

My School

by Fatima Goss

My high school is a school that celebrates diversity...on paper. On paper they boast of a 40% minority and 60% white student body. On paper they list all the "ethnic" clubs and claim they are open to all races. On paper they show a unified student body, celebrating the many holidays for all the different cultures in the school. On paper the scenario sounds great. My high school is located in the Bay Area, often referred to as the most "liberal" and "diverse" place in the United States. It is too bad that the real world is never as perfect as the world that exists on paper.

In reality, my high school has been admitting fewer minorities each year. With a steady decline of 4% a year, by the time the freshman graduate this "diverse" school will be 80% white and 20% everyone else, African American, Asian, Pacific Islander, Latino and Native American.

The ethnic clubs that the school is so proud of are a struggle for the students to obtain and keep. Their membership is almost always exclusive to the racial or ethnic focus of the club. The only really strong club is the BSU (Black Student Union). As a result, the BSU is often called racist and we do not feel strongly supported by the administration. We have made increased efforts to include other students in the club, but have learned that African American history is not a subject of interest to everyone. In fact, there is only one time during the school year when the entire student body must learn about any culture other than the mainstream European culture that is taught year round: Black History Month.

Each year there is a one hour assembly, one hour out of well over 1000 hours spent in class each year is all that is given to educating the student body about African American history! This program is presented in the hope of educating and bringing the student body together. Instead, each year there is a controversy around the program. Like a pot of water that has been heating too long, once a year, the tension in the school boils over and there are major confrontations between the races in my school. There have been racial slurs, fights, torn Black History posters and swastikas. The issue of race is by far the most divisive factor in the school. Very few cross the invisible barricade that constantly separates the races. I have heard friends worry about being called a "wannabe" or a "sellout". Many are content within their race and voice resentment towards those that venture over the barricade.

Now that I have graduated, I am able to look back and reflect on the past four years. It has definitely been a learning experience. I feel that my school, which tries so hard to look perfect, was a true educational center, because with all its imperfections, it is a true microcosm of the real world.

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She will be attending UCLA this fall.*