

We are a brilliantly vibrant country, painted with every color of the rainbow. We are a nation decked out in red lanterns and flower wreaths, papel picado and of course, the stars and stripes. We are a land of fusion food and deep-fried Oreos, hamburgers and pho, saffron rice and frappuccinos. America is an intricate patchwork of Chinatowns and Little Italies, national forests and towering skyscrapers; we are a beautiful amalgamation of different ideologies, races, religions, and cultures. But --

If my skin is too brown, I am a terrorist.  
If my accent is too heavy, I am stealing jobs.  
If I pray, I am a fanatic.  
If I am Asian, I spend my time studying - or eating dogs.  
If I am Black, I'm lazy and violent.  
If I am Mexican, I'm a drug dealer, or a rapist, or a gang member.  
White? I'm racist, no ifs, ands, or buts about it.  
If I am female, I belong in the kitchen.  
If I am male, I must always be stoic - no crying.  
If I am poor, I am a burden upon the rest of society.

The list goes on.

Collectively, we often claim to have achieved equality. However, while the progress we have made is admirable, the journey towards justice is a long and arduous one, and it is still a work in progress. As long as preconceptions like those listed above exist as the norm and policies are defined by underlying prejudice, American society isn't truly egalitarian. Insofar as we promise to build walls to keep out the "bad hombres" and institute travel bans based on religion and ethnicity, we cannot fulfill that ultimate goal of standing "indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."

Still, we are always moving forward to meet that brighter tomorrow. Our government is becoming increasingly reflective of the people it represents: There are 47 African-Americans, 38 Hispanics, 13 Asian-Americans and Pacific Islanders, and 2 Native Americans in the 114th Congress. 108 women are part of the current congress as well, including California senator Kamala Harris. This is a huge step in the right direction, but we must remember that we cannot stop here.

As Senator Harris tweeted on January 29th, "democracy is not a spectator sport." Those of us who have a vested interest in America's future need to put down the popcorn, step away from internet trolling, and work to bridge our partisan divide, not mock it. On both an individual and an organizational level, we must be willing to compromise, but also to stand up for what is right: improving education standards, reducing poverty, ending discrimination, and more. By doing so, we can increase societal welfare, in both the API community and the wider world.

They say that "America is 'the greatest country on Earth,'" but we can always be greater. I look forward to that day I know is in our future - the day our radiance is finally unmarred by injustice; the day we, as a country, can stand together indivisible, invincible.