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# I Love Being a Black Cyclist, But It's Exhausting

CYCLING IN WHITE SPACES MEANS SPENDING ENERGY MAKING PEOPLE COMFORTABLE WITH MY BLACKNESS.

BY AYESHA MCGOWAN Jul 27, 2020



Courtesy William Loyd

t's a beautiful thing to be Black. I LOVE being Black and I feel lucky to be able to experience the joy and pride that comes with that. It's also VERY exhausting navigating white folks and their feelings.

**I**

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A lot of my experience with cycling in white spaces means spending my own energy navigating white folks and their feelings. Making them feel less uncomfortable with my Blackness, and spending time and energy helping them sort through the things they don't understand about the very essence of my humanity. It's why I made it my job. If I have to do it anyway, I might as well make sure it benefits others, and that I can get paid for my work.

**“It's easier for racist folks to hide if we never come out and talk about our position on things.**

It's easier for racist folks to hide if we never come out and talk about our position on things. I want to talk about it so I know who thinks my life is worth something, and who I need to stay away from. A lot of cycling events are in remote places and I am surrounded in white faces. Imagine how terrifying it must feel to not know if any of those folks think you're worthless and they can justifiably do anything to you and no one should or would care? I feel that way every time I go to a place like Emporia, KS, or Fayetteville, AR, or Leadville, CO. They're such beautiful places, but the people are a wild card. I stick close to the folks I trust and hope for the best. Just because people are nice to my face it doesn't mean they're not racist.

These truths are probably uncomfortable for a lot of folks. I assure you, it's more uncomfortable to live in that reality. I choose to do it with a smile on my face because I foolishly hope that will help you find me less threatening.

*Ayesha McGowan, 33, is a professional cyclist for Liv Racing and advocate for representation of people of color in the bike industry.*

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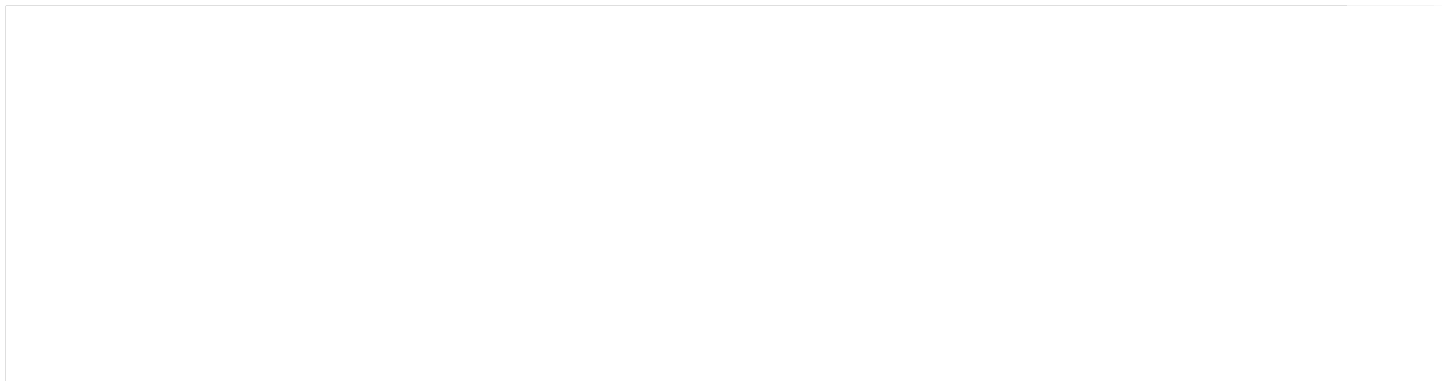
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