

## BOYS' PARADISE

I never loved this black sheet that has wrapped itself around my bones. Not light enough to pass as mixed. Not fair enough to be considered royalty. Just black.

And with that came unprecedented prerequisites. To be black was to be a them. To be black was to be a second choice. To be black was to be an object of fascination and fetishization. To be black was to be dead on the channel 5 news.

It almost felt like a curse. How does a black person not hate that about themselves?

So as many, I tried to become something I was not... white. I spoke with poignant articulation between these "too-big" lips. I strayed away from loose clothing and rap music, sticking to American Eagle and Top 40. My social circle was a sea of similar color palettes ranging from ghost white to pink-peach.

I didn't really mean to do all of this. All I wanted to do was detangle myself from this skin that an unloving God had placed me in.

But George Zimmerman wouldn't have cared about what kind of music I listened to. The police and court will not notice the receipt in my wallet for a pastel blue button up and pair of Sperry's. And when I am in jail or when I am dead, no one will care.

As I rebuild myself, I've found that this skin is not a curse. It's the place where I grew up, learned the value of life, have been hurt and been blessed. It's my home and I will always come back to it.

By Mason Pippenger

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I HAVE FOUND A HOME IN THIS BLACK BODY