

Case Study: Walter

Walter is 16-year-old biracial male. His dad is African American and is an executive. His mom is White and a kindergarten teacher. Walter and his parents relocated from the Midwest to the South due to his dad accepting a job in a Metropolitan area but purchased a home in a small rural Southern city. Walter's parents tried to provide him as much normalcy as possible. He has a great relationship with both his mom and dad's family. Racial issues were not discussed often in his home and he has had no experience with racism.

After moving to his new city as a teenager, Walter encountered some challenges. Walter's previous schools his friends were from different cultural backgrounds. At his new school, the majority of the students are White and he is having a hard time fitting in. He had an incident at the school where a White student used a racial epithet when describing him. This resulted in a physical confrontation and Walter was suspended. The principal said he was the aggressor and overreacted.

Walter has an interest in science. When he spoke to his guidance counselor about taking a physics course next year, he was informed that the class was difficult and he probably would not be able to keep up. Little did the teacher know that Walter has always been an honor roll student and excelled in his Advanced Placement Math and Science courses at his previous school. Walter often hears students making insensitive comments about the racial conflicts happening in the U.S. and some even making racial remarks towards the first Black president of the United States.

Walter finds himself being followed when he goes into stores. He was pulled over one day by the local police. Walter felt he was racially profiled as the officer could not explain what he had done wrong, and instead questioned Walter about whose car he was driving, where he was going, and why he was in the neighborhood.

Walter is experiencing feelings of anger, confusion, and sadness. He refuses to speak to his parents about what is happening to him. It is starting to impact his academic performance and his self-worth. His mom tried talking to him but his response was, "you cannot understand what I'm going through because you are White."