

## **City of Riverside: Diverse Community Essay Contest**

My parents often take me to their past through their vivid storytelling. Their most fascinating stories tell about their pioneering quest in a country with a different language and unknown customs- at least for them. They usually conclude by expanding on their choice of Riverside City to settle and begin a family. When my five siblings and I ask them what made Riverside the “right fit,” they simply reply by saying it was the most comfortable setting. After seventeen years of living in this city, I found the reasoning behind their stay. Riverside is a city with an array of skin tones and a library of speaking languages; this is the city that warmly embraced and immersed them in its rich diversity. Today, it is inevitable for me to go a day without acknowledging Riverside’s diversity because my school’s population and my involvement in the community have made me culturally and socially conscious. Through its virtuous diverseness, Riverside has enriched my perception of society and has prepared me as a global citizen.

I am fortunate to have attended John W. North High School for the past four years. North, as we tend to call it, is distinguished for its acceptance and diversity. This statement is not loosely used since students, including me, can uphold to that. When I look around in my classes, students’ distinct backgrounds are notable through their physical features and customs. This to me is beautiful. Everyone I observe descends from unparalleled worlds- culturally, economically, and socially- yet our paths have crossed as we find ourselves sitting in the same desks presented with the same opportunities. Many can acclaim their classmates are diverse, but diversity is not confined to the four walls of the classroom in my case. I, a Hispanic, am in admiration of my closest friends; they are natives to Indonesia and the Philippines. Similar to me, they preserve their cultural roots

and keep their background in high regard. I value everything that differentiates them from me from their spiritual beliefs to cultural traditions. We even go as far as teaching each other our first languages and sharing our “exotic” foods with each other. Our friendship is one of the various prints of diversity at our school. I was honored to hold a foreign nation’s flag in the Commencement Ceremony for the Class of 2013. I was one of more than twenty students who held a nation’s flag representing each birth nation of the graduating students. The flags ranged from South American countries like Honduras and El Salvador all the way across the globe to the African continent represented by Nigeria’s flag. In that ceremony, I sensed a global presence with an essence of unity and cooperation. It was in that moment I recognized attending a school in Riverside that attributes a sense of honor to the diversity of its students is rewarding. It nourishes the acceptance between those unlike and catalyzes their gradual blend or harmonious co-existence.

The diversity at North is a reflection of the diversity I found in Riverside. The city’s three hundred thousand inhabitants are not of one race, religion, social class, or any other label used to identify people. My account with diversity has influenced my development as a citizen and as a tolerant person. My inner innovation is stimulated by the moments I share with individuals from different corners of the world who bring original customs and philosophies. This inner innovation is planted in residents that have been fortunate enough to experience diversity at first-hand. In addition, I acknowledged circumstances can be approached from various perspectives because there will be individuals whose take on a scenario or idea will distinguish vastly from mine. I view the contrasting views as a perk from being raised in the diversity of this city because my

understanding of society will elaborate progressively. Among the comprehensive skills Riverside's diversity has infused in me, I have learned to be compassionate and open-minded. I anticipate situations in life where I will encounter new cultures, values, and hardships, because I will be able to successfully approach and explore such instances. I can simply credit Riverside's mosaic of people for preparing me and developing my deep appreciation for diversity.

Riverside, the city known for its arts and innovation, is what I proudly consider as the city of my diverse community. My sense perception has registered the prosperous cultural and social differences that are embedded in the streets, in my case a school, of Riverside. I concluded my parents felt comfortable in this city for the same reason I feel warmth here today: it is the undeniable diversity. As I stand hand to hand with residents with varying skin tones who speak different languages and represent countless backgrounds, I cannot help but realize I am a grain of salt in this sea of diversity.