

Say My Name, "Albert B Thomas IV!!!!"

Everyone's life today has been impacted by recent, and past events that have revived racial uproar. Philando Castile's horrifying death by a police officer in July 2016 brought to the forefront what seems to be a realistic possibility for even me.

Philando, who I will use his first name because this situation made him feel like he was one of my friends or family, was shot by a police officer in St Paul, Minnesota during a traffic stop with his daughter and girlfriend in the vehicle with him.

The international attention that was brought about because of the situation and the live-streamed video of the incident posted by his girlfriend is not the only reason that Philando has impacted my life. So much about Philando's story made things real for me. Ironically, I have family members in St Paul, Minnesota, about 10 or 11 to be exact, one of which is a 29-year-old black male. So, because of that I said, "Wow, that could have been him with his girlfriend and his two children." From there, my mind has traveled to the "What If or What Could,,,,," place very frequently. My mother has imprinted in my being, to put myself in other shoes. I realized I could be wearing Philando's shoes. All the backdrop scenarios, live-streamed realities, comments, thoughts, and other things have made me more aware of what could be. As years have passed and I am getting older, I am in a lot of different places and situations. I make sure that my eyes are open. I try to be more aware of what is going on around me, and I try to make very thought-out choices knowing that what I do and how I move can and usually will impact my outcome.

I hope that I influence my friends and family by the life I live and the choices I make. I try not to live in fear of *what ifs* but staying aware that the possibilities are there and not being afraid to speak up and stand out.