

# CouRaGeouS Cuentos: A Journal of Counternarratives

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## Do I Belong Here?

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## Do I Belong Here?

By Ashly Lopez

Life was bright  
before life changed  
9 years ago,  
living in the city,  
with my Latinx neighbors,  
diverse school  
I felt safe

Walking through the hallways of my school  
I look to the right and see kids speaking Spanish On  
the left others speak Japanese  
Paintings on all the walls of different cultures  
Teachers interested in learning our culture  
People were not ignorant.  
I never once thought about  
the color of my skin  
my ethnicity  
I was just me  
We were all equal  
Maybe it was because we were young  
and could barely do math  
But I belonged

Present time, living in Humboldt County  
I am completely clueless about who I am  
I speak Spanish and English  
I have light skin  
And now  
suddenly I don't belong  
My first months being here there wasn't a day  
I wouldn't hear those questions and comments:  
"You speak Spanish right?"  
"Can you say this for me?"  
It sounds funny when you say it!"

Were they making fun of me?  
I'll never know  
Almost everyday of my life people assume I am Mexican I  
just go along with it  
because I  
can't stand the way they mock my Nicaraguan  
pronunciation

Being at the same high school for three years, you  
should feel safe there  
Walking through the halls  
there's nothing that brings me comfort  
The pale white arm mural,  
the mural in the cafeteria with only two people of color

There's nothing showing I belong here  
A place where I can make a phone call to my mom  
without getting mocked in the background  
A place where people I know don't say  
"there's no way you speak Spanish, you're too White"  
A place where people don't assume  
my identity because of what I look like  
A place where when we finally try to step up and  
show who we are  
A place where  
we aren't quickly shut down by the big White men in power

We deserve a place to be ourselves  
I deserve a place where I can be me