listen up!

MALIK LEEKS & FINN MCNAMEE

Malik Leeks and Finn McNamee are two 11-year-old friends who study circus together at Circus Harmony. Malik says he fell in love with circus fast, like a flash. What he loves about it is the teamwork. He also loves that is a place where he can have fun and focus at the same time. Finn has been doing circus for five years and counts tumbling and mini-trampoline as two of his favorite things to do. Also, his dog can do a backflip.

Race, and religion don’t matter in circus. Just because you’re Black, White, Mexican, Muslim, Christian, etc. doesn’t mean circus will be any easier for you. Circus brings people together from all different races and religions. One example is that Circus Harmony has an ongoing relationship with the Jewish and Arab youth circus in Israel which brings the two religions together to form a circus.

I’m Finn McNamee. I went to Guatemala to visit my family and I went to a social circus there called Cambalacha. There, I taught a class as a student teacher from Circus Harmony. The students at Cambalacha came from many different economic classes which didn’t affect the way they worked together.

I’m Malik Leeks. I went to a public school named Jefferson where the whole ratio of the school was Black kids. Then I met a really good nice friend Finn McNamee who introduced me to my future career, circus. I now attend a new school where there are many different races and it doesn’t matter to me because circus taught me to like people no matter their race is, because at the end of the day, we are all equal to each other physically and mentally.

A lot of kids around the world are adopted which could mean some Blacks kids are adopted by White adults and vice versa. The two different races are brought together by a relationship as a family. In Circus Harmony, we do something similar by bringing kids from all over the globe to train there which forms very strong relationships. The Israelis and Arabs are a good example of two different religions that are in war brought together by circus. In circus you might have to work with somebody you don’t like but usually in the end they don’t end up being so bad once you get to know them and they end up being one of your friends. So don’t judge people by their appearance or your first impression, but really get to know them. People think because you might be a lower social class than someone that they will be better than you but that’s not true. You don’t have to be wealthy to be good at circus. Just because you’re a different social class or race shouldn’t affect the way you present yourself to an audience or the way you work to strive for greatness.

There is a college in Montreal, Canada called École nationale de cirque. That is where Malik and I hope to attend when we reach college age. At this school, people from all over the globe who have been trained in the art of circus come to audition. Only a few get selected out of thousands of applicants. We have several alumni who now attend or have graduated from this school. Circus really changed their lives and I bet a lot of them didn’t know early on that they were going to do circus as their career. Two of our alumni who went there are Sidney King Bateman and Melvin Diggs. They now perform in a show that’s on a world tour called Cuisine and Confessions. Keaton Hentoff-Killian is an alumnus who graduated from École nationale de cirque and will now be in a show with an Australian circus called Circa that has all different races. We also have alumnus Kellin Quinn who is a juggler on the top forty jugglers in the world list. He is now going to be a junior in college at École nationale de cirque. In the circus, world connections are one of the most important thing to have. So, try to make friends with everybody because you never know if they will be a very important person in the circus world or even maybe get you a good job someday.

(Big thanks to Jessica Hentoff who made circus in many people’s life possible without racial barriers. Thank you to all of our coaches who have pushed and trained us. Thank you to Karen Hanske for keeping Circus Harmony alive behind the scenes.)