

I grew up in Irvine, California surrounded by a diverse population of varied ethnic, racial, and religious groups. In addition, coming from a biracial family with my Indian mother who grew up in Malaysia, and my Caucasian father from upstate New York, I had always taken diversity for granted. It is only recently that I began to fully appreciate and understand how the vastly different experiences and perspectives of those around me have enriched my life and helped define me as a person.

In addition to my family, friends, and classmates in Irvine, I have also had the privilege of working with diverse teams of people from across the nation during various Civil Air Patrol activities. I witnessed first hand how their drive to serve the United States transcended all differences - race, ethnicity, religion, and sexual orientation. I was also able to see how the diverse personal experiences people brought to the team enabled us to arrive at unique and effective solutions to our challenges. Whether I was working with a tennis player from Washington, a competitive drum corps member from California, a football lineman from a farm town in Georgia, a private pilot and singer from Texas, or an aspiring rapper from Illinois, they all brought different and interesting perspectives which contributed to the overall success of the teams.

I have come to see that diversity is one of the greatest aspects of the United States. Our nation has historically attracted those who are seeking freedom and driven to succeed. By allowing the brightest minds from around the world to immigrate to our nation, we have been able to take advantage of diverse mindsets and experiences while pushing the boundaries of what was previously thought possible. I believe this unique history sets the United States apart from all other countries in the world.

As an officer in the Army, it will be my responsibility to make important and difficult decisions for the good of the team, and ultimately, the country. I believe the best way to accomplish this is to be open to ideas from leaders, peers, and subordinates, regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or religion. This open exchange of ideas will allow the team to take advantage of the diverse personal experiences that each individual brings with them. The military requires a certain level of uniformity and discipline, but that should not hinder one's ability to provide or accept unique and relevant insight. No individual has all the answers. I believe that if I and my chain of command respect and capitalize on the different opinions and ideas from those with whom we serve, we will arrive at better and more informed solutions than we would have otherwise. I am confident I will be successful at leading diverse teams because I value input from others and am open to taking differing, and potentially controversial, opinions into consideration. I believe this will help me be a strong leader who makes the best possible decisions.