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Reading Response Five: An Ocean Apart

Lost as a pebble hurled into the ocean, I throw myself into the new scenery.
I sail to a land unknown, not like the pictures I was so used to seeing.
A place whose "SoCal vibe" I will never understand.
A place whose home will never comfort me.
How I miss the trees and the rain.
How I miss closed spaces and congested cities.
Yet too stifled was I.
Too oppressed, too close to home,
I left.
Embarking on a journey across the sea,
Seeing the water that separates where I was and am now,
I left the North.
In this foreign land, I am among boulders and mountains, the pebble that I am.
But I do not stop talking, nor do I shut myself in my room.
Though the shackles of terror and shame chained me to that distant shore,
Here I'll stay!
Here I'll break free!
Here I'll run forward!
Here I'll fall!
Here I'll rise!
I know that I am alone, and alone I do not have to be.
I meet new people, with the strength to push me forward,
To pull me inland and give me what life will offer.
I have new experiences, that teach me so much.
I have new struggles, who I will look in their eyes and face.
The wind will blow and the hurricane will howl,
And I shall stand back and roar.
As the rain gives way to a rainbow, so does life follow death.
In the aftermath of blood and tears, like a flower I'll grow.
Yes, I know it hurts to bud, to bloom,
But know that I will decorate that gorgeous landscape.
With other flowers like me,
I will root myself into that hillside.

I find that my experiences with campus climate differ from most students and Kong's thesis: they are not in the sense of student to student interaction that lead to a critical commentary of racial prejudice and minority rights. In contrast, I describe my campus climate experience as intrinsic to my story: me leaving home and coming into a very new environment where I had to meet new people, adapt, and change here at UCSD. I do not mean to state that Kong's viewpoint is invalid, but I find that "campus climate" is not necessarily defined to be the same for everyone. Some may find a specific aspect that affects them and the campus environment, as in minority representation and the lack thereof. Others may view it in a more general sense, as in how the campus as a whole is shaping and affecting them. Personally, as I have attended UCSD for a quarter at most, I find my perspective on "campus climate" is limited in certain ways; I have not been here long enough to obtain a cohesive understanding. Regardless, I do know what I have experienced and I find UCSD's campus climate to be accepting yet challenging.

I left my home in Stockton, California, and came here to an area I never knew. My move-in day was the first time I stepped foot in San Diego and saw the campus, and I was welcomed into Sixth College with open arms. As I interacted with students who would later become my friends, nothing about me hindered our socialization. I find this reflected in Sixth College and UCSD's open environments, where every student is accepted for who they are. Being a homosexual Indian, the open environment allows me to be myself in front of others. I already found support groups, friend circles and the LGBT resource center, and I have yet to experience prejudice. In addition, there is also a push for personal growth. I view the campus climate as challenging students to develop and pursue their goals. The difficulty of this of course varies from student to student, and mine happens to be arduous. I will not lie, I am not doing so well my first quarter here. It will be my first getting a C in any course, but I know that this is not the end. Even though it is painful for me to go through this sense of failure, especially with the fact I am in such a new area, I feel like I can try harder and push myself forward from this because of the academic drive of the campus. The students here are headed for the same goal, and I find that we support each other.

There have been cases where the environment has changed from being accepting to downright racist. In the weeks preceding the presidential election this year, there were vandalisms across campus stating bigoted statements; an example basically stating for Mexican Americans to "go back across the border, and where you came from". I found this shocking in the sense that some of these students may be in my classes, and that these students actually "took action". As a response, some students counter vandalized the school; putting statements of support and love. It is these moments where I feel that connection and acceptance of UCSD.