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CAT 1

### My Experience at UCSD

Towards the end of the first day I moved into my Sixth College apartment at UC San Diego, all of the girls I would be sharing an apartment with had just finished settling in. We all sat down in the common room and started to formally introduce ourselves to one another. There were six of us by the last names of Lau, Liu, Nguyen, Kim, Ahn, and then of course, Espinoza. We all casually started sharing information about ourselves as an attempt to bond and create some kind of connection with each other. Everything seemed to be going well, until one of them looked around the room and made direct eye contact with me as she said “one of these is not like the others”. My natural response was to laugh, because she was well-meaning, but at the same time, it was something I had definitely noticed too. Deep down I knew it was true, I was very different from the rest of my roommates, because I was the only Non-Asian, the only Latina. We all continued to talk and bond, but it was pretty clear that we did not have very much in common as far as our backgrounds. While I was not at all surprised I could not relate to them, it had not occurred to me that maybe they did not relate with each other either. They were all Asian, right?

While being the “minority” was not necessarily a problem, it was certainly uncharted territory for me. The town where I was raised consisted of roughly 12,000 people where just about 90% of those people were Mexican or Mexican-American. With this in mind, I did not have much experience with or knowledge about Asians and their different backgrounds and

cultures. Even though I was not aware of it, I was guilty of having made several unjustified assumptions about Asians, lumping them together into a vague category based on what continent their roots originate from. Suddenly, I was living with five other girls of Chinese, South Korean, and Vietnamese roots and I did not know the difference between them all. I'm sure they did not realize it, but they too had made several assumptions about the Latinx people. Though I do look Latina, they did not think I looked like I was supposed to. None of them ever said it directly, but they revealed these assumptions in comments they would make towards me in conversation.

Angela Kong's dissertation on *Re-Examining Diversity Policy at UCSD* helped me realize that even though I am considered a minority in many respects, seeing that I am a female and Latina, I am also very lucky. Lucky, in the sense that my struggles are widely recognized – especially on the UCSD campus. As a member of a minority group, I realize that we should all be sticking together, we shouldn't exclude other minorities just because their struggles are different from ours. Even though I had not realized it, I had made way too many assumptions about Asians, I just sort of lumped them together in a vague, fuzzy group of unidentifiable persons – and that is the problem. Far too many Asian persons are getting lumped into one big category and they become invisible. They become a part of a “deminoritized” group simply because a lot of them seem to be successful in life.

A UCSD fraternity group hosted a themed party called the “Compton Cookout Party” was inviting people to dress up “ghetto” as part of the theme (pg. 5). Originally the party was meant to serve as tribute to Black History Month, but many black students did not respond well to the event. The event portrayed Black males and females as being aggressive and non-educated people (pg. 6). After the leaders of the Black Student Union on campus made a list of demands –

named the BSU Demands, racist acts of aggression from fellow students started to rise against them. They were called ungrateful and some even went as far as to leave a noose hanging in Geisel and Ku Klux Klan paraphernalia (pg. 7). This series of events called for a rise of awareness of the *racial climate* that UCSD's campus hosts, not just in regards to the Black students, but to all minorities, and that includes Asians. They are so much more than the continent they originate from or the shape of their eyes. Similar to Black and Latinx people, the Asian-American deals with their own unique set of struggles as a minority group. Whether they are categorized as the "yellow peril" or the "model minority", they too face their own version of stigma and social pressure to conform – to fit the stereotype in order to belong.

Whether someone is Black, Latino, Asian, LGBT, disabled, so on and so on, should not disqualify them or make their concerns invalid. What makes a group of people a minority is not how few of them there are in numbers or how much need they are in academically or financially. What makes a group of people a minority is having issues that are not being acknowledged in society or being treated like less or as unimportant because of your race, gender, sexuality, or anything else that outcasts a group of people apart. Instead of excluding other minority groups based on the privilege we assume they have or how overall successful they have been at achieving the American Dream, minority groups should be sticking together. The only way to see change is to help one another, regardless of whether or not they fit our personal description of what a minority is.

Works Cited

Kong, Angela. *Re-Examining Diversity Policy at UCSD*. Diss. U of California, San Diego, 2014.

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