

The poster. Everybody had seen the poster before they knew who it was. I had the poster in my dorm. It may have been a Nukeproof ad but it wasn't the bike that stood out. It was the rider. Here was a guy that looked like me. My experience with cycling and bike shops until that point was that this was a "white" sport. Not intentionally but that's just how the sport developed and grew in it's early years. Flipping through any cycling magazine at the time told the same story. It was the same faces testing, reviewing, racing and selling the products. It was ostracizing. Mountain biking felt socially and economically out of reach for much of the African American community in the US (much like skiing). But now, there was proof that a barrier had been broken and now someone who looked like me was competing at a high level in the sport that I had grown to love. That could be me, that could be any of my riding buddies, Andre, Derek, Barry. James was someone that we looked up to for making the sport less "us and them".

I personally continue to draw on that initial inspiration to get more people of color, kids and the under served on bikes. Our industry still has a long way to go in regards to representation and drawing in people from all walks of life. I can not help but recognize that James helped to open the door for other young black men to be invited in.

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