

IT'S BECAUSE YOU'RE BLACK

Despite the hurtful assumptions some people make because of my race, I have faith that the gospel can help us all become more Christlike.



By Kirstie Stanger-Weyland

You only got in because you're black."

I worked hard in high school. I took advanced placement classes and performed well academically. But when my good friend and I applied for the same college and only I got in, she didn't mention any of that. Instead, she said what I started to hear from a lot of people.

"It's just because you're black."

Growing up I never thought of myself as different from my adoptive white family. Our parents taught us that hard work was more important than ability, and I lived that.

So when some people started seeing my skin color instead of my hard work and intelligence, it hurt. After three years at college, I still sometimes hear that I'm here just because of affirmative action on college applications.

Unfortunately making assumptions based on skin color instead of who someone really is isn't a problem limited to school. I've heard people ask my husband, who is white, what it's like to be married to a black woman. At church, I have to remind myself that people are just being



nice and trying to help when they ask if I'm a recent convert. I have grown up in the Church, served a mission, and been married in the temple, but the assumption that I must be new to the Church because I'm black reinforces that some people see my race rather than seeing me for who I am.

From the mid-1800s until 1978, the Church didn't ordain black men or allow black men and women to participate in temple endowment or sealing ordinances. While the revelation extending priesthood and temple blessings was received 40 years ago, some of the past speculation on why the restriction existed still seems to affect the way some members of the Church look at



me today. I don't know why the priesthood restriction was put in place. Personally, I'm OK with not knowing, because I know that God loves all of His children. But occasionally some members still say really hurtful things about the faithfulness and capabilities (or lack thereof) of black members to try to explain it.

Some believe that racism doesn't exist anymore. While I feel the world has made progress, I've also felt the sting of stereotypes that some still hold. But I have hope we can continue to progress past racism by recognizing our assumptions and not stereotyping.

My faith is in God. I am so grateful for the gospel of Jesus Christ found in His Church. I have always loved it and wanted to learn more about it. The more I study the scriptures, the more that love grows. I've lived the gospel and I've seen its blessings. I don't think I could live my life as well or as happily if I weren't a member of the Church. Thanks to the Savior and His gospel, I can become better and find peace through any struggle I have. ■

The author lives in Utah, USA.

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- Follow the faith journey of a Church leader who grew up in the inner city:
 - Part 1: "Revelations in the Summer of 1978," [lds.org/go/E61841a](https://www.lds.org/go/E61841a)
 - Part 2: "Seeing as We Are Seen," [lds.org/go/E61841b](https://www.lds.org/go/E61841b)
 - Part 3: "He Denieth None That Come unto Him," [lds.org/go/E61841c](https://www.lds.org/go/E61841c)
 - Part 4: "Till We All Come in the Unity of the Faith," [lds.org/go/E61841d](https://www.lds.org/go/E61841d)