

We are **Noah** and **Susan** and we have lived in South Orange County for 5 years. We are both Latinxs, physicians, spouses and parents. We are the children of Mexican immigrants. Our parents came to this country for the same reason that many immigrants do: in search of a better life. The opportunities where they lived were just very scarce and very lacking and at least they had the idea that there was something better. And that something better, unfortunately, was not going to be found in their home countries; but the United States did provide these opportunities that led them here. We are both bilingual.

Susan: I felt like an outsider coming to Orange County. I had this vision of OC as being predominantly white, predominantly conservative, and of non-immigrant—as a matter of fact—anti-immigrant sentiment. So coming in, I hesitated. But we came here with the hopes of giving our own children a good community to grow up in, a safe community with good schools, and a great education.

Noah: Orange County is very diverse and it's interesting, depending on where you are in Orange County or where I am in Orange County; how I feel. In South Orange County, I definitely am much more self-conscious and I feel much more out of place than I do in North Orange County. I know that because I get to be in both as a result of the work that I do. A lot of that comes from how we grew up. We grew up where the vast majority of the demographics was poor and Mexican. We've chosen to live here in South Orange County and we're very lucky to be able to make that choice because it provides the best opportunities for our daughters and our family.

Susan: After spending a couple of years here I have found that I am not as much of an outsider as I thought I was. Either that or it seems that there's a whole bunch of people in the community who feel the same way as I do. I feel very grateful to be here. I feel like we're very privileged and I feel that our kids are very privileged to be here.

Noah: Despite how being in OC may have originally made me feel, I was willing for the sake of my family to deal with those feelings of being an outsider or feeling like an outsider, and I really made an effort to be part of our community. We've been very lucky to have found a community that shares our values. Even though the ethnic diversity is still lacking beyond the ethnic diversity, what is also very important is to find a group of people who may not share your ethnicity but share your values, share your beliefs, and share your vision for a more inclusive South OC. A South OC that is more open-minded to diversity of thoughts and opinions and I think we've been very lucky to have found that community here. [This community] is small and I feel it's growing. But I feel like we have found a pocket and groups of people that share in that common vision.

Susan: My biggest struggle is balance. It's difficult to be able to balance being a wife and a mom, and taking care of a house, and having a career. Noah has been really supportive and that has allowed me to do all of those things, sometimes not as well as I'd like but as close to achieving it as possible. The other big struggle I have is raising my daughters in this community and in this home. I want them to recognize that this isn't normal for a lot of people. This isn't what the world is like, necessarily. I want them to feel like that they're very blessed, that they have so much more than so many other people in this state, in this country and even in the world, so we try as best as we can to expose them to different communities, to speak Spanish to them and read to them -reading to them everything from Gandhi to Frida Kahlo, to Sotomayor and Malala. It's a struggle because they are growing up in a very privileged manner and we want them to be exposed to the struggle of others.

Noah: My biggest struggle right now, and it's similar to Susan's, is finding the time to do everything that I would like to do. I love my job and I'm very lucky to be able to be able to do something that I love and something I find great privilege and meaning in doing, but there is more to a meaningful life to me than just simply working. And one of those things is volunteering and giving back to the community, and making the community where I live a better place. I feel that part of what I would find purposeful and meaningful while I am here in South Orange County, is to give to this community in any way that I can, to try to make it a better place for raising children and for families. And it's finding that time to do it that is forever is a struggle. Whether that is volunteering in my kids' school or volunteering with community organizations, the struggle is just finding the time to do these activities that are meaningful and also important.

Susan: Our biggest joy is our daughters and our lives. I do feel tremendous gratitude for our safe community: it's quiet, there are so many trees, there's not a lot of traffic. We're also healthy. We're both physicians and our family is healthy. And I feel just general joy about that.

Noah: My greatest joy at this moment is being with my family and partnering with my wife in raising our daughters. I love being as involved in their lives as I possibly can. I can't think of a greater joy than to be a father to these 3 wonderful little girls.

Susan: We love a lot of things about Orange County. I love that it's much more diverse than I originally thought it was. I love that there is a social justice group in my community. I love that it's safe and also very organized. The county in general runs very well, it's very well organized. I love the trees and the ability to walk and hike.

Noah: Similar to my wife, I love the community where we live. I love the ability to be outdoors and have the beach so close by and have different activities and recreation. I love the fact that Orange County is changing for the better and the sense that there is more awareness of the struggles and of the inequities that are so prevalent in greater society. It's easy to lose yourself in a community that offers so much, that is so pristine, and organized. It's easy to be comfortable and lose yourself in that community. But what I love is that I feel that despite those privileges, the people here are looking more and more beyond their privileged communities, that we need to do more for others and for our children because our children are going to leave the bubble we have created for them. That is the goal. We create the bubble while they're children and while they're vulnerable. But eventually they're going to leave and they're going to go into what we hope will be a better place; but to do that requires work. I love that Orange County is moving in the right direction. And in the same way, a hate-free OC would mean greater diversity and representation in position of leadership. Diversity means not just what you see in front of you in terms of ethnic diversity but it also means gender diversity and diversity of thoughts and opinions. It means an OC where there is the elimination not just of racial and ethnic discrimination and bias but also gender bias. For instance, it would mean that within our schools, there would be an equitable dress code as part of our school culture and not a school culture that continues to blame women and hold women to a different standard. Diversity means embracing the importance of multiple languages and that multilingualism would be celebrated within our schools and within our families.

Susan: I believe generally that most people are kind and that sometimes a lot of the "hatred" comes from poor understanding of other people's differences. And obviously there's a lot of barriers getting to that understanding and getting to that acceptance. I think if only people would open up their hearts and minds to first recognizing that there are many differences among different individuals and then

welcoming them and accepting them -practicing inclusiveness. This would make this county a much better place. As a follow up to that, the first advice I'd give residents is to recognize your own biases. I know we all have them. Accepting that we are different and that diversity exists, then embracing diversity, being curious about the differences and why they're there, and ultimately helping those communities that are in the minority to thrive. That would make an even better county community. Let's take the example of the LGBTQ community. The California Healthy Youth Act that has not been implemented in our schools here in Orange County. A lot of that has to do with a misunderstanding of what the law is about—which is to allow the LGBTQ youth to feel like they belong— and that's a good thing. But people misunderstand that law. There are different types of families, different types of colors, and different types of religions. We have to recognize that we have biases and accept the diversity- and embrace diversity, because ultimately doing this leads to better communities.

Noah: I would only add that, we often have misperceptions of others, and we need to recognize that different is not inherently bad. There are differences among all of us—differences in appearance, in religion, in language, in sexual orientation—and that is a good thing. I think some people want to put society in a box and say that there are only two choices, in terms of sexual orientation or gender description, and that is limiting. It's wrong factually and it tries to put people into a box that really goes against the individuality of a person. I think it's important for residents of Orange County and of the world to recognize that there is much more diversity that has always been there. It's not something that's new and a fad for the moment, but these are voices that have been silenced in the past and now they're not, and we have to hear them. Not just hear them. We have to make an honest effort to understand them and to support them. Because these are voices that are coming from communities that are marginalized, communities that are smaller in number, and because of that they're vulnerable and they're going to need the support of the larger communities. We will only move forward as a society if we listen to all these voices; not just the voices that are the loudest or that have the most number of people, but we need to include all those voices, listen to them, understand them, and support them.