

The Lift Every Voice series spotlights the individual voices in our alliance who guide us to wrestle with entrenched inequities and structural racism as we all learn, listen and develop strategies for change.



“ In Mobile, I grew up knowing that there was the Black side of town, which was known as the colored side of town, and the White side of town. The division wasn't a thing that was spoken out loud, you just knew.

The characterization of my childhood was knowing your place: as a child as opposed to an adult; as a Black person as opposed to a White person; as a woman as opposed to a man.

Everything in my experience was the binary expressions of things. Black or White, man or woman, child or adult, rich or poor. ”

Monica Walker is a former educator, a businesswoman, artist, activist, mother, daughter, and friend. She brings her whole self to her work teaching Fortune 500 CEOs, beat cops, teachers, and community advocates about the history of race in America and the systems and structures rooted in that history.

Click [here](#) to read GEA Ambassador Julia Osborne's interview with Walker. It reads like a short memoir. The 5-minute investment in reading will yield exponential dividends of insight.

In your schools, were any of your teachers or the leaders people of color?

All my schools were predominantly Black-led schools. My private school was all Black teachers because it was a private, Black Lutheran school. High school was the first time I encountered white teachers. Many of the teachers that taught me in high school were people that my family knew from my older cousins. Black teachers were strong advocates of your development.

You can't solve a problem that you can't see. And what I see as the greatest challenge in this community, and probably universally, is that we are so afraid to see the problem. I believe that there isn't a problem we can't solve if we really understand the problem. I think the root of fixing what's wrong with us in this country can happen through educators. You get called into responsibility no matter where you go to work, in healthcare, banking, housing, when you really know and understand what's wrong, you have accountability to fix it. I want to believe that we are a people who, when we know what's wrong, we work to fix it.

The very fact that Black folks have any bit of kindness toward white folks is outside of my understanding. Given all that ugliness from white folks that you experienced at such a formative time in your life. We all carry with us the stuff that happened to us when we're young for the rest of our lives. How do you access any warmth toward white people?

I know that for people from my culture and my racial group to have survived what we've survived and to still have the level of humanity that we still have for other people speaks very powerfully of us. The power to love, to relate, to be in community, and to have come through what we've come through and still love... I think the greatest celebration of our humanity is to recognize how we are still willing to be in community.

Do you remember when you first became aware of the concept of race?

I don't remember a time when I wasn't thinking about race. I know that lots of Black people who could say different, but I'm not one of them because race was all around me, in everything. Black or white, man or woman, child or adult, rich or poor. When I hear people say they didn't experience racism until... I think, "I don't remember not."



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