

The Listen Up Project presents:

# BLACK VOICES *of Vermont*



FEATURING:

*Jeremiah Schotter*

**What's it like to be a teenager in Vermont right now? How does your racial identity impact your experience?**

*Jeremiah:* It's kind of bizarre because when I was younger I never really thought about my race at all. Whereas now I recognize so many rude, backhanded compliments, or jokes as being blatantly racist. I think it's been aggravating at times. When I see a mural at my school which is problematic and all my friends would tell me I'm overreacting. When talking about colleges with my friends, if I bring up my dream school Duke. I get told that I'd only get in because of affirmative action despite having a 4.3 GPA.

**What does centering and celebrating Blackness mean to you?**

*Jeremiah:* Acknowledging black voices especially on the topic of social justice, Going more in-depth with black history month- beyond Martin Luther King, Rosa Parks, and the Black Panthers. We shouldn't go through history classes as if there are a dozen historically relevant black people.

**Who are your role models? From whom do you draw strength?**

*Jeremiah:* Neil deGrasse Tyson and Booker T. Washington, because both made it to the top of fields dominated by white men and overcame all of the discrimination along the way. I also look up to my BSU club adviser because she leads discussions about race to a faculty of over 130 while being the only teacher of color in the building. My last one is Ruth Bader Ginsburg because she brought issues to light when the judges, supreme court justices, etc.. didn't think there was any issue with sexism to begin with.

**What can the state of Vermont do to actively support young Black Vermonters?**

*Jeremiah:* Beyond raising the BlackLivesMatter flags I'd say giving other state-funded grants to students of color so they can take advantage of other opportunities that white students may take for granted. Almost putting their money where their mouth is, by showing that the state cares about Black Lives instead of painting the phrase on the street near the capitol with little to no action.

## Share a story about your life that feels important, or that has made you who you are?

*Jeremiah:* I have a lot of different stories about race and each of them have molded me in a different way so picking one seems difficult. But this one story I have summarizes racism in Vermont perfectly.

I was in Costco and I was just standing in line with a cart full of groceries waiting to check out. And I hear someone's parent or guardian say "Come on keep moving" and this kid who couldn't have been older than 11 says, "I can't there's a negro boy in my way". I turned my head so fast I could've gotten whiplash, I made direct eye contact with this kid and he didn't see anything wrong with what he said. And I looked at his mother or the woman who was taking care of him and she just had a similar look on her face that said "oh I guess there is, oops" and then asked him to walk around me.

I say it summarizes racism in Vermont because they didn't see anything wrong with what they did. There is more ignorance than hate, which can be annoying for me while working with my school's administration. Because I'm trying to showcase a problem that they (they being school board members, who all 'happen' to be old white men) don't realize still exists in our district or even our state. It's this issue that I've been trying to address for the last couple of years, the invisible enemy if that doesn't sound too cliché.