



Video Transcript

I Am The I In HI

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In 1982, there was a day when an airplane went into water in Washington, D.C., and a train also derailed, and my mother was on the train that derailed, 8 months pregnant with me. I am proof that I was meant to be here because she survived that train crash, and I survived right along with her and have had a great life.

I grew up in the Maryland-D.C. area, and there are so many different cultures and ethnicities there and religions, so I was exposed very early on to different people with different mindsets. I had the opportunity to play with people who were from Vietnam even though I didn't even know where Vietnam was at the time. There were kids who practiced different religions from me, so I was able to ask them questions about their religion and take an interest in it. So for me, the way I pass that onto my children is to be open to how people think differently and why they think differently, and that's okay.

Right out of high school I joined the military as a part of the U.S. Air Force. As an airman I was a traffic management apprentice for some time. We were initially stationed at Ellsworth Air Force Base in South Dakota. We got orders to Germany, and I also got to live in a couple of different cities, so one of those was (near) Kinderbach in a row home. I got to experience a lot of the festivals and go to Oktoberfest, and experience a different culture than what I was accustomed to here in the states.

My husband and I met at Building 902 (at Newport News Shipbuilding), and it was when I was a production planner and scheduler, and he was a designer. We just started talking and became friends from there and we are now 12 years in almost. It's been great. We have two boys – an older son who is 19 and will be 20 this year and then we have a younger son – he is 8 and he is just an extremely wonderful little boy, and I couldn't ask for anything better.

A few years ago, it was interesting to get those ancestry DNA testing results back, because my family doesn't talk a lot about our history necessarily or the different cultures meshed within our heritage. And so getting back the results and seeing things like British or Irish, and obviously African, is very interesting to me, because it does start to piece together that puzzle of how my family came to be. And while we're so many different shades across our family — which we love — I think it's important for people to understand where they come from and fully embrace that, so they can pass that on to their kids and they can take pride in their unique mix of a person.

I'm always ensuring that no one ever feels left out. It's very easy from an early age to have what some people identify as cliques or demographic groups or groups we identify with for various different reasons. I always take it upon myself to look at, let's say, the project team and just ensure that everyone understands that they have a vote and they have a voice, and it matters to me what they think and their feedback it matters and they bring value to the team. It's always important to me to be inclusive of folks and ensure that they feel like they are 100% a part of the team and appreciated at any given time.