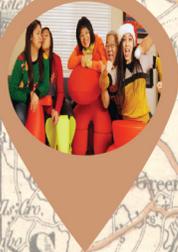


Holiday Edition 2016

# Verdadera

truthfully

Where do we come from?



# Editor in Chief's Note

Dear readers,

To start, we would like to thank everyone who supported Verdadera in 2015 by responding to our surveys, offering insightful experiences through submissions, reading our issues, and/or interacting with us on social media. We truly appreciate the feedback and wish to celebrate what makes our community - the people.

With all the stories about Syrian refugees and immigration in the media, we chose this topic out of relevance as well. Cupertino seemed like the perfect goldmine for stories of immigrants achieving their American Dream. To the outside world, Monta Vista's 82% Asian student demographic may seem either wonderfully diverse or too homogenous. From the inside, the implied "made it to America" background is so common that we often forget the sacrifices, resilience, and inspiring stories of our parents and grandparents.

There won't be any opinions in this issue, of course. But we still hope that this issue will invoke strong emotions -we all hugged our families after reading the submissions - and show you a side of Monta Vista students you perhaps haven't heard before.

As usual, thank you to those who shared their incredible stories and family portraits. If you missed our submission forms, feel free to send us your story and we'll share it in the future. And thank you to the trolls, who sent in more than 60% of our submissions. We're considering a Submissions Collection: Troll Edition online. Let us know what you think by emailing us at [mvhsverdadera@gmail.com](mailto:mvhsverdadera@gmail.com).

Thank you,  
Gloria Zhao & May Cui

P.S. Please do not try to guess who wrote which article.

# Further Resources

## **Movies and Shows:**

*The Joy Luck Club*

*The Godfather Part II*

*El Norte*

*The Kite Runner*

*House of Sand and Fog*

*Master of None* Season 1, Episode 2 - <https://www.netflix.com/title/80049714>

## **Books:**

*Americanah* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

*The Arrival* by Shaun Tan

*Esperanza Rising* by Pam Muñoz Ryan

*The House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros

*American Born Chinese* by Gene Luen Yang

*Inside Out & Back Again* by Thanhha Lai

<https://www.goodreads.com/shelf/show/immigration> for more recommendations

## **1947 Partition Archive**

<http://www.1947partitionarchive.org>

Collection of primary sources documenting stories of the partition creating India and Pakistan.

## **California Immigration**

<http://cis.org/ImmigrationReview32-ImmigrationinCalifornia>

Impact immigration has had on California and demographics.

## **American Immigration**

<http://cis.org/ImmigrationHistory>

Overview Read about the impact immigration has had on all of America and its story.

## **How to Not be Racist**

<http://www.wikihow.com/Stop-Being-Racist>

Just in case you need a little bit of a push in the right direction, refer to this. It even has pictures!

# submissions

## Student

My dad is from Kashmir and my mom is from Bangalore which are two dramatically different areas in India and it wasn't very common back then for North Indians and South Indians of different like castes and stuff to get married and my parents did so they were like yknow OG's. They moved to America so my dad could go to Arizona State University and then after he got his masters they moved to Long Beach and had me!

## Student

We originally lived in San Francisco but moved into Cupertino once I started elementary school. Having my youngest sister born then, my parents figured it would be better to give up our larger house with badly reputed schools for a smaller house with a prestigious school district. We've lived here in our little house since 2005, but I still miss the old memories in our old house.

## Student

My grandparents grew up in China during the time of the Sino-Japanese war. On my mom's side, my grandpa escaped China with a close friend and swam south into Hong Kong to start a new life. They couldn't really bring anything with them since they swam, but managed to still start a new life. He met my grandma in this new life and started a small business that worked alongside a factory to support the family of eight kids. My mom and her siblings all helped out with the business by assembling small items such as jean buttons, fake flowers, and purse straps. Eventually, business closed down, but their kids all grew up enough to support themselves. My mom and one other sister were the two that were adventurous and immigrated to foreign countries: my aunt in Melbourne, my mom to San Francisco.

