

A Visit to a Bar... Why Not?

Transcript

Written and Produced by Tabius McCoy

AMBI: Sound of passengers departing Staten Island Railway train (fades in)

Tabius McCoy:

So here I was

Standing on a random street corner in Eltingville, Staten Island, on a cold Saturday night

AMBI: Sound of passengers departing Staten Island Railway train (fades out)

McCoy:

MUSIC: "Borough" Blue Dot Sessions (fades in)

Now see, I've have been in New York City for 3 months and have made my way to every borough

Well.. every brough except Staten Island

And to be honest, I was a tad bit scared of this place

Because statistically speaking, Staten Island was deemed the most conservative and the borough with the lowest percentage of black people, at just 11% .

And see... If you didn't know I'm a black left wing liberal from Atlanta, GA.
And everything from my parents, grandparents, and most of my high school friends were black.

Even the locs on my head were influenced by my black culture

MUSIC: "Borough" Blue Dot Sessions (fades out)

But... Here I am

AMBI: Crowd of people conversing at a bar in Eltingville, Staten Island

At one of Staten Island's most conservative bars, at least according to a quick Google search that I did the day before coming here.

One of the reviews read, "Love the Pro American, conservative, Pro Trump atmosphere in this classic Irish pub. MAGA"

Immediately after entering, I noticed how small and clammy this place was

The air is rather humid

It smells like greasy burgers and domestic beer.

As though the odor is seeping through the breath of some of its customers.
they converse about sports, life and who knows what else

AMBI: Sound of the Folk Band at the Bar Playing Let It Be (fades in)

And right by the door stands this folk band playing their rendition of
The Beatles Let it Be, which I must admit was kind of comforting

PAUSE

McCoy:

However....

This feeling didn't last long.

My friend and I look at each other simultaneously and laugh

A laugh of uneasiness

Because here we are. The only Two black people....

In a bar full of white people in the South Shore of Staten Island.

And... I don't know, I can't seem to shake the uneasiness I'm feeling right now.

Maybe.... Maybe it's the fact that I was sipping on a shot of bourbon that was outnumbered by
the ample amount of budweiser bottles in the room?

or

Maybe it's the fact that there's a black American flag with one blue and one red stripe placed
right below a picture of Jesus? Jesus appears to be looking right at me with a sense of
judgment and disappointment in his eyes.

AMBI: Sound of the Folk Band at the Bar Playing Let It Be (fades out)

MUSIC: "Fifteen Street" Blue Dot Sessions (fades in)

Or...

maybe my uneasiness stems from the video footage stuck in my head of an unarmed black man
killed in 2014 in Staten Island by a NYPD officer after being put in an illegal chokehold.

News Archival Audio (Fades In)

Juju Chang:

A routine arrest goes horribly wrong and a man seems to die at the hands of the police.

The apparent chokehold now caught on tape now reverberating across the country

And as mourners gathered at the victim's funeral tonight,

The NYPD struggles to address issues fraught with race and public safety.

Here's ABC's Ron Claiborne

News Archival Audio (Fades Out)

McCoy:

His name.

PAUSE

His name was Eric Gardner.

MUSIC: "Fifteen Street" Blue Dot Sessions (fades out)

AMBI: Background Noise of a bar in Eltingville on Saturday night (fades in)

McCoy:

Also, There's also a giant Bennington flag hung up on the dining room wall.

Yes, the same type of Bennington flag that is commonly used by far right white supremacist groups during their protest

But that's not it there's also a sign near the check-out counter that reads in bold black letters, "Unattended children will be sold as slaves"

Narrator smirks

As if the word "slave" doesn't have a negative connotation of race already in the United States

PAUSE

McCoy:

After finally finishing up this shot of bourbon that seemed like it took forever to drink, I stood there for a moment to reflect on what was happening

Because The bartender, this hostess, and even the customers treated me and my friend with respect.

However, at the same time, I look back around the room and I get a second glimpse of the flags, posters and underhanded racist humor displayed on the walls.

Narrator Sighs

Those things were in plain view as well, and I just couldn't seem to shake those images from my memory.

AMBI: Background Noise of a bar in Eltingville on Saturday night (fades in)

MUSIC: "Kid Kodi" Blue Dot Sessions (fades in)

Onomatopoeia - Sounds like New York - is a production of the Columbia Graduate School of Journalism. This episode was written and produced by me, Tabius McCoy. Joanne Faryon is our professor and executive producer. Music by blue dot sessions. And Special thanks to Peter Leonard.

MUSIC: "Kid Kodi" Blue Dot Sessions (fades out)