**SCHOLARSHIP ESSAY EXAMPLE**

Prompt: “Preservation of one's own culture does not require contempt or disrespect for other cultures.” - Cesar Chavez. What does it mean to you to be part of a minority community? What challenges has it brought and how have you overcome them? What are the benefits? \* (No more than 400 words)

Being part of a minority is very conflicting for me as I feel both empowered as a part of a Haitian minority community but also disconnected from my non-immigrant peers. Coming from a background of poverty in Haiti, I knew that, even at a very young age, I had to be a good student in order to succeed. This work ethic--found throughout my Haitian community--has been very beneficial in my life as we all came here to pave ourselves a better future. As my mom held two jobs, went to college, and was temporarily homeless just to secure me a better future, I feel invigorated to be part of such an indefatigable community. And, it is because of this strong work ethic, central to my community’s core values, that I am now the salutatorian of a class of 679 students.

As I was so young when I came to the US, I didn’t know how American society functioned, specifically elementary school. I was the only immigrant in a class of forty, barely spoke English, and had no friends because of these limitations. Every day of those first few years, I felt an almost physical divide between my peers and myself. I never experienced a sense of belonging, despite my efforts. Already a double minority as a woman and a Black person, I tried to relinquish my language and culture in favor of American language and values to better fit in the crowd. By doing this, however, I almost completely lost my cultural identity as both a Haitian and an immigrant, and also my language.

It was in the halls of my first high school, International Studies Charter High School, that I realized the enormity of what I had lost. Where my peers retained their cultural identities and language, I had almost lost mine. It was there, I learned to embrace a part of me that was virtually buried inside, as I was encouraged to be more open: speaking Creole with my Haitian math teacher and peers. As a senior, I now volunteer weekly helping Haitian ESOL students with their homework. I am both a teacher and a student in that small classroom as I help them with their homework, and, in return, they help me in perfecting my use of Creole. They are my daily reminder of what unites us as Haitians—our ability to triumph in the face of adversity.