

**The Myth of the “Proper” Black Person,  
(and how we can shut that garbage down.)**

**Black people can support other Black people too!**

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## **How can Black folks better support other Black folks?**

White Supremacy is something that negatively affects the lives of every Black person. The expectation of who we are and how we will live our lives often comes from generational survival methods. The treats we face in the 21st Century may not be the exact same thing as our ancestors did, but we still hold ourselves and others to these trauma responses, and in doing so, we make the lives of all Black people a lot more painful than it needs to be. The lack of flexibility and acceptance can sometimes lead to our very deaths - at the hands of other Black people and by our own suicides.

The following are my suggestions for how to help heal our relationships with other Black people, especially those who are very different to ourselves. These suggestions do not go into a lot of detail, but they are ideal starting points of conversations, with yourself and other Black folks around you.

### **1: We can accept that Black people are individuals.**

I've been called a Coconut for decades. Like the U.S equivalent of 'Oreo', being called a coconut was a derogatory term other Black people would use to someone who is Black or Brown on the outside, and white on the inside. I've been called, "White-acting," and "Copying whites," for liking Rock music, for being bisexual and nonbinary. I was also called this when I was a kid, for loving books, writing poetry and generally being 'different' from the people in Black dominated spaces of church and school which made up my world.

Black people already get racially harassed in white-dominated mainstream and alternative spaces; I've been assaulted by white queers at Brighton Pride, and the treatment I've personally received by white vegans and 'ethical' people has been violent and racist. When I and other Black people receive that abuse from white people for how we identify, we shouldn't have to face another barrage of hate from other Black people for being interested in these mainstream or subcultures in the first place. There should be safer spaces for all of us. Some Black people will be into things you don't like; some will do jobs you hate, and some will love people you despise. We can learn to suck it up and move along.

## **2: We can remove the limits of our support, and practice solidarity**

Trigger Warning: Transphobia, Trans-misogyny, Misogynoir,

Black Lives Matter is a movement started by three Black and Brown women, some of whom were fat and queer. However in recent years, Black Lives Matter has often come to mean “Only Black Cisgender Men’s Lives Matter.” Injustice against Black cisgender women seldom make headlines. Black transgender women and feminine people have some of the highest percentages of murder worldwide, but they are dead-named, ignored or ridiculed when their bodies are found. Black people who are sex workers and/or homeless, queer, disabled, or live outside the West will experience racism along with additional oppressions that are compounded by their race. They need our support as much as (and sometimes more) than other Black people too.

## **3: We can face up to our own internalised racism and biases.**

Colourism, Misogynoir, Queerphobia, Transphobia, Sectarianism, Islamophobia, Anti-Semitism, Ageism, Ableism, Fatphobia, are just some of the things Black people face from other people of all ethnicities. Part of us being individuals mean we have different ways of living. We don’t stop being a ‘proper’ Black because we are fat, Muslim or disabled. However we face oppression on multiple fronts because of our differences. When I was homeless, I faced all the fear and uncertainty that white homeless people did, but I also faced bigotry from a racist housing system, threats of sexual assault from the white homeless men around me, and disgust from Black housed people who said I was making Black people ‘look bad’.

It is hard to be free of biases when we live in a white-supremacist society. We all receive the same poisonous messages, and are forced into thinking individuals are the only ones who can affect the outcomes they live with, instead of looking at the systems and structures of a racist world. We find ourselves gate-keeping our spaces and communities: Christians only, Straights only, Married couples only, Light-skinned babes only...

