

## Witness Moment - Ketanji Brown Jackson Speaks



We all know and admire Ketanji Brown Jackson as the newest Supreme Court justice, but for those who would like to know more about her, she has written her autobiography, titled Lovely One. In the book she describes growing up as the child of a lawyer and a teacher who taught her to excel, and of her experiences at a large, mostly white high school. This is an excerpt from the book:

One afternoon in eleventh grade, I drove three fellow students to a local stationery supply store for poster-making materials to promote an upcoming debate team fundraiser. . . . I was the only Black student in the group, something I might not have noticed but for the fact that as soon as we stepped through the door a salesperson rushed over to me.

“May I help you?” she said, standing so close to me I could feel her breath on my face. I realized at once that no salespeople had approached my friends, who were already wandering through the aisles, picking up poster board, markers, glue sticks, construction paper and wooden display easels.

“I’m just looking,” I said and tried to move around the woman. She followed closely on my heels, and would not let me out of her sight for the entire time I was in the store. My friends were oblivious, but if they had clocked what was happening, they likely would have assumed the salesperson was just being helpful. I knew better. I had been Black long enough to know that the woman was policing me.

This experience would occur throughout my life. In store after store, salespeople rushed up to me the moment I pushed open the door and they hovered nearby the entire time I was in their establishment. Some even tried to steer me to the sales section, as if I couldn’t possibly have enough money to buy

merchandise at full price. Over time, I learned to zip shut any bags I might be carrying before I walked into a shop, and to always have my hands in plain sight.

This is the reality of racism for our African American neighbors.

Source:

Excerpt from Lovely One by Ketanji Brown Jackson c:2024 pp. 81-2