

Manasa Ayyala

Grade 8

A Letter of Hopes

Dear Mrs. Harris,

We live in a country of creativity. We live in a country where everyone can speak. We live in a country where ideas spark into actions. This country continues to improve each day, but people still face discrimination. As an eight year old girl living in Los Angeles, I was always embarrassed to embrace my culture. I continually asked my parents why I was different, why my eyes were brown instead of blue, why my skin was darker than others. In my school, there were only two other Indians. All my friends had blue-green eyes, golden hair, and light skin. I longed to be exactly like them. I could not take away my heritage and culture, yet I always wanted to. In Los Angeles, I only saw people who looked the same. I was different and for so long I wanted to be identical. I was embarrassed to eat rice and curry for lunch, so instead I ate grilled cheese to fit in. My family used to go to temples and wear our Indian clothes. I was always ashamed to wear them out in public for everyone to see and judge. I always packed extra clothes to change into. If I could say something to my younger self, I would say that it's acceptable to be different and embrace it.

Currently, I am a thirteen year old girl living in the Bay Area. I look like everyone else, I am the same. I met people who are brown-eyed, brown-skinned, and have black hair. I fit in and am more happy than ever to share my culture and my heritage with everyone. I am no longer abashed to go out in public wearing traditional Indian clothes. I enjoy embracing my heritage. However, I see people who are like my old friends, who want to be the same. So, I have a hope for the country. I hope for people not to be judged based on religion, gender, skin color, appearance, or past, but on their merits, their contributions to society, community service, their positive roles in associations. I hope people will be appreciated based on their actions, for actions speak louder than words. As a senator, I hope you will stand for everyone. I hope you will tell everyone that it is alright that you are different, that each and everyone of us is unique in our own way. I hope you will stand for the voices that cannot be heard. If you accomplish this, we grow. We develop. We cultivate. If you do, then we become a country of prosperity.