

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Intimate Whirlwinds, Part I

Christopher Siders · Wednesday, February 12th, 2020

“If you want to enjoy the rewards of being loved, you also have to submit to the mortifying ordeal of being known.” – Tim Kreider

Alienated – Lead Poison

Secrets. Something that is kept or meant to be kept unknown or unseen by others. It can also be something that is not properly understood; a mystery. A mystery implies negativity, something more sinister, and the idea of digging into something intriguing, possibly traumatic.

Us human beings are a mystery. We can love what hurts us, and hurt what loves us. We can carry on family traditions and values that may not be the best fit for our personal growth or development. For as long as I can remember, I have been searching for answers as to why I respond to things the way I do; where my pessimistic attitude/lack of vulnerability has stemmed from has always been a mystery.

My father, a 59 year old man, struggled to create a foundation for his family. For nearly 40 years he was active in the store management business with Lucky’s and Albertsons. Being a black man, granted with authority, in America, the reality is there may be some backlash for no apparent reason. When I was employed through 85 C Bakery in Gardena, California in the summer of 2019, I endured an array of situations ranging from racism to mistreatment from a co-worker. Apparently, I did not exist to a manager, the word “*nigga*” was being thrown around while I was the only black man present, my issues with anxiety and PTSD of being sexually assaulted in the work place was seemingly a joke to some of my co-workers.

Expressing my disdain to my father about this his response was: “Son, I worked in the customer service/labor business for 38 years. I had people giving me a hard time. There were people around me, who were not black, using that word. As a matter of fact, I was called a “*nigger*” by a old white woman. One thing I want you to remember is to not let anyone fuck with your money. I had mouths to feed, so I did not let anyone fuck with me and mine. Sometimes you do what you gotta do and keep going.”

Hearing him say that made my throat close up. I couldn’t speak. Not because what he expressed wasn’t heartfelt, but because what he said felt extremely dismissive and invalidating. It felt like any emotion of anger, frustration, sadness or depression was going to be met with “*I went through*

this, so you have to go through this too. That's life." Life does not have to be like *"that."* This opposition in thinking about the situation has resulted in a minor rift in our intimacy.

I love my father, however, I do not feel safe approaching him with my personal issues. He calls my lack of vulnerability, the act of withholding *"dark secrets."* Yes, some of my personal issues are indeed dark. However, they are not a secret, as he has implied, or something I intend to keep to myself forever. If our connection was stronger, I would certainly let him in on every single aspect of my life. Unfortunately, that is not how our lives are set up.

I even remember as a teenager when my father would pick me up from school, he would sometimes have a cold, stone look on his face. Almost as if something was bothering him and he wanted to scream. There were times he would purposely turn off the radio and we would all have a silent ride home. Other days he would seem like a more carefree version of himself, laughing, joking around and carrying light conversation. Seeing his lack of vulnerability as it pertains to his own emotional and mental stability has affected my own interactions with being intimate.

Got Me – Revenge Of The Dreamers III

My unspoken *"secret"* or mystery regarding intimacy is that I get jealous. Easily. Not the type of jealousy where a stranger is hanging around the person I'm interested in. Showering them with all the wants and needs they wish to desire. It's the type of jealousy where I become envious of the people around me developing a strong sense of comfort with the person they are dealing with. In other words, letting each other in one another's lives, and vocally defining what the intimacy in said relationship will look like to all involved. I want that.

Recently, me and a few friends went to Knotts Scary Farm on Halloween, and it felt as if everyone in my group was getting intimate. Folks paired up holding hands. Some kissed. Some shared food. Others ran from monsters that randomly appeared out of the shadows of the amusement park leaving their partner behind. Some whispered inside jokes or information in each other's ear. It was cute, yet draining for myself. As I was the only one in the group not connecting with someone special.

Opening myself up on a deep level is terrifying. One on one interaction is a big deal for me. If I can simply be alone with someone and feel comfortable, that is my version of saying that I trust you. I am willing to be intimate. My main problem is, how exactly do you get to a point of sharing parts of yourself? When is an appropriate time to ask certain questions? What are signs that energy will go in a particular direction? I understand developing conversation is key along with a sense of trust and belief in one's self-confidence.

Truthfully, what I've come to realize is that intimacy is a cluster-fuck of secrets buried deep in a dirty-dry landscape no one wants to dig up until tragedy and trauma strikes. Fear of shame is involved. Everyone seems to know that getting their hands dirty through digging is the first step to something blooming into a solid foundation. Not only between souls but with self as well.

