

THE GLOBAL TEEN ZINE

Accepting Differences



TRANSITION
CENTER
COMICS

LIMITED EDITION
ISSUE # 3



THIS ZINE BELONGS TO

WRITE YOUR NAME HERE



This magazine was produced by the Transition Center at the Department of State's Foreign Service Institute, with creative assistance and design from the EX/Digital Learning Division.

A Note to the Reader

This issue, *Accepting Differences*, looks at some challenging situations, including bullying. The stories found here are intended to speak to situations that kids in the Foreign Affairs community occasionally find themselves dealing with.

Bullying is a complicated subject, and it can take many forms. The two stories in this issue by no means represent every situation you might encounter while overseas. If you (or someone you know) have concerns about bullying, reach out to a trusted adult (your parent, teacher, school counselor, school nurse, the health unit, or another trusted friend). Share your concerns with people who can help. Your parents can approach school administrators, the school board, the health unit or Regional Medical Officer/Psychiatrist (RMO/P), the Community Liaison Office, and post leadership with their concerns as well.

Portions of these stories are told in flashback and represent how the events felt to the characters. Sections were drawn by two teen artists. In the spirit of celebrating differences, these artists brought their own unique talent and style to the stories they depicted.



Rowan Depcik created the cartoon "flashback memory" portions in Ella's story.



Mira Smith created the cartoon "flashback memory" portions in Justin's story.



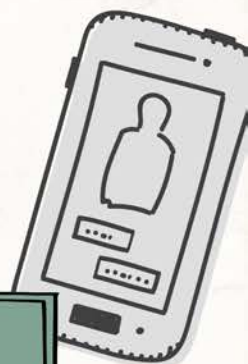


**MEET
ELLA!**

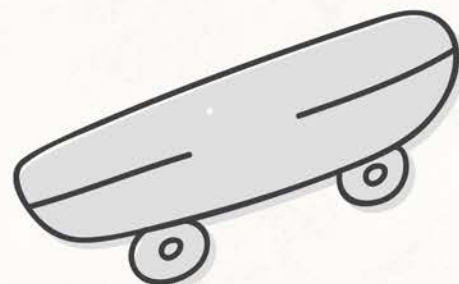
Ella's family recently finished up a few years overseas. They are now back in Washington, DC.



