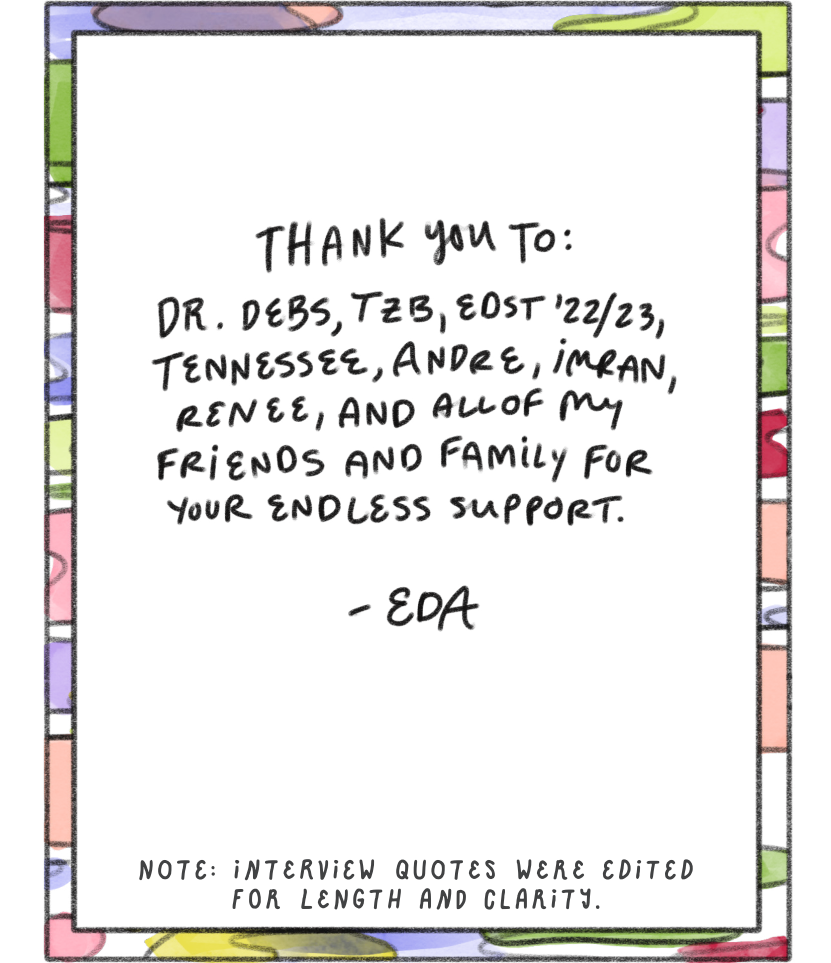




# LEARNING TOGETHER WORLDS APART

EDA UZUNLAR



THANK YOU TO:  
DR. DEBS, TEB, EDST '22/23,  
TENNESSEE, ANDRE, IMRAN,  
RENEE, AND ALLOF MY  
FRIENDS AND FAMILY FOR  
YOUR ENDLESS SUPPORT.

- EDA

NOTE: INTERVIEW QUOTES WERE EDITED  
FOR LENGTH AND CLARITY.



# LEARNING TOGETHER WORLDS APART

ON THE EDUCATION OF STUDENTS OF  
IMMIGRANT BACKGROUNDS IN REMOTE  
POCKETS OF THE UNITED STATES OF  
AMERICA

A CAPSTONE PROJECT PRESENTED TO  
THE YALE EDUCATION STUDIES PROGRAM  
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE  
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE PROGRAM

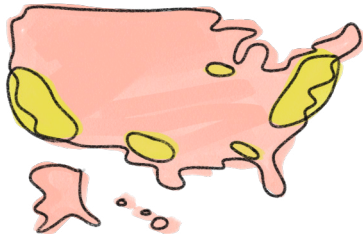
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YALE COLLEGE

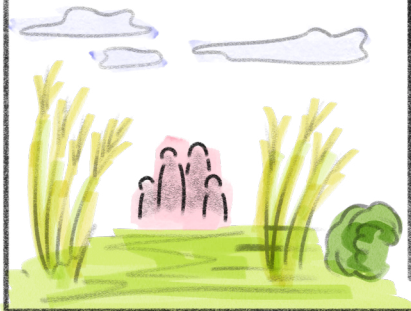


BUT IMMIGRANT  
BACKGROUND KIDS  
LIVING ON THE  
COASTS GET TALKED  
ABOUT MORE IN  
DISCUSSIONS OF  
IMMIGRATION THAN  
THOSE LIVING IN  
MORE REMOTE PARTS  
OF AMERICA ALL  
TOGETHER.

