

Who Are the Americans?

I struggle when people ask me what I am and where I am from.

I've struggled since the starting days of preschool when my teacher pulled out the world map, with most kids pointing to states from the barren regions of northwest Nevada, to the heavy foliage-filled state of Vermont with trees growing alongside hillside roads, And the beaches of the deep south and mountains of the west.

I looked everywhere on the map but found myself stuck between the continents of North America and Africa.

I looked up to my teacher and said, "I don't know where I'm from."

In which she solely replied with a pitiful look in her eyes knowing that I was a foreigner in my own country.

From that day on,

I was constantly reminded that I was different.

I had to make sense of the fact that I was American despite completely identifying with my Nigerian roots.

When people asked me where I was from, I could no longer respond with Nigeria, because that is where my parents were from, not me.

So I would begin replying with,

"Well, my parents are from Nigeria,

but I was born here,

so I am

Nigerian-American.”

However, in saying all that, I still never knew what it meant to be American.

Yeah, I ate the food sometimes,

and it tasted pretty good.

And I suppose country music isn't all that bad,

despite what people of my complexion sometimes say against it.

But 15 years later, I still don't feel...American.

What does it *really* mean to be an American anyway?

Many people are aware of the famous phrase of America being the,

“Land of the brave, home of the free.”

But I've done nothing to show my courage to reside on this land.

That phrase belongs to my parents

And the other immigrants who took a chance on hope,

A dream.

Those people,

The immigrants,

Are what I believe to be true Americans.

Who decided fear wasn't a great enough hurdle to stop them from being brave to live in a land amongst the free.

The freest people are the ones who have looked suppression in the eyes and said enough was enough.

They had to make a change,

For the better.

So while my confusion on what being an American still remains,

It's not for the same reasons as when I was four,

looking back and forth on a paper map,

deciding if

Nigeria or Georgia was where I was really from.

It's because I know I haven't struggled enough to deserve the honor of being called an American.

And it's only when I feel like I have truly suffered,

is when I will finally proclaim myself to be

A true American.