

Many think to be an American is to be born in the United States. However, you do not need to be from America, to know that your heart lies there. You don't have to take sides - take pride in where you know you belong. "My story is not in set in stone, I am still carving the lines and smoothing out the edges. I still have much to engrave," said the voice.

Photo by // Rodolfo Planells



This is my story, This is my voice...

My name isn't important; it's my voice that has to be heard. I am a native of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. I ventured along with my parents into the United States at the tender age of 4 after living in South America for three years. I share my cultures equally. I am not ashamed to say I was born in Brazil; I am not ashamed to say I am a proud American girl. When I entered high school, immediately was I disparaged to find that there are cliques, name-calling, and distinctions between people in the so-called hierarchy of the popular and the misfits in a scholastic setting. My parents are American; I am American. Even though I speak Portuguese at an expert level, I am still American. Yes; I love arroz com feijões e banana. The fact of the matter - I am still American. The roots of my culture strongly branch out to where I was raised. The beach where my parents took me every morning to see the high tide crash on my baby toes still lingers in my mind. I crave to go back to Rio. There are unique layers to my personality and appearance. To be stereotyped as a typical White, middle-class girl, who only cares about the latest looks and what drink I get at the coffee shop, ignites a blazing fire in my heart. A fire of anger and a desire to be accepted. I want my culture to be seen. I want my culture to be recognized. Yes, I have brown hair and a light complexion. In spite of that, it does not mean I fit society's definition of a true American girl. We should not assume based on looks, race, or ideals. Yes, I have no option but to hide my culture to save me from the never-ending cycle of what is called adversity and harassment. However, I have never been as proud of my culture and where I come from. When I turn 18, I will make the daring choice to become an American citizen or a Brazilian citizen. What choice I make is unknown; I do know, however, that whichever one I make will sincerely have an impact on how I carry the definition of myself. This is my voice - or as they say in Brazil, voz - and I am not afraid to speak. **I am a Brazilian-American.**