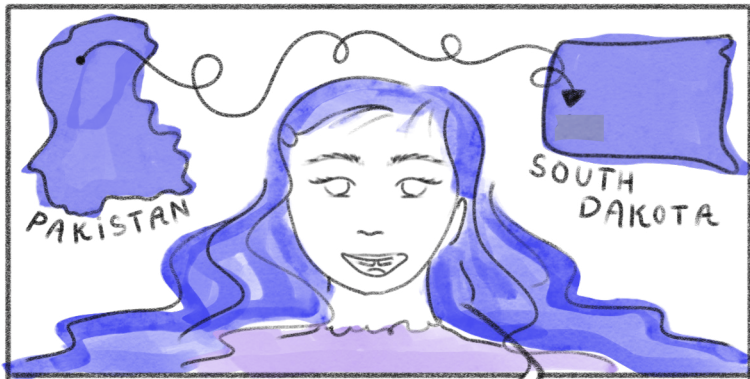
TODAY, MORE  
THAN ONE IN  
THREE STUDENTS  
IN THE AMERICAN  
K12 EDUCATION  
SYSTEM ARE EITHER  
IMMIGRANTS OR  
CHILDREN OF  
IMMIGRANTS.



SOMETIMES, A  
FAMILY WILL  
MOVE SOMEWHERE  
WITH FEW OTHER  
IMMIGRANTS... OR  
PEOPLE OF OTHER  
BACKGROUNDS AT  
ALL. THIS CAN  
IMPACT EVERY FACET  
OF LIFE, INCLUDING  
EDUCATION.



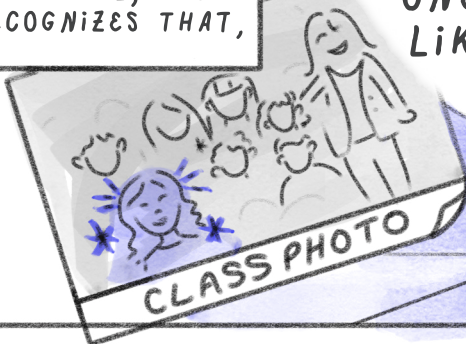




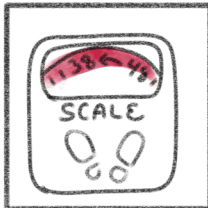
SIX YEAR OLD IMRAN IS A CHILD OF TWO IMMIGRANT PARENTS, AND LIVES IN SOUTH DAKOTA. IMMIGRANT STUDENTS ARE FEW AND FAR BETWEEN, UNLIKE MANY OTHER PARTS OF THE NATION.

WHEN SHE GOES TO SCHOOL, SHE RECOGNIZES THAT,

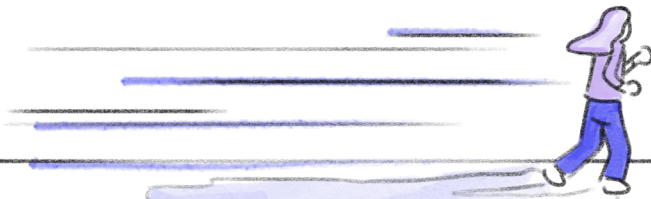
"NO ONE LOOKS LIKE ME!"