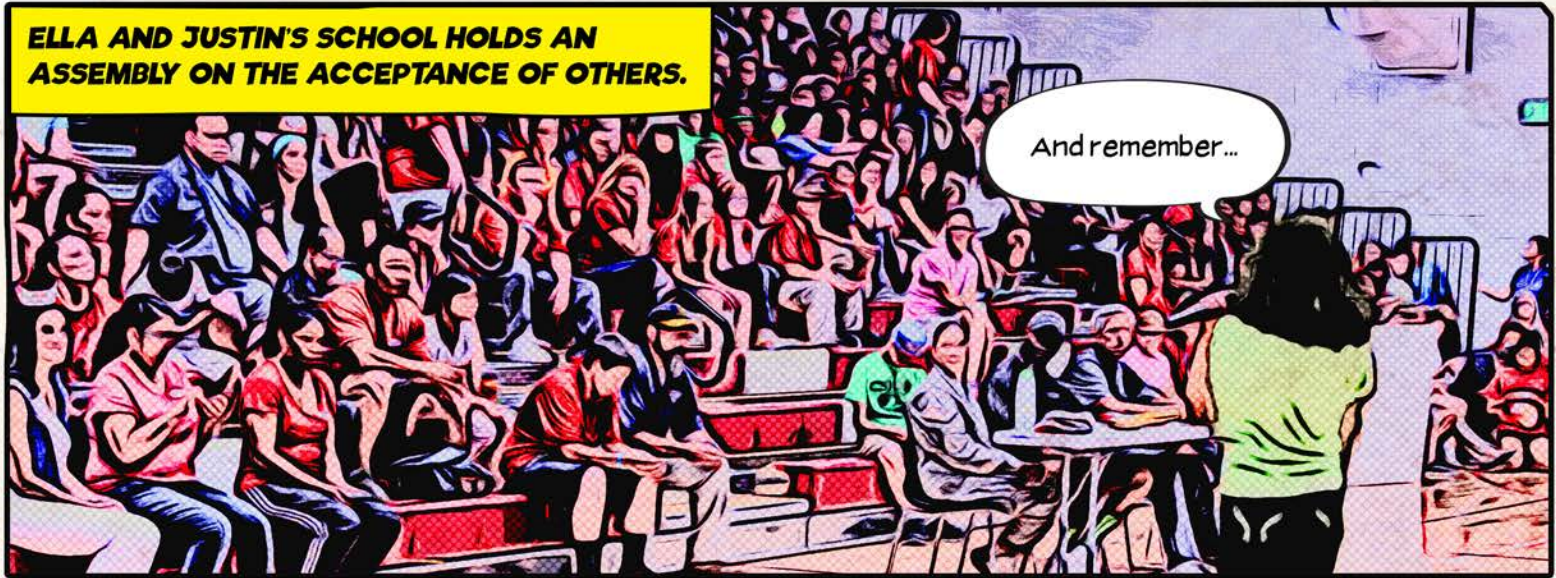
**MEET
JUSTIN!**



Justin's family has also just returned from a small post overseas. Justin is in the same class as Ella.

