

What is your name?

Jennifer Marrero

What is your gender?

Female

What ethnicity do you identify as?

Puerto Rican and Native American

What race do you identify as?

Black

Where were you born?

Buffalo, NY

Where were your parents born?

Buffalo, NY

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

I have two different types of Native American and you know, I'm black, African American, so I just think that with that unique combination, certain features kind of resemble other cultures that I may not be closely related to.

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

Yes, it is, it really is. People that I haven't really grown up with, because of the way they see me. Not everyone, but maybe 50/50 people more so want to identify me as being Puerto Rican as opposed to being black because sometimes people say that they don't see that in me. But it's if you get a picture of my mother, I definitely have her features.

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 think there is an implied hierarchy of blackness to me. I get a lot of you know, well, you're only part black and you're not full black. Or if you're black you're not dark skin black so because you're not dark skinned black you don't really know our plight. So there's a color variant and then there's the how much of black you are.

Did you grow up in a house or apartment?

I grew up in a house and I grew up in the project. So I went back and forth between my grandparents. My mom was a young teenage mother, so my grandparents raised me.

How many people lived there?

It was my grand father and my two grandmothers, (so my grandmother and her mother) and me.

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, back porch, basement (in the house only), laundry room, front yard, backyard.

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?

The cultures are two totally different cultures. The one in the house, that's my Puerto Rican and the project is my black grandparent. So when it came to my Puerto Rican side, my grandmother didn't work. She cooked, she cleaned, she stayed at home...

One of the things that they did that I absolutely love that was like tradition for my black side was we used to cook all the meals from scratch. But the thing that I loved is that I started at a very young age cleaning greens and stuff like that, it was like a tradition for us to. You know, have me in the kitchen, have the greens out there washing out, you know, cooking them and stuff like that. Greens and string beans and you know everything was organic.

On the porch, we would just hang out. When we had kids together they would sit there to have conversations. You know when we have party, you know people will just kind of stand there and hang around. Have our chairs out there, you know, just play games, you know, jump the fence on the porch, stuff like that.

A Spectrum of Blackness

Interview with Jennifer Marrero  
by Jennifer Lamy

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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?

I don't really know about non conventional because it's hard to say that when almost everybody that you know, from the same area does similar things.

What is your relationship to water?

I love water. I absolutely love it. It's very spiritual to me.

In what spaces do you feel liberated?

I would just say that the environment where the space is, is where I feel liberated. It's not one particular area because I love every aspect of the home. I grew up at one point in time in the suburbs. Just being in that type of environment where I feel like there's productivity, there's, you know, just success and stuff like that is very liberating for me, because I grew up in the projects and that's something that I longed for, to be able to have opportunities like everyone else.

In what spaces do you feel restricted?

In the project. You know, in the hood. I feel like I can't really be myself. Again just the environment rather than the spaces specifically.

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