

"The Bridge Between"

Growing Up Asian in America

I am an American kid living in San Jose, California but I am also an Asian. My life is divided between two cultures. There is a bridge that connects me to my heritage. That bridge is my family. My family is originally from Pakistan. My grandparents still live there. Every few years we go visit them. When I go there, I see certain things which I don't see in America.

I am very thankful to be living in America. Things are great over here but not so great in Pakistan. The people there are very, very poor. The buildings are broken down and do not get renovated often. The standard of living in America is way better. In Pakistan, they often lose power and without electricity, it is very hot. Not everyone has a television. I have seen people waiting in line to get water from a water pump. But most importantly, there are family values. Elders are respected and neighbors are like an extended family. Often people will help total strangers. We find many of these values missing in America, because everybody lives a rushed life.

After the events of 9/11, people started looking at Asian Americans differently. They

believed all sorts of things in the newspapers or on TV. When we were in Houston, TX, my mom invited all the neighbors to this event called National Nite Out. All the neighbors came together for a fun night of food, frolic, and fun. But more than anything, we got to know each other as human beings. It brought us together as families. Neighbors became good friends. We all started to look out for one another. Common ideas of us being Asian Americans vanished. People at first thought we were Indians but we said while we look similar, we are different in our culture, language, and customs.

I feel there is strength in diversity. While we are all different, we are all united as Americans. The richness of Asian cultures can make America more interesting. We all have very strong work ethics, which can make America prosper. I am thankful to my parents for taking me to Pakistan. It is now very clear to me what is good and bad in both cultures and I can make myself more useful and valuable for America's future. I can be the bridge in coming years between the Asian and American communities in the United States.