

Burgeoning Biraciality:
What it Means to be a Young Mulatto in America Today
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FAMILY AND CHILDHOOD

1. *How did your parents meet, and was there any racial tension between family, friends, or others when they decided to get together?*

My mother was a bartender – it’s such a not romantic story at all – I’m pretty sure they met at a bar, and that’s pretty much all I know of the story because I’m sure there’s details I don’t want to know, but... as far as racial tension between them – no. My mother, she’s from Dorchester – she loves black people, like, she’s pretty much just into black dudes, like, that’s her thing. She had dated black guys before, and so no tension between them, but family wise, his family was very open – usually works that way with black families, like “Aw, sweet, we got one!” But our family is quite racist. They were not happy about it. The key story I can think of is, basically my mother, her three cousins that she grew up with were like sisters to her, and she wasn’t invited to one of their weddings because they were afraid she would bring her boyfriend. So they never took it out on us, we were just kids that had nothing to do with it... I can’t think of a good word for it, but we’ve always been kind of outsiders in the family – her at least, like, they’re cool with us, but they didn’t like my dad, and they didn’t like her after she dated a black dude, so that’s definitely been a tension family-wise.

2. *Lenny Kravitz said of his childhood: “I grew up not knowing about race until I... went to school... My parents were the only parents that didn’t match.” (Guthmann) Were you always aware of race when you were growing up, or was there a moment you remember becoming aware?*

: I forget how old I was – I was very, very young, maybe preschool, or before preschool. I got lost at the mall, and I was with my older brother and sister, and they were supposed to watch me while my mom got food. And I decided that I wanted to go find her... And I ended up getting lost, I was crying, and a black woman picked me up, and looked at me, and she said, “Oh, did you lose your mom? I’ll help you find her,” and then the question I remember her asking is, “What color is your mom?” And I answered red, because her favorite color was red. I didn’t understand. That’s the only thing that I remember. And I didn’t realize what that meant at the time until I got older... But, I guess, once I got into elementary school, was when like, my mom would come into school and all my friends would be like, “Um, is that your real mom? That can’t be your real mom! You have brown eyes, she has blue eyes. You’re brown, she’s white. She’s blonde, you have dark hair. That can’t be your mom.” So I think, those two combined, I guess.

3. *As time passes and race relations change in America, have the ways others respond to your parents being an interracial couple also changed over the years?*

No, they're not. I couldn't see a noticeable difference, really – we were pretty well accepted outside of the family. We were kids that could speak intelligently, and I think that definitely helps. Like Chris Rock [says] – there's black people and niggers, basically, that applies – I think a lot of racists really feel that way, so to them, I'm just a black person, and I can speak intelligently, I'm educated and stuff like that, but if I had been a bit more of a stereotype even, or if I had used maybe more ebonics, dressed a little different, like, I think it's definitely harder on you. I mean, you have your problems here and there, problems with cops, and stuff like that, but, I don't think time's really changed too much. I mean, you have a biracial president now, it's a big watershed moment, but it's nothing noticeable for me, really.

4. *How did your parents raise you and your siblings, if you have any, as biracial children; i.e., did they agree on trying to give you the benefit of both cultures, or were you raised in more of one culture than another, or was this perhaps a point of tension between your parents?*

I should preface my answer with, my dad was not around... he's your typical black dad cliché, he just bailed. I've actually never met him in person. The first time I talked to him I was probably 12 on the phone, and then he died when I was like 17, 18, but it's kinda one of those situations where it's like, "Your dad's dead," and I'm like, "Hmmm." He really wasn't alive to me anyways, it's a real harsh way to say it, but I didn't have a relationship with him anyway, so it was nothing, really. So he wasn't around, so he wasn't involved in the rearing process. My mother... she was very open, and she tried to bring in aspects of black culture as best she could, but she knew it would be a little ridiculous of her to – just 'cause she has black kids change her whole life. So, we were kind of raised to her expectations, which was just kinda, city people, Boston, I mean, just from Dorchester, a little bit of the Southie, stuff like that, so, I think, raised like any one of those kids. I don't think there was any clash because my dad had no input, so, yeah.

