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“The fourteenth amendment,” says my teacher. “Does anybody know what it is?” I duck my head and hope he won’t pick me. “Okay, well the fourteenth amendment was and is probably one of the most important amendments we.....” I zone out as he drones on and on about events I don’t care about. I mean, why should I even care about being naturalized? I lay my head down on the desk and slowly fall asleep.

“Run! You N****, RUN!!” Confused and disoriented, I jump up and run without a second thought. I run through the hallways of a high school I’ve never been in before. It is so obsolete. As I run, I see a poster advertising “saddle shoes”, whatever those are. After a short while, the pounding footsteps behind me fade and I’m all alone. I stop to catch my breath and see that this part of the school is horrible. There is trash on the floor, the lockers have been vandalized with awful sayings, and the lights are flickering like there isn’t enough power to light up this section of the school. I’m walking down the hall when the bell rings and students stream out of the classrooms. Correction: African American students. I watch as only blacks stream out of that door. One of them looks at me and says, “There you are! I was wondering where you had gone. One minute you were sitting beside of me in class, the next you just disappeared!” I look down at this very enigmatic girl and wonder where the heck I am. She notices me staring and says, “Susan? Are you okay? Do you need to see the nurse?” I shake my head and she loops her arm through mine. “So, are we going to eat in the cafeteria or outside? ‘Cause I don’t know about you, but I am not in the mood for white kids looking down on us like we’re vermin.” She says this as if we are both black, but when I look at my arm I discover that I am, indeed, black. We get to the cafeteria, which is in the better part of the school, and I look in the cafeteria expecting to see my friends so I can ditch this chick. Yet when I scan the cafeteria I find that I don’t know anybody in here. I shake my head and say, “I think we should go somewhere quiet, so I can talk to you about something.” She just nods her head and walks off towards the door at the end of the hallway.

I run to catch up to her and settle into a pace the same speed as hers. We walk through the door and over to the picnic tables by the school. I sit down across from her and take a deep breath, steeling myself for the inevitable. I open my mouth, but then-SLAP! Something whacks me in the back of the head. I turn around ready to beat the crap out of whoever did that, but when I do I see a high school boy who is white and I instantly get terrified. I understand the dynamic of this situation pretty quickly. He looks me up and down and says, "What are you doing here? This table is for whites only. Read the sign." He points at a piece of paper hanging off the table. I glance at it and stand up, my hands clenched into fists at my sides. When the girl I've been with says calmly, "Steven we have just as much right as you to sit here, so you can just go back over there and stow it," I look back at her and my mouth is wide open. I am shocked at what I just heard. I didn't think she would do something like that after her display of distaste for sitting in the cafeteria with the whites. Steven scoffs and looks away from us, then he turns back and says, "Whatever, it doesn't matter anyway 'cause when my daddy and all the other men revolt against this so-called fourteenth amendment, then y'all will all be wiped out." He walks away and I stand there gob smacked. I turn to the girl and say, "I'm not from here." She smiles and says, "Yeah I kind of guessed that on my own." I sit down, calmer now, and say, "Will you explain to me what is happening here?" She smiles and says, "It all started a long time ago when the fourteenth amendment was first ratified...."

She spends the next two hours explaining how the Brown vs. Board of Education changed schooling in America. She tells me how they were able to overcome segregation because of the fourteenth amendment, which states, "No state shall make or enforce any law....nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws." After explaining all this, she tells me why the whites are so hostile to the blacks. She says it's because when Brown won, their parents, who had been raised hating blacks, told their kids to not associate or interact with blacks. "Okay, so let me get this straight. Even though that amendment was ratified close to ninety years ago, it wasn't really put into effect until five years ago?" I say, puzzled and

outraged. She nods her head and stands up saying, "Yeah, it is pretty devastating to think that it took that long for us to achieve equality." We walk back inside together. When we get to a classroom door, she stops and says, "Well, it was nice meeting you." I smile and say, "You too." She starts to head back into her classroom and I realize I'm starting to wake up, I hold out my hand and say, "Wait! I don't even know your name!" She turns around and smiles at me, "My name is Linda Brown."

Works Cited:

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