Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515–4707

Seattle University
901 12th Ave
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U.S. Institute for Scholars on Contemporary American Literature
Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs
The U.S. Department of State

July 2, 2018

Dear Members of the U.S. Institute for Scholars on Contemporary American Literature,

Thank you for having Congresswoman Jayapal’s office here today to share a few remarks. Tonight’s dinner is a unique opportunity in our nation’s current political environment to celebrate the benefits of a strong inter-cultural exchange. The Congresswoman came to this country when she was 16 years old to attend Georgetown University, another prestigious Jesuit school. Born in India and leaving at age 4, the Congresswoman grew up in Indonesia and Singapore, developing an accent that couldn’t be pinned down to any place.

Her lived experiences show that our cultures give us a unique window into other ways of understanding and highlight our similarities instead of our differences. The Congresswoman became an immigrant, civil and human rights advocate, then the first South Asian elected to the Washington State Legislature and the only woman of color in the Washington State Senate, and then was elected in 2016 to the United States Congress. Literature has often been a driving force for the Congresswoman and has helped her cultivate her understanding of others, and most importantly, of ourselves. What we believe in, why, and the type of person we want to be, can all be attributed to the poetry and literature we consume. The sheer diversity of experiences we are surrounded by in America is the defining quality of what makes our country great.

These are difficult times for immigrants and for Americans across our country. This administration has harnessed the fear and prejudice that has accompanied every wave of immigrants in United States history, and stoked those fears to further the President’s own agenda. Our office is committed to values of inclusivity and opportunity for all. Immigration is about more than just who comes here and who can stay. Please know our office is proud to be amongst you to celebrate this openness and to emphasize its importance for the future of all in this room, no matter where you call home. Thank you again for being here and please know that you are always welcomed back.

Sincerely,

The Office of Pramila Jayapal
Washington State’s 7th Congressional District
The United States House of Representatives