

C. Maxwell  
AR4458  
Words Uncaged  
Imagine Series-Lost in America

# lost in America

My journey began four and a half decades ago in the fall of 1972 at 6:02 a.m. Stories have been passed down throughout the years about my birth. Some of the stories might have been accurate, a lot of them I have made up, and the rest seemed too far fetched. See, I was abandoned at birth. Having no clue as to who you are or where came from can really have a psychological impact on an individual's life. Not knowing our roots or having that historical piece of background became emotionally damaging to me. To best describe this feeling, it's like, trying to solve a giant jigsaw puzzle. You work endless hours moving pieces of our puzzle that are missing. You are not complete. Well, that is my story. Abandonment has affected my entire life. Not knowing where I come from has also. I have taken resentment and put him n a deadlock. That moral compass that guides our understanding of the world, somehow fell off the back of the truck and got put back on before it reached it's final destination, me. I struggled in school coming up, not academically, but socially. I felt like because I did not know who I was and thath I just did not fit in. I sought out acceptance in all of the most negat e ways. I joined a local street gang, my grades started slipping in school, Next, I began experimenting with alcohol, marijuana, and was very promiscuous. With that petty crimes and lying became normal. I developed an "I do not care about nothing " attitude. I began acting out. And to be honest, I paid a very fine price for it too. Nevertheless, I was adopted two months later after my abandonment by a lovely couple. They had blessed me with a warm and stable environment in a big home in a beautiful suburban community in San Diego, California.

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Around the tender age between eleven or twelve is when I was sat down and was told that I was adopted. Denial kicked in as well as disbelief. I felt deflated like a balloon with a pin hole in it, useless. At that moment, things started clicking in my mind and making sense. I asked about my biological parents and they said “It was a closed adoption.”

The only information that was disclosed was their racial background. The biological father was African-American and Native American. The biological mother was Hispanic and Native American. The only additional information were that they were not married and too young to care for my welfare.

Growing up, in school I was short and frail. I got teased a lot because I was mixed. I had no real identity. My father was dark as midnight and stood six foot two inches tall. He had coarse hair and a receding hair line that resembled a cue ball with hair on around the sides. Mother was five foot three inches complexion was brown skinned. I was the only light skinned one in the home with naturally curly grade of hair. Something just did not match. This is when I began to understand some of the lies that I was told. It felt like a slap in the face for some odd reason. Trust issues were developed from this single act. Even to this day it is very difficult for me to give it my all. I try to guard myself from that painful feeling.

Being constantly questioned about my racial composition (make up) every other day of my life was becoming very difficult. Over time, I had unconsciously built up some tolerance and made sort of a game out of it. Whenever I was asked about my nationality, I would then turn the question around to them and ask, what do you think? I would be amazed as to the different

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number of races that other's saw in me. I could pass anywhere from Cuban, Puerto Rican, Dominican, Samoan, Native American, Hispanic, as well as African-American.

America is supposed to be the land of the free and the home of the brave, it's not. True enough it has evolved and come a long way since slavery. Our multicultural society is not perfect nor where it should be yet. We as a whole must work together and fix whatever is broken.

I was raised by an African American family and I identify with their culture. No matter what box is checked off on an application, I am still considered black. People of mixed racial backgrounds are historically and will forever be classified as black, especially if they have a single drop of "black blood" in them. I have come to understand this as being the one-drop rule.

I was asked one day, why did it bother me when I got questioned about what I am? I was actually stuck. Never had I stopped an thought to this question. I had to sit down and rethink my own thinking. That's deep. What does it really matter what race I am? Does race even matter? The answer to these questions were simple no, but because so many people have for so long acted as if difference in physical features as well as geographic origins mean different things to different people. Truth is there is only one race, and that is the human race. In a sense, we are all immigrants except for the people who were on this continent first, right?

Today, I no longer look at life through distorted lens. I embrace many different cultures. There are so many people in today's society that look quite different from you and me. America is truly the melting pot of diversity and opportunity. It has been proven using scientific methods that biologically, no pure, distinct races exist!

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No longer am I lost. I have found the freedom to finally be myself. Since the day that I side stepped self and got out of my own way, doors began opening and opportunities have been knocking ever since. Life turned around. I had the courage to give up all gang ties. Some got mad while other's embraced the change. I let'em go with nothing but love. Next, I got baptized, yes, a born again Christian and been maturing spiritually in my walk. Then, I became hungry for knowledge and dove head first into college earning outstanding grades. I have also become a state certified addiction counselor. Also, I had become a positive role model in my community. Last but not least, I have been achieving victory over my past behavioral problems, and building effective interpersonal relationships. Reconnected with health friendships and let the unhealthy one's go.

I do not know at what point where wires got crossed. I held on and allowed that pain to turn into anger, which led to rage, and that fester into violence for far too long. Going through life with that self-sabotaging attitude was not healthy for a single person. I thank God daily that I am back on track and headed in the right direction! It does not matter how life starts out, it only matters how it ends. This paradox gave me the strength and allows me to move successfully into the larger society—America.