5. *Leona Lewis said this of when she would get teased as a child: "I'd go crying home to Mum and she would say to me, "You're a beautiful girl and you're a part of me and a part of your dad. You don't have to do anything but carry yourself with pride'." (Das) Were there any messages or values your parents instilled in you with regard to your mixed heritage?*

Yeah, I mean, I can remember coming home, and the first time I'd hear kids call me "coon," or kids call me "nigger" or whatever, you'd come home and like, use those words like it was cool, like, "Oh, this kid called me coon!" You thought it was, like, just some, even, a term of endearment. So, those are conversations I can remember specifically regarding race with her, was her sitting me down and telling me what those words meant, and not to use them, which I don't follow at this age, but just stuff like that. She showed us race movies. She's kind of big on civil rights... and she's one of the people who thinks racism doesn't exist today or something like that. Yeah, she thinks in like small pockets it exists, but she thinks that we're in a post-racial world, which we butt heads on all the time. But yeah, those are conversations I can remember... Stuff like, "You're not any different, no better no worse." We were very scientific from a young age so she was like,

“You know, race is just a concept. The distinctions between our races, it’s such a small genetic makeup that it’s not even a good judge of and kind of character traits or anything like that,” so we kind of grew up knowing that and you didn’t have to feel inferior even when people tried to make you feel inferior.

SCHOOL EXPERIENCES

6. *Did you grow up in either an ethnically diverse, or non-ethnically diverse area, and was your school population mirrored by that town or city?*

I’m from Quincy, which is very ethnically diverse, but it’s only like four percent black. Why it’s so diverse is because it’s like 36 percent Asian, so it’s a diverse town, but not in anything that really applies to my race. I definitely had more black friends in my neighborhood than I did in school. Our friends kind of gathered together based on just an odd sense of humor, and it ended up being me and two or three white kids and one black kid, but yeah, I hung out with more black kids around my neighborhood. And once you get to high school, your high school group’s your group, so those were the guys I hung out with the most – it was a mostly white group.

7. *Derek Jeter said this about experiencing racism at school: “Kids would say [the N word]; you’d hear it. It would bother you and annoy you, make you feel bad. [But]... It taught me how I didn’t want to be, that I needed to learn about different people as opposed to just judging them.” (ABC News) Did you experience any racism at school, and if so, what was it like for you?*

Yeah, definitely. The thing about the north, what my dad always said was – not that I’ve heard it – it’s something my mother quoted it all the time, and other people have quoted from him was – he was from the south, he preferred racism in the south because you get it right in the face. He said, in the north, you just walk by and mumble it under their breath or pretend you don’t exist or something like that. So, I think, where people were racist a lot of times, you’d kinda hear it second-hand. After a certain age especially, no one’s going to come right up to your face, because in this day and age, you’re never the good guy. Especially in Massachusetts, we’re a pretty liberal state, and Quincy especially, diverse city on the coast and stuff, so people really weren’t too bad to your face, but you’d hear stuff. I remember, the first girl I asked out, she said no in a really blunt way – she just hung up on me, and the exclamation that she gave her friends was “I don’t date niggers.” Like that, too – like, “niggers.” She was white, with some Spanish in her too, so I was like “Calm down!” ...I mean being brown, you can kind of infiltrate groups and kinda hear how people talk when black people aren’t around, so you can kinda get a sense for it, and you’re like, “Wow, this is how they’re talking about me, this is how they’re talking about other people.” I think you definitely feel like you don’t fit in with the white kids, don’t fit in with the black kids. Black people were equally racist to me in high school because I wore this kind of shit (*references the polo shirt and jeans he is currently wearing*), and I’d get “white boy” and shit all the time, which I couldn’t stand. I’d rather get “nigger” than “white boy.” I feel like, if you call me a nigger I can just write you off as a racist or something, but “white boy,” you’re picking on my character, and saying that I’m some kind of traitor or something, I’m not like “down for the cause” or whatever, and that definitely hurts more... I think I got it from the black side – they were at least more open about it. I was routinely hated by a lot of the black

groups at my high school.

8. What is your education experience like now, attending Salem State, which is the second-most diverse school of all 20 Massachusetts state and UMass schools?