## Student

When she was little, my mom used to love riding bikes. Since she didn't own one, she would go over to the local bike shop and rent a bike with her friends. For hours they would bike around and play. One day, when my mom was biking, she wasn't looking where she was going, and therefore went over a drain grate. Apparently the grate was loose, so it gave away and fell. My mom's bike got caught in the hole and my mom fell in half way. She caught herself on the edge of the drain and called for help. All of her friends ran over and helped her. Luckily she got out with only a few bruises. Even after that, she never backed away from riding a bike. My mom has always been thankful for not falling into that drain and for her friends rushing to help her.

## Student

My grandfather's parents died when he was 15, and he had to take care of his 4 siblings on his own in India. He worked hard to get them through school as well as himself, and was able to obtain a college degree. He was invited to America to teach at Yale college, although he didn't know that it was a prestigious university when he left India! He later returned to India to marry my grandmother in an arranged marriage, as my grandmother's family was too poor to get a "better" marriage for her; in fact, my grandfather was actually her uncle. He stayed in India for some time and had 4 children, including my mother, and moved back to the States when my mom was 7.

# submissions

## Student

My dad grew up in Lebanon during their civil war and other conflicts. For the majority of his youth he lived in the stairwell of an apartment in south Beirut. He loved electronics and computers. During the war he would go to a local Internet cafe, and he slowly fell in love with Western culture. As an avid rock fan and radio talk show enthusiast, he dreamt of moving to the U.S. In college at AUB (American University of Beirut), a visiting MIT professor saw his potential and encouraged him to apply to his Institute. After getting accepted, he moved to Cambridge to further pursue a degree in computer engineering. My mother grew up in an abusive household in the backwoods of one of upstate New York's poorest farmlands. She worked hard, moved out of the house and into an apartment above a pancake house, and went on a scholarship to a local small-scale college. She graduated top of her class, and would later attend Harvard for graduate school. In a taxi seven blocks from Harvard Square, my parents would meet -- only after awkwardly entering the cab at the same time. They each had a place to be, but decided to have the taxi driver go up those seven blocks and leave them both in the square, where they decided to grab lunch, and fall in love, together.

## Student

During the Indo-Pak war of 1971, my dad was 2 years old when it started. He told me how his mother and relatives would all hide when Pakistani soldiers came, and how they would hide in the "jungle" for days at a time.

## Student

My mother and father were both born and raised in California. Their parents came from North Dakota and the Azores (Portugal) respectively. My father grew up in Southern California to a single mother who worked as a maid. My mother's family owned an apple orchard in Northern California. They both went to Stanford University where they met. I grew up in Menlo Park.

## Student

My dad first came to America in the 1990s where he came for work. He grew up in a poor family and after tirelessly working hard for his entire childhood, he was the first of our family to step foot out of anywhere but India. After he came here he worked for a couple years where he met some of his Best Friends. Then he had to go back to India because his parents had fixed him up with my mom. After he saw my mom he agreed and they got married in 1998. Then my dad brought my mom over to America, and because of his job, she got to see many different states and go to places she had never imagined she would go.

## Student

My family is originally from India, on both sides. My mom descends from the minister of a king in an Indian State and my dad descends from the first mayor of Dehli. When my dad was four, he moved to Toronto, Canada and lived there most of his childhood. When he married my mom, she moved to Toronto with him and had me and then my brother. When I was six, we moved to Cupertino and lived there for almost seven years before we decided to move to South Africa. It was an amazing three months there that I'll never forget, but soon we were missing home and moved back to Toronto. We lived there for a year, and soon came back to Cupertino, and that's how I ended up in Kennedy and later Monta Vista

# submissions

## Student

My mom left Iran when she was 14 years old, right before the war started. She wasn't supposed to move to America, as getting a green card was extremely hard at the time, but due to a hint of luck and a weird coincidence, she managed to get one. While she was in the front of her house, a person walked by and asked her if she wanted a green card. Apparently he had one but now didn't need it, so he gave her the green card and before she knew it she was on a flight to San Jose, California to live with her aunt. It is here that she would meet my dad while renting out an apartment building a couple of years later.