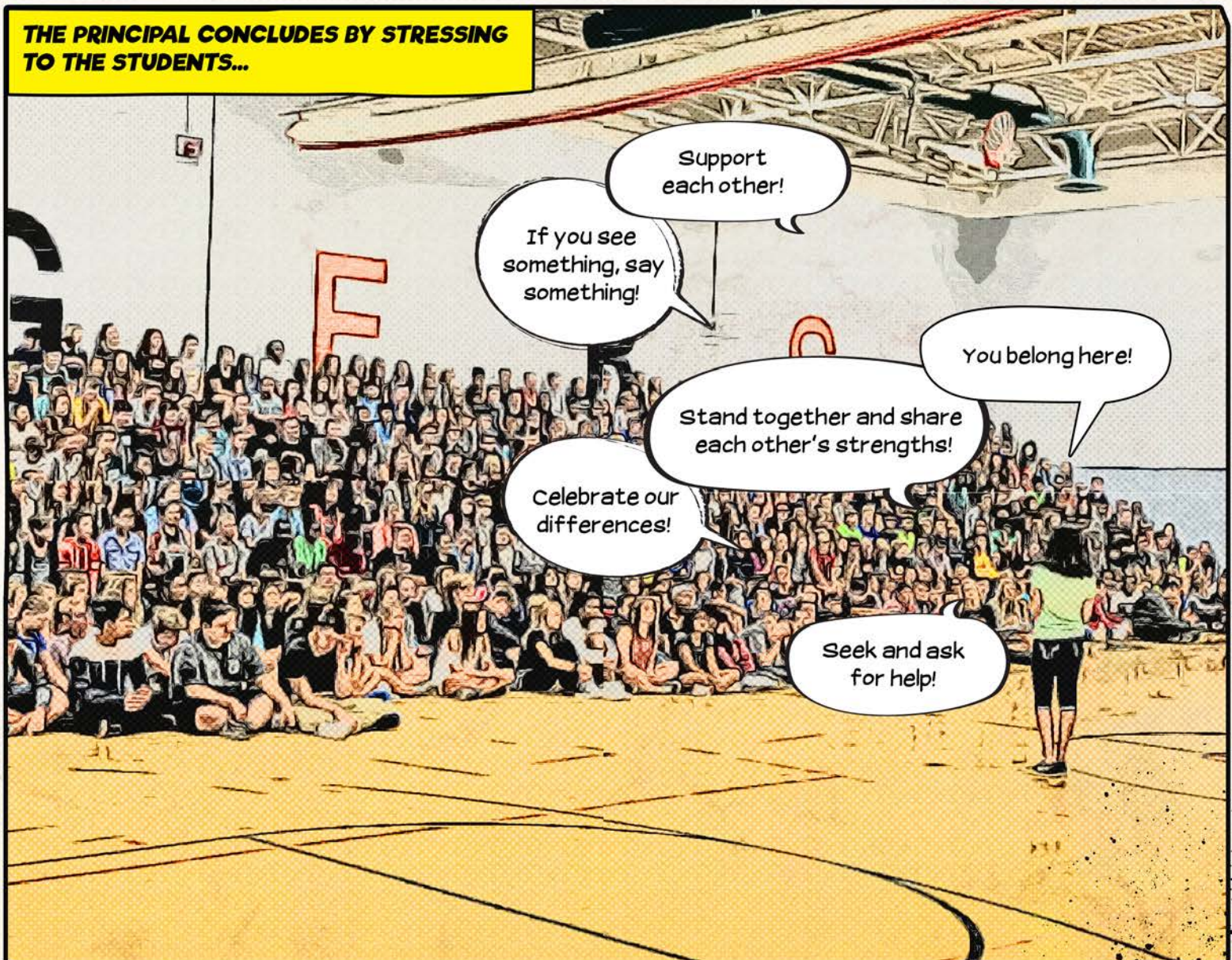


ELLA AND JUSTIN'S SCHOOL HOLDS AN ASSEMBLY ON THE ACCEPTANCE OF OTHERS.



And remember...

THE PRINCIPAL CONCLUDES BY STRESSING TO THE STUDENTS...



Support
each other!

If you see
something, say
something!

You belong here!

Stand together and share
each other's strengths!

Celebrate our
differences!

Seek and ask
for help!

AFTERWARD, THEY RUN INTO EACH OTHER.

JUSTIN ASKS...

What'd you think of the assembly?

I agree that we need to accept each other...because that's not how it always goes. Especially at my last school.

Huh. Things didn't go so well at your last post?

In the end, it was great. But at first, not so much.

Oh, that sounds familiar. Do you want to tell me about it?

Let's just say my first few weeks were pretty tough.



HERE'S WHAT
HAPPENED AT
MY OLD POST...

THE FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL
ACTUALLY STARTED OFF
PRETTY WELL. THE
TEACHERS WERE NICE,
AND IT WAS EASY TO
FIND MY WAY AROUND.



THEN, IT WAS
LUNCHTIME. I'D
BEEN THROUGH THIS
BEFORE, SO I KNOW
THAT WHERE YOU SIT
IN THE CAFETERIA IS
A BIG DEAL.



I EVEN HAD A
PLAN. I WASN'T
GOING TO
STAND THERE,
HOLDING A
LUNCH TRAY,
LOOKING
AROUND LIKE
A SCARED
LITTLE BUNNY.

I BROUGHT A GRAPHIC NOVEL AND JUST SAT
DOWN IN THE FIRST OPEN CHAIR THAT I SAW. I
FIGURED I WOULD READ WHILE I ATE LUNCH.



IF ANYONE WANTED TO ASK ABOUT MY
BOOK, THEN GREAT. BUT I DIDN'T
EXPECT TO MAKE A NEW BEST FRIEND
ON THE FIRST DAY.





SO I'M SITTING THERE, MINDING MY OWN BUSINESS, AND A GIRL AT ANOTHER TABLE CALLS OVER TO ME IN SPANISH.



SHE WAS TALKING PRETTY FAST. I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND WHAT SHE WAS SAYING. IT DIDN'T SOUND LIKE SHE WAS BEING FRIENDLY.



I LOOKED UP FROM MY BOOK AND SMILED. THEN I WENT BACK TO READING.



