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My Identity

When I experienced my earliest memory of race, I was 5 years old. I'm a light skinned complexion, my mom and her side of the family is brown skinned, and my biological father is a lighter skinned complexion so i always questioned my background. I am Puerto Rican, Mexican, Black, and Spaniard. When I asked my mom about my race, she told me about my background. I always loved who I was and who my family was. I was very happy with where my family and I came from. I would always try to involve myself around my own culture and really understand how my family once lived. My great grandmother on my fathers side of the family was born in Spain. Her name was Lourdes, which is my middle name. Her daughter, who is my grandmother, Patricia (Patty) Payan, was born in Mexico but later in time, had immigrated to the U.S. My great grandmother, Obdulia Warner, and her husband, Randolph Warner, on my mothers side of the family are Puerto Rican immigrants. My grandmother was born in the U.S. but she is a Puerto Rican-American. When I tell people I'm mixed, people called me 'beaner' or 'blaxican' and it didn't really hurt my feelings because I was never ashamed but it was very harsh and disrespectful towards other people who are like me. I have mainly experienced this in

middle school and highschool but I really didn't care for what they said because I loved my background. I became racially conscious at a very young age. I don't necessarily know what exact age because I was always aware of what my background was. My mom and my grandmothers always taught me about what their culture was like and what it was like to be from their lifestyle. Growing up, I was always in a diverse community. I would say around 2nd grade is the time I was racially aware of my diversified surroundings. I noticed how some kids were darker than others and some were lighter than others but I always saw and treated everyone the same. I never judged them for where they came from. When I was younger I always loved Disney princesses. Pocahontas was my favorite princess and so was Princess Tiana from "The Princess and the Frog". I always used to say I looked like Pocahontas because my hair was very long and I was around her skin complexion. Looking at her made me believe I was like her. I always thought I was native. Then as I got older I started to really get into my hispanic and black culture. I would make meals surrounding that culture for my family, friends, and I. I even study it sometimes in my free time. I always loved to tap into my family's background. Asking my grandmothers and great grandmothers about what life was like in their homeland. I would hear stories about how my grandmothers met their husband and how they adapted to the U.S., about different traditions they had practiced, and how they went about them. Till this day I involve myself with my own culture and even teach most of my friends about the experience and how my culture lives. What encourages me about where i'm from is knowing how life can be like in the U.S. for people who are hispanic and black and knowing that I can see from their point of view in a way and step into their shoes for a moment, but still seeing

them make opportunities for themselves in order to make a difference for other people in their former situation. I participate in racial justice because I'm going to defend my background and the people who come from the background as I do. I see how unfair life can get for them in the majority of situations, and because they aren't from the US, they get bashed and disrespected by everyone because others don't see an individual as they see themselves. They don't stop to think about what life is like for them. It's very depressing and upsetting to see action like that take place because at the end of the day we are all created in God's image and God didn't create us to hate or discriminate against each other. God created us to love one another and treat others how you want to be treated. I'm grateful for where my family and I come from. Being raised around my culture really opened my eyes and appreciated what God has given me.