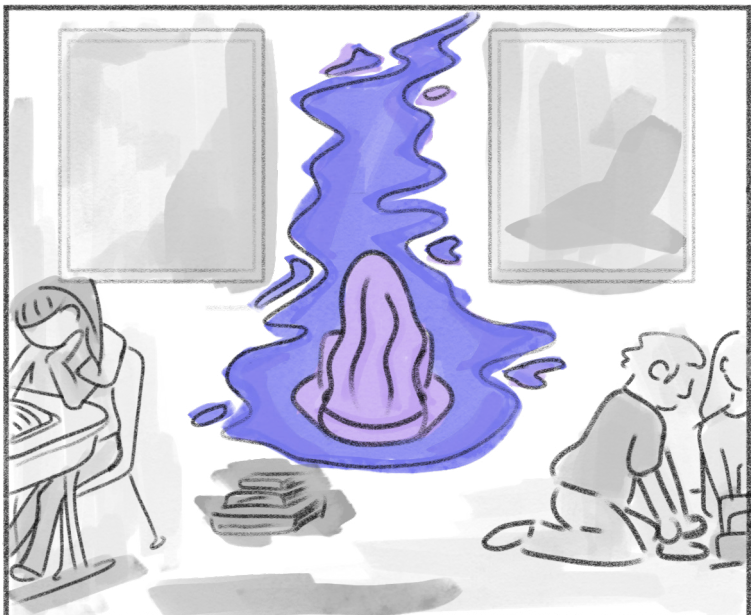
OTHER KIDS HAVE NOTICED TOO, AND  
SOMETIMES SHE COMES HOME HURT.




WHEN HER MOM AILA NOTICED, THE FIRST  
THING SHE DID WAS GO TO IMRAN'S SCHOOL.



AiLA SAYS THE TEACHER HAD NO IDEA IMRAN WAS GETTING HURT DURING RECESS. "THE TEACHER DIDN'T EVEN THINK MY KID SPOKE ENGLISH, LET ALONE REALIZE SHE WAS BEING BULLIED."



THE TEACHER ALSO DIDN'T THINK IMRAN COULD COUNT, OR READ, BECAUSE SHE SAT ALONE IN CLASS SOMETIMES.

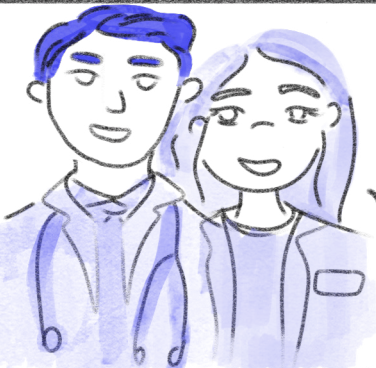


FEELINGS OF LONELINESS FOR STUDENTS FROM IMMIGRANT BACKGROUNDS HAVE DIRECT CONNECTIONS TO LOWERED SELF ESTEEM, ACCORDING TO EXPERTS WHO RESEARCH EDUCATIONAL ISOLATION. IN GENERAL, ISOLATION AND LONELINESS, ESPECIALLY FOR KIDS FROM KINDERGARTEN THROUGH ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, CAN HAVE SEVERE EFFECTS ON HOW MUCH THEY LEARN IN CLASS AS WELL AS ON THEIR MENTAL WELLBEING WITH CONSEQUENCES FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT.

AiLA DECIDED TO HOMESCHOOL IMRAN, WHERE SHE HAD SPACE TO LEARN... A LOT!







AiLA SAYS,

"WE'RE  
PRIVILEGED  
ENOUGH THAT I  
CAN DO THIS. BUT  
NOT EVERYONE  
CAN."

SHE WISHES THERE WERE TRAININGS AND RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS TO UNDERSTAND AND LEARN ABOUT IMMIGRANT STUDENTS OF COLOR BETTER, ESPECIALLY WHEN THEY'RE THE ONLY ONE IN THE CLASSROOM. "I WISH THEY WOULD TREAT HER LIKE A PERSON."

GRAB

A stylized illustration of a hand reaching out from the left side. The hand is simple, with fingers slightly curled. The background is filled with abstract, wavy shapes in shades of purple, blue, and red, suggesting a chaotic or emotional environment.




RENEE FOUND THAT TREATING HERSELF "LIKE A PERSON" FIRST LED TO OTHERS DOING THE SAME. SHE LIVES IN A TOWN OF ABOUT 2,000 PEOPLE, AND IS VIETNAMESE. IN MIDDLE SCHOOL, SHE STRUGGLED.