THE GIRL SPOKE TO ME AGAIN. IT DEFINITELY DIDN'T SOUND NICE. HER FRIENDS ALL LAUGHED.

MAYBE THEY DIDN'T THINK IT WAS A BIG DEAL, BUT IT FELT LIKE A NIGHTMARE!

SO WHAT WAS THAT ALL ABOUT?



THOSE KIDS WERE
BEING MEAN.

DO I REALLY
KNOW THAT FOR
SURE? I MEAN,
I DON'T SPEAK
SPANISH.

I COULD TELL
FROM THEIR
TONE, THEY
WEREN'T SAYING
NICE THINGS.



WHAT HAPPENED
BACK THERE?

MAYBE IT'S RUDE
THAT I DON'T
SPEAK SPANISH?
BUT I WAS MINDING
MY OWN BUSINESS!

SO...NOW WHAT?



THEN, IT
HAPPENED
AGAIN.
ONLY
WORSE...

A FEW DAYS LATER
AT SCHOOL, I HAD A
RUN-IN WITH THE
SAME GIRLS.

I WAS IN THE BATHROOM, WASHING
MY HANDS. I WAS JUST ABOUT TO
LEAVE WHEN THOSE GIRLS CAME IN.

I KEPT MY EYES
DOWN, HOPING
THEY WOULDN'T
RECOGNIZE
ME.

BUT WHEN I TRIED TO LEAVE,
THEY WERE SORT OF BLOCKING
THE DOOR.

THEY WEREN'T HOLDING THE
DOOR SHUT OR LINKING ARMS
TO KEEP ME FROM LEAVING,
BUT THEY WERE DEFINITELY IN
THE WAY ON PURPOSE.

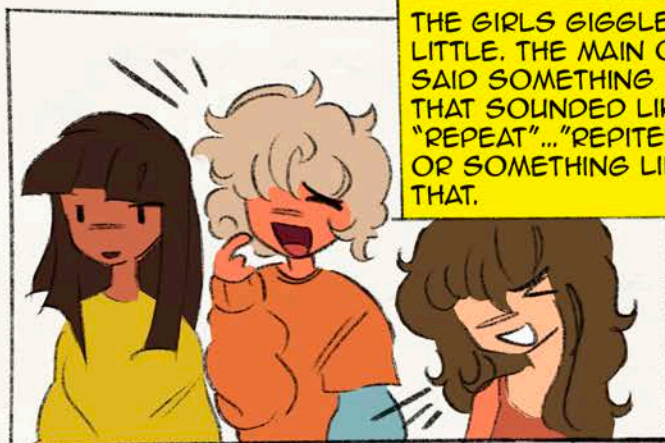


AND SO I LOOKED UP AT ONE OF THE GIRLS, THE ONE WHO SEEMED TO BE THE LEADER.

perdóneme



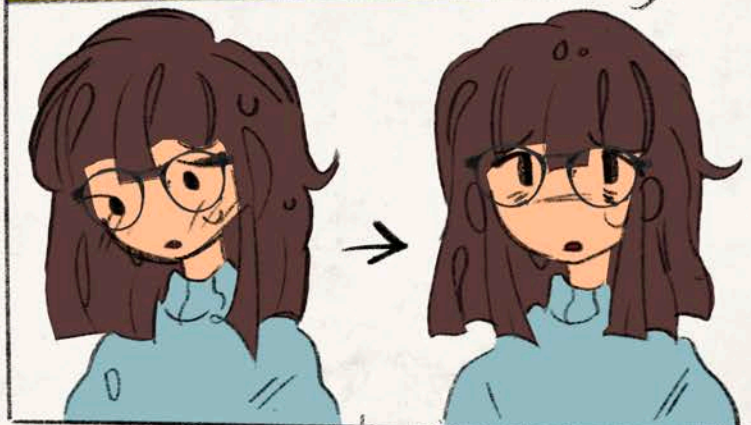
I SMILED POLITELY AND SAID "PERDÓNEME" WHICH IS SPANISH FOR "EXCUSE ME." I HAD PRACTICED THAT.



