

Senior School WRITERS' CORNER



SENIOR SCHOOL WRITERS CORNER

The Dirt Below

The thick weight of international air embraced my face.

My youthful ignorance blurred through my jagged teeth as questions poured upon me.

"You can't be Australian," he spat, his eyes glaring down at the dirt colour of my skin; his brown tinge glowing just slightly lighter than mine under the South Asian sun.

"But I am?" Am I?

It's not often that I question such a thing; why would I let anyone define who I am? But then again, why did hearing those words press out of his naive mouth hurt so bad?

The wave of migrants entering Australia has exponentially increased over the last few decades, causing an influx in the population demographics of Sydney, in particular, a Frankensteinian mishmash of cultural identities of sorts. It's almost as if a glass jar of black food dye is being held under the sink; the colour dissipating as more and more water replaces it. Is it still considered dye though, or has it become the water; has its identity changed, has the water just usurped its place?

I think back to the times of watching the news of Pauli-alien yammers and Howardian waffles when I was younger; always wondering the motivations behind what compelled someone to be so closed off. Learning about the Cronulla riots and waves of other racial attacks throughout history captured my attention; even so, the attempts and policies of assimilation of Indigenous Australians, breeding their culture out into pure white blood. Such an attempt

was cautioned by George Orwell's 1984, where individuality is restricted to the point that "there will be no thought". The assimilation of diversity is portrayed to lead to demise, so we must find another, more peaceful way to live with each other, without the threat of conflict blaring across our backs.

At that moment, the boy's words stung me. They washed upon me as I grasped the realisation that I may be a Dracula in society; outcasted by the perennial assumption of evil in difference -- or in other words, the fear of the unknown. The 'unknown' feeling was only emphasised by the racial division in my home city.

It always felt there were two sides in Sydney, that of the multicultural in the more inland suburbs of Cabramatta and Liverpool, and the Eastern suburbs, the posh upperclassmen of whites. It wasn't until I learnt of the divide of the Red Rooster line that proposed the split of the ethnic regions of the southwest and the "affluent North" within Sydney that there is in fact a socio-economic border that severs the city. A single imaginary line acting as an arbitrary boundary, but in the same sense, it's imaginary. Are these conceptions of division in our society merely just conceptual; and rather telling of our human character to always find flaws in others so that we materialise a physical separation of race?

I remember sitting under Darling Harbour on the shore of New Years Eve, filled with the youthful innocence of childhood. My eyes bore tired and waned down as the clock grew closer. Glaring around with slivers of my open eyelids, I noticed the multitude of people, people that looked like me, and people that looked different. Though, we all sat together,

sheltered in our blankets, gripping our McDonald's cups, gleefully waiting for the dancing of colour above. Together.

I realised at that moment that I don't care what other people think. I realised the true meaning of Australianism is being Australian; I'm not alone, there's many others like me. We all feel the same dirt under our feet -- that's what unites us

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