



## ZACHARY KENNA

is a 9th grader at Stowe-Munroe Falls High School. He is an honor student who likes learning about other cultures and studying foreign languages. He plays soccer and enjoys watching basketball. Zachary dreams of becoming a doctor; perhaps a pediatrician or dermatologist.

“My haters are my motivators.”

-Nicki Minaj, recording artist

Minaj has a great philosophy; but I wish “haters” did not exist. I commend people like Minaj who have learned how to take all the negativity and turn it into something positive. However, not everyone deals with negativity as well as the pop star does. Those who fail to deal with negativity well are the people we should worry about. They need reassurance about themselves to regain their confidence. Unfortunately, my friend Luna\* has had negative remarks directed at her, and she did not always deal with it well.

Discrimination has happened in many places including the classroom, during band practice, and even the occasional outdoor free time. It starts with the look—a prying stare that she knows all too well. Then comes the insult that degrades her just a little more every time. Luna is one of my close friends, and as such I have witnessed many hateful actions and comments while with her. She has also confessed that many more acts of hate have happened to her while she was alone. “Honda,” “Toyota,” “Go back to Korea,” “Communist,” some people slant their eyes to make fun of Asians while calling her name, and some people have even insinuated that “All Asians are prostitutes.”

I am completely shocked and outraged that people discriminate and degrade another person based on race or color. I often wonder; what if that were me in her position? I know I would not like it very much if all somebody saw was my race and did not even give me a chance. I think it is horrendous to discriminate against anyone for any reason. On one occasion I told her tormentors to leave her alone and left them with the question, “How would you feel if all somebody saw was your race?”

My school’s anti-bullying group, How About Personally Protecting Yourself (HAPPY), of which I am an avid member, has already hosted an extended homeroom period for our entire school about diversity, tolerance, and acceptance of other cultures. HAPPY also hosts a general Kindness Week in the spring that encourages kindness around the school. I have proposed that HAPPY goes to the elementary schools to read various books about diversity, tolerance, and anti-bullying, because it is important to teach children these values at a young age. I have also suggested that my entire city have a Diversity/Culture Week to celebrate diversity and to educate about other cultures. Currently, these plans are in the early stages, but with a little time they should come to fruition. We all need to do our part to stop hate, and that is why when I hear someone talking hateful about or to another person, I ask how they would feel if they were the person they are talking about. I will continue to educate myself and others about race relations in the hope of living in a color-blind society.

*\*Name has been changed*