## Parent

Likely 50% of the immigrant parents will have this story: Both my husband and I completed our engineering in India in different universities (Hyderabad and Vizag respectively) and different years. We worked hard for our GRE and TOEFL tests. I received a fully paid scholarship to a university in the north east. He also came here and obtained a fully paid scholarship (different universities, different years)

After my M.S (Computer Sciences) I got an internship in Sun Microsystems in Bay Area. My husband was already here for a year, working for a consulting firm. We met through common friends and fell in love. TA-DA! We got married at the Hindu temple in Livermore in 1995. We had other familial responsibilities early in our lives. My husband's sister had renal failure, and was on dialysis. My husband donated his kidney, so she got a renewed lease on her life. 20 years later, she is healthy and leading a normal life. I had to help settle my other brothers and sisters in India, being the only sibling who was in the USA and financially capable of it. These are stories possibly our children don't know yet. But we will tell them when they are grown a little more.

## Student

It was 2008, and I was studying in a private school in India. And a lot of my friends had started moving away. Many of them had moved abroad, and I remember thinking when will I move? One of my best friends at that time had moved to America. And the day she moved, I came home and told my dad I wanted to go to America. Coincidentally, over the course of the next few months, my dad had gotten a transfer to Cupertino, and I've lived here ever since!

## Student

My grandparents were all from China and fled to Taiwan during the war. My grandpa was fighting for China, but when the war was over he wasn't allowed to return to his family. Thus, he never saw them again, and we don't know where they are anymore.

## Student

My family comes from all over the world. My father's side is from Iraq and Morocco, and my mother's side is from Austria, Germany, and the Czech Republic. It's quite an interesting blend of culture. We often eat Middle Eastern food at home — kubbeh soup, falafel, hummus, and loubieh bi zeit — and Arabic phrases are thrown around occasionally. My mother's side has a lot of history. My maternal grandfather has gathered and digitized multiple family artifacts that date all the way back to the late 1800s. Hand-written diaries, photographs, and government documents. Every summer, when I visit my grandparents, I read my great aunt's diary entries from when she was a nurse on the famous kindertransport, the train that saved many Jewish refugee children. I admire photos of my great-great grandmother's first day of kindergarten in Germany in 1920, in which she holds a giant bouquet, full of candy and twice her size, a German tradition known as Schultute. I analyze my great-great grandfather's photos, who was a photographer for the British military prior to World War II.

## Student

My mom grew up in a small village in China, surrounded by the daily tasks of tending the chickens, cleaning up after the rabbits, and feeding the goats. That village, she says, was utopic in a sense. Her father grew the rice, her mother tended to her and her three siblings, the children went to school and helped take care of the house. Life was good. But a couple bad seasons forced her parents to move the family of six to Hong Kong, where my mom attended the equivalent of our middle and high school. She had to learn a new language, and adapt to a new culture; life was different, but she got by. Her second half of high school, she moved to Saskatchewan to go to boarding school, which she claims were the best years of her life. She felt free to do whatever she wanted, though at the same time, she was mindful of her spending habits and her school life. My mom eventually got used to the very different culture and people halfway around the world in a very different climate as well. This move was her first real reality check, and she took it relatively well.

## Student

My dad lived in a little village in Maharashtra. He lived with his mom and little brother. I don't know a lot, besides the fact they were really poor and had a lot of problems. One time his mom took rat poison. When he came home from school on his bicycle, she was in the hospital. My mom grew up in a big city in India. She lived near the zoo. Every night when she went to sleep, she could hear the lion roar. Her dad was a photographer, and her mom was a doctor. For my dad, his life changed when he got into IIT Kharagpur, which is like really prestigious in India. It's like Harvard, except EVEN MORE swaggy. I remember him telling me about the Iranian kids at school who jumped off the buildings. Apparently, their families had died in the Iranian revolution while they were at IIT. It's a pretty scary world out there I guess.

