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CHIME THROUGH THE YEARS

## **“IN A PERFECT WORLD” BY DAPHNE MCWILLIAMS**

*CHIME FOR CHANGE Through the Years: The Female Fabric is a series curated by CHIME Managing Editor Mariane Pearl featuring stories from the CHIME journalism platform archives by women around the world.*



To watch the full film, visit [www.inaperfectworldfilm.com](http://www.inaperfectworldfilm.com).



My parents met and married in Harlem, New York, having immigrated to the United States from the West Indies (Jamaica and Trinidad). I was lucky, they were in love and once they had children; they took great care of us and provided excellent education. I am the seventh child in our family of four girls and four boys and when we were growing up, life felt good: my parents were born optimistic, always looking at the bright side of everything, but when I decided to have a child out of wedlock, they were in shock, especially my mother who was a devout Catholic. **It didn't seem to matter that I was early into my fourth decade of life, had a good career and financial security or that I hadn't lived at home in over 20 years.**

Chase's father and I both have Caribbean roots but as time passed, it became increasingly obvious that we had little in common besides having a baby. We decided to go our separate ways, in the beginning our co-parenting went fine but that too didn't last. The situation turned particularly dire after the 9/11 attacks when Chase's father moved away from the city. Overall, his life is probably typical of a New York City kid, one spent on schooling, sports and travels. He

started traveling before he was a year old, spending time with me on production sets and in the kitchen with his father, who is a chef.

As a single parent, I found that the early years of my son's life were not as difficult as when he became a pre-teen. Chase was growing rapidly, and his moods were endlessly shifting. Once he reached the hormonal stage, I felt as though my role, as a parent was starting to take a back seat. Looking back, I don't believe Chase had any major issues, he was just growing up, but I started to feel frustrated and helpless. **Perhaps was I struggling with the stigma of being a black single mother? It was a sore spot, one I wasn't prepared to deal with. And the more I read about fatherless black males, the more my panic grew over the future that awaited him.**

My first interview with Chase was difficult, we ended up bickering. The crew, who I have known and worked with over the years, helped to diffuse the tension and assisted me in getting my teenage son to express his feelings about his father. As the project progressed Chase started to go with the flow, I started to photograph everything I saw and eventually I got a video camera, Chase got used to it but neither of us realized then what impact the film would have on our lives.

### Chase's Viewpoint

Growing up with a camera in my face was an experience. No matter what I was doing, the camera was out and ready to roll. All of my memories have a common theme: the camera. It was there at every school performance, milestones were recorded and tasks documented. I remember it being there even when I was running around as a little kid, the camera was out... just because. One of the most difficult parts was that I was so often being told to wait. I would always have to pause before I did anything because my mom needed to set up her camera to record. I sometimes would grow very impatient but in retrospect I was also a little happy. I feel that to have all the moments of my life, the significant and also the not so significant, on camera makes me a pretty lucky guy. It allows me to look back on my life as a child and all I have done.

In school, most of my friends don't have a relationship with their father either but it's not a big deal to us. Even though we do have a lot of conversations about it and it gets pretty serious. We also have a lot of different scenarios and fantasies and we crack jokes about fathers. It's always good fun but there isn't a day that we don't actually make those dad jokes. Not all of my friends that don't have dads are black which makes it very diverse and also breaks the stereotype. But the violence is real and it is a big deal, my black friends are all aware of the risks induced by the color of our skin, especially with the police. I have to remind my white friends at times that it is actually dangerous for me to do certain things just because I am black. I have to explain but they never actually understand.

