

Sweet Diversity

Diverse – this word alone describes the type of state and community that I reside in. Yes, that location is West Orange, New Jersey – one of the most diverse communities any individual could ever live in. How unenthusiastic would it be to go to live in an area where various cultures were nonexistent? This is surely a good question, but it is a difficult one for me to answer because I have been fortunate enough to live in a community where diversity is dominant. There is nothing like the feeling I get from greeting the new faces of people who come from countries all over the world. I am not just talking about Hispanic or Italian, or even Haitian because in New Jersey, it is possible to meet a range of people from Germany, to Nigeria to the Caribbean – The list goes on and on. Being that I am Cameroonian, I was extremely content with the idea of becoming part of the melting pot that is West Orange. I am amazed at the array of cultures that I have encountered while residing in here.

When I moved to West Orange in 2006 I was terrified that, because of my cultural makeup, I would not fit in. To my surprise, I was completely wrong. I felt even better about West Orange when I attended my first day of Roosevelt Middle School. The warm welcoming I received from the diverse student body definitely gave me an incentive to love the fact that I lived in the oh-so-diverse garden state. On the first day of middle school, I made friends instantly, and all of them were as unique culturally as I was. It felt great to have a group of friends who could share their culture with me and vice versa. Truly, this is something anyone can find in New Jersey.

Apart from my middle school experience, diversity has also had a great impact on me at other instances in my life. Once I entered high school, it became clearer to me just how diverse West Orange was. It was not like other schools where most kids are predominantly one race. Take a moment right now to visualize all the races of people that exist. Done yet? This might sound crazy, but all of those races can be found in the rich surroundings of West Orange high school. It is a prime example of the unique multi-cultures of New Jersey. The idea of living in any other state is completely bizarre to me. Who, in one's right mind, would desire to leave New Jersey, with its bountiful and exciting masses of diverse people? No one, that's who.

Some people may argue that, because I have lived in New Jersey my entire life, I am prone to speak passionately about my home state. This may be true, but it is a known fact that people who move to New Jersey inevitably fall in love with the state and never leave. For example, Bob McGrath, who is from Ottawa, Illinois and Stevie Wonder, who is from Saginaw, Michigan have been permanent New Jersey residents since moving from their home states. With all their fame and money they could have chosen to reside anywhere. However, New Jersey had a stronger appeal to them. McGrath and Wonder's presence in New Jersey is an example of New Jersey's tendency to attract people of diverse cultures. Every corner of the "Garden State" is full of smiling, happy, groups of people from different

states and all over the globe. The best part though is that all of these people get along and they do not berate one another, mainly because diversity is a big part of all of their lives. It is too bad other states can't be as diverse as us, but hey, it's always fun to be the best at something. Cheers to diversity, our next door neighbor!