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**First Place Middle School Essay**

**Dreams**

As innocent victims are caught in the crossfires between racists and their beliefs, the world continues to see horrid examples of how hatred can destroy the beauty of humanity. As a result, of such ignorance and blind faith, many have been discouraged from seeing the truth. Examples such as the Holocaust, Columbine High School, and cruelty on our own playgrounds, perpetuate the belief that mankind needs a lesson in empathy. If there were any hope left after the horror of such events, it would be the beauty of the belief that our own hopes and dreams are more powerful than hatred itself.

We can never lose sight of our dreams.

I remember when my dad would tell me stories about the hardships of his family preserved when they left Mexico. One story in particular left a strong impression. The day he came to La Habra, California would forever change his life and in return, mold mine. Upon arrival, he enrolled in high school, but had to drop out to help support his family. Life would be different in America. His carefree days of youth were gone. He found himself secluded from other teenagers, and withstood ridicule for being "poor" and "different." Soon after, he married and was met with even more responsibilities. He worked harder than most his age to create a better life for his family.

He never lost sight of his dreams.

I have always been proud of who I am. Although I was born in the U.S., the blood that courses through my veins belongs to a true Mexicana. But sadly, I have also endured ridicule and doubt for who I am. As a product of bilingual education, I can recall an incident in the third grade that will never leave me. A young girl approached me, pointed, and called me "retarded." She said I couldn't speak English. This incident alone fueled a yearning for success that still empowers me today. Even as a young girl, standing alone in the playground, I knew that this teasing and cruelty would not hold me back. Today, I still strive to survive in a world that sometimes seems to have no compassion for difference.

I have never lost sight of my dreams.

It is sad to know that there is still racism in this world. One would think it would be gone and over with by now. Everyone should put aside their pride and try to make the world a better place. The Holocaust survivors never gave up on their fight for survival. My father struggled in the light of adversity for his own family. Devastating words did no taint my own experience.

People of diverse beliefs should not be viewed without empathy. Fathers should never give up on a dream of a peace and acceptance for their family. Children should not be silenced by hatred.

No one should lose sight of their dreams.