KENTUCKY



RENEE'S  
TOWN:  
97 PERCENT  
WHITE

"I'M THE ONLY  
ASIAN GIRL HERE,  
AND I HAVE TO  
SURVIVE ON MY  
OWN."



SHE FELT LIKE PEOPLE TALKED ABOUT HER A LOT...

IT MAKES HER HEART FEEL TIGHT.



IT MADE IT HARD TO DO WORK.

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

1) LIST FOUR WOMEN WHO  
WERE INFLUENTIAL IN THE  
SUFFRAGE MOVEMENT.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2) EXPLAIN THE IMPORTANCE  
OF ORGANIZING IN THE 1920S.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

SNIFF  
SNIFF

YOU CAN'T FIGHT FIRE WITH FIRE,  
RENEE. YOU CAN'T BE IMMATURE.

RENEE... I DON'T THINK THAT'S  
THE SHIRT FOR YOU.

AT LEAST IN  
MY CULTURE,  
THEY'RE UP  
FRONT WITH  
YOU!"

- RENEE

PEOPLE ARE GOING TO  
DISLIKE YOU FOR NO  
REASON, NO MATTER  
WHAT YOU DO. DON'T  
WASTE YOUR TIME!

YOU SHOULDN'T  
BUY YOUR  
JEANS ALREADY  
RIPPED,  
RENEE!

LUNAR NEW  
YEAR RED  
ENVELOPES



HONG JUAN  
GUAVA CANDY



RENEE SAYS IT'S ALL ABOUT RESPECT. SHE'S IN HIGH SCHOOL NOW, AND SHE HAS FRIENDS WHO NOT ONLY RESPECT HER, BUT ALSO LEARN FROM HER. SHE SHARES PARTS OF HER CULTURE, AND LIKES IT.

NOOOO NOOO!  
RENEE, NOOO! YC

"HE DOESN'T  
LIKE ME BECAUSE  
I'M ASIAN!"

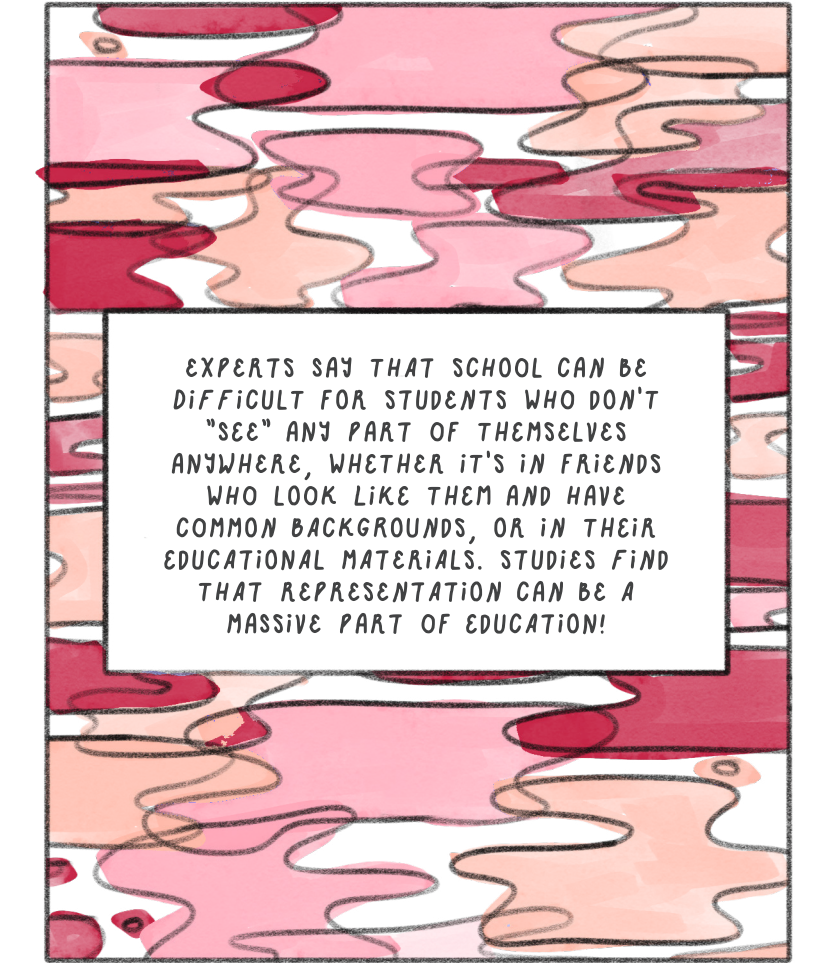
\*SIGH\*

SO COOL AND NICE A  
NOOOO!! YOU CAN'T  
LOVE YOU! NOOO! YC



HER FRIENDS BACK HER UP, EVEN WHEN SHE DOESN'T FEEL STRONG.





