

## “What Being Tall Means to Me” by Chiamaka Uchegbu

Being tall means learning how to make yourself smaller. It means ducking instinctively under chandeliers (although I often forget), folding your legs into airplane seats that were never designed for you, and sleeping diagonally across beds that are still somehow too short. For me, it has meant accepting that sleeves will never quite reach my wrists and that finding pants that are long enough is a victory within itself. Beyond these more trivial issues, it also means people assume things about me—like I’m intimidating or much older than I am. Sometimes, I am mistaken for other tall Black girls, as though height alone makes us interchangeable.

I guess my height is somewhat to be expected though. My parents are pretty tall. My mom is 5’10”, and my dad is 6’2”, so I always knew that I would be tall. It just took a while for me to accept it. In all honesty, the reality of my height didn’t start to dawn on me until I started towering over my teachers in middle school.

Ironically, the turning point came through something I initially resisted. Four years ago, when basketball resumed after the pandemic, I had no desire to participate. Regardless, my mom insisted, saying it would be a “waste of height.” Looking back, I am so grateful to her for pushing me. If not for her, I wouldn’t be the player that I am today.

I certainly wasn’t “WNBA-level” starting out, but it only motivated me to improve. Thus, after my school’s winter season, my mom registered me to play on the Moncton spring team. There I improved greatly, and I still cherish that experience. The next spring, I tried out for Basketball New Brunswick and was thrilled to make the team after just one year of play. Representing my province was an honor, and since then, basketball has provided me several opportunities to play across Canada. Last summer, I had the privilege of representing my province at the 2025 Canada Summer Games. I’ve also been able to lead my school team to sectionals for two consecutive years.

Basketball became an outlet for my height, and I will forever be grateful for that. It has connected me to a community of people I wouldn’t otherwise have met. Now, I spend several hours in the gym, perfecting my skills. I also volunteer at a local basketball clinic, hoping to inspire younger players to love basketball as I do. I adore every aspect of the sport—the dynamic play, showcase of skill and athleticism, and sense of community. It has taught me to seek unfamiliar experiences and embrace challenges, whilst balancing my coursework and maintaining a 4.0 GPA. Looking ahead, I am determined to play at the university level and eventually coach. Basketball has become an integral part of my life, and I hope it remains so for the foreseeable future.

Yes, being tall comes with its share of challenges, but I’m forever grateful for how it brought me to basketball. Beyond the sport itself, it has given me confidence and allowed me to step fully into who I am, rather than shrink myself for the comfort of others. More recently, I’ve taken a lot of joy into dressing to better embrace my height. What once felt awkward and unavoidable has become familiar and fully my own.