

What I did find out about my family was that my great-grandmother's mother's family (on my mother's side) owned the farm that they were enslaved on and sharecropped before they were able to purchase and own for themselves. My great-grandmother was born in New Jersey in 1921 and her family moved to her grandmother's farm by 1930. The Farm was in Farmville, VA, which is now Cumberland county/ Prince Edward County. My grandmother went to live with her mother two other sisters when she was 16 years old and lived on the farm up through till the '60s, when my great-grandmother decided to move to Brooklyn, NY. She moved to Brooklyn because she was no longer interested in keeping the farm and she wanted change.. As I was told, racial prejudice wasn't as prevalent in NY or MA as it was in VA, but there was still some tension because of what was going on in the south. In Springfield, in particular, Blacks were still required to sit in the back of the bus, there were "Colored Only" and "White Only" bathrooms and fountains and certain restaurants did not serve to black costumers. Because the North was not required to free their slaves as the South was during the Civil War, racial tension was still existent in the area, even if there were cases of it few and far between. My grandmother eventually moved up to Hartford, Ct with her two sisters to escape the big city and worked on a tobacco field where she met my grandfather. My great-grandmother moved up to the Springfield area in the 1970's and served and was a member of the church, Holy Trinity C.O.G.I.C (on Bay Street also know as Bishop Morgan Way. Bishop Morgan has since passed, but know the pastor of the Church is his son, JP Morgan, Jr. My mother remembers Pastor Morgan coming to her grandmother's

house for Sunday dinner after church when they were all growing up together. When my great-grandmother died, I only then understood what the church meant by a “Seasoned Saint” since she truly was.). By the time she had passed, she was the head of most of the auxiliaries. She was a missionary in the church and ministers assistant before marrying her second husband, who was the minister she served under. She became a Minister’s wife and a church mother. After he passed, she remained in Springfield and my two great aunts moved to Springfield to be near her. My grandmother and my grandfather married in CT and moved permanently in Springfield, MA where she was a Nurse's Assistant and he was a Chef.

My grandfather was a farm worker from Barbados who was recruited to work on the tobacco fields in southern Florida in the very early '60s. He remembers hearing about the racial tension the southern states while living on the island, but never understood what was going on until he arrived in Florida and was instructed by an African American citizen that he had to use the "Colored Only" bathrooms in the airport. Because he was from the island, he was treated a lot different from the general black community in the southern states. My grandfather was still required to use the “Colored Only” bathrooms and receive his meals from the back window of the restaurants down in Florida. He remembers this one time when him and a few buddies decided to try a different restaurant, which served to a “White” Clientele. When he started to talk to the manager, the manger noticed that he had a foreign accent and he was allowed to

eat there, just in the back by the kitchen. Of course, after leaving a generous tip. Him and his party were allowed to come back. After returning back to the island after his first farming assignment, he returned to the states to work for a short while in the orange orchards before being sent to Central Massachusetts to work the fields up there. In this type of labor, you worked where you were told, when you were told to. For them, the foreign workers from the islands, they didn't mind the work. The Mexican-Americans and the illegal Mexican immigrants were fighting for equal pay during the 1960's, so farmers were looking for cheap labor elsewhere. Barbados, Puerto Rico, Jamaica and throughout the West Indies was a lot of this "cheap" labor was found. There, he picked tobacco and cleaned the busses used to transport the field hands to and from the farms. While In Central Mass, he and a few of the field hands cleaned bus on their days off from working in the fields. One day, while cleaning one of the buses, the daughter of the town's Sheriff was on the bus while it was getting cleaned. As my grandfather approached her seat, he asked her to get up so he can clean the seat. Of course she said no and put her foot up to block his path. At that point he was already mad by the way she was talking to him and he took her foot and broke her ankle. When his superior found out, he hid him in the camp where the men sleep at night so when her father came around, he would be gone. Everyone knew if the Sheriff got a hold of him, he would have killed him. The next day, he found himself on the way to Enfield, Ct to work the Tobacco fields, where he met my grandmother. They married in 1963, a few years before my mother was born.

Shortly after my grandparents married, they divorced. My grandmother moved her family to Brooklyn where her mother was living during the 1970's, where my mother grew up. My mother and two uncles spent the rest of their growing up years moving between NY and Springfield. The last time my mother moved back to Springfield, MA, which was about the mid-1970's. My mother and father met in middle school and married a year after they graduated High school.

My father' family is mainly from Canada and the NW of France and England and Ireland.

My grandmother's grandmother came down from Canada during the first wave of immigration in the 1840' s-1850 and settled in Vermont. There, my great-grandmother's father owned a potato farm during the 1870's into the turn of the century. My great-grandmother was born in 1906 in Vermont. She married her first husband when she was 16 in 1921 and had two children. After the death of her first husband, at 20, my great grandmother moved to Springfield, MA in search of employment and eventually ended up working at a factory that produced aprons on Cemetery Ave. (Off of Maple street, in front of the entrance of Springfield Cemetery.). She met my great-grandfather, whose family were French Canadian immigrants that settled Springfield during the 1920's and 30's, looking to find employment. She met and married my great-grandfather in 1938 and was enlisted in the Navy reserves before WWII. Shortly before my

grandmother was born in 1940, he was called to Alaska to protect the northwestern seaboard. My grandmother and her two brothers and two sisters grew up in the Forest Park area of Springfield after the war during the 1950's and 1960's. Both of her parents worked, my great-grandmother as a housemaid and my great-grandfather on the railroads. My grandmother dropped out of High school to pursue hairdressing and married my grandfather in 1964, after he was finished with active duty in the Navy.

