

We Can't Let Others Define Us

By Rahul Yates

Throughout my life, I have always felt different. As a mixed-race individual, it has been difficult for me to find my place in a society that largely holds a binary outlook on race and ethnicity: I can be either Indian or white, no in-between. I have felt alone as I grappled with my dual identity – even though the multiracial population is one of the fastest growing communities, it is still vastly underrepresented in all aspects of American society.

Like many others who identify as mixed-race, I thought that I could only identify as one of my ethnicities instead of embracing both. With this uncertainty about my own identity and the lack of individuals like me represented in school curriculum, media, and society, I grew up never truly understanding who I am.

Upon reflecting on one of my favorite quotes, “*Great leaders don't set out to be a leader. They set out to make a difference. It's never about the role – it's about the goal*” by Lisa Haisha, a life coach, speaker, and author, I understand that an impactful leader is someone who identifies an issue that challenges individuals and proposes ways to address the problem. The key is selflessness – a true leader emerges because of the work they are doing, not because of the role or recognition they may receive.

Haisha's quote inspired me to focus on not only my unique experiences growing up multiracial but also to make a difference by helping others with similar experiences. To do so, I founded HumSub GlobalTEEN, a platform that raises awareness and builds a community for multiracial and multicultural teenagers. Through this initiative, I empower mixed-race teens to take control of their individual narratives, and lead the efforts to stake their place in society. It is time to make their voices heard, to make their presence known,

and to stop letting others define them. As Haisha states, *“It’s never about the role – it’s about the goal.”* With HumSub GlobalTEEN, my goal has been to provide other mixed-race individuals a safe space for conversations about their identity.

Over the past year and a half, I have shared resources through my website and social media posts, interviewed thought leaders from the multiracial community, and worked with other organizations to create opportunities for mixed-race teens to understand who they are and to be unafraid to embrace their full selves. I am proud to have grown HumSub GlobalTEEN’s following to reach young people from across the world who are interested in learning how to meaningfully engage with their identity. Some of the most important topics discussed include helping people understand that they can be 100% of all their heritages without having to choose one over the other, and that the way they identify can and will change over time and that this fact is just a part of the fluidity of the multiracial identity.

I am proud to have entered this new space as a teenager and to be able to amplify the voices of hundreds of teens globally. My goal of lending support to and creating a place of belonging for mixed-race young people has led me to becoming a leader within the multiracial community. If from my work I can help just one other multiracial teenager feel more comfortable in their identity, then I consider that a leadership success.