

TAIKA WAITITI'S UNTEACH RACISM STORY TRANSCRIPT

“Hey little eight-year-old Taika, how’s it going”...

“Don’t bother answering. You can’t, because you’re just an old photo. And this is a made-up thing using computers and technology and nerds and stuff. Listen, younger old photo version of me. You don’t know it yet, but you can be great. You’ve got something no other kid has – a benevolent future version of yourself talking to you. And take it from your future self. Right now you’re being taught some pretty harsh lessons, and it isn’t fair. I know everyone thinks you stole Tommy’s shoes.”

“And who’s Tommy, you ask? Well we can’t use Matty’s real name. I mean Johnny. Samantha. Well I reckon they’re gonna be pretty bummed out when he finds the shoes tomorrow by the pool. And I know your English teacher said he wasn’t expecting much of your English because, “you’re not English”, but I like your stories. And who knows, one day your story-telling might mean you get to work with some of the world’s most overpaid actors. And forget about being accused of being a glue-sniffer, or stealing lunches, or that you’re brown because you don’t take baths. Europeans didn’t take baths until like 1962. And please don’t listen when they say opportunities are limited for Māori actors. It’s acting. You literally just have to remember words and try to say them convincingly. You’ve been made to believe that you’re not trustworthy, you’re trouble, that you won’t add up to much. But you’ll prove them all wrong. You’ve got this, little me. You’ve got this! If only you could see how much you’re worth.”

“And if only every kid who was destined to not fulfil their potential because of cultural stereotypes and assumptions about their minority race, had a successful and benevolent future self that could travel through the space-time continuum and encourage them with motivational wisdom, like I’m doing right now, with this little guy. Unfortunately, that isn’t possible.”

“That wasn’t my wise advice to eight-year-old me. It just sounded like me, because it was me, reading it in my own voice. Convincingly, using acting. In actual fact, it was two of my teachers, Ms Kennedy and Mr Kellis. Or maybe I should call them unteachers. They made sure I learned all of that so I wasn’t left believing all the crazy stuff society teachers kids about race. If it wasn’t for them, I’d probably still be this shy, little eight-year-old kid. Over here, this guy. With the beautiful, angelic... just painfully beautiful face. As teachers, you’ve got the real-life ability to make a difference for kids in the face of racism. There’s so many things their benevolent and successful future selves would love to go back and unteach them. But you’re the ones who can choose to do that. In real time. Now. You have the power to unteach racism. Will you? ... Nah but, will you?”

UNTEACH RACISM

Credits (UNTEACH RACISM, Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand, Give Nothing to Racism, New Zealand Human Rights)

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