## Student

My family is originally from Mexico. My mother, oldest of four kids, is from northern Mexico, while my father, youngest of ten kids, is from southern Mexico. Me and my sister were both born in northern Mexico, but my parents got permission for us to cross the border every day so we could attend school in Arizona and learn English. This made our move to upstate New York that much easier-- the more difficult move for us was not moving countries, but moving to CA after living comfortably in NY for ten years. However, experiencing different ways of life and learning how to adapt from one culture to another has brought my family closer rather than apart. To this day, we still visit our extended family in Mexico-- we just had relatives join us on a Lake Tahoe trip, and they got to experience snow for the first time.

## Student

Our family came to this country in suitcase of clothes and basic necessities, Where my father was the professor and Student at Columbia university in New York and worked very hard to raise the 3 kids and gave us the independence, education and Family value. We now are all doing great in our profession and looking forward for our next generation to build on the struggle we faced and the layer of platform we build for our kids so that they can archive and be successful at what ever they desire. I am very happy to see all my 4 kids are all doing great and look forward to see the changes they will make in this world.

# submissions

## Student

My father came from a small city in the province of Sichuan in China. He grew up with his mother, a teacher, his stepfather, and two older sisters. He would always tell me about how carefree his parents were when he was a child. There is one story that I find particularly interesting. There was one day when one of my father's older friends came running to his house saying that a man was letting children fly with him in an airplane. My father dreamed of being a pilot or an astronaut so he couldn't refuse the offer. Together, they climbed onto the back of a small truck crowded with lots of other children. My father didn't even tell his parents where he would be for the entire afternoon, not that they really cared. I would never trust a stranger loading children into the back of a truck, but he did eventually get to a small airfield, ride on a glider, and return home before dinnertime. My mother on the other hand, came from a rural farming community, also located in Sichuan. She spent lots of her free time doing chores. One of the things that I found hard to relate to was that she rarely got to eat candy, or even meat. On occasion, her parents would send her into town to buy half a kilogram of soy sauce. They gave her a dollar and let her keep the change. She would end up with ten cents, just enough to buy two hard candies, one for herself, and one for her sister. During harvest time, when most of the crops have been picked, people would send the children into the fields to pick up the last grains of rice in exchange for some allowance. My mother saved up her money for a long time until she decided to go into town and spend it one day. She initially wanted to buy a snack, but she ended up purchasing some kohlrabi. It turns out that they were hosting some guests that night so she decided to help her family out by buying something nice to serve to their guests instead of buying something for herself. My parents met in college in China and decided to move to the US together while schooling for a master's degree. My mother fell in love with bananas, for she grew up in a rural farming community in Sichuan province and didn't eat fruit very often. Bananas were cheap and easy to eat. My father was addicted to all things unhealthy. My mother got sick of bananas after eating them every single day for several months. She pledged to stop eating bananas for the rest of her life. She does occasionally eat bananas as of today, but never without a reminder of her first year in the United States. My father gained 30 pounds within the first few years he spent in the United States, mostly from eating an unhealthy diet. He hasn't lost much of that weight he put on more than twenty years ago. He made sure I understood the importance of eating a healthy diet and resisting temptations. These are some of the experiences my parents had that I will probably never have. Enjoy:)

## Parent

We arrived as boat people, a term for Vietnamese refugees who escaped the communist regime by wooden fishing trawlers, often not bigger than 10m long carrying 100 people or more. Our objective is not to arrive at our destination in said boat but rather to intercept a shipping freighter out in international waters who would rescue us. We spent 4 days and 3 nights in the holds of the boat, severely dehydrated due the seasickness. We started to lose hope when the boat started to leak and the engine started to have problems. We saw numerous shipping vessels but all managed to change course to avoid us. Maritime law at the time dictate that all shipping must render aid to marine vessels in distress and we took advantage of this fact by intentionally scuttle out boat when we intercepted a Shell oil tanker (registered in France) heading for South Korea. We requested political asylum and was allowed to immigrate to France. We lived in France for 1 year and then moved to the US 35 years ago. Looking back, I don't think I would have the courage to risk my family's lives by doing what my parents felt they had to do, knowing that a large percentage of refugees perished at sea trying to escape an oppressive regime.

