

## **My Father Was a US Citizen**

When I started junior high school, my feelings for my parents changed. They were different. They talked funny. They gave me different foods. I felt ashamed. I even had a funny name.

One day after school, some mean kids started bullying me. They were calling me names and hitting me.

I thought it would never end. I didn't even know what half the names meant, but I cried as I ran home. I locked myself in the bathroom. Those bullies should not have done that. But what could I do?

My father asked me what was wrong. He gave me a hug.\* He asked me what was the matter and told me to tell him.

I told him about leaving school and the bullies and how they hit me and called me mean names. And then I waited for my father to go out and find the parents of the bullies and make sure they were punished. But he didn't do anything.

Then my father tried to comfort me. He called the bullies cowards who would pick on anyone who was different.

I told him I hated being Italian. I want to be something else.

My father grabbed me and seemed to get mad. He started yelling at me and began telling me about all the wonderful things Italians had done in art, literature, and architecture. He told me I should be proud to be an Italian and an American too.

I told him I wanted to be the same as everybody else.

He disagreed. He said that everyone was different. That's not how it was meant to be. He asked me if I wanted to be just like the bullies.

I had to admit that I did not.

He told me to stop crying and to be proud instead. There will always be bullies. Don't be afraid of them. Be brave.

Eventually, I stopped crying and my father gave me a snack. From this experience I learned that you should be proud of who you are and where you come from.