
The Concept Of Self Identity In Graduation, Shooting An Elephant And Black Men And Public Spaces

Identity is the characteristics, beliefs, personalities, and experience of a person or a group. Identity is a part of us and helps us make decisions. Identity is who people are, as they think about themselves, the way they view the world, and the characteristics that define them. In "Graduation," Angelou wrote about her 8th grade graduation where a white person tries to belittle her and her race. Orwell records his incident in "Shooting an Elephant," when he had to live up to expectations that the Burmese people put on him based on his identity. In "Black Men and Public Space", Staples addresses a situation where he was identified as a criminal because of his race. People aren't born or given identities, they create who they are and their identities through their experience.

In "Graduation," Angelou and her classmates were given an identity by white people because of their race, saying that African Americans were only good for sports and servicing white people. Angelou began to state what she loved about her community and about herself.

She was proud of her race and her identity as one of them, but once Edward Donleavy wanted to give her an identity as someone who can't do anything. He told them that the white students at the Central School will get "a well-known artist" from Little Rock and the "newest microscopes and chemistry equipment" while they got nothing (Angelou 473). He gave them an identity where they were only good for one thing. She began to hate herself and others; she said that "it was awful to be a Negro" and that everyone else, not including white race, "were [an] abomination. All of [them]," she let the identity Donleavy gave her consume her (Angelou 474). Yet, Henry Reed was the only one that didn't let the identity take him. He didn't care what Donleavy said about their race. He sang the Negro national anthem with pride that showed them that they weren't good for one thing. His words made "an impression on" them and they all realize that they do matter. Angelou said that they are "on top again" and she "was a proud member" of her race (Angelou 476). She created her identity in her race. If identity is given, people lose themselves; identity is created by themselves.

Orwell wrote about his experience in "Shooting an Elephant" when he was given an identity as a strong white man by the Burmese people. Orwell was a police officer when Britain conquered the Burmese people. They gave him an identity as a big strong white man where he has the power. So when an incident happens with an elephant during it's must it kills a person and destroys their town. Orwell orders for a gun in the case that he needs it to kill the elephant. When the people found out, they stated to follow and cheer for him it made him "uneasy" because they were interested to see the elephant kill; "it was bit of fun to them" to see the Orwell kill the elephant (Orwell 582 583). When he saw the elephant peaceful, he didn't want to kill the elephant and only to watch if the elephant attack again. But the crowd was not going to let him not kill the elephant they want to see the elephant to be killed by him. He let the identity to take over him and he started to say that "the people expected [him]" to do it and "[he] had got to do it" because they were demanding to kill the elephant (Orwell 584). He kills the elephant because he is "the white man with the gun" he accepts his identity given by the people. (Orwell 583). He stated himself he is "wear[ing] a mask, and his face grow[ing]" into the identity. He was melancholy when he kills the elephant and how long and painful it was for the

elephant. He lets the identity that was given to him to take over and he did a worst action. When people don't create their own identity, then it let your self do things that them don't want to do

In "Black Men in Public Spaces," Staples was given an identity by white people who were afraid of his skin color. Staples starts off with the first person that was freighted him by because he was walking on the sidewalk. He continues with another incident that happens to him and people that he knows. Staples knew what identity they were putting on him as "a mugger, a rapist, or worse" and he was "surprised, embarrassed, and dismayed" at all these accusations by them (Staples 394). Staples goes on to talk about the incidents where they assumed that he will do something to them. He felt heartbroken when they do that and how he scary woman. Due to the identity that white people put on him, he "grew accustomed to" it but he never felt relaxed with the fact they are afraid of him for no reason (Staples 394). He knows that he can't change that fact that they are afraid of him, but he can lower it. He changes how he moves at night, he "give[s] wide berth" to the pedestrians on the sidewalk and subway platforms, he wears suits instead of jeans, he waits for people to leave, he looks "clam and extremely congenial" when pulled over, and "whistle['s] melodies" from classical music (Staples 396). He felt that they couldn't think bad of him if he did those things. Staples made his own identity where people admire rather fear him. When people give someone an identity, they change and let it influence to become a part who they are.

People create their identities; they are not given. When they are given an identity, they lose their true selves. They need to create on for themselves. When they don't create it for themselves, they end up doing things that they don't like. In "Graduation," Angelou made her own identity rather than the identity Donleavy tried to give her, in "Shooting an Elephant" Orwell didn't make his own identity and he suffer because of his actions, and in "Black Men and Public Space," Staples creates his identity by changing the stereotype of him.