

JCSCORE

Journal Committed to Social Change on Race and Ethnicity

The Journal of the National Conference on Race and Ethnicity in American Higher Education

THOUGHTS OF THE LITTLE BROWN GIRL

Durga V. Sritharan
Iowa State University

Journal Committed to Social Change on Race and Ethnicity
Volume 8, Issue 2 | 2022

Copyright and Open Access

© 2022 Durga V. Sritharan



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/). Permission of the authors is required for distribution and for all derivative works, including compilations and translations. Quoting small sections of text is allowed as long as there is appropriate attribution and the article is used for non-commercial purposes.

The *Journal Committed to Social Change on Race and Ethnicity* (ISSN 2642-2387) is published by the National Conference on Race and Ethnicity (NCORE), a production of the University of Oklahoma, in partnership with the University of Oklahoma Libraries.

Thoughts of The Little Brown Girl

Durga V. Sritharan
Iowa State University

In this poem, the author highlights the internal struggles of racial and ethnic discrimination, including the feeling of guilt and the art of code-switching. The author is a Sri Lankan-American woman, who has witnessed and experienced discrimination and wonders if her feelings of confusion are valid, as her parents, who immigrated to the United States, changed her life trajectory before she was born. She writes this poem to emphasize that pursuing the American Dream can still lead to continuous race- and ethnicity-focused challenges and accounts of proving one's worth. Her reflection inspired this poem upon growing up in a predominantly white area and her growing passion for research and education surrounding race and ethnicity.

A little brown girl walks into a room, and what does she see?
She says, "All the eyes immediately dart at me."
Shortly after, all the thinking begins
And she wonders, "What's it like to be comfortable in your own skin?"

A room of thirty people, she sticks out like a sore thumb
They ask, "Where are you from? No, where are you *from* from?"
Who knew the amount of melanin in her skin
Would determine her worth or if she would fit in?

To be made fun of her culture and name is just one thing
That influences her participation in code switching.
Near her family, she feels whitewashed, but around her friends, she feels too brown,
Which is why she feels the constant urge to get up and run away from this town.

Attending a PWI, she tries to navigate
Her way through trying to prove herself and determine her own fate.
The little brown girl becomes a token
Of gold for the institution whose principles seem broken.

Raised in America, she should be grateful,
But at the same time, she feels like the thoughts she can't express are making her head full

Of confusion
Like it's an illusion
And it can't be real

To feel what she feels.

She says, "The model minority myth just haunts me,
But I *need* to fit the mold that everyone wants to see."
She pretends to be perfect and strives for the best
When in reality, all she needs is just a little rest.

The little brown girl just wants to build a foundation
And pave the way towards success for the future generation,
But progress feels like one step forward and two steps back,
So if that's the case, how is she supposed to get on the right track?

We watch as a caterpillar turns into a cocoon,
And we wait for a butterfly to blossom and bloom.
But how can she do so when all that she sees
Is a crowd full of people overanalyzing her identity?

Raised in America, she should be grateful,
But at the same time, she feels like the thoughts she can't express are making her head full

Of confusion
Like it's an illusion
And it can't be real
To feel what she feels.

But I have hope for the future and will continue to fight
For other minorities to get their full rights.
I will take your hands and show you the world,
With warmest regards,
The Little Brown Girl.