The Day I Found Out I Was Black

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I will never forget the first time I truly realized I was different from everybody else. In the third grade I transferred from a school on a military base to a civilian school. The military school was very diverse. There were children of all races, colors, and ethnicities. However, at the civilian school there was little to no diversity. I was one of a handful of African Americans. Initially I was frightened and anxious attending a new school, but then again, who wouldn’t be? But I knew I would be alright because making new friends has never been a problem for me; I’ve always enjoyed meeting new people. One day in the lunchroom, I ran into someone who probably at the time had never met an African-American person. Maybe he didn’t know how to react or even know what to say. I can’t recall what we were talking about, but all of a sudden he blurted out “You’re as **BLACK** as my jacket.” I was puzzled and irate; I had no clue what to say. I thought to myself, Why would he say that to me? He doesn’t know me? Why did I look different from him? Why did he point it out? I went home to my mom as she comforted me and told me, “Everyone is beautiful, and we are different because this is part of God’s design. Embrace your differences and enjoy life.” That was the day that I discovered I was black and that being different was good. It was this lesson of discovering that helped me to appreciate and understand the differences in the world and to respect those differences.

My childhood encounter in discovering who I was helps me to have empathy and respect for my peers. I believe that it is our differences that make us great and our similarities that make us even greater. This unexpected event that I experienced as a child has had a positive effect on my life. From this experience I learned to love myself and to love and respect others around me.
I grew up in a predominantly Hispanic and Anglo community, as one of a few African-American females. This unique upbringing taught me to interact, socialize, and be comfortable with people from different backgrounds and lifestyles. I was not only able to share with them the perspectives of my heritage and culture but to learn about theirs as well. These gained experiences and knowledge make me appreciative of what other races contribute to our society.

Although living in a diverse society can sometimes lead to dispute, it can also create peace. A diverse society can advance peace because we have a mutual respect and understanding for one another. Living in a diverse society is personally important to me because it promotes a healthy society. By healthy I mean a happy community that is tolerant and understanding. A diverse environment is also very good for one’s psychosocial well-being. I am excited about embarking on a future in a society that is diverse, but I am more excited about contributing to that diversity and not only changing my life, but other lives as well.