

# Where do I see myself?

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## As a Black student, where do I see myself?

I see myself on the field and on the court, brothers who can jump high and sisters who can run swiftly; leading in these areas effortlessly. I see myself there; I like seeing myself there. But I'd like to see myself in other places too.

The textbooks barely show any of my heroes from my culture, but there is no shortage of European history or legends. When my history teacher places pictures of the greatest contributors to history in the classroom, none of their faces are Black, except for one or two people. Does that mean that only one or two people from my culture matter in history?

My English teacher talks of the greatest writers: Hemingway, Frost, Shakespeare, Kipling. When I suggest authors who are Black, sometimes they get supported. And this feels good. But other times, I cringe, when I hear my teacher use the N-word from texts selected for our class. I desire representation, but I don't always want to read about negative experiences related to my community in front of a largely white class ... and a white teacher.

My school staff is largely white, except for the custodians. None of my coaches look like me. Same for my culinary arts teacher, my dance teacher and my physical education teacher. I really like them, and I admire them, but every year I hope to see at least one teacher who looks like me.

When I see someone from my culture in the hallways, I acknowledge them — a nod, a high five, a joke, a brief conversation. It feels good to see them, even if it's just briefly. When I see someone else who looks like me in class, I feel joy, confidence,

and I feel supported, even if we never speak. I know that they are there, and they know I am here. We see each other, and we see ourselves.

If I get in trouble and I have to go to the office, no one on the admin team at my school looks like me. They all went to university, they all probably started out as teachers, they are all probably friends outside of our school — but none of them look like me. Does this mean that I will be treated differently?

## As a Black person, where do I see myself?

Every police officer I've ever encountered in my life has been white. As youths, we're taught that the officers are here to protect us, but as a Black male, as soon as I transition past puberty, am I the person that these officers are protecting others from, even though I feel like I'm the one who needs the most protection?

In pop culture, I see myself as a rapper, singer, comedian and dancer — all things that I enjoy. But how often do they show us as scientists, astronauts, mathematicians, doctors, professors of education, and drama and calculus teachers?

I see myself as Trayvon Martin walking home from basketball practice, my hoodie on, and my music playing loudly, followed by shadowy figures who think I am not in the right neighbourhood — even though this IS my neighbourhood.

## As a Black teacher, where do I see myself?

I see myself at work as the only Black teacher on my staff, asking very important questions, knowing how badly the youth desire change. The youth wonder if I can be the one who will fight for them. This is where I see myself. Where do you see yourself? 