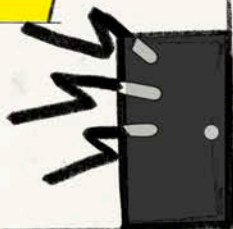
THE GIRLS GIGGLED A LITTLE. THE MAIN ONE SAID SOMETHING THAT SOUNDED LIKE "REPEAT"... "REPITELO" OR SOMETHING LIKE THAT.

IT WAS REALLY UNCOMFORTABLE. I'D BEEN WORKING ON MY SPANISH, AND I WAS PRETTY SURE I WAS SAYING IT RIGHT. I SAID TO HER AGAIN: PERDÓNEME.

perdóneme



I WAS TRYING TO SOUND CONFIDENT, BUT MAYBE IT SEEMED LIKE I WAS GETTING ANGRY?



THE GIRL SAID SOMETHING BACK TO ME. SHE WAS TALKING REAL FAST. I HAD NO IDEA WHAT SHE WAS SAYING. I QUICKLY SLIPPED PAST HER AND GOT OUT OF THERE.



NONE OF THEM TOUCHED ME OR ANYTHING, BUT IT DEFINITELY DIDN'T FEEL RIGHT.



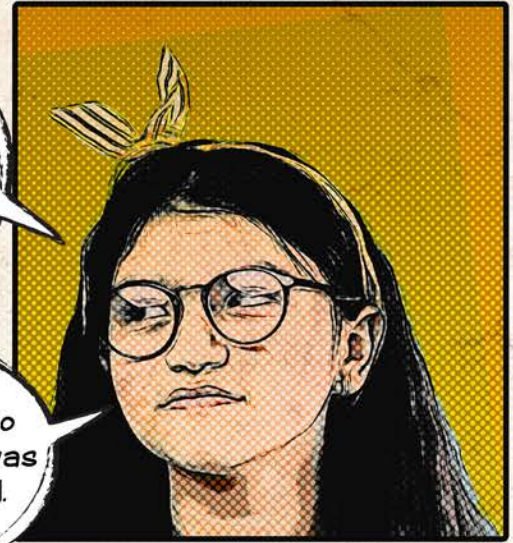
That is rough!
What did you
do about it?



At first,
I didn't do anything.
Then one day at
dinner, my parents
asked how things
were going.



I didn't want to
talk about it. I was
embarrassed.



My sister is only
five years old and
she couldn't believe
I wasn't loving my
new school.

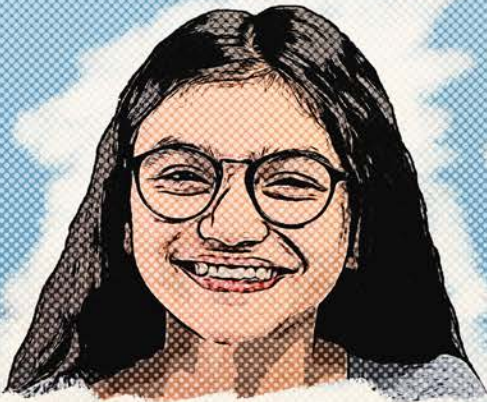
She was getting along
fine in her classes
without any problems.



My parents told me, "Sorry, that's awful.
These years are tough no matter where
you are. They were tough for us, too."

I'm so glad you
told us. Is there
anything we can
do to help?

It's hard now, but we
will get through this.



REFLECTION

No matter how old you are, getting by in a country where you haven't mastered the language is tough.

When we're very young and we get into a fight, the grown-ups often tell us to "use our words." But how do you do that when you don't speak the language?

Bullying is often about making a person feel like they're outside of the "in-group." When you don't speak the local language, you might feel like an easy target. Not being a fluent speaker can make you feel helpless. Remember that you are not alone.

