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What Makes America Great?

Ralph Waldo Emerson once stated, "America is another name for opportunity." As a first generation Filipino child growing up in America, I truly believe his sentiment. I am grateful for the opportunity to live and become educated in one of the most culturally diverse, technologically advanced countries in the world. America, the cultural "melting pot," is so great because it unites Americans of all races with hope, liberty, and opportunity.

As a child of immigrants, I often struggled with my cultural identity in my younger years. Was I a Filipino or was I an American? I faced an internal struggle between two opposite worlds of disarray and structure, of poverty and wealth. My parents grew up in the Philippines, where democracy has a different connotation. Philippine politics breeds disorder and corruption. The political scene is dominated by the wealthy; political bosses place their elite status and wealth above the development of their country. There is no government "of the people, for the people, and by the people."

Witnessing the devastating effects of poverty in the Philippines has made me appreciate the vast opportunities and liberties I have in America. These opportunities have fueled my passion to reduce poverty and promote human rights on the global stage. I started by becoming actively involved with my high school's HERO club. The club, Help Educate at Risk Orphans, donates money to build schools and provide basic living necessities- food, water, shelter, and medical care for children in Africa. As a member of the leadership council, I have helped run the club meetings and organize fundraising events. The fundraising efforts in this club have made significant contributions to the lives of so many destitute children, from providing clean drinking water for an African community to building a playground and vegetable garden for a school.

My involvement with the HERO club has reminded me how fortunate I am to have so many resources and possibilities as an American citizen. As a first year college student, I feel overwhelmed by my opportunities to make a difference in the world. I hope to use these opportunities to continue my passion for helping others by pursuing a career in medicine. While I know my dreams are ambitious and difficult to achieve, America, where the possibilities are endless, is the best place to accomplish my goals. I am proud and grateful to live in a country where my voice can be heard where my dreams can become reality, where I am treated equally no matter my race, gender, or beliefs. Since my childhood struggle with my cultural identity, I have learned that I can celebrate my Philippine culture in America because both worlds have influenced who I have become and who I aspire to be. Because of this, I am proud to live in such a culturally diverse country, where Americans of all races can say, "I am proud to be an American."