

## Of Everything

I was born in Curacao, a Dutch island in the Caribbean. Even though I was born in Curacao I always question myself if I am actually a “*Yu Korsou*”. Maybe, nationality doesn’t matter because my life has been more influenced by those around me than the land of my birth. Maybe I am not from a certain place, rather from certain people and things that have influenced me.

When I was three years old my family and I moved from Curacao to McAllen, Texas. At the time I knew five English words: “*Hello*”, “*Goodbye*”, and “*High School Musical*”. I only spoke the Dutch of my citizenship and the Papiamentu of my ancestry. A neighbor whose name sounded like the word *skeleton* taught me English. Every morning my mother would send me to the neighbor’s house where for the first few months I homeschooled with her family, here I developed a love for a language that was not my own. As soon as I could speak English, I started reading. First *Barbie* and *Dora the Explorer*, then *Nancy Drew* and other books that kept my imagination flying throughout the night. Now I explore the worlds of the likes of Toni Morrison and any author that gives me some link to my ancestry and roots. I will be forever grateful for the gift given to me by the skeleton woman.

I am from my mother, the definition of an independent woman. As a child, she was ridiculed for being smart and nerdy, but she paid them no heed. Attending college in the Netherlands, she would bike one hour to get to the school where she would study, then to her job, where she worked so well that she was given a management position by her sophomore year of college. She finished college and nursing school with no debt. During vacations, she and her friends would travel: Spain, Sweden, Africa, China, and France to name a few. My mother, when she was in her twenties, bribed a South African taxi driver to drive her and her blonde friend to

the black neighborhood of a segregated South Africa so they could see Nelson Mandela's house. When they arrived, they anxiously waited for him to appear, and took a picture with him, a picture she still treasures to this day. My mother taught me small invaluable lessons like, a woman never pays for a man and that a woman never lends money, she only gives or keeps. She is my proof that women can accomplish anything with grace, poise, and a nice pair of shoes.

I am from my father, the strongest man I know. He has the biggest determination to fulfill his dreams. In the middle of his senior year, he dropped out of school to support his family, when he finally went back he was in his 40s and was required to get his GED in a language he still has trouble speaking. Cancer came in 2017, but he never stopped trusting God. Remission happened and he was determined to change his lifestyle so he could be as risk-free as possible. No sugars, no carbs, exercise daily, and organic foods. Everything my father does, he does his best to represent God with his life; accomplishing his bachelor's and two masters' degrees while bestowing in me an expectation to do better. I am from my father, who taught me what full dedication looks like.

I am from my sister, a genius. She reminds me that dreams have no limits.

My oldest brother left when he was eighteen and I was only two. He went to Amsterdam to "study". He traveled and learned and settled in England. I am from my brother, who taught me that family knows no limit of time or distance, that we must love each other no matter what.

I am from my grandmother. Rude and sarcastic, she is not known for her kindness. Yet, she raised four of the most amazing women. The eldest, a world traveler, and a foster mother. The second, a successful banker. The third, my mother, a nurse. And the youngest, a police officer. Her husband was an alcoholic, forcing her to work while raising her children. But, she made sure that they always had good report cards and weren't wasting their time on boyfriends

and other distractions. I am from my grandmother, who taught me that difficult times are no excuse for laziness. That even though I am poor and life can be unstable, I can always work hard.

I am from my friends, who taught me what it really means to love someone. It means being willing to ride the bus an hour and a half to visit cause you know they're having a bad day. Or sending a funny snap to make them laugh. Or sometimes just sitting next to them while they mourn the loss of an uncle or grandmother. My friends have taught me loyalty and selflessness.

I am from my neighborhood, West Ridge. A neighborhood full of immigrants from Africa, the Middle East, and India all living in the same place. These beautiful people every day wear their national clothes and speak their languages. They make their own shops with foods that they are familiar with. The billboards all display languages from lands far away. I am from the immigrants in my neighborhood, who have taught me that one's culture should never be forgotten. Even though I am far away from my island, I still speak my language at home, lest I forget and become even more separated.

I am from black Americans. I see their pain, and I feel it too. I am resilient with them, in the hope that someday there will be equality and justice. I feel pride in the achievements of black Americans and the boundaries they breakthrough every day. I am prepared to break those same barriers myself. They have taught me the importance of hope and grasping every opportunity given to me.

I am from black people all over the world who fought for equality. From Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King Jr., Harriet Tubman, the Obamas, to Madame C.J. Walker. These inspiring people, not only became successful but also opened the doors for millions of others to come through. They have taught me that success is only good when it helps others.

I am from Curacao. A land ignored by the world until the world needed it. A land where everyone speaks four languages. A place where everyone knows everyone. My island of the blue sea and white sand. I am from the slaves that worked under the hot sun until they died or were emancipated. I am from the Native islanders who were pushed off their island, their blood is mine.

I am from the Latin Americans who came to America searching for better jobs and futures. I too am searching for something from the land of the free. I too have faced the language barriers. I too know what it feels like to be different. To have different names for everything, to be in and out of this crazy American culture. Those who search for someone in this large crowd who knows their culture and understands.

I am from Christians all over the world. From Billy Graham, Tony Evans, Priscilla Shirer, Hudson Taylor, and Gladys Aylward who have all taught me what modern Christianity looks like. Like me, they have grappled with questions concerning major problems in the world. They bravely stated their truth founded opinions even when everyone else disagreed and considered them stupid. Christians around the world have shown me the importance of faith. They have shown me that I must always stand for the truth.

Who am I? Too many things have influenced me, making me the product of many things. I am from the amazing people who have surrounded me and brought me up; while also being from the amazing places I have experienced. I see no reason in declaring one origin. I am from everyone. I am from everything.