

New Life by Laura Hatanaka

Falling from the past and landing in the now,
Finding strange places as familiar somehow
Past schools were forever cold and drab
This life now, I never thought I'd have.

Different people who think and try and feel
It's amazing to me that all of this is real,
Grasping new information, hanging onto every word
I finally feel as though I am heard.

The me of the past is lost and alone
Always estranged, school was never a home
I never thought I'd get to learn in this fashion
Pursuing my education with a fiery passion.

So many new experiences and things to do,
So many of my dreams have finally come true.

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November 28, 2016

My viewpoint on UCSD's campus climate has changed drastically after reading Kong's "Reexamining UCSD's Diversity Policy" because it opened up an ugly history of racism and revealed a fundamental lack of understanding of minority groups at this school. My past experience in school with regards to racial climate has always been pretty bad. The "Compton Cookout" event that so offensively propagated African American stereotypes was highly reminiscent of a similar event that occurred last year which involved a large portion of my senior class where a party was thrown and people were encouraged to be as racially offensive as possible. Another time, during LGBTQ awareness week, students who attended the Mormon church next to my high school vandalized LGBTQ posters and tables, harassing students and yelling slurs, all while wearing shirts they'd made that read "straight week". I was furious at this blatant form of targeting and talked to my Principal about these problems, to which he merely shrugged and claimed that "everyone had different opinions" and that the students who had harassed LGBTQ students had "a right to express those opinions".

Instances like this happened all the time in my hometown highschool due to the incredible lack of awareness of minorities because of our predominantly white population. As a ChineseJapanese American I always felt very uncomfortable in such an environment and was often bullied and excluded from events due to my race or because I was an Asian student who wasn't good at math and didn't specialize in STEM. Students regularly would make "Asian jokes" at my expense and drew offensive images of caricature "Asians". Thus, coming to school here was like a dream to me. I had heard of UCSD's "ethnically diverse" campus population and I was excited to finally get the chance to feel accepted into a community for once.

The difference between UCSD and my old high school is substantial, which has a big impact on why I saw UCSD in such an untarnished light prior to reading Kong's work. In comparison, UCSD is still a much safer community than that of my high school. When the Trump chalkings that targeted the Latinx community appeared, I remembered feeling upset, but

then surprised and thankful that there were others at the school, and a majority, it seemed, who also felt outrage at these offensive messages. Such an event would not cause much discussion at all at my old high school, so it made me feel safe knowing that people here cared about the treatment of minority groups. As a result, reading about the past events of minority groups being attacked that so eerily mirrored those of my high school came as a shock to me. It wasn't necessarily that I was naive enough to believe that there had never been any sort of problems with racist actions, but rather that I had a fear of losing the rosetinted image I had formed of UCSD after escaping my high school. It was this fact that allowed me to slip into a state of contentedness that was given a major wake up call after reading Kong's work.