

Rayyan Tawseef Talukdar

Grade 8

Granada Islamic School

3003 Scott Blvd

Santa Clara, CA 95054

“Growing up Asian in America”

When I saw the flyer about the contest, “Growing up Asian in America”, the first thing that came to my mind was, I am an Asian. Not only I am an Asian American, I am a Muslim Asian American. Growing up as a minority is a challenge in any society. But being a Muslim in today’s America has its own challenges. I know several youth who are afraid or hesitant to tell others that they are Muslims and have changed or shortened their names in High School. Mohammads have become Mo, Osamas are Ozzy now, Shamsuddins are Sams and some just use their initials. It is a crazy world where you are afraid to be known by your own name. But that is the sad reality.

I learned it very early on that I am growing up in a society where my name makes people nervous. It used to bother me a lot. I feel one should not be judged by their names or appearances but rather one’s actions. I am a boy scout for my local Troop 499. Every month or so we do beach or park cleanups. Last year, my troop and I cleaned up the Half Moon Bay beach on a Saturday. We collected tons of trash which were mostly man made. There were soda cans, plastic food containers, plastic utensils, plastic bags, beach balls etc. All the trash from the beach eventually end up in the ocean, and is harmful to the marine life. I am learning to be respectful to the nature. And I am thankful to my boy scout troop for that. I am a proud member of the Boyscout of America and I want to be a person who takes care of the environment.

The mosque shooting in New Zealand literally happened as I was typing this essay. I had brain stormed what I wanted to pen down, but now the situation around me has completely changed. The hate that I wrote about in the first two paragraphs has come to life. It has caused 49 lives and dozens injured. This Friday, when I walked in to the local mosque, I saw police cars parked in front of the mosque. The fear was real and law enforcement was ready to deal with any situation. It reached deep inside me. It made me question, WHY?

I have decided I want to be the CHANGE. I want to be a youth who is not afraid to be known as a Muslim Asian American. I want to be more involved with my community, reach out to people in need and volunteer as much as possible. I want people to know that Muslims are not bad people. Terrorism has no religion. One should not be bullied or oppressed just because of their faith. And when I grow up, I want to be a Civil Rights lawyer.