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DATING & MARRYING ETHNIC MEN

BB&W Interview spotlight: Morshe and James

25 Feb 19 | Tacia Bryan | [4 Comments](#)

Morshe and James have graciously taken time to interview with me, all the way from the beautiful state of Hawaii. I hope you enjoy hearing their story as much as I did.

What are your names?

My name is Moshe and my husband's name is James.

How did you meet?

We met in college in Virginia; we were college sweethearts. I was a sophomore at the time while he was a freshman. We were both interested in French, and so we had classes together. James spent time in France as well, so he could speak some French. For the next three years, we were in the same French class. We were not dating then; we were in other relationships at the time. In fact, we did not like each other at first. He thought I was loud, obnoxious, and attention-seeking. I am extroverted while he is introverted. In the second semester of my junior year, we started to talk more than the usual "Hi," and "Bye."



Who took the first step?

We started to get very close. Both of us are military brats, with a similar background, so we really connected on that. I was attracted to him, and I had dated white men in the past; but at that point in my mind, I still thought about eventually marrying a black man. When we reconnected at homecoming, we started to see each other in a different way. We flirted, but nothing came of it.

He found out that I was casually seeing a mutual friend; a black man. Oddly enough, his name was James as well. James (my now-husband) was very not thrilled about that. As we spoke more and more, we started to get really friendly with each other: teasing each other and things like that. I could tell that we were starting to get closer. One day, I decided to tease him and ask when we were going on a date and when things would go to the next step. He said that he would call after his test the next day. He invited me out for lagers. We went out for dinner and talked for the night. The next week, we went to play laser tag and to eat at Applebee's after class. The rest was history.

What are your cultural/ethnic backgrounds?

I am African American. My husband is Japanese American and white. He is a third-generation American. As we both come from military families, we have gotten to experience other cultures. (My family is connected to the marines while his family is in the army.) His family went to Korea and Germany, while mine traveled around America. That helped us find some common ground and grow closer.

Where are you now in your relationship?

We are celebrating nine years together this year. We were married in October 2010. Fall is my favorite season, so we had a fall-themed wedding. My husband proposed to me on Halloween of 2009. It was such a beautiful proposal. We dressed up as Bonnie and Clyde that year. He was carving a pumpkin and asked me to light it. When I went to light the pumpkin, the ring was inside. The ring was so cute. It was such a beautiful moment.

As James was in flight school at the time, and I had my heart set on a fall wedding, we decided to have a long engagement. Once he graduated and we had moved to Alabama, we decided to get married in Virginia. My mother and sister helped me have the wedding in Virginia, at a military location.

When did you know it was going somewhere?

He was a senior in college while I was going to New York for an unpaid internship. We really started to think about each other when we were not so close. It is like the saying goes; absence makes the heart grow fonder. In the beginning, to be sure that I found the best man for the job, I decided to keep my options open until he expressed that he wanted to be monogamous. I think that is when we both knew that things were getting serious.

James was always very intentional with the relationship. I think the support from his family really showed me how serious we were. His mom provided me with financial support throughout my unpaid internship. After my internship, I worked at a department store in Virginia and lived with my family. James would drive from campus all the way to my house to see me.

When I started moving up in my career as a Channel 10 Journalist in Virginia, James had started attending flight school and invited me to stay with him in Alabama for a year. It was a big commitment. I was going to have to live in a different state and give up my job. James understood that it was a big sacrifice on my end, so he agreed to cover the expenses. He proposed that if we stayed together for a year we would get married.

When we moved to Alabama, we lived in a countryside rural area. I got a job with the newspaper about a month later. One thing I appreciated about James was that he was a provider. He paid for all expenses and I would cook and care for the home. It was during that time that I realized how much marriage matters. In the army, the rule was that we could not live on base (post) without being married. We wanted to try this out and see how we worked together. We decided to use that year as our trial run. It is good that we are both strategic planners and we work well together because of that.



Do you find the military a very welcoming place for your relationship?

Oh, it was great! The military has a lot of interracial relationships, so we did not have any problems.

What is the best part about being together?

We mesh really well, like yin and yang. My husband is a planner. He is very logical and stoic. That is definitely due to his cultural upbringing. He doesn't talk as much. He is usually quiet and reserved. On the other hand, I love people and I am very emotional. I am a Pisces: we are typically very full of life. James brings the calm in the relationship. When people we know see us together, they always tell me that I've opened him up.



How did each of your parents react to your relationship?

James' parents are retired colonels. They have long-term relationships and friendships with black people, so that was not an issue. Once my parents realized how serious our relationship was, they were very supportive. My parents did not care. I think that they were shocked that he was not white.

Do your different cultural backgrounds impact how you raised your children?

