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Black History Essay

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The person I most relate to is Fritz Pollard. Besides the fact that we both like football and that we are both black. We both have been underestimated. Fritz Pollard was born in 1894 and was raised during a segregated time. He joined the Akron Pros of the American Professional Football Association, but the audience, even his own teammates underestimated Pollard because of his appearance. The audience would verbally and sometimes even physically try to hurt him. In his biography on CNN.com, it said that “fans taunted him with racial slurs, and opposing players tried to maim him.” I have not been called anything racist, but I have been underestimated because of how I looked. I could have been underestimated because of my sex, the color of my skin, or my height or just because I’m me. There are many different reasons someone may underestimate another person, either way, it is not right. Even though so many tried to turn him away, he held on to his determination and kept going.

Another thing we have in common is our determination. Despite all that negativity against him, Pollard would respond with a smile, literally! During a 1974 NFL Films interview he said, “I’d look at 'em and grin. Didn’t get mad and wanna fight 'em. Just look at 'em and grin, and the next minute run 80 yards for a touchdown” (WBUR). He decided to keep pushing forward even though so many tried to drag him down and kick him out. Fritz Pollard could turn someone’s negativity towards him around in almost like an instant. He held his ground against all the negative and bad things people would say or do and would stay true to himself.

When someone tries to be rude to me by trying to push my confidence down, I keep my head held high and just ignore them. I do not try to fight or show anger, and even when I do respond, I think about what I am saying and ask myself “is it even worth it to argue?” When the crowd and his teammates would be rude and look down on Pollard, he would show them that he was good enough, and that he was part of the team. By the end of the game, the crowd would love him, and he would have the last laugh. Eventually, the crowd and his teammates began to have his back more.

When I’m playing sports or doing something I love, and someone tries to hold me down, I hold on to my thoughts saying, “I am good. I don’t have to prove myself to their expectations. I know how good I am.” Both Pollard and I must prove the naysayers wrong. When I would play basketball with my friends at school, I would have to change people’s perception of me. I would play hard on both defense and offense; I would shoot baskets and encourage my teammates. At the end of the game one of my teammates said, “You’re really good. I wasn’t expecting that. Good job.” I don’t know exactly what they were expecting, but I showed them that I could do it. I thanked them then repaid the compliment, and it made me feel even better that my team saw what I could really do.

Since Pollard played football in the early 1900s, you can imagine the hardships and challenges he had to face. Sometimes when he and his team would play in certain places the crowd would yell threats and be abusive towards him. Pollard was often the target of excessive roughness from the opposing team. Pollard’s team helped him out “by wearing baggy uniforms, so that way no one could tell in the game who he was” (WBUR). When his team had his back, I bet that made him feel better about his situation. Just as it matters to me, if I was not playing well

and would get frustrated. When my team had my back, it made me feel so much better and made me want to keep trying.

Another example of his team having his back, is the New Year's Day game that almost did not happen. According to the article on WBUR, Pollard's grandsons retell the story saying, "They wouldn't let my grandfather sign in," Pollard III says. "So they said 'Well, take us back to the train station, because if you won't let him stay, we're going back.' Brown was going back to Rhode Island if they weren't going to let my grandfather stay in the hotel." "The team then refused to stay, and the hotel worked it out", Towns says. "Meaning they let him stay." (WBUR)

When you have a support system in place, it helps you feel more confident and better about yourself. Some of the people that support me are my parents, my two brothers, and my friends. They tell me not to give up and that I am just as good as everyone else. I know that they have my best interest at heart. My brothers make me laugh and try to boost my spirits when I'm getting stressed, because they know I would do the same for them. My parents help me if I'm questioning who I am or am having self esteem issues. They let me know that they are always by my side and will help me when I need it. My friends also want to help me if I'm ever struggling with anything. They help me speak out more and feel more comfortable at school, even when sometimes I feel alone. They just want me to be okay.

Both Pollard and I have both been underestimated by different people, but we did not let that stop us. We both had support systems backing us up, even if his was his teammates and mine are my family and friends. stayed true to ourselves and kept trying. We both had the determination to stand up and show that we could do this to those who have doubted us. I relate most to the great football player and inspiration Fritz Pollard.

Works Cited

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