IMAGINE YOU HAD BEEN THERE

What would you ask Ella about what happened?

What would you suggest that she do?

If you had been there, do you think you would have said or done anything?



Sorry you went through all that. You know... I actually can relate.



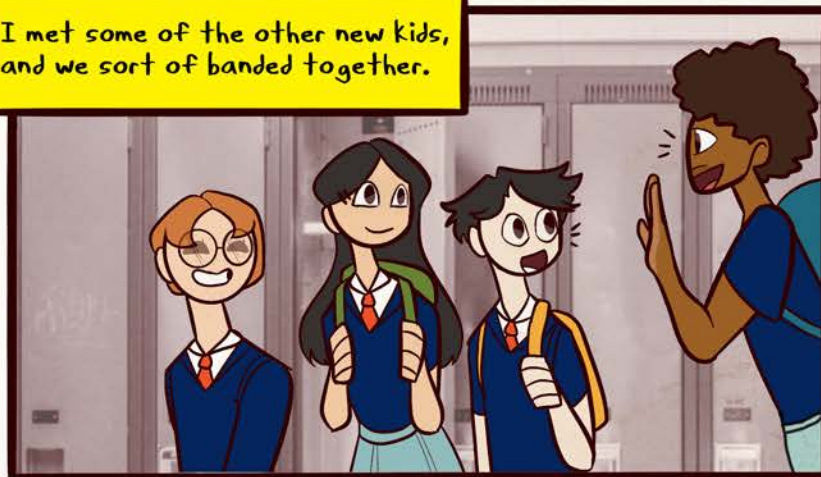
Really? Did something like this happen to you?



Well, yes and no.



I met some of the other new kids, and we sort of banded together.



I wasn't even the only black kid. This girl, Mira, was in my grade.



When we were alone, I asked her about something that I had noticed.



Mira just shrugged. At first, I thought she meant she didn't care.



Now, that surprised me. Because I felt like I got stared at a lot.



And when I caught them staring, they didn't even quickly look away. They just kept looking at me.



I tried to ignore it, but then this thing happened...

I was walking out of school at the end of the day, and this girl runs up and takes my picture with her phone.



Then she runs back to her friends and shows them the photo, and they all crack up.



So what's that all about?



When she did that, it kind of freaked me out.

I mean, why me?



And when that kid ran back to her friends and they laughed...



I thought maybe it was the color of my skin.

But it seemed like it wasn't happening to Mira.



Maybe it was my height?

I'm tall for my age, and I was the tallest kid in my class.



And I was definitely taller than most of the kids from there.

But to take my picture? Without asking? And what were they doing with the photos?



That didn't feel right.



It maybe didn't sound mean. But it also wasn't friendly...

or it didn't seem like they were trying to be my friend.

