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Dear America Essay

According to the Merriam Webster dictionary, a community is simply a place where a group of people with common characteristics or interests live together within a large society. While reading “Dear America” and reflecting on my life experiences, I began exploring the concept of acceptance and its relevance to community. Just because a person lives within a community does not mean an individual is a part of the community. Within his book, “Dear America,” Jose Antonio Vargas explained perfectly time after time the sense of confusion and homelessness. When he says homelessness, he does not mean it in the literal sense, in which someone does not possess a roof over his head. He is referring to the state that people who are within the community, but not a part of the community. He describes this as an "unsettled, unmoored psychological state."

Moreover, I can relate to his overwhelming desire to be accepted by those that are within a community. In my opinion, a community is a relationship built on acceptance, engagement, respect, and a shared vision of blended culture. A person should desire to get involved and get to know one another. There has to be some buy-in from the individual living in the community. It is

a two-way street; the person living in the environment must feel accepted in order to build relationships and participate within the community. When I attended high school, I was part of a program called Urban-Suburban, which allowed inner-city youth the opportunity to attend schools in the suburbs. My school, Irondequoit High School, is the oldest member of the Urban-Suburban program; despite being a founding member of the program, it is ironic that school officials did not properly orientate the school community, as well as the students and parents from the inner city. During the four years I attended this high school, I never truly felt like I belonged there. Despite being a student who was relatively well-liked by my teachers and peers, in the back of my mind there was always an inkling of doubt; was I a part of the community? I would always hear that faint whisper in my mind, reminding me, "You do not belong here."

Similar to Mr. Vargas' experience, some individuals who helped make the experience tolerable were my counselor who gave me a shoulder to cry on, my friends who stood by my side, and my teachers who encouraged me to excel. Overall, a community is only as good as the people within it.

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