

· LETTER TO THE EDITOR ·

Submitted letter from Coronado High School students

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BEING A MINORITY: AN OPEN LETTER

Dear Coronado High School students and staff,

My name is Jasmine Goodson and I am a senior here at Coronado High. I have been a part of the Coronado Unified School District since I was about 7 years old, which means I am used to the way things are run here.

You may wonder why I am even writing a letter to you. The truth is that I want to bring light to something that I have kept quiet about for years. Being a person of color at a predominantly white school, in all aspects, is hard, not just because of racism, not just because of discrimination, but because you will automatically feel different. You will be set to a certain standard of beauty that requires you to "tame" your hair, have a slimmer nose, or have thinner lips, all of which I have been teased about. But keep in mind, these are just "jokes," so still, in the eyes of the majority, this teasing is okay.

I am half Costa Rican and half African-American, but I have had staff and students tell me that because I 'look black' that's how I should identify myself. Obviously, I can only speak for one group of students at CHS and that is the black students. I have been asked many times if I can get sunburned or if I can swim, all of this a "joke," of course. When I get offended about a racist joke being made at my expense, the jokester almost always says something along the lines of "chill out" or "you take everything too seriously."

Black students are just a walking stereotype until we prove to our peers that we can be trusted. For example two black students new to CHS last year were automatically asked "what tribe do you belong to?" and "what is your dad in jail for?" by their peers when they

arrived at school. This year, a staff member told a black student to his face that he's "too big" to be a houseboy, and that he would be better "working on the fields." All here, on campus.

Attending a predominantly white school as a person of color is even harder when you are constantly accused of pulling the "race card." The jokesters almost always insist you can't be offended by their jokes, because their joke isn't racist and neither are they. If you talk about being black, you either want attention or you're just making everything about race; there is no in between.

The hardest part of being a person of color in a predominantly white school is that people think they know how it feels. I have been told how I should feel about certain topics in history and English classes. A teacher puts air quotes when speaking about the "black struggle" as if it did not exist in America at all. This can cause us to feel like our history of being enslaved, lynched, tortured and oppressed means nothing. This can also cause non-black students to feel like the black struggle isn't a big deal anymore just because we're no longer enslaved.

The point of this letter was to show students, staff, and just anyone in general a tiny piece of how it feels to be the minority. Just because you don't believe that it is happening and just because you haven't seen it happen doesn't mean it hasn't happened. Don't ever tell another student how they should feel about a certain topic when you have no idea what it feels like to be that student.

Sincerely,
Jasmine Goodson