



Unpacking the Periphery **By Akilah Allen-Silverstein**

Straddling multiple identities,
Feelings of duplicity,
Oh but you're not really a Jew,
According to who?!
DNA is pretty clear,
But you're more concerned about holding onto to antiquated fears
But each part of me is dear
Why should I have to choose or one part of me lose?
Proudly Black and loving my Caribbean roots,
Borne from dual lines of generational trauma but resilience and courage flow through my veins
Never again will we be slaves
So many parallels and shared struggles,
How do I combine the journeys
How do I weave in both my stories
I was raised in the Caribbean island of St. Kitts and Nevis
I was raised to be proud of skin
Proud of my heritage, my ancestors struggle for freedom and independence
I took pride in the legacy of our rhythm, found throughout our stories and our love of the
drumbeat,
And no one comes closer to seasoning to perfection a pot of food with just the right amount of
heat
Nothing but love for my curls, a perfect combo of tight coils from mom and 70's Jew fro from
dad,
The saga of texture, the politics of good hair,
But on my head it's a crown I proudly wear

Always made to feel shy about claiming I'm a Jew
But touching down in Israel I couldn't help but feel like I'd made it home
The way the sun glistened and shone
A melting pot that's spirit is constantly evolving
More than a religion, the magnetism of a peoplehood
Centuries of oppression, expulsion and genocide, Yet somehow we've managed to survive,
More than that we've thrived No matter what was done to us You can't stop a people who are
brilliant and industrious
Seeing Jewish faces that looked like mine
Yemenite, Ethiopian and Mizrahi, Brown, Black and olive skin
Yet everything I knew about being Jewish had a European spin
I'm proudly Ashkenazi but I couldn't help but fall in love with the notion, the diversity and
richness
I felt seen, I felt valid like I could for once be Jew-ish enough, Why was I always treated like
such an anomaly?



When all along I wasn't that different than the rest of the family...
Post world war 2, post civil rights it felt like our struggles just took a different path,
I get it, it was easier to just be white,
And avoid the wrath,
Jews of all shades became an inconvenient truth, but a Jew just being white is nothing short of
a lie

But we're at a critical moment, a moment of change, a moment of healing, a moment of genuine
embrace, a moment where we can demand no Silence on Race,
Embrace all that we truly are, be stronger for the richness in our histories and narratives,
uplifting the voices of all Jews, especially those of Colour not often heard before, but are eager
and ready to take the floor,
Next year when I celebrate freedom at Passover, it'll be for both sets of my ancestors
No matter the country or community
Speaking out when we see inequality...it's a responsibility
Being more than "not racist"
Cuz a hero was never a passivist
An ally takes a stand, holds your hand as you make a demand, and acknowledges Indigenous
rights to their land, listens to the struggles and doesn't diminish the stories, or hand pick what's
relevant to history,
Then 100s of years later, simply label it as a mystery
It took a perfectly captured murder lasting 8 minutes and 15 seconds for the world to wake up
To see what we been seeing for 400 years,
We shed tears and gritted our teeth while you were surprised and so politely shocked
Somehow this outrage had a tinge of being mocked,
The alternate universe is appalling,
Got the activist in me calling,
But I'm cautiously optimistic, more inclined to work from within the system,
But I'm hoping every ear is truly listening
That we've finally cracked the surface
And maybe a window pane or two
Because nothing will ever change until we can see right through
Injustice against a few is a stain against us all
For each other as allies, I pray we can stand tall
Diminish the fine lines, deepen our understanding,
Listen with compassion
Listen with empathy
Act with courage
Act with reason
Because this is the season
To do better
To act on the Open Letters
To be more than trend setters
But intentional change makers