

2022 International Essay Contest for Young People

[Youth Category – Honorable Mention]

Diversity and Inclusion, Go Hand In Hand

(Original)

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Nervously, the doctor looked at my mother as he viewed my ultra-sound, she noted his worry and held my father's hand. What would be devastating news, turned out to be me missing a limb, more specifically my right arm. Four months later, I entered the world kicking and screaming, wailing one arm and two legs. Whenever my mother would take me out, old Turkish ladies were astonished by my quick movements and my wide-eyed awe of the world. Once they noticed I was missing an arm, they could quickly exclaim, "*mashaAllah*" an Islamic term that means "what God has willed has happened." Quickly, they would remind my mother that my hardships in this life would be rewarded in the next life where I would be given two arms. Looking back now at such things, it almost seems silly as I am perfectly happy having one arm, it seemed to bother others more than myself.

Upon starting kindergarten, everyone doubted my skills in being able to fend for myself. Little did they know their doubts were proven to be false as I learned to tie my shoes with one hand first in my class. Suddenly, everyone needed my help and wanted to use my one-handed technique. My disability wasn't a hindrance it was something that allowed me to push boundaries. I never had moments where I focused on what I couldn't do because I always did what I wanted and what needed to be done, albeit in new and interesting ways. Fully, I explored my interests and never let having one arm deter me, rather it motivated me and make space for myself where I was the only person who had an outward physical disability.

When I was in the fifth I was into the dance genre of hip-hop. My team and I had to perform in a dance show for our school event, while we were dancing on the stage, the first-grade student started laughing and making fun of my arm. I didn't care that much, I was used to being bullied by others. I accepted the fact that some humans were fueled by

not having manners and lacked knowledge of physical and mental impairments that people globally deal with on a daily basis, I am one of the millions. After our show was complete, I saw my friends crying. I asked them the reason, and they stated, they were sad because I was bullied on the stage in front of everybody. Simply, I felt bad they were sad. What other people thought or felt about me wasn't my problem, it was something they needed to work on.

At the start of high school, I began to hear the jargon diversity and inclusion. Knowing what they meant, I never knew that they could be applied to me. My brain always defaulted to them being applied to race, gender, and ethnic groups. However, once I got my robotic I became a poster girl for these buzzwords. Policies aside, I was able to partake in new activities and people became interested in my new arm. *RespectAbility* had come full circle for me as being visible is where most education on my condition takes place. Therefore, I don't need to state my values as I think they are quite obvious. *Respect and being welcomed go a long way and should be the backbone of all organizations.* Now wherever I volunteer, I make sure that intentional consideration is taken for all groups of people. Repeatedly, all organizations must articulate that people of all races, abilities, and other identities should be welcomed with arms even if comes with discomfort as that is where true learning and mindful implementation come into practice.