BECOMING

MR. PARKER

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I WAS THE ONLY BLACK STUDENT IN MY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CLASSROOMS. WELL, MAYBE NOT THE ONLY ONE THERE WAS ALWAYS ONE OTHER BLACK STUDENT. EVERY YEAR. BUT THEIR FACE AND NAME CHANGED. EVERY YEAR.



IN GRADE 1 IT WAS JOSEPH: GRADE 2. BABATUNDAE; GRADE 3, RODNEY; GRADE 4, SABRINA; GRADE 5, BRANDON MY BEST FRIEND AND THEN MY COUSIN JERMAINE IN GRADE 6.

Y'all watch Fresh Prince last night?



WE WOULD SHARE STORIES ABOUT OUR FAVOURITE TV SHOWS WITH PREDOMINANTLY BLACK ACTORS.

FOR BLACK STUDENTS, WE KNEW WHO WERE THE MOST RACIST STUDENTS IN OUR SCHOOL, THE STUDENTS WHO BOLDLY CALLED US NAMES. YOU KNOW THE NAME THAT I AM REFERRING TO THE FIRST TIME I HEARD THIS NAME I WAS SEVEN YEARS OLD ... IN GRADE 1.

THROUGHOUT MY SCHOOL YEARS, SOME STUDENTS ASKED VERY INAPPROPRIATE QUESTIONS ABOUT: MY CULTURE, BODY PARTS, HAIR AND ANCESTORS. MY YOUNG WHITE ALLIES SOMETIMES BACKED ME UP. ONE TIME BRANDON AND I GOT WE GOT INTO MORE TROUBLE INTO A FIGHT WITH FOUR BOYS THAN THE BULLIES DID. WHO CALLED US RACIAL SLURS. I'm so Stick to the vision, bro. WE LEARNED TO PICK OUR BATTLES

IN MY HOME, FROM A YOUNG AGE, I WAS TAUGHT ABOUT BLACK HISTORY, RACISM AND DISCRIMINATION ... EVENTS LIKE RODNEY KING AND EMMET TILL. MARTIN LUTHER KING, MALCOLM X, HARRIET TUBMAN, MARCUS GARVEY-THESE WERE OUR HEROES.



