

Syria Vassar- Dunbar

Diverse But Separated

I live in a highly sought-after community in the suburbs of Cleveland. A joyful neighborhood with great public schools and an overall safe community. My city, Shaker Heights is mostly known for their highly rated city services, historic district and beautiful environmental landmarks that have won awards for tree-lined beautiful streets. When a person drives down my community's streets such as Chagrin, Van Aken and South Woodland, you'll see families and children enjoying their company with other families and neighbors. You'll be greeted with smiles and waves just for driving past, walking or just minding your own business. Wondrous career and life opportunities are also well known in my school district. What makes the school so distinguished is that students of all colors and races attend the high school, middle school and the various elementary schools. We all come together into one building to get an education. It all sounds so wonderful, but like most communities in America it has its faults and there are areas that need to be adjusted and fixed.

You see, which side of the RTA rapid tracks you live on will determine what table you sit at during lunchtime. Honors classes are filled with one majority race and at school dismissal time you will see African American students go one way and White American students go another.

My community is seen to have an exterior that is a beautiful sight and being perfect but what you don't see is the interior which is totally different. My schools are very diverse having over 100 different cultures and countries of people in one district. Walking into any of the elementary schools you will see that all the kids are seated together at tables but living in my city, the higher the grade you go, the more isolated each will race will get. As time goes on, students discover

the differences in them from other races which makes them feel that they don't have anything to relate to together. Looking deeper into my city streets you will find that Van Aken is the border of two different images. From Van Aken to Scottsdale you can see that the community is mostly African Americans and middle-class citizens. Now on the other side, from Van Aken to Fairmount you'll come to see that the most households of White Americans and higher class citizens. My city goes from homes about the size of 1,800 square feet and 2 family households to 3,500 square foot mansions. At my high school you can easily figure out who lives on what side of Van Aken also known as the RTA rapid tracks. The problem with this setting of living is that it isolates students from each other because they aren't seen to be the same. The cafeteria tells it all. One side of the cafeteria are tables filled with white students from rich families. Another table which, is located in the middle, are foreign exchange students sitting with the kids they are staying with, and on the other side are the tables full of black students. All these groups enjoy where they are at even though they know it is a great issue that my school has been trying to change for the longest time. It has been so long that some of the school staff has learned to deal with it. The visitors who visit the school think the school is all cookies and cream but it's not. All inter baccalaureate classes, the highest of them all look the same. They have an average of 20 students, two being black, fourteen being white and four being Asian, Indian and or Middle Eastern. All college prep classes, one of the lowest, average 26 students, 22 being black, two being white and two being Asian, Indian and or Middle Eastern. The reason for this is because teachers and counselors don't expect as much from students, mostly blacks that weren't placed high at a very young age. Whites are expected to take the highest classes there are available because they come from families full of doctors, lawyers and CEO's.

What I would love to do is to decrease the separation and to continue my participation in S.G.O.R.R. and M.A.C. Sister Scholars. S.G.O.R.R. stands for Student Groups on Race Relation. It is an organization of high school students that teaches students in elementary and middle schools about the importance of diversity, relationships and differences. We also train the students how to deal with bullying, discrimination and how to react with it in discussions and activities. M.A.C. Sister Scholars is The Minority Achievement Committee Sister Scholars Program. This is an organization of female high school students with great achievements and grades. We worked to help and motivate female students in the 9th, 10th and 11th grade to set academic and long term goals that they want to reach. We teach them the different skills and techniques to be successful academically. We encourage these young females to set high standards for themselves. I don't believe that separation means racism, I believe students like most go where they are most comfortable. We can increase the comfort level by teaching students of all ages similarities we all have and how separation will affect us in our future. As generations go by we should be coming closer together to achieve and be successful together as one. I plan to recruit other students and people to help inform others in the community about the faults around us. I've had middle school students want to help and take over the S.G.O.R.R. organization when they get a chance to help the generations after us. Participating in this organization for two years, I have a good effect on others to adjust our school systems. In my other program, M.A.C. Sisters Scholars, these young females are solving the problem by challenging themselves to take those higher classes and making friends with people of all different races. They have come to find that all of us in the school have more similarities than

differences. Older generations are looking up to us change the world and we can do so by giving each other a helping hand to success.