

Being Different Is Cool!

Hello. My name is Daniel Roman and I am nine and a half years old. I live in Glendora, California with my mom and dad. I also have two older sisters who are in college. I am in the fourth grade at Sellers Elementary School. My teacher's name is Mrs. Fallon.

To me diversity means that it's okay to be different. I think I knew what diversity meant long before I ever heard the word. You see I have autism. Having autism has always made me different from other children. I get bothered by loud noises or tags in my clothes that make me itch. It is very hard for me to look at people in the eye, and I don't like it when anything at school or home does not follow the usual routine. I go to a lot of programs to help me learn how to do things that other kids just know how to do automatically like telling jokes.

It was when I was in the second grade that I first noticed I was different from other kids. This is when I started to learn about diversity. At that time I didn't like being different. I thought that no one would ever think I was cool. I just didn't know how to talk to other kids about anything other than American history or Star Wars. I also got teased sometimes because I was different.

Now two years later with a lot of help from my family and teachers I don't think of diversity as a bad thing anymore. Now I think it is a good thing. It makes every kid special in their own way. I know that all kids have some things that are hard for them.

Because I know that being different can be hard, I always try to be nice to other kids who may be feeling like I used to. My cousin Asilbek who comes from Kazakhstan has cerebral palsy. This makes it hard for him to run and play. I always try to make sure and say something nice to him and include him in games I am playing. I know what it feels like to be different.

I will always have autism and so I may always be different in some ways. However, I never want people to feel sorry for me. I think that having autism will teach me to be strong and learn how to overcome challenges. My mom told me about a woman named Temple Grandin. Temple Grandin had autism yet became a famous scientist. Some people didn't like Martin Luther King Jr. because of the color of his skin. These heroes helped me to learn that diversity is a good thing.

I have learned how to feel good about myself and not let other people make me feel bad. I can be cool and at the same time tell you anything you want to know about American history.

My message is that diversity means its okay to be different. It will be nice someday when everyone is accepted for who they are and we all realize that diversity is a good thing. It makes each one of us special!