EXPERTS SAY THAT SCHOOL CAN BE DIFFICULT FOR STUDENTS WHO DON'T "SEE" ANY PART OF THEMSELVES ANYWHERE, WHETHER IT'S IN FRIENDS WHO LOOK LIKE THEM AND HAVE COMMON BACKGROUNDS, OR IN THEIR EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS. STUDIES FIND THAT REPRESENTATION CAN BE A MASSIVE PART OF EDUCATION!



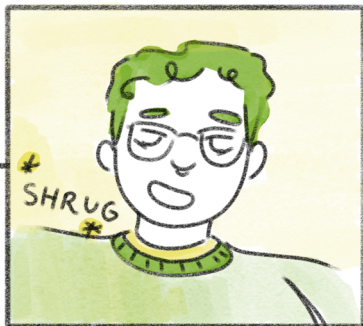
RENEE'S PROUD OF THE PROGRESS SHE'S MADE. EVEN STILL, SHE THINKS IT WOULD HELP IF THERE WERE OTHER PEOPLE TO LOOK OUT FOR HER, BECAUSE THAT TIGHT FEELING IN HER CHEST...

"IS STILL THERE WHEN I WALK DOWN THE HALLWAY."

TEACHER



SUPPORT IN SCHOOL CAN  
COME FROM ANYWHERE,  
ACCORDING TO ANDRE.



THEY'RE ABOUT  
TO GRADUATE  
COLLEGE, BUT  
GREW UP IN  
MAINE.

POPULATION: 3,000  
97 PERCENT WHITE

"ONE MAIN ROAD GOES  
DOWN THE ENTIRE  
TOWN."

THEIR PARENTS WERE  
ALWAYS QUICK TO POINT  
OUT THAT,

"ANDRE, WE  
ARE THE  
ONLY ONES  
HERE."





THEY'RE VENEZUELAN. AFTER COMING TO COLLEGE, THEY REALIZED HOW DIFFERENT EDUCATION CAN BE WHEN THEIR BACKGROUND IS A PART OF THEIR LEARNING.



THIS NEW ACADEMIC SPACE HAS ALSO SHOWN ANDRE A LOT ABOUT WHAT SCHOOL WAS LIKE BACK IN MAINE. IN HIGH SCHOOL, THEIR FRIENDS WOULD SWEEP THEIR BACKGROUND UNDER THE RUG.



"I DIDN'T REALIZE HOW OFTEN PEOPLE MINIMIZED MY IDENTITY, EVEN THOUGH I ALWAYS THOUGHT THAT PART OF ME WAS COOL..."

ONE OF THE ONLY TIMES ANDRE THOUGHT PEOPLE DID BRING THEIR FAMILY'S IMMIGRATION AND BACKGROUND INTO CONVERSATION WAS... DURING THE 2016 ELECTIONS.

"MY IDENTITY WAS VERY POLITICIZED BY KIDS WHO WEREN'T USED TO TALKING ABOUT POLITICS."

TRUMP  
2016

~~TRUMP~~

MAKE ★★  
AMERICA  
FAT AGAIN!

"BUILD THE  
WALL!"

"YOU NEED  
TO USE KIND  
WORDS! NOW...  
LET'S SING  
THIS LAND IS  
YOUR LAND."





THOUGH MOVING TO COLLEGE HELPED, IT DIDN'T FIX EVERYTHING. THE LATIN AMERICAN COMMUNITY AT SCHOOL WAS TENSE WHEN THEY ARRIVED IN 2018, BECAUSE OF QUESTIONS AROUND WHAT "LATINX" REALLY MEANT.