**4: We can acknowledge that experiencing one type of oppression doesn't mean we can't perpetuate another type of oppression.**

The racism we face does not negate what we dish out to others. We cannot see our Blackness as being the only oppression that matters. Black people are individuals, and as such, we come in all varieties. It is hypocritical and damaging when you see your Blackness as natural and beautiful, but you treat Black Queers as unnatural and undeserving of life, view Black fat people as ugly, ignore and erase Black disabled people because you see them as embarrassing, and erase the existence of Black Survivors of abuse because you see them as a stain on the reputation of the Black community\*

**5: We can acknowledge there is more than one Black community.**

Just like the fact we are all individuals, there is more than one place of belonging for Black people. Popular U.S dominated media may present an African-American community as the only way of living for Black people, but this is never the case. Even within the U.S, there are vast differences between communities of Black people, who may not identify as African-American in the first place. The world has a huge amount of diversity, and the African diaspora is present in much of it. There are Black communities in places often portrayed as white only. We do nothing to support Black communities in places like Ireland, Norway and Sweden, India, Mexico and the UK when we allow ourselves to think Black communities only exist in Africa, the Caribbean and U.S.

**6: We can allow ourselves and others to rest.**

The constant news of violence, abuse and discrimination experienced by Black people is exhausting, and takes a toll on our mental health. The daily experiences of race-based oppression can force us to be resilient when we shouldn't have to be in that position in the first place. We can switch off when we need to. We can say, "No," to constant demands for our emotional and physical labour from others. We can stop waiting for the perfect time for ourselves and rest before we crash with exhaustion. Most of the world sees us as workhorses, but we don't have to view ourselves the same way. Rest is not being lazy; it's a lifesaving necessity. We don't have to be strong our entire lives, or guilt-trip other Black people (especially children) to constantly be the same.

## **7: We can learn about how Black people have influenced the world and its history.**

This isn't just about inventions by Black people, but how art, literature and music over the centuries have been created by us. We can learn about how our influence in other spheres has often been non-consensual; medical innovations being a very important and tragic one. Much of modern Western gynaecology comes from experiments conducted on Black women for example.

We can learn about the Black Queer and Trans sex-workers who initiated the Stonewall riots and in doing so, started the modern LGBT+ Pride movements. We can learn about Black civilisations that existed before the Trans Atlantic slave trade and other types of colonisation around the world. We can do so without getting into Hotep, Ankh-Right and Black Supremacy realms too. By looking into the contributions of Black people worldwide, we can be more accepting of the diverse range of interests, and the depths that our influence can reach. We can stop saying things like, "Black people don't do X," where X is anything outside of current popular culture.

## **8: Folks of all races can support Black people who have been hurt by other Black people.**

Trigger Warnings: Brief mentions of Child Abuse, Domestic violence, Sexual assault

This isn't the same as when white people derail conversations of racism with "What about Black on Black crime?" This is because the white folks who say this don't care about Black victims in the first place.

When Black people defend Black perpetrators of abuse and violence, we throw Black victims and survivors under the bus. I've been told to give Black perpetrators of abuse second, third and fourth chances, even when the people saying that, fully know that I'll be disbelieved by authorities when I try to get assistance. They know I won't receive cultural specific help from services for Survivors. They don't see me as worth the fuss. My silence is for the reputation of Black communities; for people in those communities who are held in higher esteem. I realise Black people who commit crimes receive harsher sentence than white counterparts, and even if they haven't committed any crimes, just the suspicion of it can end up with arrest or police brutality. The issue is that the Black people who fight against judicial racism, never say a word to support Black victims or survivors. People can do both these things. They rarely do.

This is a particular issue when it comes to Black Survivors of sexual violence. We can stop sexualising Black girls; calling them 'grown' when it is adults of all genders who are abusing them. Stop ridiculing and erasing Black Cis and Trans men who have been sexually assaulted. Stop pretending sexual violence never happens to Black people or that we are incapable of being perpetrators. There is already enough shame and trauma that comes from these crimes. We don't need disbelief and victim blaming from Black people too.

