



# Video Story Transcript

## The Story of My Teacher

**By: Storyteller Kiran Singh Sirah**  
www.storytellingcenter.net

**Link to YouTube Video:**  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WXDkGBaqxr0>

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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.

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My name is Kiran Singh Sirah. And this story is for my teacher Mr. George.

I was born in 1976, in a summer heat wave. In a town called Eastbourne. My mother called me Kiran. Kiran which means in Sanskrit, light from the sun. The town I was born in was on the south coast of England, about 80,000 people. I was the first person of color born in that town. On a clear day, you could look out to the sea and you could see France. "Bonjour," I would say sometimes. And I imagine people back saying, "Hello." There were so many stories about growing up. It was a good place to grow up. It was a nice town. There was good things that happened. We used to go out for ice cream. We would go down to the seaside. We used to go to and sit on blue and white deck chairs and listen to the bandstand. We would even eat a lot of the fish and the crab sticks. And we used to be a lot of family gatherings.

But then there was the bad side. There was a lot of racism going on at that time. Spurred by Enoch Powell and the far-right fascist groups. The skinhead punk, the green bomber jackets, the Dr. Martin boots. They used this word called "Paki." It was a horrible word to use. It doesn't matter what co... where we came from; we could be from Pakistan or India or just brown skinned. They just refer to all of us as Pakis and they'd go out Paki bashing. For us, it's like the N-word. That's how we felt. It wasn't so much about when someone... I'd would leave the house and I'd feel like I have to be on my guard. And it wasn't the hurt that came to me. It was when I heard someone use that word against my parents, my mother or my father or my brother.

One day when I was about five or six years old, and I remember this vividly, I woke up in the living room on the couch. I'd been knocked out. I didn't know where I was. My memory just before that, as I was cycling around my BMX bike and a punk had knocked me out. He'd gone Paki bashing. But my mother told me that

this old lady, old white lady, had seen what happened. And she picked me up and she took me home. Racism existed in our, in our community. As I said, there was good and there was bad. But sometimes, it was just very difficult to understand why I felt so different. Why was I being treated different? Some of these people called my people the smelly Curry people. The people that worship lots of gods. We're somehow different and sometimes made to feel really different. I couldn't concentrate in the school classrooms. I found it really hard to focus. But that was until my head teacher, in the classroom assemblies, started to tell stories.

Mr. George was an older white man. He wore a tweed jacket and always wore a kind face. He told us folk and traditional stories from all over the world. And one day, he told us story about a prince. This worldly prince that gave up all his worldly riches and went out into the world to explore the world and to meet the people of the world. We took two objects with him, a cup and a toothbrush. And one day, he looks out and he sees this man break a twig from a from, a tree and starts chewing it and release these juices that start to clean his teeth. And he realized, I don't need my toothbrush. And he threw it away. And then, he looked out again and he saw someone bent double, by a river, and used their hands and they cup their hands together and poured out a scoop of water and then drink the water from their hands. So, he threw away his cup, realizing he don't need that too.

But then one day, he tells us the story about someone that really inspired him throughout his lifetime and that man was called Nelson Mandela. He told us how he remembers him as a chubby man going into prison for his beliefs. But then, over the years, were the images that were coming from South Africa, was this man that had gotten thinner, he'd become wiser, he'd become calmer. And he was promoting messages of peace, of unity. Not just to unite the people of South Africa from all different backgrounds and races and ethnicities, but to unite the world. He was like the conscience of the world.

From Mr. George's stories, he was connecting me to the wisdom of these folk and traditional tales to know that we can go anywhere in the world. We don't need the objects. We just need our human bodies. And he's also connecting us to the idea of social justice and equality and that we actually belong and we're part of the world around us. I now live in Tennessee, in Jonesborough, Tennessee and I oversee the work of the international storytelling center. My job is to advocate for the power of stories to change people's lives and to enrich people's lives. But then I realized last year, now living in the States, I haven't actually thanked the person that inspired me to tell stories and to think about life in this way. So, I contacted my old elementary school back in Eastbourne. I looked them up. Phoned up the school and I asked about Mr. George, where his whereabouts. They told me that he's now retired. He's doing well still. And, uh, but he's there... in touch with his daughter Claire George.

A few months back, I got an email from Claire George. Never met Claire, his daughter. And Claire had said that she had printed out the articles. She'd Googled me. And she used these articles to speak to Mr.... her... Mr. George, her father. And all the articles I'd written about Mr. George and talked about what I'm up to. A few weeks back, I received a letter in the post addressed to me at the International storytelling center. And guess who it was from? It was from Mr. George. Mr. Len George. I'd never known his first name. In the letter, he talks about how he remembers me but not just me, he remembers my mother. He remembers the house that I grew up in. He remembers my character, and he remembers, and he's so proud of me, he said in the letter, of what I've achieved and what I'm doing now. And he also studies, still telling stories.

It's been 30 years since I've had any contact with Mr. George. But I know that I owe so much to this teacher, this great teacher, for inspiring me and make me think about the world and how it can also teach. Storytelling is such a powerful teaching tool to enrich other people's lives. The fact that we don't need any props or things

or objects to experience the world just like that prince in that story. All we really need are the stories. And ultimately, the fact that, we can be the story that we want to see in the world. That was for Mr. George.