

Wendy Salgado's Story

My name is Wendy. I live in Anaheim, and I've lived my whole life in Orange County. I'm sixteen years old. I would describe myself as an outgoing person who really likes to make friends. I'm shy at first but afterwards gains that confidence to talk to people. I feel like I'm really humble, honest, and responsible.

To be myself in Orange County would be like living life every day to the fullest and really being outgoing to everyone. I like to say "Hi" to strangers even though I don't know them, because I feel like it brightens someone's day, especially with the things going on right now. I feel like even a simple "Hi" can affect somebody's life greatly, and it's just really good to be me. For example, let's say (with) the immigrant thing, people may feel like, "Nobody likes me because I'm this race." But that's not true, because in reality, race doesn't matter. Truly we are one single race, which is humanity.

My biggest struggle is myself, because I'm not completely happy with myself. I've done a lot of things that I wished I would never have done. But I'm happy that I'm getting through all of that, and I'm happy that I'm changing to be the person that I want to be and not the person that I was. I'm Catholic, and going to retreats helps spiritually. A couple of my friends, real friends, they've helped me and supported me. Mainly, my family has helped as well. They've always been there for me, always hyping me up, always keeping me happy.

What I love about Orange County is that there are a lot of diverse people here and you can make friends with anybody, and there are a lot of friendly faces that you don't know. But you say "Hi" to them and they'll start a conversation with you. Like "How's your day?" It's really nice to know that you don't have to know somebody to talk to them. Just go around and say "Hi" and make new friends all the time.

To me, a hate-free Orange County means everybody getting along. When I hear that, the first dimension that pops into my head is all races getting along no matter what. There have been a lot of incidents in neighborhoods that I've heard from my friends where there are different ethnicities and that they don't like each other. So hate-free OC would mean everybody getting along and everybody being happy with themselves and with each other.

My advice is that we shouldn't care what ethnicity someone is. We shouldn't care what status they come from. We shouldn't care what their gender is. We shouldn't care about anything. The only thing we should focus on should be their personality, their hearts, and how they act. Just overall, how they are as a person, because race (and) gender is nothing different. As I've said before, the only race that we have that I believe in is humanity.

I am a little more happy with myself than I was before. But overall, if you're not happy with yourself, you're going to get through it, you're going to keep going. Do your best! And be happy with other people. Support everyone, no matter who they are and be happy with each other. Just get along. It doesn't cost anything to smile at anybody.