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## Black On White: A Found Poem

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## BLACK ON WHITE: A FOUND POEM

TODD JAMES PIERCE

*In 2007, I asked hundreds of students at traditionally black colleges to help me better understand common social stereotypes of white people in the African-American community.*

White people tend to ask a lot of questions,  
want more than they need, take a lot  
of vacations because they have more money  
than most everyone I know. White people  
get away with stuff I would never try,  
are unafraid, don't understand  
that they can make it in any city  
they might like to live. White people  
act like race isn't an issue  
anymore, like racism doesn't exist.  
White people can trace their ancestors  
a dozen generations back.  
White people act extra friendly, smile  
a lot. White people behave  
like the modern-day effects  
of slavery aren't a good reason  
for me to be upset right now. White  
people believe that history is  
the history of white people  
as that is what they learned in school.  
White people talk about spirituality only  
on Sunday, if at all. White people are good  
in groups, good at business, good at reaching  
out to others. If I were to change  
one thing about white people,  
it would be this: for them to realize  
how few nonwhite friends

most of them have, how hard  
it is to live in a world where  
people see you as a possible criminal,  
that they will never find out who they are  
by asking questions  
about how black people see them  
as a group. Or maybe this,  
for them to understand that to be black  
is to have two sets of eyes,  
one looking to see  
what your black friends think  
of you,  
the other fixed  
on white people quietly judging you  
from the far side of the room.