For as long as I can remember regarding the friendships and the people I have attempted to be intimately involved with, there has been no sense of foundation. The only thing present was fear and ignorance. Constantly assuming the next person's move which was solely based on societal norms and body language, when those alone do not hold all the weight. Barely any dialogue was

held stating what we were about as individuals. I desire to be a straightforward “tell me what it is,” type of person. It’ll save me the heartache. To put it bluntly as a 26 year old adult, that is the main reason why 90 percent of my relationships in general fail.

Historically speaking, I have a difficult time being direct with how I feel and I honestly would not know what to do if I were to be presented with a situation where I am emotionally available. If a person approached me to spark up some type of intimate-romantic relationship I’m not entirely sure I would know how to react. With that being said, I have not been in a romantically charged relationship, technically. I honestly, secretly like “*the chase*.” Those adrenaline fueling moments of wondering what they’re thinking. Texting back and forth. Being on the phone for hours literally talking about nothing.

What currently boggles my mind is concluding if these ideologies of romance and intimacy stem from an early age? There have been studies that state romance and intimacy develops from storylines in television, movies like Disney, the environment we grew up in, etc. Speaking from my personal experience I can honestly say that there have been a variety of different factors as I have gotten older that contributed to idea of romanticizing versus cultivating healthy relationships.

The Ecology – Boy Meets World

My earliest memories of romance, or infatuation, I would say was in 5th Grade (2003). I had an enormous crush on a girl named Maya, who happened to be the daughter of the school’s principal. To be quite honest, I have no idea why I had a crush on her. I think I may have just become fixated on her because she was extremely nice to me and she was popular at school. However, that did not last as Maya was interested in another kid who was an aspiring rapper with the same skin complexion as me. Also, my parents forced me to switch schools as the system wanted to hold me behind believing that I had a disability because of my reading and writing skills.

During that time, I had been in fist fights often. Guilty of being a quiet, dark-skinned student and befriending another student who was Muslim (who also got picked on due to his skin complexion and xenophobia). We both got teased frequently when hanging out on the playground together. To have someone around that did not view me as a freak of nature was nice.

The summer going into 7th grade, I attended a program at View Park with an older cousin of mine. Almost instantaneously, I resented him based on my own insecurities as I correlated his light skin and hazel eyes with the success of developing friendships quickly. He attracted a lot of women, and I felt like the dark-skinned ugly younger cousin.

This frustration even carried outside of school walls in his neighborhood, my neighborhood. Along with him I had two other older cousins. They were a little darker, but way lighter than me. They had no problem fitting in. It’s almost as if I had to build my chair at the table to have a seat, while everyone has a grand old time enjoy each other’s company. There were no instructions on how to put the chair together. There were no guidelines on how to appear more attractive to peers or how to sedate anxiety at a young age.

My envy towards my cousin only grew because at 12 years old I constantly heard “*oh his eyes!*,” “*his skin!*” At some point everyone in my neighborhood booped up, including all my cousins. I hated coming outside to play basketball or kick it with everyone because of their seemingly

extreme public displays of affection.

My cousins noticed my feelings on the matter and hooked me up with a girl named Leslie, who genuinely had feelings for me. However, I could not return the same feelings to her. Shortly after being in a dark garage for 3 hours partying and her grinding on my body, I felt uncomfortable and decided not to continue dating her. Understandably so, she was upset. I remember asking one of the homies from the neighborhood, why was she grinding on me? They responded, it's supposed to feel good.

I had no knowledge of sex. Shortly after, everyone started letting each other borrow cut outs of a playboy magazines hidden in a backpack. Only the naked pictures, not the interviews. Thus starting the early years of masturbation. The go-to was late nights on Cinemax, *Real Sex* on HBO, and the infamous *BET Uncut*. Turn the television volume all the way down to one. Tweak the picture contrast to where if someone tries barging through my locked door they won't know what's playing. Finally, no session is complete without turning off the lights. It's definitely rocket science. One mess up can result in a lifetime of shame. As a matter of fact, I got caught one time in my early career watching an anime on Cartoon Network's adult swim, *Lupin the 3rd*.

Anyways, being around those relationships in my neighborhood, I quickly realize it wasn't so much about falling in love with someone. It became about who could have sex with whom. Without asking questions, I automatically assumed intimacy meant sex or something physical. My friends would finger-bang their girlfriends publicly out in the open along with deep french-kissing. Performing oral-sex outside behind someone's house. The misogyny and machismo language was rampant.

One time during a game of Truth or Dare, I was dared to perform a sexual act on one of the girls. I was still 12 years old, and sometimes I reflect back thinking if she really wanted to do that. Pressure is a mothafucka. I'm not entirely sure I was ready myself, however my youth was.

(Photo by Jay Stevens and WISE)

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