

The University of Southern Mississippi
The Aquila Digital Community

Race, Gender, and Sexuality Symposium

2022

Excuse Me

Sarah Burse

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“Excuse Me” by Sarah Burse (she/her)

ABSTRACT. *The purpose of this poem was to bring awareness that racism isn't in the past. The popular stereotype that “black people are aggressive,” influences the ways in which the United States has treated the Black community. They try to communicate their needs and concerns in a calm and well-mannered tone, leaving them with the same problems. Before they speak, they are labeled as “a danger to society,” and excessive force is used. When they tried to stand up for themselves, they ended up in jail, dead, or in the hospital. Burse also wanted to make are of the “School-to-Prison Pipeline.” People aren't aware that some public schools track students with low reading and writing scores to calculate the estimated number of people most likely to go to jail or prison in the future. The schools that are overcrowded, low funded, low-income, and their students are predominately people of color. For racism to end, as a society we must come together and be aware of the biases within society, the system, and individuals.*



STUDENT BIO. Sarah Burse is from New Orleans, Louisiana. She will be graduating in May with a B.S. in Sociology and a minor in English. Currently, Sarah is a peer mentor for a Sociology 101 course at The University of Southern Mississippi. Last spring, she presented her research on Black English at the Undergraduate Research Symposium.

“Excuse me”

excuse me?

excuse me?

EXCUSE ME MAM, I NEED TO PASS.

“Why are you being aggressive?”

I asked nicely the first time

But you ignored me.

“How do you expect anyone to listen to someone acting like that?”

Oh!

The tone of my voice is low

but the color of my skin speaks loudly.

We sat calmy in the back for too long

and all that got us was the chance to swing on Massa’s oak tree.

Massa’s oak tree, it’s 2022!

Oh!

The tone of my voice is low

but the color of my skin speaks loudly.

We sat calmy in the back for too long

and all that got us were public schools –

that pumped us into 6x8 tanks.

Oh!

The tone of my voice is low

but the color of my skin speaks loudly.

We sat calmy in the back for too long

and all that got us was white people

saying, "hey my nigga."

Oh!

The tone of my voice is low,
but the color of my skin speaks loudly.

We sat calmy in the back for too long
and all that got us was "I think I see a weapon

. . . .

EXCUSE ME

While my people try to survive
In a society that thrives
From the tears of crying eyes.