

Racial Biography

My name is Esmeralda Garcia. I am a proud latina woman who is doing all I can to make my community and my family proud. Years ago a younger version of myself would not have been able to say that. Growing up in a Catholic household surrounded by immediate and extended family was all I knew as normal. Having a single mother raise four children, two of which are 24 and 22 years older than me, was a picture perfect family to me. Having my tias, nieces, nephews, and cousins live on the next street was normal to me. Having my mom take me and my older sister to work with her at the rancho (greenhouse of plants) every summer was normal to me. Going to La Guardedia (Spanish preschool) from the age of 3 months every morning at 6am so my mom could work to provide for us was just my daily routine. I did not think of myself to be different from any other child until I entered Kindergarten at Casita Center School for Technology and Science. Casita was an innovative advanced elementary school. Other schools had torn books. This school had updated mac computers and in the year 2000 that was uncommon. This school also had a “track system” ; there were three tracks: green, orange, and blue. My oldest sister fought for my sister and I to be placed in the Blue track. It had taken some time and I had already missed a week of Kindergarten but my sister and mom were determined to have me in Blue track. I had no idea as a child why it was an issue. I thought wow they must really know I love the color blue. Also, my other older sister who is 4 years older than me was in 5th grade at the time, and in Blue track, so I thought they also wanted us to be in the same color. After a week and a half, I was approved to be in the Blue track. My mom had bought cupcakes to share with the class and I was excited because I was used to a school routine. However, I was not prepared for what was to come. My mom opened the classroom door and I was greeted by a teacher who did not look or sound like me and a class full of students who did not look or sound like me. A pale colored, light brown haired student came to me, waved his hand slowly and said “H-E-L-L-O”. I immediately cried. This was not the normal I was used to. I knew little to no English and had to learn quickly. Over time, I adapted. I had mostly friends who did not look like me, maybe one or two did but, they were also in the blue track. I did not understand why green and orange track students looked like me but were never in my classes. As I continued to grow, adaptation was my new normal. I entered my teen years and I had become “white-washed.” The language I once knew as my native language was diminishing. Half my family was an embarrassment to me and the other half I praised as they too were more “Americanized”. Come High School I was in mostly honor classes and again same as elementary and middle only a few looked like me and the rest looked nothing like me. However, I began to notice the difference between an honors course and non honors course. I noticed in my honor courses I was working harder to talk like them, dress like them, act like them. The class was a challenge but, so was the adaptation to feeling like someone I wasn’t. I just wanted to have their version of normal. Almost my entire adolescent life, I learned to conform and adapt into a societal version of myself. Towards the end of high school and the beginning of College was when I started to remember the normal life I once knew. I started to embrace not adapt. I embraced all that I once knew about my

culture, my native language, my family. I am saddened by my decisions as an adolescent. Ashamed of who I was and of my family was a moment in time of not understanding that difference doesn't mean lesser than. My normal matters too. I have grown and learned since then such as never to undermine my mothers hard work and efforts of giving me a better life than what she had. I was a child unable to see that my culture, my way of life different from those around me was a privilege. My experiences have allowed me to develop into a strong, independent, woman just like the person who raised me, my mother. I realized that my inspiration through this all should have and will forever continue to be her. I have learned to appreciate and be proud of who I am and the roots of my family because of her. I am determined because of her. I am a proud latina woman because of her. I have worked hard to accomplish my goals and dreams such as earning a Bachelors in Health Science, studying abroad, and traveling around the world because of her. These opportunities were uncommon or heard of in my family and community growing up. I adapted to think I had to, in order to accomplish greater things. I aim to show my family, my community, and my future kids that these opportunities are achievable. Our voices do matter. Our version of everyday life is not an adaptation. I am a proud latina woman and take pride in supporting my community and my family to embrace who we are. We are to be seen, heard, and appreciated by our own self and the community around us. We each should embrace our own version of normal .