

What is your name?

Paul Soomar

What is your gender?

Male

What ethnicity do you identify as?

Trinidadian

What race do you identify as?

Black and Asian

Where were you born?

Trinidad

Where were your parents born?

Trinidad

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

I think both are true. I believe there is a similarity in cultures across the Caribbean, but I think each island has its own traditions that make it unique.

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

I believe my blackness is questioned because I am of mixed race, a majority of my family heritage coming from India.

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 do believe there is an explicit hierarchy of blackness. I think there is a sense of citizenship and ownership by African-Americans and they hold themselves to be higher than immigrants that come to this country.

Did you grow up in a house or apartment?

House

How many people lived there?

5 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, Foyer, Front Porch, 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?

Cooking on the porch was a big thing in our family

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?

Hanging out in the kitchen while the meal was being prepared (i.e. talking, playing cards or board games, etc.)

What is your relationship to water?

I have a lot of memories of the water some good and some not as nice. Being around and swimming in the ocean and rivers was pleasant. On the contrary, growing up in Trinidad, there were a lot of floods due to the lack of drainage. Our house was elevated three feet and because that was the case, our house was never aected; family and neighbours throughout the area would spend nights by us because their houses were aected.

A Spectrum of Blackness

Interview with Paul Soomar
by Gabriel Soomar

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In what spaces do you feel liberated?

I think I feel liberated anywhere that is outdoors; growing up there were rules in the house that needed to be followed while outside those rules didn't exist. I also feel liberated in the ocean, especially snorkelling and scuba diving. It's very freeing being in an open body of water surrounded by fish and coral and other animals.

In what spaces do you feel restricted?

In the house – there's not as much to do and being restricted to the house was sometimes used as a form of punishment. I couldn't do what I loved doing swimming and hanging out with friends; A lot of times friends weren't allowed inside the house growing up, so I had to go outside.

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