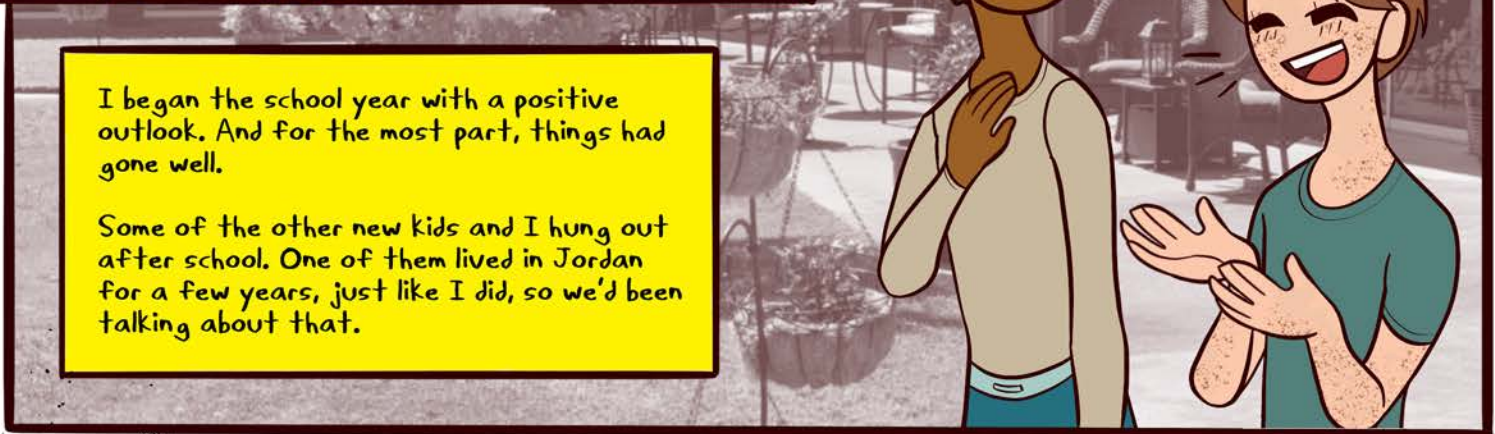


People from different cultures sometimes act differently, right?

I felt like I was being singled out.



I didn't know why it was happening, but I knew I didn't like it.



I began the school year with a positive outlook. And for the most part, things had gone well.

Some of the other new kids and I hung out after school. One of them lived in Jordan for a few years, just like I did, so we'd been talking about that.

I'd almost forgotten about the kids who took my picture. And then it happened again.



Same as last time, I was walking out of school, and it was like they were waiting for me. One of them snuck up behind me, stuck his head next to mine, and took a selfie. He thought it was hilarious.



And then another one of his friends came up to do the same.



As for what happened next...I can't even say that I decided what to do. I just did it.



I grabbed his phone from him. He was not expecting that. Neither were his friends. Neither was I.



Here's the crazy thing, though. The kid didn't ask for it back. He just stared at me. They all did.



That almost bothered me even more. Like, they didn't think I would react. Or that I would even have an opinion.



I don't even know if he understood me. He just reached out his hand...and, eventually, I gave him his phone back.



I'll give this back to you if you promise to stop taking my picture.



In the end, I figured out what was going on.

And let's just say it was NOT what I expected.







REFLECTION

Justin found himself in a confusing situation.

He didn't understand why he was receiving so much attention. The fact is, Justin probably did stand out in his new country, and situations like that can lead to unwanted attention. While it seemed that none of the kids taking his picture had any bad intentions, that didn't make it okay if it made Justin feel uncomfortable.

Appearing different from those around you can feel like a big obstacle to overcome. The good news is that you are part of a diverse community that cares deeply about understanding other countries and other cultures. Your support system may be bigger than you think.

IMAGINE YOU HAD BEEN THERE

Imagine you had been there when kids were taking Justin's picture. What would you say to the other kids?



I talked to my parents about what was going on. They talked to the school. No one got in trouble, but the school made sure that new kids had other new kids in their classrooms so we didn't feel isolated.

I had a good talk with the guidance counselor about all this, and each of the teachers talked to their classes about welcoming new kids and helping each other out instead of singling people out because they are different or new.



I decided to tell my parents. They hadn't been in that exact situation before, but they knew a lot about being the center of unwanted attention. I'm glad we talked about it, since this isn't the first time that I've felt like people were staring at me. They helped me see that getting into an argument wasn't going to help anything, but I shouldn't just ignore it.



As for the kids taking my picture, I did my best to be friendly with them. I'm glad I let them know that they had been making me feel uncomfortable.

What would you do first?

Let's say that you find yourself in the following situations.



1. A boy in the cafeteria slips and drops a tray full of food. You...

Hurry over to him and offer to help him up.

Laugh a little and maybe point him out to your friends.

2. Some of the popular kids at school invite you to a party. You know that some of your close friends were not invited. You...

Go and have a good time and post any good photos on social media.

