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The Last Word

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The Last Word

By Shana Fletcher, *Bank Street School for Children* – 2011, *LREI (Little Red Elisabeth Irwin)* – 2015

Dear Bank Street,

Remember me? I'm Shana, and I'm on my way. Do you remember the first year I came here? I was just a half-black, half-white, quiet girl from Crown Heights, Brooklyn. I was shy and a little overwhelmed by all the new and different people, but I quickly made friends. Soon people were talking to me like I'd known them for years.

It didn't take long to begin to find my voice, starting in KOC [KOC is the Kids of Color affinity group for students of color], where I instantly felt comfortable speaking my mind about the problems in this huge world, surrounded by people who looked like me and who could understand where I was coming from. I remember one discussion when we talked about what it meant to be a Black or Hispanic person on the Upper West Side, and in America, too. I remember sharing my feelings on how I felt uncomfortable sometimes being mixed, and how I felt like I was judged sometimes in the outside world.

Eventually, my feelings of comfort and security within the whole Bank Street community grew, extending to everyone in my classroom and grade and the teachers. It wasn't so important that people looked like me anymore. Instead, it was enough that they all supported me, and we all cared about each other. I soon learned the true meaning of family, outside of home. In this new family, we started to go on trips together, and I soon enjoyed spending hours and hours a week at school.

This year, I couldn't have tried to slow the year down more. Every day—walking into the same lobby and breathing in new pictures to store away in more memory boxes—felt special. I met so many people this year, falling into deep conversations with teachers and classmates, learning so much about our collective diversity. I cracked my shell, branched out of my eight-year-old body, becoming strong and open. I have become one of the luckiest girls in the world. Thank you Bank Street. I will always keep you in my mind and heart. I will always love you.

Love,

Shana

P.S. When can I visit?