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Red stream

Born an Outcast

Introduction

My mom was born in the U.S Virgin Islands and my dad in Palestine. My mom's mom or my grandma was Puerto Rican and my mom's dad or my grandfather is from Palestine brought up in the West Bank just like my father. My father is 100% Palestinian. My dad was dirt poor in Palestine whilst my mom was living it up in Puerto Rico enjoying the ocean views from the third floor of their family mansion. This was but before they've ever laid eyes on one another.

Love is war

When my mom was in her mid-teens my grandparents would often take their daughter to visit the West Bank so she can be "in tune" with her Arab side. It was here in the height of The Second Intifada (a series of violent protests and riots combating the inhuman occupation of Isreal on the Palestinian people) where my parents met. They met in a clothing store in Ramallah, in this store my parents were taking cover from tear gas and gunfire from the protests outside, this is how they fell in love. Now, what is the point of you the reader knowing this? I can relate to the struggle of how they fit into two completely different lifestyles and cultures. My parents migrated to America in 1993 where they later went on to have four children including me on July 20th, 2006.

The City Of Brotherly Hoods

I've lived in Philly, on the same street, same house, and the same neighborhood my entire life. My community has a sense of appreciation for people's cultures and religions due to the fact that my community is pretty diverse. See in North East Philly, most people love one another because it's hard to harbor biases towards minorities when you live amongst them yourself. It is in Philly where I discovered and explored my identities, my time in Philadelphia has made me truly absorb Puerto Rican culture. Puerto Ricans were very common in my neighborhood many of my friends were Puerto Rican so it was only natural for me to pick up some of the cultural traits, I would also go home where my mom would speak Spanish to relatives that were often there, and cook rice and gandules with a side of fried plantains. I was surrounded by Puerto Rican culture.

OutKast

The Arabian culture was always prominent in my day-to-day life sometimes even more than Puerto Rican American culture. I feel like I just never picked up on it, I eat the food, know the songs, know the dances, know the language (to an extent), and dress the style. So why don't I feel like I'm not embracing it? It's like learning a new foreign language, a language that has no link to you, you can speak it and you can write in it but you don't feel like you would fit in with others that speak that same language. I'm 75% Palestinian but somehow I feel as if I am an outcast amongst my people.

The Western Trap

After I visited Palestine, I slowly started to understand why I felt like I didn't fit in. Westernization has affected many foreign lands including many Latin and Spanish countries. Westernization hasn't really affected many Arabian countries mostly because there is no business for tourism in war-torn countries that are constantly in a fight with terrorists, foreign militaries, and militias. Puerto Rican culture has been colonized by the west, I'm familiar with

western culture cause I've lived in America my entire life. It was easy to fit into a community of Puerto Ricans cause they enjoyed the same music as I did, liked the same movies, and liked the same food. Westernization has killed many cultures diluting them with American trends in food, fashion, music, and entertainment. When I went to Palestine there was none of that which is why I felt like I started to fit in, I saw what it actually means to be Arab.

Sticks and stones may birth a friendship

In Palestine, I got to interact with many different types of people, Arabs, Jews, Israelis, Palestinians, Muslims, and Christians. When talking to them they discussed their personal issues with both sides of the Palestinian/Israeli conflict. They said the usual things such as the war is bad for the business, the constant loss of family members, etc... I was able to catch a glimpse of what the wars looked like in Palestine. Since Palestine doesn't have a military the wars are against Palestinian militias/rebels and the IDF (Israel Defense Forces), during these wars it's usually guns against stones, and sticks. I remember seeing a group of Israelis fighting with a group of Palestinians, I and my father later went up to them and asked what they were doing fighting for us. They said, "my country for as much as I love my country and people, I cannot stand with the stuff they do to you guys, I don't want to support a government that commits atrocities that go against my personal beliefs and religion." Everyone is really prideful over there about their countries, religions, gender, and ethnicity. I wanted to be like them I wanted to be like that Israeli I met that day. Just as the Israeli man loved and cared for his country and people, he wanted to help take in and try to understand Palestinians. I want to embrace my Arab side but still retain my love and contributions to my Puerto Rican side.

The Ends Of Confliction

In the last couple of years of my life, I learned how to balance my Arab and Puerto Rican sides. Now when my dad's relatives come over I can converse with them properly, I can now

make them laugh and keep their attention in a conversation. I feel like this search and desire to fit in with my Arab identity helped me mature greatly. It's taught me to step out of my comfort zone and to strive to become better. My inclination for fitting in, lead me on a journey where I discovered myself and I learned a lot about not only myself but about my country, and I'm really happy I put in the time and effort to become comfortable with who I am.