Yeah, I think nobody's going to be harsh to your face here about race, really. If somebody was bad to my face, and I was the kind of person who would tell on them, I think they'd get in some deep shit here, especially. You have your gay posters on the wall – that's a weird way to say it. It's a really liberal college ... Definitely dealing with freshman year, going to parties there were places where – there was a hockey house, it was a little racist there, this kid was just like, "You and your friends gotta get the fuck out of here," and kicked us out for no reason, we weren't doing anything, and I heard later that it was – well, they like their black kids, but, new black kids or whatever... I remember being at a party at a lacrosse house, and this group of four or five black dudes came in, and they were immediately rushed to the door and they were like, "Alright, you guys can come in, but don't cause any trouble." And the worst part is, the whole party is about "These black dudes are gonna cause trouble?" and there's always a fight, because what do you expect when you're watching these people all night, and you're treating them like fuckin' animals in your house? I mean, if you want to treat someone like an animal, don't be surprised when they fuckin' fight somebody. So I feel like that's the only time I see it, 'cause people are drunk, and they get that little liquid courage, and that's when your dormant racism might come out a little bit, so it's something you see at parties, it's something even friends of mine – one of my real good friends here is a conservative from western Mass., and he's like "Look man, I'll be honest, black people make me pretty uncomfortable." And it's something that I'm like, hey man, it's a small part of a person, I don't care, we can talk about, as long as you're straight up with it. But when he's a little bit drunk, that's when the real racist shit comes out... But on campus, no, you're not gonna get it in class really. So I mean, people are mature enough now to know that if you don't like black people, they're just going about their day, you don't need to be all in their face and stuff.

9. Did you know how diverse Salem State was when you applied to the school, and did that have any sway in your final decision to attend? Do you think schools with a range of diversity are a better thing than a school with less diversity?

I've read stuff on both sides. I think in Massachusetts, a school with better diversity is good, but I think in other places sometimes they try to force diversity, and they get black people beat up and shit. So that shit kinda worries me. I think here, I didn't know how diverse Salem was, no, but I think the diversity is good... Here you're kinda gonna fall into your own group anyways. I don't think the diversity has affected me or anybody I know, really, or nobody's really brought it up... They put me in a room with two white guys, and the race talks come up, and stuff like that, so I think the diversity helped there, and I think I'm probably the first black friend of both of them, so, I guess that's somewhere it's affected my life.

10. Have you had any difficulty being accepted by certain groups here on campus, or the opposite - being automatically accepted because of your skin color?

Yeah, I think that definitely gets better with age. When I was younger, you really felt the

black kids were pushing you away, and the white kids were pushing you away too. (*I say, "Have you experienced reverse racism? Being automatically accepted because of your skin color?"*) No. Because the way I talk, definitely – like, if I meet a black guy, he may not even know I'm black, he may think I'm Spanish or something. I've never been accepted into a group here because of my skin color. There was one time where these kids were being pretty racist to this black dude, just calling him out for being loud when everybody was being loud – he wasn't nearly the loudest, and a few of my friends even, were being pretty fucked up, and they were like, "Hey, he looks like Wayne Brady," and he got offended, because he does not look like Wayne Brady at all. And I was just sitting there laughing, and he was like "White people love Wayne Brady, huh?" Which is a Dave Chapelle quote, "White people love Wayne Brady because he makes Bryan Gumbell look like Malcom X," or something like that, and he looked to me, and I was like, "Yeah!" That was probably the only example I can really think of.

FRIENDSHIPS/DATING RELATIONSHIPS

11. Throughout your life, have you become friends with people of a variety of different races, or mostly one or two races?

I had black and white friends in high school, one or two Asian friends. I'm not restrictive with who I become friends with, but I think other people are, and other people aren't necessarily gonna approach you. So, yeah, I haven't really stuck to one race.

12. If you have friends who are also mulatto, do you feel like you relate to or can connect with them in a special way, or do you have different backgrounds and thoughts about race than they do?

I don't have any biracial friends. In my high school, I couldn't tell you another kid. I'm sure there were, but I had never met them. And then here, I knew Ben [Kirk] was, 'cause he had brought it up to me, I'd come in drunk or something, and we'd be like "Mulatto! What's good?" But I haven't really sat down and had a conversation with another person of a mixed heritage.

13. Oprah Winfrey once said that she wished she could be light-skinned as a young woman, because the light-skinned women were always the ones that were most pursued by black men. Were you ever picked on for being a particular skin tone by any racial group? Do you think there is still a color-tone hierarchy?

