

Denise McNair - A Girl With Dreams
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Dreams of success, family, freedom, and recognition - these are what makes eyes glitter with hope and determination. As an immigrant female, I have a dream. I want to live a happy life with my family and friends. I want to become a nurse practitioner. I want to travel the world. I have aspirations. I'm sure that's the same as every individual. Yet, not everyone is given an equal opportunity to fulfil these hopes. Born with the promise of a future, Denise McNair was unjustly robbed of her life, robbed of her dreams.

If I'm honest, I did not know who Denise McNair was. Now, her name echoes in my mind as I feel goosebumps while reading her story - her tragedy. Though I do not know her personally, it's obvious that Denise McNair was your typical child - filled with youth and innocence. Participating in Brownies, her church choir and baseball, Denise McNair reminds me of my precious baby cousins. They bring so much light into my life with the burning questions, unlimited curiosity, and future proclamations. I can't help but wonder who's world Denise McNair lit up. What kind of things did Denise dream of? What did she want to be in the future? Perhaps a singer or an actor? Maybe the next Jackie Roberson? There are a million questions, all left unanswered.

Hearing her name sparks anger, sadness, and frustration. But most importantly, I crave action. To prevent deaths, to prevent discrimination and injustice, to prevent a child from losing their dream, I will no longer remain silent and ignorant. Sharing with my friends her story, I will spread awareness and challenge subtle racism that is unconsciously embedded within my community. Complacency is the enemy of justice. I will not stand for those who make light of history nor continually perpetuates mediocrity of the past. While discrimination is not as extreme, the problem has not vanished. From prejudiced arrests and unprosecuted murderers to media slander and daily microaggressions, our current system is simply a modernized tragedy of the past. Many still remain a bystander, passive and blind to social injustice.

I admit that I receive much more privilege than most minorities. Though ashamed by the benefits as a "model" minority, I hope to use my privilege as an Asian American to speak on the behalf of the silenced. Taking my voice to social media, stepping in during kitchen conversations, challenging classroom discussions and educational curriculum, demanding action from my local government - I hope to ignite a wave of momentum. By reaching voices of the youth like myself, we can actively dismantle our corrupt social structure. For the sake of my cousins, for the sake of children like Denise McNair, I want to build a world of freedom. I want freedom from supremacy complex, racial discrimination, stereotypes.

Denise McNair symbolizes courage. Her name empowers me with a passion to overcome doubts and ridicule for being a teenager. She reminds me of my purpose - my purpose to protect the future. Now I will take action so that the future generation, whether black or white, Asian or Hispanic, will see beyond skin and dream big.