Ask if it's okay for you to bring a friend to the party.



3. Someone on your soccer team misses an easy shot and costs your team the game. In the locker room, she approaches you and says, "Sorry." You...

Ignore her because you are frustrated and a little mad at her.

Respond by saying, "Shake it off. It happens to everyone."

4. A new kid at school is getting picked on by some of your friends. You...

Ignore it, because you don't want to make a big deal about it.

Introduce yourself to the new kid and ask where they're from.



Now think about this...

Imagine you had been that kid who fell in the cafeteria...or the one who didn't get invited to the party...or who missed the goal and lost the game...or was the new kid getting picked on...

If you were in any of those situations, how would you want people to treat you?



What if:

You're not a bully...
and you're not being bullied...
but you see someone being bullied?

We are often taught to walk away
when we encounter a bad situation.
In many instances, that's good
advice. But what should you do if
you see someone being bullied?



HAHA

I hope I'm not next...

It may feel scary to stand up to a bully. However,
there is a good chance that you are not alone. Other
bystanders might be laughing at what is happening...
but they may be thinking something else...

The truth is, laughing along with a bully only
contributes to the problem.

So, what should you do?

Speak up!

You may be able to calm the situation down by simply approaching
the bully and asking: "Why are you doing that?"

Talk to the kid.

Ask them if they are okay. Even if you aren't able to prevent the bullying, it helps
people to know they have some peers on their side.

Let a teacher or parent know.

Sometimes, people feel like they will be looked down upon for "tattling." It takes
courage to speak up. Have courage! You would want someone else to do the same
for you.

We are all different! That's what makes life exciting...

Birds come in all colors, shapes, and sizes. Some soar high in the sky...some stay close to the nest...some even dive in the ocean. Their differences are real and they matter...but what makes them all birds are their similarities.

In this zine, we looked at stories of young people being singled out for being different. People sometimes fear what they don't know...and that fear can lead to some bad behavior. Accepting differences is the opposite of bullying. So, what are some ways to reach out and accept differences?

Try to learn from other people. **Think before you speak.** **Be kind.**

Try not to judge people. **LOOK FOR THE POSITIVE.**

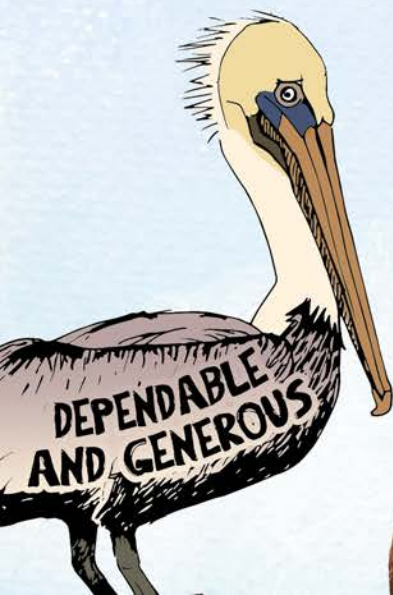
Learn about where they come from.

Put yourself in their shoes. *Think about how other people see you.*

AND REMEMBER TO ACCEPT YOUR OWN DIFFERENCES!

Being in a new place and among new people is exciting...and it can feel a little scary. It might be tempting to try to blend in. Just be sure that you don't forget who you are.

Think about these qualities...
which sound like you?



NOTES

LOOK FOR MORE!

WE HOPE YOU ENJOYED THIS ZINE. LOOK FOR ISSUES ON TOPICS SUCH AS TRANSITIONS, FAMILY AND FRIENDSHIPS, AND MORE!

YOU CAN FIND DIGITAL COPIES OF THESE ZINES—ONLINE AT:
<https://bit.ly/youthbox>

ARE THERE ANY OTHER TOPICS YOU WANT TO READ ABOUT?
WE'D LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU! WRITE US AT:
FSITransitionCenter@state.gov

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