



Video Story Transcript

A Journey Story

By: Storyteller Patricia Coffie

www.storynet.org/teller/directory.php?ID=74

Link to YouTube Video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BncacTixmS8>

Note : The following is a transcription of a spoken story performance and may not reflect textbook perfect English. It will guide you as you listen (or read) along.

Hello, my name is Patricia Coffie. And in 2013 I took a journey that allowed me to travel much further than from one physical place to another.

It was Atlanta. I was going to Miami. I boarded my flight, I walked down, I sat down and while I'm putting my seat belt on, I said to my seatmate, "Looks like we're going the same way for a while." I like to be friendly but not overbearing.

And she said, "Well, yes, but I don't know how many more times I'll be doing this."

I said, "Oh."

She went on, "You know my husband and I bought this vacation home several years ago and we really enjoyed it. But, I just think I'm going to sell it. He's been gone for a year now." And I'm thinking, lonely. And then she continued, she said, "Yes..." She said, "So many of them are coming now."

I said, "Are they?" And I begin to scroll through what groups might congregate in large numbers where people had vacation homes and be frightening to this woman.

And then she said, "And they bring their guns." Now I'm revising my scrolling but not much because guns are a lot of places. But I'm going through things and then she said, "And they shoot small dogs." I flash immediately to one of my grandfathers. He thought the only reason people had a dog was to bother him. The little, bitty, yappy ones belong to rich white people and the big attack dogs belong to the coloreds. And we were neither

of them. None of those groups were just like us. And we were nervous about people who weren't just like us. So this went through my mind.

And then I waited a couple of beats and I said to her, "Who are they?"

And she said, "The Canadians." And I had to cover my mouth because I was startled and started laughing because she had just de-railed every group I had scrolled past. We didn't talk anymore; we just traveled quietly to Miami. When I reached home, I told my friends and I told my family this little journey story and they found it was hilarious as I had.

And then I went to lunch with storytellers. It was a multicultural, multiracial group. And I told my little story; there was dead silence. Nobody laughed. And then the Cuban American story tellers said, "Thank you for that WASP point of view." Now no one had ever called me a WASP before; certainly I am a white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant, but no one had called me that name before. I wasn't really happy with their silence or with that reply but it gave me a lot to think about. And eventually I emailed that Cuban American storyteller and told her she had given me quite a bit to think about. She emailed back. She said she thought it was a wonderful thing that we could come together and share our stories and talk about what they meant to us.

I saw some more possibilities for that little journey story. And now I can bring a group together in a workshop or just a conversation. And I can tell that story but I don't describe my seatmate. I don't tell you where we're coming from or where we're going and I don't answer the question, "Who are they?" Instead I ask you to jot your own answers down and then we talk about all the different answers. Some are race based, some are other groups. There's quite a variety in who "they" might be but ultimately we come to understand that we are all "them" to somebody. It has given me a lot to think about and the opportunity to change attitude and action. As I think about the stories that I tell them what they might mean to others. I hope it gives you something to think about too.