# submissions

## Student

My mother was telling me about her grandfather once, who is my great-grandfather. He was a teacher in the village where my mom and her family grew up, as well as the head of the town, and he was renowned for being an incredible person. He was intelligent and wise and offered apt, clear advice to people who needed it, solved disputes between people arguing. When he passed away, it was remarkably simple--he felt a little pain in his chest one night, headed to the hospital, and died in a great doctor's arms. Practically the entire town came to his funeral to pay their respects, and when I go back to India, I still hear about him. It's pretty awesome to know that I'm related, even if separated by a few generations, to a person like that.

## INTERVIEWS

### Student from Homestead High School

"I remember our first apartment we lived in Israel - we lived in apartments; they didn't have houses like this - it was a one or two bedroom apartment and it very small and tiny and cluttered. It was a large building and we lived on the twelfth floor. I remember we had neighbors upstairs, a girl about my little sister's age and another little girl no more than my little brother's age. Both our families spoke english and we hung out a lot. One time we tried to do a chemical experiment with soaps in our bathroom - we used the toilet as a mixing bowl and ended up flooding the entire apartment. When I moved to a different city to go to school, I ended up making friends with the boy directly across the street. We used to have pancakes together in the mornings on weekends. It was very easy to be friends; we'd both be downstairs at the same time and play and walk to school. My dad got a job offer here in the US and when we talked about the possibility of moving to America we all agreed upon it as a family and that's how we got here. My first impression of America was that it was so big. It's so empty, you know, in Israel it's crowded with people and everybody was close together. But here, it's so vast and wide and huge and open. Everybody here is conservatively polite; in Israel it was less formal, strangers on the streets would yell out 'Hey kid!'"

### Anonymous (Translated from Mandarin)

"When I moved to America, America was regarded as one of the richest countries in the world at the time. China was very poor, and my husband and I saw it as a place of opportunity.

As a child I lived in the countryside and my parents were farmers. In China, being able to pass the college entrance exam was something of extreme difficulty. Out of 100 people, only 3 would get a chance to go to college. So I was very nervous taking my test. The results came very slow at the time, because there were no phones or efficient ways of long- distance communication. So I waited a month for my results to come in. The entire month I was very anxious. And when some of my classmates had gotten their results and I still hadn't gotten it, I became even more anxious. I cried and cried at the time, thinking that I hadn't gotten into college afterall. I got my results a week after everybody else had gotten theirs, and I had succeeded! I was so excited, I couldn't sleep. I spent all my time telling myself "I got into college! I got into college!" I was the first woman to ever in my city to pass the entrance exams. I became a role model, and people would tell their children to be like me. My mother was very proud.

# submissions

## Anonymous (Translated from Mandarin) Continued...

Ever since I was little, I had always gotten good grades. My teachers really liked me, and some classmates became very jealous. As soon as school ended, they would gang up and bully me. I couldn't fight back because those kids were bigger than me. One time, a bigger boy was bullying me and my older sister came to my rescue. She picked up a rock and started chasing him around. "You dare bully my little sister! I'll kill you!", she said. All at once, she threw the rock and cut open the boy's head.

Another time, I was being bullied by two of my classmates and my little sister came and jumped on the bigger kid's back. She was two years younger than me at the time, and shorter as well. She grabbed his hair and pulled on it until he said "Ok, ok, I won't bully her anymore! Get off!" She was a very brave person, and it left a very big impact on me.

The conditions I lived in were very bad. When I was little, China was a very poor country. We didn't have enough rice to eat, so my mother watered it down and made it into porridge. Each of our bowls would only have a few grains of rice. To make the porridge more filling, my mother would go into the forest and pick wild plants off the floor to put in the porridge. Everybody did; no one had enough to eat. She would take the leaves and mince them up really small so we wouldn't be able to tell what kind of leaves she put in there. The only time we would ever eat meat would be New Year's. My mother and the rest of our village went fishing at that time of year, and it was such a luxury to eat meat that the entire year afterwards I would look forward to the New Year's fish.

