

“Be who you are, and find yourself so you can be your own person and enjoy life with no regret” - Bonnie Zackson Koury. My name is Aniyah Jackson and I live in New Philadelphia, Ohio and this is a story about my life. There is no perfect guide on how someone should be or look or even act in this world and I wish I could've figured that out sooner but I'm glad that I'm starting to get it now.

Trying to figure out who I “should be” and trying to fit in has been hard for me because I have always been different. I think the first time it really hit me was when I was in class one day and someone had asked me why my hair was so greasy and I had to explain to them that mine and their hair wasn't the same and that I have to put oil and other hair products in my hair so that it can be healthy and healthy-looking. I have had to answer this same exact question multiple times and I feel like I'm being over repetitive. This particular time though it was different because the person had still not understood what I had told them and continued to ask and make fun of my hair. It made me feel terrible but there was and is nothing that I can do because I need those products in my hair. I kept thinking of that conversation I had and I started to look around in the hallways at school and realized that, yeah I really am the only one who has hair like this and my heart sunk. I would often ask myself why I had to put oil in my hair but then I could hear my mom in the back of my head going on a rant about how I'm black and not the same as the other students and have to do different things to have healthy hair and I'd laugh and continue to oil my hair. In the end, my health is more important than other's thoughts or comments and I am still continuing to learn that slowly.

My mom has been one of my greatest supporters throughout my journey. I don't listen to her all the time but she's usually always right. My mom has taught me how to carry myself well so that I can be the best person I can be and so that others can see that too. I am very

self-conscious about the way people see me. I'd like people to see me as a kind easygoing and sometimes energetic person and my mom has taught me a whole lot of lessons on how to do that. For instance, treating people the way I would like to be treated. She has told me many times that "You can't be friends with everyone" but I try my best to be nice to everyone because you never know what someone is going through and why they are acting that way, so I try to have patience because not everyone is gonna have a good day all the time and maybe that one nice thing you say could make all the difference even if it's just a friendly greeting. My mom has also taught me that I shouldn't worry about fitting in because I honestly never will and in the end, I'm okay with that because I have wonderful people around me who love me for me.

Trying to figure out your own style is hard. I still haven't found mine yet! My talking style and clothing style are still evolving! It's important to know what works best for you. Maybe you have a country accent or regular American or speak in slang, it's all about what you feel comfortable with. I don't know exactly what mine is but it's a mix of regular old American English and English slang. The way I talk is part of what makes me, I and I used to be confused on how I should talk around different people, but now I realize that as long as I'm being respectful, anything is fine. The clothing style has always been weird for me since I started picking out outfits for myself instead of my mom. But I love having that freedom of wearing whatever I like. Sometimes I'll wear sweatpants and a hoodie and then other times I'll dress up. It all depends on the mood I'm in and if I wanna be comfortable or not. My mom will tell me when something doesn't look right in a heartbeat and I'm thankful for that so I don't go out looking crazy. Although sometimes I still have to ask her for help and sometimes it is like a whole fashion show she doesn't wanna watch. All in all, I have learned to always know what works best for me and everything will be fine.

In conclusion, there really is no perfect guide on how someone should be or look or even act in this world and I'm glad that I'm finally starting to get it now. all these experiences have built me to be the person I am now and I'm grateful for all of them, the bad and good.