"IT WASN'T REALLY STUFF I'D BEEN ASKED OR FORCED TO THINK ABOUT."

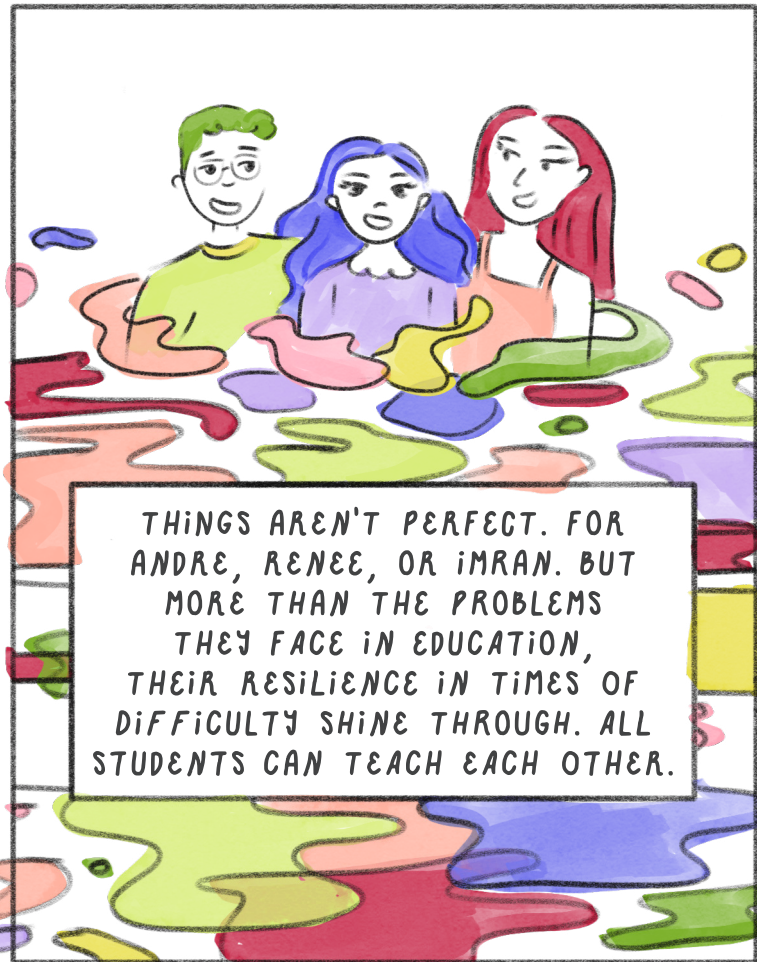
ANDRE SAYS,

"GOING TO SCHOOL ISOLATED FROM YOUR OWN CULTURE MAKES YOU SOMETHING DIFFERENT THAN A THIRD CULTURE IMMIGRANT KID.

IT'S NOT LIKE GROWING UP IN A BIG CITY. IT'S LIKE A FOURTH CULTURE, ONE OF ITS OWN."







THINGS AREN'T PERFECT. FOR ANDRE, RENEE, OR IMRAN. BUT MORE THAN THE PROBLEMS THEY FACE IN EDUCATION, THEIR RESILIENCE IN TIMES OF DIFFICULTY SHINE THROUGH. ALL STUDENTS CAN TEACH EACH OTHER.



BUT IT SHOULDN'T JUST BE ON THE STUDENT TO MAKE THEMSELVES FEEL COMFORTABLE. TEACHERS, ADMINISTRATORS, AND OTHER SUPPORT IN SCHOOLS CAN HELP. GUIDANCE COUNSELOR HELEN WILLIAMS SAYS,

