

Teen Corner

Dominique's Journey

by Dominique Parker

Adoption is a very special experience. This means a parent loves you enough to give you a better life or someone is kind and willing to open their hearts and homes to help you to a better life. I arrived at my adoptive home when I was 3 months old.

I was adopted when I was 5. I was a part of a program called foster-adoption. Foster-adoption is when you are in foster care and the family adopts you but it is not planned or expected. I can't remember everything, but I have been told things also. What I do remember is it took very long for the adoption to go through. My adoption process started when I was 3 1/2.

I remember going in front of a judge, and having a lawyer tell him why my family should be allowed to adopt me. The lawyer, Jerry Zanzinger, was a friend of my adopted family. The judge's name was Judge Harrison. Judge Harrison was black. I remember his face because so many things were going on that he was the only one thing I could focus on. He was dead ahead of me and was looking at me. He had soft but rather large eyes. He wore silver rimmed square glasses. He had a rather large nose with freckles. Judge Harrison also had a curly mustache but no beard. He wore a plain silver chain around his neck and a gold wedding ring on his finger.

I think I remember him so much because he was one of the only things that I saw over and over. We had to go to court a bunch of times. Everything was moving so fast for a 5 year old.

When I was younger my adoptive family moved a lot. My adoptive dad, Dennis, was a project manager for the Olympics so we went everywhere the Olympics went. I remember the Winter Games of '94. They were held in Lillehammer, Norway. My adoptive mom, Catherine told me that I had to step in my older brother's footsteps because the snow was too deep. We also lived in Georgia for the '96 Summer Games and Australia for the 2000 Summer Games. I remember Georgia a lot. The majority of people that lived in our neighborhood were racist. I have good and bad memories about all the places I have lived. The best part of Australia was the wildlife. In our backyard we would get tons of birds. There were cockatoos that were very noisy. They were all white with a yellow crest on their heads. The rainbow lorakeets were my favorites. They look a lot like our parrots but you can feed them from your hand and they don't talk.

I need to tell you about my family because we are very unique. My adoptive dad, Dennis is white, same with my adoptive mom, Catherine and their 2 birth kids, Pete and Emily. My other brother, Major and I are both African-American. Even though we are not

blood related we still treat, care and love each other as much or even more.

Being in my milkshake family at times makes life very hard. When we walk anywhere together we get looks and whispers. Trust me this is not a good feeling. It feels like you are dirty. We get stares, not just from whites, but also from every race. My theory of why we get stares is because we are not the average family you see.

Being adopted is hard. My parents are white and don't know much about African culture. Some of my black friends say I talk, dress and act white. I act like I don't care but I do. It hurts really badly. It makes me feel bad because the people that are saying this are supposed to be my friends.

I really, really don't like explaining to everyone what my situation is and having to answer all the questions after I explain. When I explain and answer questions I also get looks; not like the other looks though. The people look confused and sometimes it feels that I am wasting my time.

Explaining is a very hard thing to do. My story is long and confusing, so sometimes people lose interest. I still haven't figured out why, because I think that my journey is kinda cool and odd. I sometimes imagine what I would be like if I had stayed with my birth mother. I think that there would be pros and cons to living there.

My mother, Parrisha, was addicted to cocaine. There would be easy access to drugs. I could slip into that lifestyle and never get to my goals. I could have gotten hit and neglected, and have to take care of myself because my mom would always be high. I would have to look after all of my younger siblings. So that means no regular kid stuff. No sports. And maybe little or no celebration of birthdays and definitely no presents.

But, if I had stayed there I could look to my left and to my right and see people that look like me; the same eyes, nose, lips, ears, and body type, the big booty body type. I could get to know my African heritage. Who my father is, and what happened to him. I could finally feel accepted by people of color.

It has been a challenge learning how to survive without my birth mom being there every step of the way. Sometimes I wish I wasn't adopted, and hate being adopted, but when I look around and see what I got to experience I love it. I would not be the strong, happy, fun, curious, brave person I am if I wasn't adopted.

Dominique was 14 years old when she wrote this.