A note on violence against children and female partners: Just because our parents were physically disciplined by their own family, doesn't mean we deserved what they did to us in turn. Too many Black people make jokes about being beaten or punished in a violent way by their parents. Too many of us talk with reverence about women family members who put up with abusive or absent male partners, while keeping the family together. To say, "That's just how things were," or use our painful experiences to show how today's women and children are weak when they stand up for themselves, doesn't help anyone. We all have enough pain in our lives already.

## Oreo and Coconut are slurs

Respectability will not save us.

We are told:

That music isn't Black!  
You're a disgrace to the community.  
What will white people think of us?

Racists will hate us regardless.

Oreo and Coconut are slurs

When you're Black and you don't fit in.

And your:

Enforced rules,  
Modest clothing.  
Degrees and well-spoken words,

Will offer no protection from:

A rock/  
A bottle/  
An insult/

Thrown our way.

Respectability politics destroys Black people who are:

Trans and Queer,  
Fat, not Thicc,  
Survivors of trauma,  
Rockers, Goths and Opera Lovers,

And it swaps a white prison guard for one that is Black.

Surely we are allowed to be:

Messy and Thoughtful,  
Loud and Quietly considered,  
Flaming Asexuals and Bisexual Butches,  
Gay and Disabled and  
Well rested Lesbians.

We deserve long lives full of peace.

We deserve to be individuals, not always ambassadors

Of the entire Black race.

Because we never asked for this battle from other Black people;

This fight on a thousand fronts of:

Racism and  
Poverty and  
Homophobia and  
Homelessness and  
Hate and  
Hate and  
Hate.

## Resources

**The Nap Ministry:** Rest as Rebellion  
<https://thenapministry.wordpress.com>

**Black Sex Workers Collective (Worldwide)**  
<https://www.blacksexworkercollective.org/home2>

**Black Trans Foundation** has free therapy funding on occasion. <https://form.jotform.com/210736664693363>

**Mermaids:** Gender diverse kids and young people support <https://mermaidsuk.org.uk>

**Black Minds Matter UK:** Mental Health  
<https://www.blackmindsmatteruk.com>

**Bi's of Colour:** Group is closed, but website has a lot of resources and articles.  
<https://bisofcolour.home.blog>

**Imaan:** LGBT+ Muslim support and social group  
<https://imaanlondon.wordpress.com>

**Black Humanists** on  
Twitter: <https://twitter.com/abhumanists?lang=en> and on  
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/AssociationBlackHumanists/>

**Aja Barber:** A Black Writer and Speaker on Sustainability and Intersectionality. <https://www.ajabarber.com>

**Triple Cripples:** Highlighting the lives of Black people with disabilities. <https://thetriplecripples.uk>

**Fat Women of Color**  
[https://instagram.com/fatwomenofcolor?utm\\_medium=copy\\_link](https://instagram.com/fatwomenofcolor?utm_medium=copy_link)

**UK Black Pride**  
<https://www.ukblackpride.org.uk>

Age UK has a LGBT+ section called **Opening Doors London**, and that has a group for People of Colour.  
<https://www.openingdoorslondon.org.uk>

**LGBT Foundation Manchester**  
<https://lgbt.foundation>

**Nottingham QTIPOC** group  
Twitter: <https://twitter.com/qtipocnotts?lang=en>  
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Qtipoc>  
Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/qtipocnotts>



**Purple Rain Collective:** Highlighting the experiences of Queer, Trans, Intersex People of Colour <https://purpleraincollective.com>

**Black Pride Ireland**

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/blackprideire/>

Instagram: [https://instagram.com/blackprideire?utm\\_medium=copy\\_link](https://instagram.com/blackprideire?utm_medium=copy_link)

**Worldwide resources for Survivors of sexual violence/abuse** (use at your own risk, as some are less helpful than others) <https://oneinfour.org.uk/useful-links/>

**Article about Black male Survivors of sexual violence in the UK, and how they're constantly let down:** <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-48118278>

**Hashtags**

#DisabilityTooWhite

#TheUKIsNotInnocent

#AllBlackLivesMatter