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3/3 of the Truth

“Hi, I’m Isabel. I’m Guatemalan.”

My school friends have always teased me for using that as my introductory line. They say that it is my go to line when I meet someone new or it is the first day of school and the teacher is having us participate in ice breakers.

I would like to say that it is because I am proud to be Guatemalan-American. The country my parents were born in is beautiful with its vibrant colors weaved into tapestries and scenic views of volcanoes behind a massive lake. The people are kind and humble; you can not walk down the street without being greeted by “buenos dias,” “buenas tardes,” or “buenas noches.” I have felt first hand the welcoming presence of the older women as they motion you into their small homes and offer you their last soda or anything else they have on their kitchen table. I would like to say it is pride in my heritage but that would only be $\frac{1}{3}$ of the truth.

When people see me, they can assume I am Latina but they automatically label me as Mexican. While there is nothing wrong with being Mexican, I am sick and tired of being put into this box. I am tired for every other Latino who also has to deal with this. There are 17 countries in Latin America yet only one is represented in social media, literature, film, music, art, and countless other mediums. When I use my introductory line I can beat them to the punch. I can save us both the awkwardness of correcting them and the shy laughs and smiles that follow it- I do not have to pretend that it is not

nails on a chalkboard. $\frac{2}{3}$ of the truth is that I would rather put myself in a box than allow others to place me in one that does not fit.

However, sometimes I feel as if I do not fit in the box that is rightfully mine either. The few Guatemalans that are represented in the media are on the shorter side with brown skin and either pin straight hair or a 4A curl pattern. Even in my own family, most people have one if not all of these features. When I visited Guatemala, I was hoping to see at least one other person who looked like me- tall, pale, and simply wavy hair. Although there were maybe one or two people who fit the description, it was still very disappointing to see that everyone I came into contact with still saw me as a foreigner. $\frac{3}{3}$ of the truth is that if I do not say I am Guatemalan, I do not believe anyone would know.

After having time to reflect, I have realized that it does not matter if I am the only person who knows I am Guatemalan. I do not have to proclaim how proud I am, correct people, or try to fit in because it does not change the facts. I use the Spanish vernacular, I eat plantain in all forms (steamed, fried, grilled, ect.), there is a Gallo sticker on the back of my car (a Guatemalan identification amongst ourselves), and I wave our flag just as proudly as someone born and raised there. Although I stand on American soil, I know there is a quetzal soaring in my heart- even if nobody else does.

There is a small blonde child at the end of the street. Her skin is fair, her hair is the color of sun rays, and her eyes are a snapshot of a stormy sea. She seems confused but not afraid as she begins to wander along the sidewalk. She can smell the fresh cut grass, feel the warmth beaming down on her skin, and see the bright blue sky. What does she have to fear?

The first