

What is your name?

Khalil Maxwell

What is your gender?

Male

What ethnicity do you identify as?

Afro Barbadian

What race do you identify as?

Black

Where were you born?

Barbados

Where were your parents born?

Father In Barbados and my mother in Montreal, Canada.

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

I think it has similarities. People in Barbados endured similar trials and tribulations, mainly through the avenues of African tradition. I would say many similarities involve music and food. The music has a huge African influence. We share a lot of music with other Caribbean countries such as Calypso with Trinidad and Soca with the rest of the Caribbean. Native forms of music, such as Tuk Band and Spouge, sound a lot like early calypso. Tuck Band is more unique to Barbados but you would hear similar stuff in other other Caribbean islands such as Bahamas. All of those things have more or less evolved independently, but they're very similar to one another.

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

I would say it used to be by people that did not know better because their spectrum of blackness was quite limited. Their blackness was defined as African American, and that was a strict definition when I first came to the University of Miami. My friends didn't really consider me black. They didn't fully understand the difference between race, ethnicity, nationality. Those things didn't exist to them. So they questioned my blackness because they didn't really think about the history of the Caribbean and how it is similar to the US. They just thought that blackness was confined to Africa itself and African Americans, but I educated them to think differently so they no longer question it.

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?

Yes I think so. I think that innately the pure African Americans are denigrated in US society to a certain level. Then immigrants after that are sort of seen as they have potential or hope to become something more than just Black African American. So I would say that it goes just black African American would be at the bottom of the list in terms of how people look at minorities, and then every other minority based on immigrant status based on percentage African descent.

Did you grow up in a house or apartment?

A house.

How many people lived there?

6 people.

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, front porch, laundry room, front yard, back yard.

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?

Anybody that wasn't immediate family would be greeted and hosted on the porch during the day because it was hot inside and it was a nicer setting to entertain people. I had a front yard and you could see the view of the beach and it was breezy outside. The kitchen on Sundays was more of the communal space. Cultural traditions were passed down in the kitchen. Any recipes that are found that belong to the family are passed down and stored there. I also saw majority of affection between family members take place in the kitchen for some reason.

A Spectrum of Blackness

Interview with Khalil Maxwell  
by Gabriel Soomar

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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?

On the porch, the in most unconventional activities I saw would be entertaining. That's not really conventional because we don't really have people over that often. If my grandmother was preparing to cook something that included a day's preparation or a few days, she will always do it on the porch.

What is your relationship to water?

That answer is directly correlated between how many living creatures are in the water and how hot the water is. I prefer hot water in any form or fashion as long as there's nothing living in it.

In what spaces do you feel liberated?

I feel more liberated in areas where the ocean is rough. When you can hear the ocean, that has that calming effect.

In what spaces do you feel restricted?

Just being in this being inside of four walls with nothing to do it. I would rather be outdoors walking around with nothing to do rather than be inside.

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