“Exploring Identity in College” Video Transcript

Lacey Schwartz
When it came time to apply to college – I decided I wanted to go to Georgetown. On their application I had to check a box.

The only box I had ever known was white, I didn’t know what any of the others even meant for me so I just didn’t check anything. Georgetown required you to send in a picture and based off of a photograph I was admitted to college as a Black student. That moment when Georgetown said you’re Black it was a moment that…it was like they gave me permission to start entertaining the idea myself.

So when I got invited to the Black Student Alliance meeting – I went. And I kept on going—all through college and on into law school.

Samuel
My name is Saumel I’m from Ethiopia.

Unknown
I’m Said, I’m originally from [inaudible] Ethiopia.

Jilani
My name is Jilani Jefferson; I’m from New Orleans

Lacey Schwartz
My name is Lacey Schwartz; I grew up in Woodstock, New York.

Unknown
You need to escape and you just want to be around some Black people this is you know, this is a great place for that.

Lacey Schwartz
And just like that I was welcomed into the Black community. Just because of one photo. Not unlike the photo of my great grandfather that 18 years earlier had made me white. It all seemed a little too easy. But at that point I was ready to try on a new identity.

Professor
There are different narratives of racial identity in America and people can easily misunderstand each other because they come with assumptions of what it is to be a Black person.

Lacey Schwartz
University was like Race 101: a crash course for a white person in what it means to be black.

I had always taken it for granted that what I accomplished was seen as a product of my own hard work. But I soon
realized that my black friends felt they had to work harder to prove they deserved their success.

White people don’t spend a whole lot of time thinking about their whiteness, but for black people blackness is everywhere – it was in the comics my friends referenced, the music being blasted in their dorm rooms and the smack they would talk when playing cards.

There were moments in the beginning when I would walk into all these Black spaces and I would think how am I going to fit in or what’s it going to be like? Ya know - Would I dance the right way? Would I say the right things but they didn’t know all about the fact that I grown up and only known other white kids.

As it turned out hanging [out] with black people put a lot of my insecurities to rest – the dark skin I always worried about was light skin to them and my bad hair became good hair.

My black friends looked at me and saw another Black person. Feeling like an outsider was something they could relate to [too] and that didn’t seem like a coincidence to me. For the first time in my life I felt like I belonged and somehow I just knew that Black was who I was.