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When we make quick judgments about someone we don't know, in our minds we're putting him or her into a box and storing the box away for good. This box now contains a product, not a dynamic soul. We don't want to know more and could care less about the person's past, talents, strengths, or faults. We could care less if the African American kid is a Superboy fan, the elderly Asian is a Salsa dancer, or the white teenager grew up in India. We've made up our minds based on one look, and that's that.

Telling someone he or she is "white" on the inside is almost always meant to hurtfully accuse, or at the very least pointedly question the person's identity. I'm "keeping it real" while you're not. Look at the angry letter Brian Copeland talks about in the beginning of his *Not a Genuine Black Man*. The anonymous writer tries to pin the author as someone who has denied his African American culture. The problem with this criticism is that the writer never defined what the culture is, so all that's left for Copeland and the reader to go on is confusion.

Pressure is still there if you let it get to you--if you're nonwhite and living in a mostly white area--to at least show the outward trappings of the majority. Keep up your home and clothes so that they mostly blend in. Get rid of those weird spicy smells from the kitchen so you don't freak the neighbors out. It's human nature to seek acceptance. Thankfully, it now seems easier than ever to blend in while at least semi-comfortably revealing our grandparents' heritage. Present-day Cupertino seems to have much in common with present-day San Leandro, where hopefully no one is feeling vulnerable because of background or skin tone.

There is one irony to this progression. It could be the ever-expanding Internet, bolder media, and/or increasing mix of cultures in our city, but now one can pledge allegiance to a clique or niche that isn't based on a single ethnicity or other grouping. It's a more accurate measure of a person's comfort zone, a pretty sweet way of "keeping it real" as a lifestyle.

So, you're not some random Asian—you're an Asian American athlete with fellow Asian jock friends. You're not just another Silicon Valley resident—you're a Cupertino foodie who obsesses with likeminded pals from the same town. A danger to this is becoming so entrenched and smug in your chosen "tribe" that you start looking down on those who aren't interested in it. Based on Copeland's outsider experiences, we painfully know where this exclusion can eventually lead if we don't occasionally look outside ourselves.

Once you decide it's too much work to stay curious, your world becomes smaller as the borders calcify. You stop bringing anyone or anything new into your life to freshen your perspective. Finally, time withers along with your mind--let alone your heart.