Similarities Among Our Differences

I’m just normal. I haven’t traveled to Paris or won a gold medal at the Olympics. I’ve never been abandoned by a parent or been evicted from my home. I have never taken an extraordinary adventure. I’ve never been diagnosed with an extreme illness. I don’t have an extremely inspirational story to tell; however, I do believe that I have an amazing life with a huge support system that has helped me become who I am today.

As I walk into my school, I see the wide variety of skin tones pass me, one by one. Each face is special in its own way, each with its own story to tell and each with a dream that wants to be fulfilled. I look at every single one of these faces every day and see a family - not defined by the color of our skin, or our appearance, but the rush of warm love that flows through those large glass doors every morning. There is so much diversity at our school, and so many opportunities to gain knowledge about our world and the people in it.

I never thought I would have the chance to learn about so many cultures. It is so entertaining to learn about how others live. I have learned to play Mahjong from my Chinese friends and to speak German from a friend whose parents are both German-born. My friend, who was born in Barbados, has even taught me a few new island tunes and crazy dance moves. I have tasted spicy yet amazing Ethiopian-inspired dishes and even attempted to race against one of the fastest students in our school from Ghana. These are just a few of the memories that I will carry with me for the rest of my life.
Although we are all different, in many ways we are the same. We all face the same battles of adolescence every day of our lives. We have success and then make silly mistakes shortly after. We find it extremely hard to make the right decisions. We struggle sometimes just to fit in. We are not perfect, nor will we ever be perfect; however, we all strive to make new discoveries, take risks, make new friends, and take on unexpected adventures. Each one of us anxiously counts down the days to graduation. It is not an easy road from here as we grow into young adults, but we have to continue to live and learn.

Individually, I have grown so much from my high school experiences. I have learned to challenge myself academically and not fall into the “typical stereotype” for an African American girl my age. I have taught myself to express my creativity and dream bigger than ever before. I aspire to travel, and learn more about the hidden corners of the world. I desire to turn my visions into my creations and pass them on for generations to come.

As I exit through those large glass doors for the last time this year, I will have mixed emotions. I will really miss the family that I have grown so close to for the past twelve years; however, I know that there are many others in college that I will have close relationships with. Will I make more silly mistakes? Of course, but I will learn from them. I know that I’m capable of being more than just a statistic in life. I am ready for all of the unexpected surprises that I will find in the future and I am extremely excited to learn more about this world and about myself.