

Growing up, I remember me and children my age being told stories from the time we were born. These stories taught us about everything in the world and children from a very young age formed opinions about people, places and even animals. Based on these stories, we learned that Bunnies are good and wolves are bad, and we also learned the idiom “it's not a good idea to walk into Grandma's house alone.” but what happens if you don't see yourselves in the story , how do you develop a sense of place and belonging?

Just imagine growing up and seeing yourself in books; imagine being represented in story books, maybe not me literally, but a black child growing up in a castle, dressed up like a princess, having to ride in an expensive car to school and everywhere else. Just visualizing the marginalised in our society as characters in children's literature was unrealistic for me as a child. Growing up in the seventies, I didn't see myself in books. The books that I saw reflected white American children, not black American children. They were written in English which was difficult to understand and also you longed to be the character in the book. Just imagine if every child in Africa sees themselves represented in every book on the shelf. The impact this would have on those children would foster a sense of place and belonging, inclusion and empathy. Imagine where every black child sees themselves in a book of a princess and being saved by a charming prince in American literature.

I grew up learning about princesses and princes through the books I read. I read many different children's literature of the 70's and the 80's. Princess Fiona, Beauty and the Beast, Snow white, Princess Cinderella to mention a few, great books, all of them, but they didn't have any one that looked remotely like a black princess (me). Where are the books about little black kids being kids, playing soccer or playing or dress up as a black princess, reading books in their language. Books should be diversified; a book, real or imagined , should denote, another world,

another culture, and another way of life that needs to be learned, respected and appreciated, so that we can see ourselves reflected in that world.

When I read these story books, I read about these princesses being kissed by princes and I wished I would one day be kissed by a prince too. Unfortunately, I was not and was greatly disappointed, thinking this was how life and relationships were supposed to be. It also brought my down hopes of falling in love and also finding a perfect match for a partner. Not seeing enough representation of black children in story books is a great misfortune and it's pathetic.

We need to see more books with diverse characters, diverse representation in media, movies. We need to change default settings of literature, we need to do this because we are a diverse nation.

The US census board, says as of 2017 over 50 percent of the US population under the age of 5 belong to the minority population.

I love the diversity here in America, the fact that children can speak English, Spanish and all, but unfortunately the books do not reflect diversity. As of 2015 73% of all children's books published in the US depicts mainly white characters. We need to see more cultural diversity, social and economic diversity in the books our children read. We need to see books about children's culture not their foreignness. We need to normalize the presence of people with color in the workplace, in education, in literature. We need to see people of color in the boardroom, but if children of color in the early age do not see themselves in these settings, we will not have a pipeline line of diverse qualified candidates for the positions of greatness.

If children of color do not see themselves in characters such as doctors, scientists, lawyers or engineers, they may not pursue those careers. Stories help in many ways, stories define us, stories connect us to the bigger world. We need more stories, stories that are published

about all diversities in our community, having all rights to do so. Imagine the world represented by diversity in children's books whether their background differs. Representation matters, we do not need to keep writing the same story.