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Do I Belong Here?

Ashly Lopez
Cal Poly Humboldt

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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