

What is your name?

Saachi Creque

What is your gender?

Female

What ethnicity do you identify as?

Dominican

What race do you identify as?

Black

Where were you born?

Brooklyn, NY

Where were your parents born?

Dominican Republic

Is your blackness unique or does it have similarities to other ethnicities?

It's similar in that we look the same like there's not that much different that you know, we don't look any different than African Americans. Except maybe sometimes I do get from people when they look at me "like, oh, you look Indian. You look like you're from Trinidad or you look like some type of something that's not African American." But it's still a Black Caribbean. Now where the uniqueness comes in, is we speak Spanish. Our customs are different in that. What we eat is different than like an African American like cuisine.

Do you feel like your blackness is questioned? If so, what aspects?

I find that my blackness is questioned by black people because I feel like even in school, I was never Latino enough to hang out with the Latinos, I wasn't black enough to hang out with the black people. Even though, my little circle really was just black people because I looked like them. If I was lighter, then I would have hung out with the Dominicans because they would have accepted me. Even if I spoke Spanish at school, they would look at me like I had three heads. Like, we hear what you're saying, but you don't look like us.

Do you believe there to be an implicit or explicit hierarchy of blackness? i.e. Is Afro-Cuban seen as lower than African-American in society?

I don't necessarily think so.

Did you grow up in a house or apartment?

A house

How many people lived there?

So in our house, Nana lived on the 1st floor. My aunt, Barbara, my uncle Jose, my cousin Jasmine, my cousin Joseph lived on the 2nd floor and my mom and myself lived on the third floor. So 7 people lived in one house. We grew up in a brownstone it was very much a family unit.

Which of the following rooms were in your living space? Bedroom, Bathroom, Kitchen, Dining Room, Living Room, Den, Foyer, Library, Oice, Front Porch, Back Porch, Balcony, Basement, Laundry Room, Front Yard, Back Yard

Bedroom, bathroom, kitchen, dining room, living room, foyer, porch

What activities did you participate or witness in the kitchen or on the porch that is unique to your culture? If you did not have a formal porch, was there a communal space that acted as a porch?

So here's what's interesting for me. We did have a porch. We had our front stairs, the steps, we call it the stoop. We don't call it the porch. We had our stoop and what was interesting is that growing up with Barbara, who is my aunt who is African American born in North Carolina, I learned the customs of what people in the African American community would do, such as playing double dutch, playing hopscotch or we would play like "Mother may I?" We grew up learning how to play those games and very much sit outside and talk and play and eat snacks and play music on the stoop in Brooklyn and chill. On the block there was a lot of black people, so kids from up the block, down the block would come and play with us. That was our stoop experience. And even Nana would come outside and sit with us. She would just sit on her chair and watch us play or if the ice cream truck came, she would give us money and you know people would come by and talk to her, just stop by the gate and talk to her. We would sit outside was very much decompress and be comfortable.

A Spectrum of Blackness

Interview with Saachi Creque  
by Germane Barnes

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What type of non-conventional activities did you participate or witness in the kitchen, on the porch? If you did not have a formal porch, was there a communal space that acted as a porch?

As far as nonconventional, I mean I would say hot combing my hair. Barbara used to hot comb my hair all the time.

What is your relationship to water?

I've always been immersed in some sort of body of water from young. I learned how to swim in the ocean, not in a pool. We are not people of like "oh I can't be in the water, my hair." No, we have to be in the water. Even having family back in the Caribbean, the first thing we do when we go, when we land, is go to the beach. We don't go to the hotel, first. We change in the back seat or the back of somebody. We go to the beach and we get a beer. A Presidente beer, which is the Dominican beer. I even think back to just being Latino and just understanding that, granted we grew up we grew up in the church, there is also a respect for the orishas of Yoruba descent. We have family members who do believe in that and so there is a respect for them. One orisha in particular is Yemaya, the goddess of the sea. We are very receptive and respectful of that and of her and what she represents.

In what spaces do you feel liberated?

I feel liberated at home, in my apartment. But more so here since I grew up here. I know coming here is like "yeah, I'm home."

In what spaces do you feel restricted?

I don't really know.

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