Our different personalities affect our parenting. I am the more hands-on parent while he is more hands-off. The cultural barrier was not an issue for us personally. I did have some cultural issues with my mother-in-law. During my daughter's first year, he was away in Afghanistan. My mother-in-law really stepped in to help out. When you compare both of our motherhood experiences, it was a lot smoother for me as times have changed. We had different parenting styles since the military is not as accommodating of mothers in the military. My mother-in-law was used to a more traditional way of life. I wanted to use cloth diapers and breastfeed my child. We did not always see eye-to-eye at first: but with time, we worked well together.

We use food as a way to share our culture and spend time as a family. On New Year's Day, many Japanese people typically eat a broth dish. We usually enjoy that meal, along with some food from my culture. I will cook collard greens, black-eyed peas and they eat it all together and enjoy each other's company. At Thanksgiving, we eat traditional turkey with sushi and traditional meats.

You both have moved around a lot, and you are now in Hawaii. How do you find that your location has supported your relationship?

Living in Hawaii has been great. It is easy to be in an interracial relationship here. Plus, we can raise culturally mixed children in a diverse and supportive environment.

What challenges have you faced?

We experienced most of our challenges (as an interracial couple) on the mainland (USA). I used to travel there with her daughter while my husband was deployed. There have been stares, mainly to figure out what my husband is. Any direct aggression has been on Facebook, with people hiding behind their keyboards. I really have not had any negativity happen face to face.

How do you deal with difficult times?

Sometimes, just having my husband with me really helps. A lot of the negative experiences and comments that I face are new to my husband. I think he has learned to deal with them very well. There are certain Japanese places of business where I will bring my husband to ensure that I'll receive fair treatment. I definitely feel more protected with him in the south. People could tell he was in the military, so they are much more respectful. If anything does happen, my husband makes jokes to diffuse the situation. If things became more serious, James will defend me and shut down negative comments. Even when I'm not around, he protects her from negative conversations. I am truly a well-watered woman with a husband like that. Most of my interactions have been very positive though. People like to approach us and tell us how cute our daughter is.

Do you think that your life experiences impact how you interact with each other?

Definitely. While we both grew up in the military, we have still had some different life experiences. Our backgrounds definitely impact how we interact with and understand each other. For example: James comes from a more affluent family, while I grew up poor with a single mom. I cannot always expect him to understand where I have been, as that was not his reality.

I can even see some of that with my daughter. She would not necessarily be able to relate to other family members or someone in a different situation, as she has a different experience. She looks like a light skinned black girl with kinky hair. She is a biracial girl in Hawaii, with a completely different economic situation. She has been to 13 countries. She has jazz class and golf lessons on the weekend. Her experiences are much different from the ones I had growing up, and I am so happy for that.

How do you deal with difficult conversations?

We sometimes put topics on the backburner and revisit them later. We have to be careful about picking our battles. We also have to pay attention to race relations and the news, as issues may affect our home one day. Time is an important factor as well. Spending time with his parents has helped shape and change their mindsets on things. They have learned a lot about their preconceived notions. At the end of the day, we are family and we are all different. For example, my husband is more conservative, while my sister-in-law is more liberal. It's all about learning to work with each other.

What kind of boundaries protect your relationship?

I like to be very private about my relationship. It is important to be extremely selective about what I share and with whom. My sister is my support and confidant. For the most part, people can judge the situation to know what to ask and when.

How have your friends reacted?

My friends are amazing. They were giddy about my relationship from the start. They were constantly encouraging and supporting the relationship. They would ask me a lot of questions and offer support.

Did any of your other family members have any reactions?

I kept my relationship private for the most part, so not really. Although, I did love the support I got from my grandmother while I was dating. One day, I told her she was getting picked up by James. She asked me which James, as I had seen two men named James before things became exclusive. She asked me if she was going to meet the black one or the other one. When I said it was the other James, Grandma was so relieved. She liked the other James better. She was rooting for this relationship.

Is interracial dating a new dynamic for you?

No, I have dated white men in the past. I've always let myself be open to each opportunity that comes my way.

What are some of the expectations you had before your relationship?

Originally, I had planned to spend 10 more years in Korea in the military and then go to the mainland (USA). My husband wanted to go into the military with our home base in Hawaii. That one time, we weren't on the same page however, looking back, I'm so happy now that things didn't not turn out [how I had planned].

Looking back on some of those expectations, how have they changed now?

I think things stayed pretty constant, as we were very strategic about the steps we took in life. I think I practiced divestment without even thinking about it. I chose not to go back to dysfunction. I chose not to go back to my old environment after my degree and internship. Some family members would see me differently as I wouldn't come back home and I married outside of the race. For a little while, I had survivor's guilt.