My grandfather, who was born in 1940, came from French-German immigrants who settled in the Quabbin reservoir and worked as a field hand. He met my great-grandmother (who was an illegitimate child and a outcast of society), while living in the Quabbin reservoir she was born from a polish-German mother and her father was French-Canadian. My grandfather's family moved up to Holyoke to work in the factories during the 1930, working in the paper mills. My grandfather was the youngest of eight children and grew up very poor. My grandfather was forced to drop out of school by the 6th grade and work to help support his family. After an argument with his father about wanting to return to school, my grandfather joined the Navy in the very late 1955, at 15 years old. When he left the Navy, he received his GED and worked in the paper mill where his father still worked. Nine months after meeting my grandmother, they were married in 1963 and they moved to the Forest Park area of Springfield. After my uncle was born (the third of the three boy, my father being the oldest). After my

great-grandfather died, they moved to the still growing Sixteen Acres area of Springfield, MA.

Being black and white, I did not know that the term “Mulatto” was a discriminatory word until I said it to my father’s mother one day. She explained to me that growing up, that work was just as bad as calling someone a “Nigger”. Her mother, my great-grandmother never tolerated any of her children to participate in the racial negativity and even encouraged my grandmother to date a black man (who had a crush on my grandmother.). What even kept her from that was the fear of losing her friends. The greatest difference between both of my great-grandparents was the way they were treated. Both of them worked as housemaids. Obviously, if my father’s grandmother wanted a sandwich for lunch, it wasn’t docked out of her pay, whereas my mother’s grandmother, if she wanted a sandwich for lunch, it was docked out her pay; losing nearly half of her daily pay.

My mother’s-mother was an active believer in the Black Panther cause, even though she never participated in any of the events or rallies. She experienced first-hand what it was like to be discriminated against, especially in Virginia, where she grew up. My Uncle Rydell was the oldest of the three kids she had and when the bussing laws were enacted, he was sent to Forest Park. There, he

experience a lot of racial hatred going to school, the very same area my father's mother grew up. My dad's father understood what was going on because he lived among black families. My mother's father, it took by complete surprise because on the island, people interacted with each other as if slavery on the islands never happened. It can be difficult to listen to my father's mother talk about "black communities" and what it is like to be discriminated against. I have to keep reminding myself that she doesn't understand, since I grew up with my mother, who is black.

When my and father were planning to get married, my mother's mother wasn't happy because of what might follow, like racial discrimination of the marriage from the black and white community. My father's mother didn't mind, but she was still apprehensive about it. Interracial marriages were still slightly taboo here in America during the '80s. After my mother and father divorced, my mother raised my brother in mixed communities and it is safe to say that I was able to see both points of view while growing up, especially when it came to the issues in the white community and when it comes to the black community. My mother never taught us to hate, under any circumstances.

Both of my grandfathers remember the race riot in Springfield, when the black community began to protest about the welfare system. My mother's father remembers sitting in Dunkin' Donuts while watching the news. He rushed home where my mother and brothers were to see if the riot made it to the area yet.

While passing through the Mason Square section of Springfield, the predominantly black area of Springfield, and saw people rip chunks of the concrete out of the pavement and throwing them against the glass of the shops and pillaging the store. He remembers seeing a group of men carrying off a swing set that sat in their neighbor's yard! This continued for a number of hours right into the evening and while my father's father worked as a security guard at Bay State Medical Hospital and came to work to see a burning cross on the lawn of the residence house for the medical students on Union street. He remembers being approached by a "homeless man" (a special agent in disguise) and telling the man to "go away" before telling my grandfather that he was an FBI agent. My grandfather showed the officer where the tunnels were so that the police can block them to prevent any of the rioters from entering the building. My great-grandmother, my father's mother, remembers seeing, from time to time, a cross burning in the hills when she was a little girl on the potato farm in Vermont and it used to send her whole family into the house and her father would sleep with the shotgun nearby.

Now that America is changing again and Latin communities are being developed, there is certain uneasiness to the change, just like when the slaves were free. Unfortunately, because I look Latin American, blacks and whites automatically discriminate me against. People discriminate by association. For example some people think that if your skin is the color black, they assume your African-American, or, like me, because I have thick, wavy hair and a Carmel-color to my

skin like most Puerto Ricans, I'm assumed to be Puerto Rican. I have been treated differently by black and white at school throughout my entire school career until they meet my parents and see that my mother is Black and that my father is White. When I speak to them, more that often, whoever is listening is surprised to hear me speak good English, they're shocked. Don't let me tell hem that I was born and raised in Springfield, MA, they might fall out of the chair! When People ask, I tell them that I am very well mixed in. I have to say that there are good and bad people and not all Latinos want to be on Welfare. A lot of aggression comes from the belief that they can receive public assistance a lot easier and it is becoming a lot harder for those who need it to get it.

Change can be good or bad, but with equal opportunity, there is equal responsibility.

My father and mother were the only children from both of my grandparents that married and had children, making my brother Christopher the youngest Corbeil in my father's family. When I marry next year, my name will change to Reynolds, so he will be expected to marry in order to keep the name alive; how's that for pressure!