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### Mixed Feelings: Growing Up Biracial in America

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*Mixed Feelings: Growing Up Biracial in America*  
(Working Title)

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**Background**

My mom is the daughter of 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Swedish and Danish immigrants and my dad is the son of Jamaican immigrants, who settled in the segregated city of Baltimore just months before his birth in a black-only hospital. In the eyes of Americans, they were a white woman and a black man embarking on a relationship that was less than palatable to many in this country-- including my mom's own family.

Growing up, society was constantly forcing me to question my identity. Whether it was who to play with in daycare, or what dolls to pick at the toy store, or what ethnicity bubbles to fill in on my standardized tests, I was constantly in conflict with one side or the other. This was also true at my mother's annual family reunions. There was always a feeling of being considered "other" during those gatherings. On more than one occasion, those instances escalated into racist remarks. While my instinct at times was to write off that side of me all together, it always came down to one word-- family. Now at 27, with a heightened sense of racial and political divisiveness playing out on the national stage, I cannot help but draw the parallels that exist among members of my own family.

**Act I**

This documentary will begin by building the background of what my family is today focusing on the story of how my parents upbringing- my dad in the Bronx and my mom in Green Bay- and how they met on a merchant marine ship somewhere in the Gulf of Mexico. Visually, I will use archival footage to depict the opening narrative of the Boothe family. I will also rely on archival stills to introduce my maternal grandfather, who passed on problematic and racist views to his children that I am still trying to contend with today in my generation, more than four decades later. I will use interviews from different family members to create a sense of my grandfather and the family that was to follow. Act I will end with the introduction of my struggle of not only what it means to be biracial, but determining if my family is truly accepting of me and those who look like me or if they still harbor those prejudiced and racist views acquired in their youth.

**Act II**

Act II begins with a present-day gathering of my family for my mom's graduation in Virginia. After the festivities, my family gathers around the dining table and launches into yet another conversation about race. We discuss the latest media headlines on the topic, our own personal experiences both in our day to day and within our own family, and how we will address race with our next generation.. This conversation then transitions into each of my siblings and myself sharing our own

unique and in some ways conflicting views on what it means to be both black and white and where we did and didn't feel comfortable fitting in growing up. In my recollection I will reflect on my childhood and how I viewed race in society and in the context of my mom's white Midwestern family. I confront my aunt in a car ride to our annual family reunion to take place in Wisconsin, only to become painstakingly aware of her ignorance on the topic and further frustrated with her privilege in not having to be aware of today's racial climate and what negative and lasting affects it produces for communities of color. Through my frustration and exploration I come to a pivotal question, do I make the effort to have these conversations with my family hope to reverse some fraction of over 50 years of prejudice or do I just accept things as they are and avoid those family gathering that have brought me so much turmoil over the years?

### **Act III**

The third act will open with a trip to the National Museum of African American History and Culture with my Aunt Darlene on my dad's side and my mom and my Aunt Sonny. Through this experience I will attempt to have a candid conversation with my aunt on race and how I've been affected by family situations and what events like Charlottesville mean to me in the context of my identity. I also address with her my fears for the future and what my children may be exposed to as a result of ignorance like hers, and the views her son might now possess. The film then transitions to our family Thanksgiving in 2000 at my Aunt Darlene's house with her extended (black) family. We invited my Aunt Sonny along with her husband and new born son. Through archival footage I show the evening unfolding with Aunt Sonny and Rick sitting in a dark room for the majority of the night because of their discomfort in celebrating the holidays with black people. In the home video my dad must turn to the night vision mode in order to see them on camera, meanwhile in the next room he captures footage of kids singing and dancing and playing video games enjoying each others company. Through narration I question how something so obvious and hurtful was not confronted or discussed for so many years. The film concludes with a phone call to my mom with my reflections on this journey of self-discovery and what can still be done to address the issue of race within my family. The final scene is a call to my Aunt Sonny, making her aware of the footage she is going to see during my screening and expressing to her my desire to keep the lines of communication open in the future.

### **Audience**

I truly believe that this film would appeal to a majority of the American population, because as we have seen in recent media coverage, race is still an issue that we are barely able to contend with as a nation let alone solve. I think this story does a good job at looking at such a polarizing issue through a lens that everyone can relate to on some level and that's family. The film attempts to challenge us in our thinking and determine if we can meet people at a deeper level or if our understanding will remain skin-deep.