Oh yeah, definitely. Black people, too – you get it from both sides, it's one of those same situations, black people will call you light-skinned and shit, like, "You're not one of us... You're in the group, but you're gonna get shit for being light-skinned." And I do think definitely, if you look on TV, there's a lot of white-washing, like, Beyonce's awesome, and she's wicked talented and gorgeous and everything, but she's very acceptable because she's light skinned. Kelly Rowland, also from Destiny's Child and dark as fuck – I don't think it's a skin thing why she's less successful, I just think she's less talented, but I do think you can see it on TV that if you're Mariah Carey even, a lot of light-skinned black people make it big. Especially women, to go back to your point about black men pursuing lighter-skinned women, which I'm sure you've dealt with. I think that's definitely true. There's a Chris Rock joke or something, where it's like, "Black women are like, 'Anytime you get some money, you wanna get a white girl, a light-skinned girl.'"

And he's like, 'No, before that!'" I think, for a lot of black guys, you go to like, "Well, I'm trying to get a white girl, if I can't get a white girl I'll get a light-skinned girl, if I can't get a white-skinned girl, then well, I'll settle." (*I ask, "Why do you think that is? Is it a status thing?"*) I think that's definitely it. If I bring a good-looking white girl to a party, I'm gonna get some high-fives, like "Oh, she's nice, she's fine," and everything, and if I bring a good-looking black girl to a party, a lot of them don't find her attractive. A lot of men, including black men, don't find black women attractive. They don't find black hair attractive, so, yeah, I think it is a bit of status, but it's also what you're into, and I think when you're young, you are kind of conditioned to favor the lighter skin.

14. Have you dated whites, blacks, mulattos, or entirely different races from yourself? And if you have dated more than one race, how have your experiences differed in accordance to the meshing of both of your respective heritages and cultures?

I usually mess around with white girls, one or two black girls, but I've never gotten to the point in a relationship where it lasted long enough to get to where our cultures really mixed.

15. If you see yourself getting married or having children, do you see yourself most likely marrying a person of a certain race?

I would like to think that I'm a good enough guy that it wouldn't matter. But, I mean, who knows, you like what you like, and I definitely, definitely like white girls – I mean, I like all kinds of girls, but I could see myself settling down with a white chick...

SELF-IMAGE

16. What is it that constitutes being a particular race – is it more cultural and environmental than color-wise, more nurture than nature?

I think race for me is about how other people treat you. I think you can speak as intelligently as you want, but to a certain population, you're still a nigger. You can't really change that. People know they can hit a nerve with you, and you wear that nerve on the outside of your body. I think there's cultural stuff, but it's so fragmented nowadays. There's this commercial where Jay-Z's like, "This is great, everybody's feeding off each others' culture," and all that stuff, and that's not a new idea at all... I just like Jay-Z, so he's the guy I'm thinking of, but I think that's true as far as black dudes in skinny jeans, and white dudes wearing the same shit, I feel like the culture – especially in the city, all the white kids dress like black kids, and the culture is so fragmented that it's just about what you look like now.

17. Throughout your life, have people ever been surprised when you told them you are mulatto? Did they ever guess any other variety of ethnicities that were wrong?

I think anybody that's brown thinks I'm whatever they are. I've had Cuban people tell me I look Cuban, and I train martial arts, and the style I do is Brazilian Jiu Jitsu, and the gym I teach in is in Somerville where there's a ton of Brazilian people, and my gym is 80 percent Brazilian, and most of them, when I first met them... 80 percent come and start speaking Portuguese to you – they just assume, and I work in a kitchen now with a lot of Brazilians, and same thing. Like, "Do you get that a lot?" "All the time, dude, don't

worry about it.” And then black people think you’re black, and I had a girl at my work the other day – we were just having this conversation, she looked kind of offended by it, which I don’t really don’t get... As soon as race gets brought up they get really uncomfortable and they don’t want to talk about it, like, “I’m not a racist...” It’s one of those things, and she was like, “Oh, well I’m white, so I must think you’re white.” And I was like, “You would be correct.” I don’t think she got it, but I think that’s my experience with it – I’m not immediately identifiable as black. Like, I would say you are either. Have people called you Spanish? (*I say “Yes.”*)

18. Have you ever, or do you feel uncomfortable with either side of your black and white heritage (or in more specific terms of your ethnicity, i.e. Jewish and Haitian)?

