

I was 8 years old and living in East Rogers Park. I was one of a handful of white students at my school, and interestingly, many of my closest friends were Jewish. Not only Jewish, but they would take the CTA bus each Sunday to a place called "Sunday School". I would be at one of their houses for a sleepover, but come Sunday, I had to go home because she had Sunday School.

Well... I was not having that. I remember talking with my parents. One of those "talks" where it was "serious". I couldn't just sign up and drop it. If I wanted to attend SS, then I was attending HS and I was getting a BM- no turning back. I couldn't imagine anything better than MORE time with my friends, so I was all in.

I don't know if I learned anything at all in Sunday School, and other than being able to read the Hebrew letters, I was not the most motivated student. But somehow being Jewish seeped into my blood a few more layers. I went to Camp Chi and while it was a Jewish camp, it was meaningful to me because I had THE BEST camp friends.

I had a bat mitzvah, and while I was very focused on the party over the meaning, still... that seepage. On some subconscious level, I was absorbing not just what I was, but who I was.

In high school my best friend was Jewish. Not because she was Jewish, but more because she was awesome. In college, a Jewish sorority called to me, and again, I felt at home. Not because it was Jewish, but because it felt right.

I didn't mention that there was someone really important to me growing up who was half Muslim and half Baptist. Not only was he different that way, he was also a Sox fan. He is now my husband, and as our relationship grew, and our engagement happened we decided that our family traditions were much more important than our religions, so we got married under a chuppah and he broke the glass and we danced the hora. But it was not a "Jewish" wedding. It was just simply half Lynn.

We got pregnant and had kids, and similar to our past, we said "we will raise the kids as Zakeris. They will be culturally everything, and religiously nothing". But then something happened.

The question "What am I" did not take long. My oldest was 3. How could we answer? Nothing? No. Everything? Yes... but.

So I had that "talk" again. The "serious" one. This time with my husband. I had misled him. I said religion didn't matter. And then it did. And being a level headed fair man, who loved me very much, he agreed that identity was in fact important.

I was a SSW at the time and our respected and kindhearted PTA president belonged here. My good friend works for JUF and she agreed that TBI sounded like a good option to consider. So I looked it up.

Oh- Did I mention my rabbi who bat mitzvahed me in 1986 at Temple Emanuel? The one who recorded cassette tapes for me to practice my Torah portion? Coincidence. Yeah- it was this guy- Rabbi Weinberg.

We set up a meeting with him, and surprising to all of us, I burst into tears at the first sound of his voice. Yes. This was right. When you know you know.

And my husband, the one who agreed with his wife that identity is important to our kids, the one who said “yes, we will raise our children Jewish” played his cards right. They needed clarity on their religion and on that day that we gave it to them, we also clarified one more family allegiance. Instead of being loyal to both sides of the city, they are now only Sox Fans.

TBI has been a part of our lives for over 10 years. My husband isn't Jewish but lives with a Jewish family. When we can get to KS Services, we sing familiar songs, and when we listen to Rabbi Weinberg talk, I feel something spiritual and right. Being Jewish is who I am. The Zakeri Jew who roots for The Sox.