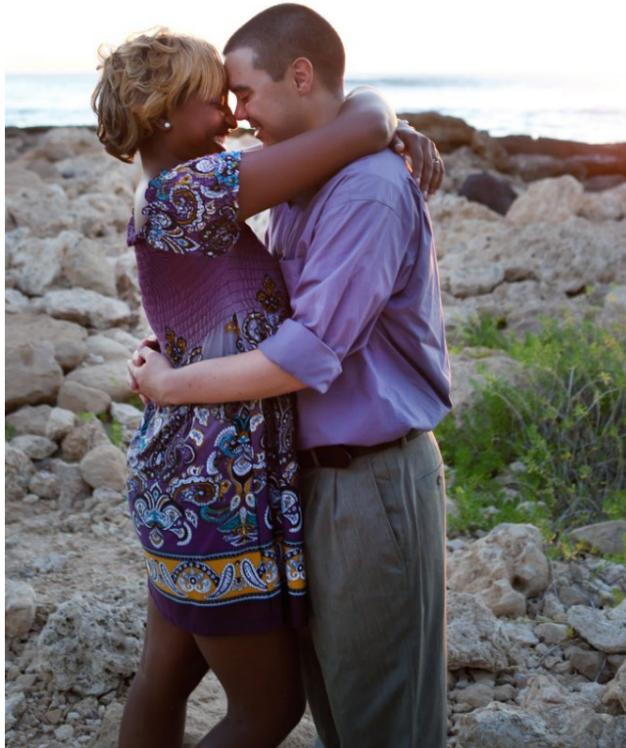
I have learned that I should not live life looking through the rearview mirror. I will not feel guilty about strategically planning life. It is not worth it. If you have made the right decision, and you love where you are now: there is no need to apologize for the decisions that were made. I do not apologize for not being a bank, for staying in Hawaii, for having access to awesome things, for doing special things for my daughter, or for having a comfortable life. I love my life now. I have the freedom to do what I want. I can choose to go to the gym, pole class or sleep. I can choose between motherhood or having a career. I stayed home for 4 years after working in cable news/journalism. Right now, I am active within the military community and my sorority and my running group. I even did some homeschooling for a time.

James works a lot. He really understands the importance of being a provider. I was working with the VA for a while, during my husband's transitional period between the military and his civilian job. I was finding it rather stressful to try and balance everything. When I talked to James about it, he told me to quit and to prioritize my mental health. Thankfully, we had enough money to tide us over during those transition months.

Hawaii is so family-oriented, so it was a great environment for me in which to invest more into motherhood. Now, I work part-time and from home: to provide some more stability for my child. I take care of our home and our daughter's extra-curricular activities, while my husband works full-time. I love the freedom that I have to be involved in my daughter's life. She does Kumon, ballet, jazz and golf. I am a certified dance mom. Life is amazing.

What are some of the things you do to keep your relationship growing?

We like to get out there and have fun. I love pole dancing while James loves Ultimate Frisbee. He gets two hours of cardio each session. In fact, he even helps to run the Ultimate Frisbee Association in our area. Having an outlet and outside activities helps to keep us going and brings us closer together. We can go out separately and have fun but, we always get together afterwards to talk about our activities. My mother-in-law always says, "You still need to find time to date your husband." We go on a date once a month and we island hop to different Hawaiian Island once a year.



What advice would you give to others?

Have an open mind. You do not want to miss out on something major because you were not open to new and different things. Date. Do not tie yourself down to one guy, until you are both ready to move things forward. Cut out the noise. There will be a lot of people in your ear as you get to know each other. Do not let people rent space in your head. Do not tell people everything. Give your relationship that space to bloom.

Take advice with a grain of salt. Make sure you trust your instincts. For example, I have received great parenting advice about parenting from non-parents but, I feel that they also need first-hand experience to have that point of reference. Leave some mystery. Do not let your husband know everything about you. Keep them on their toes. Do not let them become content. It keeps things fresh and exciting.

Do not lower your standards. When James was interested in being with me, he took the time to get to know what my standards were and worked to meet them. A key example is that I always wanted my husband to be a provider for our family. James worked in the military for many years. When he was interested in leaving, before presenting the idea to me, he made sure that he already had interviews lined up the next week. He knew that with my strategic planning, I would have questions for him. He was ready with the answers before I even asked.

Stand as a cohesive unit. Work as a team. Be on the same page when society tries to tear you apart. Because if you're saying one thing, and the other partner is saying another, people that do not like your union WILL use that to try to destroy the relationship.

Is there anything else you would like to share?

Everyone's path and finish lines are different. Chill out on social media comparison. The grass is not greener on the other side. Great things are happening in your life right now. You are only seeing someone else's highlight reel. Sometimes, I can get tied up in things I cannot control. Thankfully, my husband is always there to remind me not to do that. You can have good things happening in your life and opportunities will come your way. Take advantage of that. Grab each opportunity and run with it.

Love changes over time. Be flexible and open to the changes. Relax, you and your family are going to be fine.

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