

## DIFFERENT

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[Assignment: Write about an event that changed your life. The essay's introduction should provide context, theme, and justification. The body should be more than a string of events; select four or five significant incidents that enliven your essay.]

(1) I have always been different from other kids my age. My difference, however, is not apparent until my whole family is together: both my mother and I are white, but my father and sister are black. I was only three years old when my mother married my stepfather, and I was too young to realize how much this situation would affect my life.

(2) I always knew my family looked different than others around me, but I didn't feel different until my kindergarten Open House. I had been full of bubbly excitement all day. Mommy and Daddy could finally meet all of the people I so eagerly came home to tell them about. I walked into the classroom with one parent on each side of me. Everyone stopped and stared at us. I felt so awkward. I wanted to run and hide. Nobody wanted to talk to us. When I pulled my mom and dad over to meet my friends, their parents found a reason to pull them away from us. We didn't stay at Open House very long, and on the way home I wondered why my friends had been so mean.

(3) Open House only marked the beginning of my problems. A few days later, my best friend, Ariel, told me that she was not allowed to play with me anymore. Her mommy told her that I was not a "nice girl," and neither was my mommy. Some of the older boys started to follow me home from the bus stop. They called me "Zebra" and said my mother was a "nigger-lover." I did not even know what those words meant. I knew, however, that they were not nice words, and I went home crying because of them. I started to ask my mom a lot of questions. I asked her what "nigger-lover" and "zebra girl" meant. I also asked her why I couldn't play with Ariel anymore. I thought I had done something wrong. My mom hugged me, and kept saying she was sorry. That really confused me; why should she be sorry?

(4) She told me that some people don't like people who are different colors, and especially did not approve of her marrying someone black. She told me to be strong. She said that I would probably meet many people like that, but that I should not feel embarrassed because I love my daddy, and skin color does not matter to me.

(5) Since that day, I don't feel bad when people give me funny looks or make rude comments. I probably even

chuckle every once in a while at their ignorance.

(6) Now that I am at college, the only people who know about my family are the ones I choose to tell. I do not mind telling others; in fact I'm pretty excited about my story. I grew up in an environment that taught me to accept people for who they are, not for what they look like. My parents taught me in the most effective way how much prejudice hurts, and how ignorant and useless it is. I know I will never be a prejudiced person in any way. It is scary for me to think of how I would be if I grew up any other way.