

I Am American by Dana Blatte, grade 9

I am white. I have American-born parents. I've lived in America my entire life. I speak English as my first language. Many would say that because of this, I am American. But that's not true. Yes, I am American; however, none of those statements make me American, because being American isn't defined by trivialities such as skin color, parentage, native country, or even spoken language. If it was, imagine how monotonous our country would be. Being an American is so much more than belonging to a nationality. It's beliefs, hopes, stories, futures, and emotions - the so-called American Dream. This American Dream, the constant strive for a better life for all generations to come, lives inside all of us and unites us as Americans.

My ancestors came to this country seeking that very same Dream. While some of them immigrated legally, some did not. Even so, I've never had to question my identity as an American. Unfortunately, others are not judged so leniently. Although many of my close friends are immigrants or the children of immigrants, originating from countries such as Sri Lanka, China, Russia, and Albania, I've never questioned their American identities either. Maybe it's how I was raised, maybe it's the privilege I receive as a white citizen, or maybe it's because there is no reason at all to question their identification as American. We were all immigrants once, only for some of us our ancestry goes farther back than one or two generations. Even if we may act different, believe different, or even seem different, we are all American. You are American. I am American.