

“Meet The Parents”

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typically chatted about the kids they sighted and discovered they were considering the same children.

It was Mark who found Malik and Takwon, two biracial brothers with different fathers, both Black, and a white mother. “They are beautiful kids,” Larry beams. “I looked at them and noticed they are 4 and 5 years old and have not been adopted. What’s wrong?” They learned that Malik as diagnosed as mildly retarded and both kids were deemed as functioning at relatively average levels. Their mother was alcoholic and both fathers had substance abuse problems and were abusive. They had been living with foster parents for the past 11 years in Connecticut which grants foster parents influence in the process of selecting the adoptive parents.

“Once the Flannagans found out we were gay they flipped out. They didn’t want us to adopt the boys.”

But the couple was discretely persistent. Essentially they wooed the Flannagans, both in their 60’s, by sending them pictures that included their own families and making frequent phone calls. They even went out to Connecticut to visit the boys and eventually won the Flannagans’ trust. They were approved in April 2002 and legally confirmed in November of that year.

When asked about the rewards of parenting, Larry and Mark immediately focus on the changes they have witnessed over the past four years. “Just to see them grow is mind-boggling”, says Larry. “They used to be non-communicative, could not read or write. They were transformed through our care.” Malik has undergone the

most dramatic growth. Given his diagnosis of ADHD and a severe learning disorder, they had low expectations of his potential. With the aid of several teachers and special attention, he managed to surprise both dads. “I took him bowling with me and he picked up a pamphlet which explained that by joining a certain league, he could receive his own bowling ball. One day we get a call for

Malik Francois-Williams.

We found out that he had filled out and sent in the application on his own. This is a child who at one point could not write his own name. Now he’s filling out forms!”

While the media often focuses on the legal and cultural hurdles faced by gay parents, Larry and Mark attest to the overwhelming support of a constellation of family and close friends. Both of their respective families play major roles in the lives of their children. They realize the importance of having the boys engage with women and girls so they

intentionally have them spend time with both their godmothers, Larry and Mark’s mothers, sisters-in-law and other female kin. “When the boys had their first communion, we were told we had more folks representing our family and friends than any other members”, Larry recalls. “We are blessed to have people who love us and love Malik and Ty.”

In many ways Larry, a records manager at Verizon and Mark, who is pursuing a nursing



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