

Judge Immigrants by Content of Character, not Skin

I'm one of millions of Mexicans living in the United States who Donald Trump might assume is "good people." I'm not a criminal, a rapist or a drug dealer.

I did not cross the border by foot but arrived by plane in Seattle, a welcoming city I now call home. I was born in Mexico City into a family that, unlike many others, had the means to live comfortably.

We traveled to and lived in other countries, and we focused on the future since we intuitively knew we would never do without three meals per day. I was very fortunate to live a good life in a country that gives few opportunities to even fewer people. But like millions of other Mexicans who left loved ones behind, I now call the United States my home.

Before I lived here, I must admit, I didn't think I had much in common with those who risked their life walking through the unforgiving heat of the desert. I didn't spare a thought to people who felt that living in the shadows, out of fear of being deported, was preferable to living in the daylight. I admit I couldn't identify with the people who now remind me every day of our common humanity.

I moved to the United States 11 years ago and I've met many people who I share common roots with even if our branches spread differently. We speak the same language and can recognize which part of Mexico we're from based on our accent. We dance to the same music when we're happy and we cry to the same songs when we're sad. We suffer equally when we watch the Mexican soccer team play, we long for the people we left behind, and we yearn to someday return. Whenever possible, we lend each other a helping hand and when we first meet, we ask

each other how we got here and if we'd go back.

The United States has given us the possibility to recognize and acknowledge each other. To be able to provide our children many of the same opportunities and allow them to be peers instead of the strangers they would've been back in Mexico. To have the chance, despite our differences, to look at each other in the eye and say "mi amigo."

And thus it pains me to see these people scapegoated. It worries me to realize many people actually seem to believe Mexicans are synonymous with crime and deviancy. Many of us do not return to Mexico because we fear the violence and crime that exists there. The cartels control the flow of illegal drugs into the United States.

Mexicans are not sexual deviants nor do we prey on the helpless. It is true that these and other acts are committed by Mexicans, but they are not exclusive to any group in particular nor should they be used to broadly and irresponsibly define an entire people.

In a time when politicians seem to thrive on intellectual laziness for the sake of political expediency, I'd much prefer to remember what Martin Luther King said on August 28, 1963, in front 250,000 people at the foot of the Lincoln Memorial: "I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character."

I'm one of millions of Mexicans who some might assume is a good person and this is what I think and hope for this country. Yet it's important to me that my newfound friends are not singled out negatively because they or their parents came from Mexico. We must not demonize some people due to the crimes committed by others who were born there. If we are to be judged, let it be due to the nature of our individual deeds and the content of our individual character.

Is that not the American way?

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[IMAGE CREDIT: Pixabay]