It is amazing how humans are obsessed with classifying everything. We not only classify all that is part of our world, but also all that belongs to the infinity and beyond! Grouping has many purposes, some positive and others negative. Once we differentiate one group for another, individualism kicks in and we stop seeing ourselves as part of a whole; which has a great effect on how we relate to others.

I am a 43-year old (*Generation X*) *single woman* who was born in Guatemala; therefore I am considered a *Latin* or *Hispanic female*. In terms of racial profile I always have trouble defining myself because my appearance is *white,* but I am sure that somewhere along my bloodline I should have some Mayan in me. I am *Catholic*. I moved to the United States when I was 25 years old, which adds to my identity the status of *immigrant*. I am *bilingual*; I speak and write in Spanish and English. I am a *student* at Florida International University and a full-time *worker* at a private sector entity as a *graphic designer* and *marketing coordinator*. I am a *Toastmaster* attending Doral Toastmaster Club. I live in Miami, Florida, which makes me a *South Floridian.*

Last year, I started working on my personal brand, an exercise that takes a lot of inner knowledge because the core of a personal brand is the authentic self. I did an inventory of my needs, values and interests. I need stability, challenges to stimulate my intellect and creativity, a peaceful environment, interaction with people, personal time for introspection (a lot), laugh, and structure. I value creativity, efficiency, enjoyment, excellence, family, gratitude, integrity, learning, love, and respect. My interests and hobbies include reading, painting, listening to music, traveling, learning about cultures, and visual communication.

In Guatemala the black population is 0.1%, in other words almost non-existent. When I was 13 years old a new girl moved to our community, she was black. I was immediately interested in getting to know her because it was a novelty. I brought her home and when she left, my mother said, "I don't want you to be
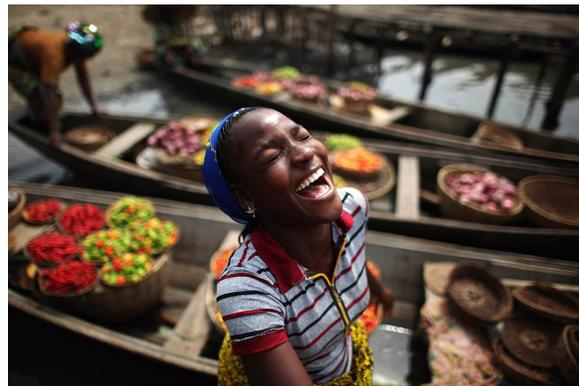
friends with her." My mother was the most caring person I have ever known, but she was also very strict. She had the power to make my siblings and I obey only by looking at us. We never challenged her orders, but that day I asked why. Her response was "they have different habits." I felt confused because deep in side I felt my mother was wrong, but I obeyed.

Ten years later, after my mother moved to Miami and back to Guatemala, she told us that she was going to get married again; she was marrying a Cuban. I only knew Cubans through TV. Mexican movies of the 50s showed black Cuban maids raising white children (nanas) or black Cuban exotic dancers. In the Olympics, Cuban athletes were black. Famous singers, like Celia Cruz, were black. So, I assumed Cubans were black; therefore, I also assumed my mother was marrying a black man. When we went to the airport to pick him up I was so surprised to see that he was tall, white and blond. I said to my mother, "You told me he was Cuban" and she said, "Yes, he is." I replied, "but he is not black." She said, "Some Cubans are black, but not all." I felt stupid.

Writing about the stereotypes made me questioned about how that experience in my childhood affected my relationships with black people. I don't consider myself racist, but making an inventory of my friendships I don't have black friends. In fact, I have never have black friends. Most of my friends are either Americans or Latin Americans; I wonder if my mother's statement impacted the way I select who is my friend.