

Age I Was At My Whitest: A Comprehensive Study
By Robert Criss

Ages 0-5

They say you're born without a concept of race so it's safe to assume I was not at my whitest in this stage. I would learn what white was as a color and nothing else. I would see white in a bottle of breastmilk, in a bushel of cauliflower on a party platter or in a ranch dressing cup also on a party platter. The party would most likely be one of my first five birthdays. I would have yet to see white as a love for The Eagles: Unplugged album or the filmography of Noah Baumbach.

If I were held in front of a mirror, I would see myself as myself and not as a person that would one day repeat philosophies for a better golf game. When that day comes, I would see white not simply in the golf ball but in the golf ball's ability to absorb all other colors and reflect only white. I'd retain a deeper sense of whiteness as a proclivity toward the golf ball because of our socio-economic relationship. But as a child – somewhere between the ages of nothing and 5 – I would have no use for a golf ball except maybe to put it in my mouth.

Whiteness rating: 3/10

Age 6-10

My concept of race began to take form in school. As formal education became part of my white life, the potential for a heightened degree of whiteness raised exponentially. For instance, learning that Columbus was a meanie-bo-beanie and Native genocide was *so* uncalled for while simultaneously not realizing that's just the sugarcoated tip of a very sizeable, very white iceberg.

The whitest moment I can summon from these years was in 5th grade English class when my teacher played James Brown's "I Feel Good" and instructed us to sing along with a grammatically correct version of the lyrics. I was one of thirty white kids and a few confused black kids singing: "I Feel Well."

Whiteness rating: 9/10

Age 11-15

The white teenage years began in this age range so as natural proclivities toward raisins and khaki shorts took hold, my whiteness factor rose exponentially. Also, I'd suddenly become self aware of my whiteness. Not overly self aware but just enough that it made me vaguely ashamed of myself for the rest of my life.

This moment would've been triggered by a traumatic event like seeing a token white person in an African American film for the first time – i.e. Ice Cube's or *Barbershop*, Queen Latifah's *Beauty Shop*, or the amalgamation of their artistic visions in the crossover *Barbershop 2: Back in Business*. Or perhaps it was triggered by the first time I heard Limp Bizkit.

Not to pin it all on one film but the Fred Durst directed and Ice Cube starring movie *Longshots* sounds like the prime suspect. It's hard to say. That movie blurs together with Martin Lawrence's *Rebound* and Lil' Bow Wow's *Like Mike* whose white characters came from the same home water birth that produced the same Rachel Ray placenta taco casserole.

Whiteness rating: 10/10

Age 16-20

By law, 16 years old commenced the age of mobilized whiteness. It consisted of me driving my white self around, doing white stuff like driving around together with my white friends, and attending white events like bonfires.

On less social nights, I'd read and fill out a financial literacy workbook for white teenagers and leave notes in a library copy of *Fight Club*. For the years after I would somehow live with that fact.

Whiteness rating: 18.5/10

Age 21-23

The self awareness of my whiteness would become the forefront of my fully formed personality. The white me that would travel to the Greek Acropolis because that's where Pink Floyd played their live album was gone. Gone but not forgotten. Mostly forgotten but still not nearly enough forgotten.

My hobbies include acquiring Criterion Collection blu-rays and organizing them by color. Watching them would never cross my mind. Except 8 ½. Not the whole film but the harem scene.

Whiteness rating: 5/10

Results: The age I was at my whitest was unsurprisingly 13 years old. The moment happened when I was decidedly attracted to a girl with a full-color tattoo of the Super Mario Bros. characters on her otherwise pale thigh.

Judgement: I'm appreciative of more diverse backgrounds *now* instead of just being embarrassed by my own. I appreciate the literature of James Joyce as much as I appreciate the real father of rock and roll Chuck Berry. And greater than that, I appreciate the knowledge that they were linked by the same unbridled genius and well documented fart fetish.