



They Saw the Sun First

Spelman SIS Young Scholar Writings

Fall 2020

Dear SIS Seminar

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This summer was incredibly rough for me. As someone who is very close to her friends and family, being away from home was hard. Every day, I turned on the news and would see that we were in no way closer to getting back to what we would call “normal.” The death of George Floyd made it so much more urgent that people understand and acknowledge the pain in the Black community.

I went to protests, rallies, and webinars for racial equity while working, going to school, participating in my social justice work, and just being Nina.

Although this semester was one of the most stressful experiences I have ever had in my life, I must thank SIS Seminar for several reasons. Let me begin. When I started in the class, I was incredibly nervous. As an only child, I was always around elders and adults, but I knew I was ageist in the ways I thought, spoke, and moved in my world. I didn’t want to confront that because facing my flaws head-on is scary. As I have reflected on the semester, I have realized that this is what SIS is all about. Dr. Gayles created a space for me to face my ageism head-on. I was forced to acknowledge the ageism in my social justice work, the entertainment I consume, and even the birthday cards I buy.

As a young Black woman, I never gave much thought to the ageism around me. I did not acknowledge it. I would even say that I was complacent, which is a word I would never use when describing myself.

During the course of this class, I have not only acknowledged my ageism. I have been active in URGE (Unite for Reproductive and Gender Equity), which upholds the Reproductive Justice framework, which stipulates that we must be inclusive of all. But, during this semester, I realized that we were not upholding the framework because of our ageism. So, I made a change. I hosted a workshop with a group called the Bad Old Days Posse, a group of women who had abortions or did abortion advocacy work before Roe v Wade. When I became involved with the group, I knew we have to make an intergenerational conversation happen because, as Dr. Gayles would tell us, quoting an African Proverb, “Each time an elder dies, we lose a library,” and I couldn’t live without tapping into their history and their experiences.

The workshop went well! We talked about the “old days” and the present. This experience was incredibly valuable, but it would not have happened without SIS. Although the experience of seeing who my ageing was rough, I will be forever grateful to Spelman for giving me chorus and to Dr. Gayles for providing me the knowledge about ageism I will carry wherever I go, to my classmates who journeyed with me and to elders with whom I bonded in SIS Interviews.

I have enjoyed almost every course at Spelman, but this course is the one that will stay with me forever. Thank you, SIS.