

White Skin on My Hands

I'm not seeking validation or to make you feel bad
I just want you to know what a tough time I had
An adopted child you wanted to have
But at my expense I made you glad
I eased your mind, your responsibility
About raising a black child in a white family
You always told me that everyone is the same
Which stopped me from talking about all the shame
About being born black and growing up white
And how that was such a difficult fight
It's my time now to let you know
It's my time now, so here I go
I tried and I tried to ignore the feelings inside
But the thoughts that haunted me would not subside
So I did what I could to get through each day
Hating myself was not an easy way
So many nights I cried in my bed
Wishing these feelings were out of my head
You did not help me at all to understand
Why there was not white skin on my black hand
I longed to be free of thoughts haunting my mind
I longed to feel comfortable with my own kind
I hated my life, I hated it so
But there was nowhere else, nowhere else I could go
To the sky up above I looked and I said
Is there another family that could adopt me instead?
I wanted a family that could understand
A family to help me be all that I can
I tried to manage my feelings inside
But the thoughts were burning too deep to hide
So I turned to things that I am ashamed of today
To get your attention in any way
I longed for your attention, for you to understand
Why I wished for white skin on my hand
Today I am ashamed, ashamed to be me
But I am learning without you, learning to be free
It's still a struggle for me to understand
That it's ok not to have white skin on my hand
But there will come a day when I will be proud of who I am
There will come a day when eventually I can
Look in the mirror and not wish to be white
Look in the mirror and know I was right
That color does matter, it matters a great deal
And ignoring that fact helps no child heal.

Note from the Author to Joni Mantell, LCSW

"In everyone's life, at some time, our inner fire goes out. It is then burst into flame by an encounter with another human being. We should all be thankful for those people who rekindle the inner spirit."-Albert Schweitzer. *Thank you Joni for helping me rekindle my inner spirit.*

-T. Reid

And thank you T.R. for letting me share your journey with you. - J.M.