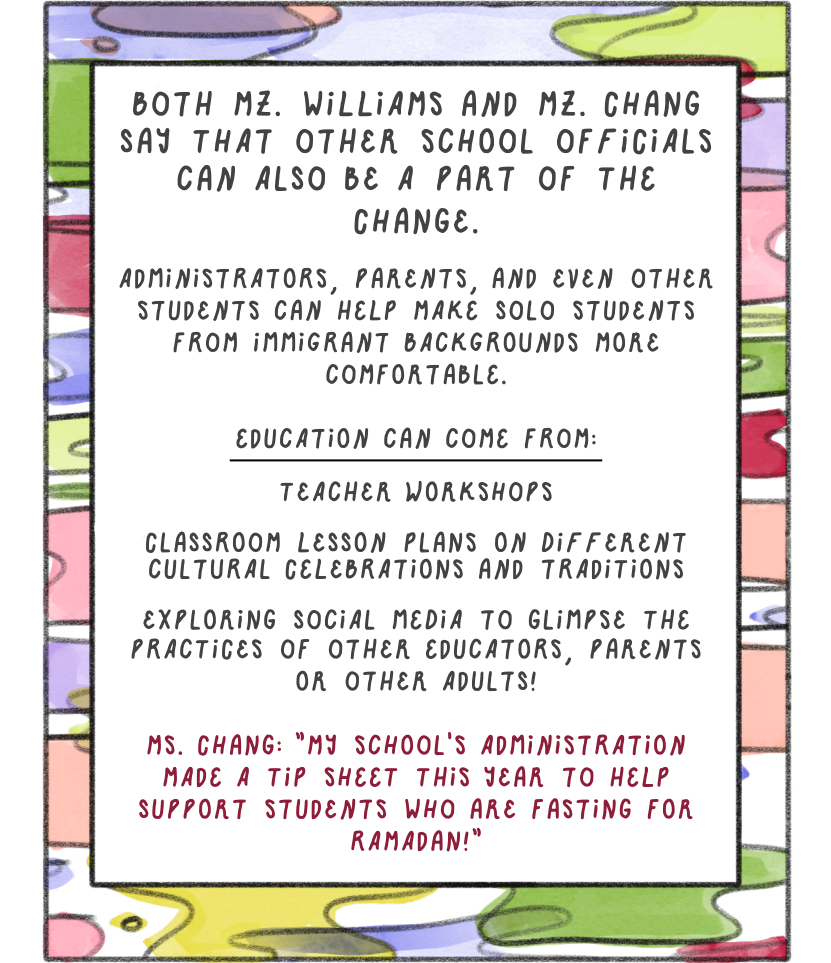


"EVERY CHILD DESERVES TO HAVE SUPPORT IN A SCHOOL. SO THEY KNOW THEY'RE LIKED. SO THEY KNOW SOMEONE HAS THEIR BACK IF THEY NEED IT."

JERE CHANG, A TEACHER WHO SHARES VIDEOS ON INCLUSIVE EDUCATION ACROSS SOCIAL MEDIA, SHARES WHAT SHE TELLS HER STUDENTS.

IN BRIEF: "WHAT YOU DEEM AS WEIRD IS SOMEONE ELSE'S NORMAL, AND SOMEONE ELSE'S NORMAL MAY BE YOUR WEIRD." SO THINGS REALLY AREN'T WEIRD! SIMPLY DIFFERENT."





BOTH MZ. WILLIAMS AND MZ. CHANG  
SAY THAT OTHER SCHOOL OFFICIALS  
CAN ALSO BE A PART OF THE  
CHANGE.

ADMINISTRATORS, PARENTS, AND EVEN OTHER  
STUDENTS CAN HELP MAKE SOLO STUDENTS  
FROM IMMIGRANT BACKGROUNDS MORE  
COMFORTABLE.


EDUCATION CAN COME FROM:

TEACHER WORKSHOPS

CLASSROOM LESSON PLANS ON DIFFERENT  
CULTURAL CELEBRATIONS AND TRADITIONS

EXPLORING SOCIAL MEDIA TO GLIMPSE THE  
PRACTICES OF OTHER EDUCATORS, PARENTS  
OR OTHER ADULTS!

MS. CHANG: "MY SCHOOL'S ADMINISTRATION  
MADE A TIP SHEET THIS YEAR TO HELP  
SUPPORT STUDENTS WHO ARE FASTING FOR  
RAMADAN!"



SCHOOL CAN BE HARD, FOR  
EVERYONE. FEELINGS OF  
ACCEPTANCE AND CELEBRATION  
ARE ESSENTIAL TO A POSITIVE  
LEARNING EXPERIENCE. EVEN  
WHEN WE'RE WORLDS APART,  
WE CAN LEARN TOGETHER.

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