My friends were always weirdos, so we just kinda did our own thing... and I’m huge on soul music, hip-hop – I listen to tons of that, and I think you’d identify those things as black, but I also do things people would identify as white, where I’m kind of a melting pot. I wouldn’t say I identify with my black or my white side. My white side, I guess not really. My family’s Italian and... Irish... [and] I always thought their shit was kinda stupid. I’d always come around and I was like “I don’t fit in here.” There’s a lot of people eating and talking loudly, that’s basically all their gatherings, and then yeah, the Irish side... I mean, I like potatoes, but I don’t really have any kind of Irish... stuff that I identify with. I guess I have more stuff that people would immediately identify as black about me. (I ask: Do you know where you’re from in Africa?) No idea. I know I’m an eighth Cherokee Indian, and then the rest of it is just like – because I knew my mother’s side, I can remember this from a young age, my mental picture was (*gestures with his hands*) here’s the middle, my mother’s side, I’m this much Irish, this much Scottish, all this stuff, and my dad’s was just black, or, Africa. And then I found out Cherokee, but it’s still mostly Africa. I don’t know where they’re from – especially too, my mother’s really into genealogy, and slave records from black people are very wishy-washy and tough to deal with and routinely inaccurate, so I really don’t know. I think there were slave descendants on that side.

19. Race-wise, do you feel like there might be a side of yourself that is hidden, either subconsciously or on purpose? If so, do you want to reveal it?

If I found out where we were from in Africa, it’s distant enough for me that I would feel very touristy to go there and do anything. It wouldn’t feel like any journey of discovery, it would kinda feel like me going and being offensive, like, “Hey, 400 years ago...” I really wouldn’t do that. I spent some time in Pennsylvania with the black side of my family, and that was pretty cool. It’s definitely a different lifestyle. My grandparents are Jehovah’s Witnesses, and everyone else is very religious, but like the kind of churches with choirs. I remember a Sunday dinner with them where it was my uncles in purple suits and shit, and little kids in suits, and it was one of those churches where the women are standing up in the aisles like this [raises arms and bounces up and down], and goin’ nuts and shit, it was pretty awesome. I guess that could kind of be like my Africa. I’m a little bit closer to it – I actually have relatives there.

20. Bob Marley said this about being biracial: “Me don’t dip on nobody’s side. Me don’t dip on the black man’s side nor the white man’s side. Me dip on God’s side, the one who

create me and cause me to come from black and white.” (Lowney) Depending on who you happen to be around (i.e. a certain race or culture of people), does your self-image in terms of your race differ? Or, in your daily life, do you tend not to think about or notice your race?

I think you have to be conscious of your race at some level if you're a logical adult, because you know that it's a factor in a lot of situations. I'm sure you've gotten, "You seem a bit brainy." Have people been like, "You're so articulate!"? (*I say, "I haven't gotten that."*) Such a backhanded compliment. It's like, they're so shocked. It's something that when you're younger you're like "Thanks!" But now you're like "Alright..." I probably wouldn't say that if I was white, really. So I think you have to be conscious of it. I know people are like, "Race? I don't see color." It doesn't seem very mature to me. It's like, "Well, you don't believe in color, but color believes in you." It's a factor with a lot of people. You know who it's not a factor with, but you have to be cognizant of it or you're gonna be like, "Why doesn't this guy wanna be my friend?" And you'll be acting like a 10 year old. When you were 10, you should've found out he doesn't want to be your friend 'cause you're black. You have to understand that stuff. And I think that's where it comes up, in situations like that, but when you're off on your own, you're just being yourself. Most people I know nowadays, black or otherwise, they're like "I'm my own person." They all use that kind of shit. Everybody wants to be special, individual.

AMERICAN CULTURE/CURRENT AFFAIRS

21. Although we are coming up to a presidential election soon, America has now had four years with a mulatto president. What do you think his election and presidency means to American culture, and the often-controversial, often-shifting racial environment of our country?

There was this ROTC kid in my class that I used to argue with all the time, and I used to think it was about politics, but when he actually got elected, I walked into class and just slammed my bag down, and I was like, "What's good! What's up, man!" And then we watched the inauguration in class, and he was like, "Bang, right here." I was like "Oh shit, I'm not talking to you again." He was really rooting for assassination. I heard that from a few people who were like, "He's gonna get shot." I think him actually being president, a lot of people were like – it's kinda like there was this big momentous occasion, like "Aretha Franklin's singing, this big thing, such a big moment for America," and all that stuff, and then when he was actually president, it kinda hit with people that it's really not that big of a deal, because people were like, "Well, he's a same old politician." The one thing people are still talking about is that he gets elected by white guilt, and I think that's just really stupid. I don't think I've ever met a white person that I got that vibe from, that they were voting for him out of guilt from slavery. So, that's another thing, but I think him being president has cued people into that it's just that it's not that big of a deal.

