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Cambiando Vidas

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Cambiando Vidas

By Katherine Quintero

At the beginning of the year 2019 my dad decided to make one of his biggest choices of his life that would affect all his family. Many might think moving houses was not a major thing but on this occasion it was moving states, moving two whole different worlds where similarities were quite rare. Moving from a city where 42.6% of the population was Hispanic/Latinx, to a whole new town where 12.1% of the population was Hispanic/Latinx. When I discovered that we were moving I had a thought that I was going to be able to relate to many people as I did in Arizona. As we made the transition from Arizona to California my only question was “will I be able to find people like me?” As we relocated in Arcata, California I kind of saw some changes right away that really threw me off because I had never seen or experienced those things before. I know when you move you’re expected to realize and adapt to any new changes, but in my occasion, it was different since I had never previously lived in a place similar to Humboldt county. I had previously lived in Mexico which was really different from Arizona but I adapted fast since everyone had so many similarities with me.

Once my dad had opened his restaurant in Eureka, California, I saw some diversity but not much. I even noticed that the food was quite different from the one my mom had always fed me; the food was really “white-washed.” Then came the day when I went to Arcata High School for the first time. I remember being so happy that I was going to meet new people who could relate not only to me but to the cultures I had always cherished with my family. As soon as I went to my first period class and sat down I observed my classmates and noticed there were only two other kids other than myself as persons of color. I was really confused as I expected the same diversity as my previous school. As we got out of class through the halls I tried to observe and see if I could glimpse someone being other than white. Nothing. As my periods pass 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th 6th, I can definitely count with one hand the people of color I saw.

Later that year one specific person decided to start the Latinx Club which I found was a way to incorporate myself into a group where I would find the same diversity I had always expected. We did some stuff but it wasn't major since the club was not 100% approved until later that year. As the year ended, COVID had hit which made us kind of depart from the club and really not start much.

Now I am in my senior year and I was elected president of the Latinx Club to promote the diversity as I had always wanted to do in a place where diversity is not really mentioned or seen. I also joined the equity team which is another way for the leaders of the diversity clubs to talk about their experiences as a person of color in school and talking about those experiences to the community and other members of the board. Trying to change things around school where we are all included and treated equally as white people. As of today, I am sitting here typing this google doc trying to figure out how much I and other people who are similar to me have achieved!