

Dr. Kedziora:

"I grew up during the time Martin Luther King was assassinated. He was killed in April of 1968. I was in the third grade at an all-white elementary school, and I had an African-American teacher for the first time that year. Our schools up until that point had not integrated. It was the first year that Black teachers came to the schools. I was one of the students that was interviewed to be in [a Black] teacher's class. They interviewed the parents and the students to make sure that they were comfortable being in [a Black] teacher's class. That was probably the beginning of one of my most vivid memories of understanding about race and race relations, hearing about integration and people talk about that. Memphis is a real divided city today, as far as Black and White, and it was even more so at that point in our life.

When Martin Luther King died, I was watching TV the night he was killed. We only had three channels, and it came across the TV that he had been assassinated. Then they didn't let us go to school for a while. They had the curfews and they had the National Guard. I kept thinking "wow!" I didn't realize our teacher would be so affected by this.

So, I really took on a real strong interest in the Civil Rights movement, the era. People were saying, "I'm going to a Christian school," and I'd be like, "well why?" And they'd say, "because I don't want to go to school with Blacks, and I don't want to be bussed." And I'd be like, "well you want to go to school in the basement of a church or something?" I mean it just seemed so crazy to me!

My parents wanted us to go to private school, but I just insisted [that we stay in the Public school system]. I was not going to be bussed. I was a student that was in the zone for Whitehaven [school], but my parents still were like, "We think you should go to one of these private Christian schools." My brother didn't want to go. I didn't want to go and I had a sister and she didn't want to go. So we went to Whitehaven.

The Principal called the White kids into the auditorium and there weren't that many of us. I kept looking around and I kept thinking, "gosh there's not many kids left!" He [The Principal] said, if you stay here at this high school, I know this is Whitehaven but it's not going to be Whitehaven anymore. The Whitehaven you think you're going to go to," he said, "you're going to be the minority!" And I kept thinking, well, okay. He made it sound like if that happened, that somehow we'd have a defect in our life...

I'm an assistant Superintendent now. I have opportunities every day when I see shades of racism or something happening at a school I can do something about! I feel so lucky that I can intervene, because I can change what's happening for someone.