22. Do you think that, in America today, it's still necessary to pick either solely black or solely white social groups to be accepted, or is it more complicated?

Definitely diversity stuff, and it's one of those wounds time heals, especially nowadays, a lot of people I know, they're racist to Asian people and Spanish people, and they're like,

“Black people are cool, whatever.” Because they grew up with pictures of black kids and white kids holding hands, and MLK day and stuff like that, and racism’s bad, but really, racism only extended to “I’m not racist, I love black people.” I think it’s a diversity thing and time passing, and it was part of the curriculum. Black history month especially, it was brought up. And you always have your population in class with a couple kids who are like “Oh, black history month, mutter, mutter.” It’s whatever.

23. *When asked about her daughter Nahla’s race, Halle Berry said, “I feel like she’s black. I’m black and I’m her mother, and I believe in the one-drop theory.” (Weiss) Although Halle Berry is technically mulatto, she sees herself and her mixed daughter as black. Does anyone in your family categorize you as one race or another? If you decide to have children, how do you think you would choose to handle your children’s races? People usually consider me black, I consider myself black. (I ask, “Both sides of your family?”) Yeah. I don’t know why that is – well, I guess I do, but yeah, people do consider my black. If I had kids with a black woman, I think the kid would be black enough that he or she would have to consider themselves black. If I married a white woman, a kid who’s a quarter black, really, it’s not even necessarily identifiable. I had a kid I wrestled with for years who’s a quarter black and I didn’t even know, so I think how people treat you affects how you identify yourself and how you have to raise your kids and stuff. Halle Berry grew up in a time where she’s dark enough that she really couldn’t pass, so I think [her mother suggesting she stick with black friends to be accepted] makes sense for her. (I say, “But some people wouldn’t define themselves by what people see you as. Are you saying that you would want to raise your kids so that if they’re dark, you would make sure they know that other people see them as black?”) Yeah, if I had a kid who was dark – you have to have that conversation with them. I saw something on CNN that was on kids who weren’t exposed to race at all, and the ideas that they got that were horrific. It was like, “Black people are dirty,” and shit like that. It’s just a cultural thing, and you have to be aware of it. It’s a little naïve to say, “Well I think I’m white, so society should view me as white.” Or, “I don’t care what society thinks.” That’s not up to you. I think if people identify you as black, you kind of have to view yourself that way. You need some kind of correspondence with reality in your self-image, otherwise you’re off in la-la land.*

24. *Lenny Kravitz said this about his parents’ relationship: “[My parents] would walk down the street (and) people would spit on them... very disgusting things. My father lost his side of the family ‘til I was born.” (Guthmann) This memory Lenny related is well within living memory. How far have we come since then?*

Well, you don’t get spit on, but we’re from the north too. I think, certain parts of the south is, “The south will rise again,” confederate flags, and all that stuff. I don’t think they’ve come too far. I think they’re still bitter about the civil war in some places, civil war reenactors and everything, “Oh, it’s about the history, it’s not about slavery.” I think here, yeah, it’s come a long way, but... Southie’s extremely racist. Whitey Bulger was a hero for keeping black people out of Southie, really, so I feel like you have a big racist spot there, but I think it’s come a long way as far as, I’ve never seen anything like that really, nobody would – I never was around my mother and my father when they were a couple, but you would never expect somebody to spit on them.

25. *What is the most important thing you feel you have learned about yourself and how you fit into the world as a young American mulatto?*

... You're calling this project "American Mulattos?" (*I ask, "Does that bother you?"*) A lot of people don't like that. I don't mind it, because I think when I say biracial, the conversation has to keep going, and they'll say are you Spanish, etcetera. When you say mulatto, people understand it like, they know what you're talking about, but a lot of people do not like that term. (*I restate the original question.*) I think just increased self-awareness, and I think a lot of kids don't really understand how they fit into a room at a young age, and you have to be cognizant of that stuff... and I think definitely, I've always been one of the more self-aware kids – I would always make jokes about, "This is one of those conversations they have," stuff like that, so I think self-awareness is an area where I'm strong because [of] my culture, or my skin, so I don't know. I think that's definitely something I've learned from it. (*After finishing the interview, I explain why I used the word mulatto in the title of the project.*) I think mulatto is a good name, it's punchy, but I don't usually call myself mulatto. I wouldn't be offended if somebody called me mulatto, but I don't know if it's a good or a bad thing. It's got kind of dirty origins.

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