

Identified



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The Struggle life of a Mexican-American In today's society, racial profiling is not unheard of, actually it is quite common. It is still at debate whether the act of racial profiling is moral or not. In the essay " Exile. El Paso, Texas", Saenz describes his personal experience of discrimination due to his ethnic background. Saenz is a Mexican-American and because he lives in El Paso, which is a border town, he is often mistaken for an illegal immigrant by other Americans. Throughout the essay, Saenz's feeling about his identity as an American had changed.

He feels like he is always being judged by Americans solely on his appearances. Towards the beginning of his essay, Saenz feels like he belonged to America and he had a positive view about everything around him, special is the nature throughout his desk view. Saenz says, " I looked out my window and stared at the Juarez Mountains. Mexican purples - burning. " (p. 20). We can see that Saenz is enjoying his desk view. He goes further in describing how he feels, " All this color, all this color, all this color beneath the shadow of the Juarez Mountains.

Sunset Heights: a perfect place with a perfect name, and a perfect view of the river. " (p. 20). These colors, especially the purple, represent the beauty of El Paso for him. At this point, it is easy for Saenz to find the beauty of El Paso. But later, Saenz's feeling had changed because Saenz is stopped on the streets of his neighborhood and questioned by the border patrol officers. When she first saw him, she suspected that Saenz was not American. She asked him where he came from and later she repeated the question in Spanish because she thought Saenz could not understand English.

Even though Saenz said he was a U. S citizen, she still kept her suspicious about his identify and kept asking him some questions to make sure. Despite the rude questioning of the female border patrol officer, Saenz tried to stay friendly and appeasing. Afterwards, Saenz regreted the way he handled the situation saying, " I was embarrassed, ashamed because I'd been so damned compliant like a piece of tin foil in the uniformed woman's hand. " (p. 22). At the same time Saenz becomes annoyed and says to himself, " pretty soon I'll have to carry a passport in my own neighborhood. "(p. 22).

Because he thinks when people stops him and starts to ask him the same questions, he would show them the passport to confirm that he is American then they cannot be mean to him. Besides, Saenz was affected by the questions of the border patrol officer and the attitudes, so he tried to do anything to get these questions out of his mind. As the result, he went for a run, he kept running until he could no longer hear " Are you sure you were born in Las Cruces? ". The next encounter, the border patrol officers still had doubt about him and they asked him some question such as: " Do you live in this neighborhood? , " Where down the street? " (p. 23). But in this encounter, he became more confident for his answers and with each pursuing officer Saenz becomes more aggressive. He replied they:" are you planning on making a social visit? "(p. 23). Couple months later, he was stopped again and be asked by the similar questions:" where are you from? " (p. 24). Saenz was so upset and he asked them to leave him alone. In another day, when he was in Juarez with his friend, Michael, the custom officer asked them to declare their citizenship.

After they answered that they was U. S citizens, the officer kept asking Saenz about where he was born in America and did not ask Michael. In this situation, Saenz noticed that his friend did not be asked about the identity because he had blue eyes, white skin which makes him look like an American. Thus, Saenz feels like he was being discriminated against because his appearance. Saenz's total shift is completed in his final confrontation of the essay. In this run in with the border patrol Saenz's defiance is most blatant.

Saenz is pushed past his threshold and snaps, saying to the officer, " Read me my rights, throw me in the can, or leave me alone. "(p. 26) The reader is able to view Saenz's change in attitude. Saenz feeling of annoyance turns to pure hatred. Saenz states, " He hated me as much as I hated him. "(p. 26). We can see the feeling of Saenz had changed from the beginning through the end of the essay. When the first meet up with the female border patrol officer, he did not get upset about what she acted to him and her rude questions.

Nevertheless, his feeling had changed day by day because of the behavior of the officers that makes him feel like he is separated from his neighborhood. Saenz's lifestyle has been an ongoing struggle for him because of all the harassments and discrimination he encountered in El Paso. He realized that people judged him sorely based on his appearance and treats him different than his other American friends just because he doesn't look like an ideal American. Throughout the essay he becomes less and less aware of his identity and who he really is.