

The Guessing Game is probably the oldest and most effective way to engage with another person. It doesn't matter how old we are; we all do it. We may not realize it, but we all partake in this universal game of guessing one's race or religion. It is the banter that goes back and forth between two people, and it can have the most beautiful effect of bringing them closer together.

I have always been an enigma, even to my family. As the story goes when I was born, my maternal grandmother peered through the window into the newborn nursery and asked, "Why is she so dark?" It certainly didn't help that I had to be placed under a tanning lamp to cure my jaundice.

When I started kindergarten, a classmate tried recreating my skin color using yellow and brown crayons. After experimenting with shades of Dandelion, Raw Sienna, and Burnt Umber, he concluded that it was impossible to replicate my skin color. No one looked like me then or now, yet it was difficult to make sense of it when I was younger.

But as I learned more about my heritage, my parent's backgrounds, and their unexpected connection, I started to realize how special I was. Whenever I meet someone new, I await for the questions that signal the beginning of the Guessing Game. The game starts off the same way every time:

*What is your name? Diana Maria D'Souza.*

*What is your parents' nationality? Chinese? No.*

*Filipino? No.*

*Hispanic? No.*

*Thai? No.*

*Cambodian? No.*

The speed of the questioning increases as the person eagerly tries to discern my racial mix. Vietnamese is sometimes an early guess; however, getting to Indian can take a while. When my Guessing Game partner is on the verge of defeat, I offer a hint. *My father is from the second most populous country.* After my partner submits the final answer, I confirm his findings: "My mom is from Saigon, Vietnam, and my dad is from Goa, India. I am half-Vietnamese, half-Goan."

The wondrous part of my version of the Guessing Game is that it doesn't end there. In fact, my partner is usually more inquisitive after learning of this unique racial mix and emboldened to ask more questions because I am emboldened with my answers. After telling them my race, they ask what language I speak at home. *English, Konkani, Vietnamese, and I am learning Mandarin.* Then the religion question. *My mother is Buddhist, and my father is Catholic.*

And then I brace myself for the most unsettling question: “Do you ever wish you were just one race?” *I have always been proud of my unique heritage.*

I explain that I enjoy eating beef burritos (something many Hindu Indians cannot do) and celebrating Lunar New Year (part of my Vietnamese culture). I smile warmly and so does my Guessing Game partner. And just like that, I have formed both a stronger bond with them and my own unique heritage.

The more people I play the Guessing Game with, the more awareness I spread about myself and biracialism. It’s in this intimate moment that allows a stranger to ask questions which are usually viewed as off-limits with the most supportive partner—me.

I often think about my parents’ own Guessing Game with each other when they first met. I suspect the banter was magical; I wish I could have seen it. Yet with each new stranger I meet, I am inspired by my parents. Their original exchange that I imagine and their daily exchange that I get to see firsthand have enabled me to encourage others to talk openly about race, religion, and identity. The Guessing Game is so accessible that we all can partake in it. And when we do, we have a deeper understanding and respect for one another that transcends skin color and transforms our minds.