in my life. You know, Black skin can be a curse. It can be coveted. It can be imitated. It can be ridiculed. It can be loved. It can be hated. But the one thing it can't be...is validated. Right? Not by White Society. Not with All Lives Matter. I mean, you have experienced this right?

(Beat)

Oh, well maybe you didn't have that experience. How lucky are you? // And how crippled are you. You don't know how the world is. How can you even be sitting where you are sitting?

(Beat)

Have you ever felt helpless? Like for real helpless? Not, "If I don't turn in my dissertation by the end of the week and it won't get defended and I won't get my doctorate, helpless." But really helpless? Feeling like someone took something from you that they had NO business having access to? None! Have you ever felt that?

(Beat)

Listen to this. Tell me what you think? Your Freudian opinion:

"Uber driver...Black Uber driver, Jeffrey Greene, murders White rider by strangulation."

(Laughs)

Now, what do you think of me Suzan, with a “z? As a Black woman? // Right...you are still on the clock so let’s just talk about me. That is what I want to happen. //

I wanted to kill a White passenger. I wanted to put my Black hands around his White throat...and squeeze until there is no more air! Until he “Can’t breathe!” I know that doesn’t sound too Christian of me, does it?” That’s sick. And I know that is sick. But that is what I would have wanted to have happen in a “perfect world”.

(Long Pause)

Put it this way! What if, considering all that has happened in the past for equality...racial, gender, pay...consider all the people that have lost their lives...who died to make you, Suzan with a “z”...able to sit where you sit. With your education, with your practice, with even the ABILITY to be ABLE to get to where you are...and one day one of your fellow doctoral sisters that is not “Sistahs” calls you a nigger? What would you do?

(Waits for Suzan)

Can’t tell me? Well, I think I’ll tell you what I did:

I was driving these three passengers home. It was late. They were drunk. This is one of the best times to drive because the demand is high. Late, during the weekend, and at bar close.

Now, they were drunk. I mean, one of them had to hold the other one up just so he could walk to the car. But that shouldn’t matter. How drunk they were...cause I’m talking to a rider in the front seat. There is music playing, there are snacks in the hand rest in the front, waters in the cup holders, and in back I brought a seat organizer and packed it with water, candy, and Combos cause I want to create a good vibe, you know? The guy up front is like, “Man, I have never been in an Uber like this! You got water? And candy! (Talking to his friends in the backseat) Bro! He got Laffy Taffies!” The mood was set!

“Drive nigger”...that’s what I hear from the backseat.

“Drive nigger”...that’s what I hear out of nowhere.

“Drive nigger”...that’s when I turned the music down cause.

(Beat)

Its 2016. Barack Obama is still president. I mean, Donald Trump is running for office but of course he isn’t going to win. So there is NO WAY that this is happening.

“Drive nigger”. I looked to the guy in the front. I said, “Did you hear what you boy just said?” He looked at me, shocked. “Drive nigger”.

(Beat)

Now, murdering this White man would have protected all Black Uber drivers, young, old, female, male...putting me in jail, yeah, but it would have protected them. But I couldn't...I couldn't even protect myself. Because he took something from me that he had NO business taking!

But I still had a job to do. I was named Uber Elite by another rider. So...I drove those White men to their destination.

(Beat)

I went to the police and reported it. And the White police officer...said that the address I gave him didn't exist. Now, I am not technically savvy. All I know is that if there is an address under a passenger's Uber profile, that's their address and that's where I go. And the one time, out of hundreds of trips...the one time I needed this feature to work...there was a technological glitch and the end result is that the address DOESN'T EXIST. Can you explain that to me? With all you doctoral knowledge, EXPLAIN that to me!

(Beat)

Of course you can't! There wasn't any justice! I wanted JUSTICE! Which, I never would have gotten because I later found out that its not really a hate crime for a White person to call a Black person "nigger". They're just being an "asshole".

(Beat)

Maybe if there was a written law that, for instance, that a White officer would have to enforce, this would not happen so easily! And maybe this type of situation would not happen so often...and maybe people of color like me would not be left feeling...marred.

(Beat)

So...I left the police station and I went back online. We got bills to pay.

So...I did what I had to do.

So...my baby girl...wouldn't have to see me on the TV with the headline that read: Black Uber driver murders White rider by strangulation...but I need to feel like I matter. I need to feel like what he did was so trivial...and yes! Killing him over a name seems trivial too...except that it was a name that was used to oppress an entire race of people.

Nigger! //

I can't get over it.
No matter how hard I try...

Nigger!! //

No matter how good my customer service was...
No matter how many amenities I provided...
No matter how many doors I open for my riders...
No matter how many snacks or waters or phone chargers I have a White man can just take...all my efforts and use the oppressive word:

Nigger!!! //

And then I'm less than human. Then I get angry and become the Black monster that the society "knows" I am...which, of course, means that I have to be detained and locked up out of fear of what I might do...because I would have wanted to kill him...all because some White person said a word that some of my ancestors heard right before being hung...or shot...or dragged in a car to their death.

(Beat)

"Just give over it! Move on," people say. I can't! Cause I'm Black, like you. And we don't get to walk away from being Black. We have to live with it. And we have to die with it.

(Beat)

The dying part is easy. Now you tell me...how do I live?

- // = Mini-beat

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