



May 23, 2025

Dear Newcomers,

I believe you. I feel your struggles even if I can't relate to them. What's yours is mine. We are almost the same people—the same group of people, even. When you come here, a lot will be different, but a lot will be the same.

You'll start school. The school system here isn't the best, but it's definitely not the worst. Nevertheless, school will be your best bet for anything, socially and academically. You will first have to focus on your grades. Going to an entirely different school system is not easy. I've done it before, but I didn't come from another country. I came from a charter school to a Chicago Public School. When I first transferred in second grade, I was afraid. Everything felt different, my surroundings were different. It felt better, it was more funded. But it's not like the people were different. We're all losing the lottery in some way.

In school, besides grades, you'll probably need friends. If you don't find your clique in the first week of school, it's okay. If you're introverted, it's okay. I was, too. But my clique found me. A clique is a group of people whom you are automatically drawn to, even if you don't see it. You could deny the friendships, say you don't need them because they aren't your type of people...not what you're used to, but it's good to step out of your comfort zone because stepping out will create a new comfort zone. It will make you broaden your horizons and start to open up to more things. Even if you feel like you don't fit because the people don't necessarily look like you, they don't act like you or speak like you. Trust me when I say opposites attract, friends are like magnets and are bound to find your way together no matter how different you think someone is. You'll feel when you've found that person. Most people like to find people they are familiar with, as in familiar in looks. You are drawn to what you're used to. And that's okay, but it's also okay to strip yourself of familiarity. It's okay to want what you've always had, but you'll see, different is good, and sometimes even better.

Now, I wanna move into music. Music creates unbreakable bonds and creates such a strong hold between you and your mental health. It helps you distress, get over things, and even reminisce about things you're familiar with!

Lastly, I'd like to acknowledge your journey. I recently read an article, (What Colombia Can Teach Chicago About Managing a Migrant Wave), listened to a podcast (The Venezuelan Migrant Experience — in Colombia, in Chicago), and explored a photo essay (Walking to the United States) about a situation I knew little about. When the lesson ended, I came away with a singular thought—when you walked here, you must have been afraid. You must've wondered what was to come? What would you find in this new land? A lot, I promise you...both good and bad. I won't say it'll be easy because it definitely won't be...but hopefully it's worth it. The readings also mention that the city of Chicago is struggling to care for you, but I don't believe that's true. When you come here, you'll notice that a lot of people won't put in the same effort that you do. Everyone isn't your friend, everyone won't care about you, but others will. People will even hate you for things you can't control. The readings also note that about 30,000 Venezuelans have come here in the past 2 years. I'm glad you've come to get what you've earned and deserve. Even if people won't share our resources because they look at you as an outsider, they'll never guess you're closer to them than they know. I know the journey here wasn't easy, and I know being new here is even harder. Please continue even though I know you're tired and remember—you'll get through this because you've worked hard.

Sincerely, Justice



May 23, 2025

Dear youthful & enduring souls,

Your tribulations are seen, your sorrows are heard, and your presence in a land that is foreign to you is so dearly welcomed. While as a second generation immigrant I can comprehend the events that have shaped you into the person you are today, I will never be able to understand the swallowed pain you have endured through your experiences that cause you to stand where you are. As the minorities of this nation, we must remember that our ancestors and families have been drawn to this country based on the false promise that hard work ensures a quality education, well-paying jobs, economic prosperity, and generational wealth for our descendants. When acknowledging the fact that, for some, the impossible is possible here, we must also accept a difficult truth-while immigrants are the backbone of this country, we are often considered outsiders.

Nonetheless, this world will always be an unfaithful slate for us to survive in, but we shall not let that shatter our spirit into rubble for you have experienced some of the most torturous events of your life and are still prospering as we speak. You must not allow yourself to become victimized by the harsh reality of this country. Instead of being suppressed by inhumanity, you must become the walking embodiment of what this unjust nation never imagined you'd amount to. When education is one of the highest forms of success, we should not be drawn to such solely for a check. Instead, take advantage of the intellectual opportunities not handed to everybody.

Lastly, please understand that money does not ensure a good heart, but can reflect poor character when not used for positivity. I imagine that you are lucky in the sense that you've been able to grasp the intangible-hope. Therefore, you must remain humble and give to the ones you love without greed. Money is certainly not everything and, in fact, is the most insignificant thing about the United States. Here, we are free to be exactly who we want to be and this is the true definition of the American Dream.

God Bless,

Emilia Rodsana Salazar