



Video Story Transcript

ANGELS WATCHING OVER ME: TRANSFORMING YEARS AT ST. SABINA SCHOOL

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Link to YouTube Video:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8icz8q63tZ4>

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.

Hi, my name is Patricia Redd. And in a storytelling world, I'm also known as Serenity and I'll be sharing a personal story about my experiences at St. Sabina.

I went to Catholic schools all my life. First grade through college from 1959 to 1976. But I have to tell you the most dramatically, transforming time for me was when I went to St. Sabina in my fifth through eighth grade years. I remember that 1964, my parents moved us from Englewood, which was a Southside community with people that look like me, to a predominately white neighborhood in Auburn Gresham. I had never seen so many white people in one place at one time. And when we went to the school, my mom was just comforting to me. And I knew in my heart that everything was going to be all right.

My parents went to so many community meetings back then. I was just a young'n but I remember that they would talk about how, as African-Americans, we just wanted to be able to go and live and be at peace. We just wanted to be able to go places and do things without folk telling us to go back to Africa. And we wanted to be able to walk around in the neighborhood without people shouting at us to get out of our neighborhood. It was our neighborhood. We lived there too.

There were three transforming, life changing events, that happened to me during that time. The first happened when I was in fifth grade. And we had just moved into the Auburn Gresham community. And had been at St Sabina, probably starting in September, and now it was May. September had the pract, ah, ah, St. Sabina had

the practice of having a statue of Blessed Virgin Mary travel around from one person's home to the next. And apparently, somebody had the bright idea that we should have a turn that this. That didn't go over too well for some folk because there must have been a great deal of ruckus happening. But I tell you what, between my mom and the powers that be, we did have the statue of the Blessed Mother in our home along with all of the regalia.

The second transforming event changed my life forever though. On January 1st, 1965 at nine o'clock in the am, we got a phone call from St. Bernard Hospital that my mother had died. What? Oh my! My parents had just gone to a New Year's Eve party the night before. And to my knowledge she hadn't been sick. And then we get the word that she died of a cerebral hemorrhage. I had a hole in my heart too big to bear. What was I going to do? Here I was in a new school, in a new neighborhood, with people that didn't really seem to want to have us around. But you know what? My mom must've really been looking after me though. Because in my sixth grade year, I had a teacher named Sister Kent that was not like any other teacher I ever had. Now I had been with nuns since the first grade, so that wasn't it. There was something about her where she had a heart for me and I had a heart for her. She kind of looked after me. She watched out for my every move.

Well, on this day it started out like any ordinary day except I ended up with a splinter in my finger. Sister Kent rushed me over to the convent, and I've been wanting to go in this place forever, but now here I was, in it for the very first time. She sat me down at this long, yellowish looking table and disappeared. I waited with bated breath. Where, where was she? Well, when she came back, she came back with a bowl of water, a needle and some matches. All to take that splinter out of my finger. When she put my finger in the water to soak it she said something that changed me again. She said, "I can't believe how white my skin is against yours." I didn't feel like she said that to hurt me. It wasn't like some of the things that I heard my classmates saying or their parents saying whoever made of the mantra, "Sticks and stones may break your bones but words would never hurt you." They didn't know what they were talking about because some of the stuff that came out of their mouths was really ugly. But I didn't get that sense from sister Kent. She loved me. That's what I felt.

Well, in my seventh and eighth grade years, it seemed like every time I would come into the classroom, there was a desk vacant. There was a student sitting there the day before but now they were gone. And this happened repeatedly throughout, throughout those two years until eventually, St Sabina was no longer predominantly a white Catholic school. It had become a predominantly black Catholic school. And I realized that they were leaving just because of people like me. The color of my skin scared them. I thank God for my teachers but especially Sister Kent because through those years, I believe that they did everything they could to shield me from the ugliness of racism. But more than that, I believe that they picked up where my mother left off. They were the angels watching over me.