

FEEL IT IN THE AIR

It's the weekend again and I am currently on my way to play an 18-hole golf round at a new golf course I found on my GPS. As I drive down a long and narrow road covered in animal carcasses, I unconsciously began to bite my nails from nervousness. Normally this happens when I am studying for a hard test or I am at the end of an important deadline for work.

Not today.

What got my nails on edge was oddly enough not the dead animal bodies scattered on the road nor the stench of skunk spray. When I looked out the window of my Mazda 3 with a crack in the windshield, I could see broken down houses with old trucks in front of them. I focused my eyes on their yards and porches to see them flooded with Confederate Flags. I could feel my heartbeat slightly faster than normal. I continuously looked at my GPS praying that I had a lot of more miles to go. Yet, it showed the course only 2 minutes away. I began to contemplate turning around. If you are confused about why I feel this way, I will explain it to you.

Even as a kid we were taught to avoid certain situations depending on where you were brought up. And this by far was one of the worse situations for me to be in. History has shown us many cases where people that look like me are reported missing in the back countries of America since its founding. As a result, we are taught to not go alone while traveling and to only stop at places with a bigger population. You may still not understand the severity of the situation. And that's okay. I will take you through my thought process.

There were three red flags that occurred back-to-back. First was the narrow road with dead animals. This showed me that not many people complained about the animals on the road. So, I imagine that means not many people travel this road.

The second flag was the run-down houses and big trucks. This is a stereotype that has been engrained in my community about a certain demographic of people who do not like us are located somewhere in the area. Not to mention the amount of guns they possess without background checks exceeds a few cities. But that's another issue.

The third and most alarming flag is ironically their flags and signs. The confederate flag has been a clear representation of the old southern pride of America. This has to include the fight over slavery which is the main reason for the Civil War. Many will argue otherwise, however, this is the undertone that is understood by us. And the Confederates were of course on the side of slavery. Despite the gruesome inhuman treatment of African Americans by people who raised this flag, they desire to fly the flag proudly in their front lawn. Even after explaining multiple times why it would hurt us to see this flag, they still raise it. Obviously, they could care less about little old me driving down this pothole infested road. They might even decide to hold a cross burning in honor of their flag. I may be overexaggerating but I can't help but think of these things. Now that you know my thoughts lets continue. Trust me, it gets better.

As I began to drive through the gates of the golf course there was a huge emblem of the golf club on top of the gate. It would be beautiful if my mind weren't flooded of images from history books about racism in golf clubs. That's when I saw the main attraction of the golf course, it was a big red

bridge that went over a small creek. This sent shivers down my spine. As I looked closer to the bridge all I could imagine was black men hanging from its beautiful white trusses. Again, I remind you, it may seem exaggerated to you but it is reality for me. As I walked towards the club, I could see nobody that looked like me playing or walking into the building. I got even more nervous. All of my fingernails are to my skin at this point from biting them off. After I got my golf cart I proceeded to the first hole. The park ranger stopped me.

“Hey, the first whole is this way.”

“Oh, thank you!” I replied.

“What’s your name?”

“Oh, Deshaun. I have a 1:45 Tee Time.”

“Hmm, I don’t see you on here. And you are a little early. I am going to need you to go back.” I was a little shocked. I looked ahead to see nobody there. I am even more confused. And it’s not like I just got the cart. They had to give me the key for it. Maybe it was just a mistake. But in the back of my mind, I was thinking the worse.

“Okay, I will just go back to the club house until its time.”

“Okay.”

Five minutes later I came back to see a different guy there. He wasn’t as old as the ranger I ran into so maybe I had a chance.

“Hey, can I get your name.”

“Deshaun, at 1:45.” I was expecting the worst.

“Here you are. I have one other player coming to play with you so just wait at the tee.”

“Okay, will do.” Great, now I have to play with someone.

I waited anxiously for the person I would end up playing with. That’s when I see a fairly young white couple pull up to the tee. I waved to see their reaction. The woman waved back ecstatically while the man gave a slight wave. They introduced themselves at Anna and Matt. Pretty much as white as I gets. Yet, they were pretty much the best golf mates I ever had. Matt was just a little better than me so I was able to elevate my game and Anna just cheered for us on the sidelines.

As we went through the course, I made many mistakes. But so did Matt. He reacted pretty much the same way I would. Yell and throw clubs at the ground. Everything is going great. However, I could hear a golf cart approaching. Suddenly guess who rides by me in his golf cart. The ranger. He stops and yells at me.

“Your name was there! I had to refresh.” I could smell the bull all over his breath, but I gave him the benefit of the doubt.

“Okay.” I replied like Craig’s mom from Friday. And he drove off.

Matt and Anna looked at me with concern. They knew exactly what happened. I passed by him a couple of times and he had the biggest smile on his face. Maybe he was genuine. But I still had the urge to give him the middle finger. After we finished the 18-holes, I waved goodbye with a slight tear in my eyes. I returned the cart and went to my car. I looked at bridge that once stood my hairs edge and noticed that I didn't feel as nervous. Even the drive back seemed peaceful. Yet, while getting gas down the street from the gate entrance

I could still feel it in the air.