I only had one set of clothes. I would wear them every day, because I had nothing else to wear. Especially in the summer, after our bath, we would wash our clothes and hang them up to dry. The next day, we would go to school in that pair of clothes.

When I was in school in America, I saw fresh apples for the first time on campus. I had never bought fresh apples before, and the ones I did buy were the rotten ones that they sold for very cheap. The apple trees in America had their branches hanging with fruit, and all around the tree were fallen apples. At that time, I would wonder why nobody was picking up that fruit to eat, but I myself wouldn't dare to pick up that fruit out of fear that everyone would laugh at me. So I just looked at those apples. I sat down next to the trees for hours and look. For days on end, I would pass those apple trees and just look at them. At night, I was too afraid to steal them, so I just looked. I never ended up eating those apples, but it did leave on me such an impression that I still remember after all these years."

## From Japan to America

Senior Miharu Koh was born in Tokyo, Japan, where she lived until 7th grade, when she moved to the Bay Area. Koh's family's story shares many commonalities with the stories of most immigrants and their struggles of adjusting to a new country with different language and social customs. Immigration is currently a hot topic in the political scene, with today's politicians focusing on the economic and national security consequences with a strong nativist bias, while individual immigrants themselves tend to be overlooked. Koh's story highlights her experience as an immigrant and the social and political differences she faced after arriving in the United State

"Here in America," she says, "everyone accepts how the individual is, no matter whatever background, race, sexuality, people accept the individual." While she concedes there is significant opposition to certain races or sexualities, people are at least free to express themselves here. "In Japan, people wanted to conform to each other, be in the trend, and not stand out." For this reason, it was initially very difficult for Koh to participate in discussions in her classes in America. "I had never practiced expressing myself."

According to Koh's experiences, the emphasis was on conformity and assimilation in Japan. She recollects one incident when mobs of people had gathered outside a Korean school, yelling at them to go back to Korea. Many have argued that there is a culture of exclusionism in Japan with "nationality clauses" for employment opportunities and blood-based citizenship laws.

"People could tell I was not pure Japanese." Because of Koh's last name, people caught on to her half-Taiwanese heritage. "It was a little hard for me at first. My parents told me I don't have to worry about it, that I have to be me. I wasn't sure what that meant until I came to America."

While Koh had relatively few struggles acclimating to Hyde Middle School, her older sister initially had some troubles adjusting to Monta Vista. "I think she felt like she was inferior to others," Koh explains. Her sister came from a prestigious and very difficult high school in Japan only to arrive in Monta Vista, where the language barrier prevented her from following the material taught in class. Koh's mother was initially lonely with few social connections in the community. But she overcame this by joining a local tennis team to make new friends and socialize.

"I am really proud of how she is trying to be more outgoing," Koh says. Today, Koh is proud both of her Japanese and American heritage. "I put everything together. I really like the Japanese culture, like the respect that people have and politeness even if they're in a rush or something. In the U.S., I like the self-assertion and individuality. I think that is going to benefit me in the future—understanding both cultures."

# About Verdadera

Verdadera, meaning “truthfully” in Spanish, is a student-run publication at Monta Vista High School which was initiated by Hung Wei, a Monta Vista parent herself. She envisioned a place where students, alumni, counselors, teachers, administrators, and even parents could freely express their thoughts on the controversial and challenging issues within the Monta Vista community.

The goal of Verdadera is to initiate an honest conversation between parents, students, and everyone overall. It can be hard to come in terms with feelings that students may not directly vocalize or even understand to begin vocalizing; therefore Verdadera serves as a platform to provoke opinions, thinking, and understand the change we all wish to implement.

We collect submissions from students, interview alumni, talk to parents and counselors, professionals, and much more. Verdadera strives to provide a 360 degree view of our reality and we hope you can help us achieve this.

Enjoy reading!

\*Please note, while we do shorten and abridge submissions occasionally, we do not edit them to maintain the integrity of the original voice. This means grammar mistakes are left alone.

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