Acknowledgments

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Poetry

First Place Awards
Claire Matway
9th Grade, Pittsburgh CAPA 6-12
“For a Day the Air is New”
Taylor Randall
11th Grade, The Neighborhood Academy
“How in the World”

Runner-Up Awards
DeAsia Davidson
11th Grade, The Neighborhood Academy
“White Face”
Aaron Holness
11th Grade, The Neighborhood Academy
“I Come From”
Arbil Lopez
11th Grade, Pittsburgh CAPA 6-12
“Somewhere Close to Georgia”
Kaitlin Manion
10th Grade, Pittsburgh CAPA 6-12
“My History Home”

Honorable Mentions
Ekin Erkan
9th Grade, Pittsburgh CAPA 6-12
“Crossroad Complexion”
Amanda Lawson
12th Grade, The Neighborhood Academy
“Past, Present, and Future”
Alison Malehorn
11th Grade, Pittsburgh CAPA 6-12
“Blue Scarf”

it just put hate, anger and sorrow in me. When I was thirteen, someone called me a racial slur on the ice and I lost it. I threw my stick and punched a kid in the face. My team knew what was going on, but the parents and the coaches were so upset with me because of what I did. Even though I was wrong for hitting the kid, I was just so angry and tired of hearing those things said to me. My coaches did nothing if I told them what people said to me.

Martin Luther King was right, that people are going to say things and do things to us as black people to make us seem inferior to them. I just don’t understand why.
"Discrimination is a hellhound that gnaws at Negroes in every waking moment of their lives to remind them that the lie of their inferiority is accepted as truth in the society dominating them."

Discrimination: an act or instance of discriminating. Discrimination occurs every day in every walk of life. It doesn't matter if you're White, Black, Asian, Indian or Spanish. People find ways to discriminate against you. In this case however, Martin Luther King was speaking about Negroes or African-Americans, a race of people who have been discriminated against ever since their arrival in North America. They were sold into slavery, where they might never have seen their friends, family or homeland ever again. As slaves they were beaten and not even seen as human beings. Not as another living, breathing, 46-chromosomed human beings. The states didn't even count these "Negros" as a full person; they were seen as a 3/5 of a person. That means it takes almost two Africans to make one person, that "person" being white.

After slavery, came the time of segregation and civil rights where Martin Luther King, Jr. became famous for the protests and his nonviolent views on ways to gain rights for African-Americans. These people were discriminated against just because of the color of their skin. They say beauty is only skin deep; well, so is skin color. The blacks in America were discriminated against in many ways such as by not being able to sit at the counter at restaurants, having to use different bathrooms and water fountains, sitting in the back of the bus, sitting on different benches. What was all of this for to make the blacks feel inferior or to put them back in their place. I may recognize you as a living creature, but you're nothing more to me than a dog. No, a dog is better than you.

Today, discrimination is more subtle. People say things to you that you may not catch on to, unless you take time to think on what is said. They might have had some sort of discriminative meaning to what they said. This summer, I worked at a summer camp in Carrollton, Ohio which, is in a small, predominately white town. The Junior Counselors of which I was a part, went into Carrollton to do laundry and to relax and hangout. We went to Dairy Queen where they have a bush that is the only place in Carrollton to get AT&T cell service. My friends and I were out there talking to our friends and family, while I was standing behind the bush, in front of a window where people could see me. I was wearing my Obama shirt and talking to my mom, when two women from Dairy Queen who worked there asked me to come out of the window because I was making the other customers feel uncomfortable. I didn't think much of it because I would think it was weird if I saw someone standing in a window. When I told my friends what happened, Nic, an administrator at the camp, heard what had happened and asked the Dairy Queen workers why I wasn't allowed to be out there. They said a woman was scared because I was in the window. So Nic calmly went over to the women and told her that I was just talking on the phone and that we wouldn't be coming back to Dairy Queen again. So we boycotted Dairy Queen. I didn't think much of it at the time. But when I went back to my cabin and thought about the situation, I realized that I had been discriminated against because of my skin color. Because I looked different, people are going to look and treat me different. But I didn't expect it to happen at a place where I pay money to eat ice cream and have a good time with my friends, a place where I can just relax and have to worry about being discriminated against.

Things like this bother me but because I was raised that people are going to discriminate against me because of my color and say things and assume things about me, believe in stereotypes, that I shouldn't get upset and angry.

Like I did when I was younger during hockey. Kids on the opposing teams called me so many names when I was younger, and I didn't know why. All I wanted to do was play hockey and have fun—not be called a Nigger, a porch monkey, or cousin, not have people tell me to go back to Africa or say they're going to lynch me. Stuff like that when I was younger angered so much that
of high school, I was walking to a free concert in the park with a friend of mine to see a local hip-hop artist one afternoon, when a police car passed us on the street. My friend and I began to joke about how the police car was actually after me, as I was black and my friend was white. To our surprise the squad car turned around and stopped in front of us in the street. My emotions could only be characterized as stunned with fear as I heard two white police officers ask us if they "could talk to us for a minute." Scared and confused my friend and I slowly asked what the reason was and how we were involved. They asked us to walk into the street and place out hands on the trunk of the squad car. As I sheepishly walked over to the police vehicle, I began to put my hands in my pockets and was met with the screams of the male officer to, “Get your hands away from your pockets!” I was scared and humiliated as they began to search my body for weapons of any sort and the only sounds I could utter were the words, “Sir, what happened? What did we do?” After being ignored three or four times, we were informed that there had been a shooting at the park earlier and that we “fit the description.”

I was dumbfounded; I never believed that in my lifetime I would hear words as terrifying as those. I was reminded of TV shows, movies and stories where young black men would be arrested or wrongfully murdered with only the crime of fitting a description. I was a young black man in a residential area, dressed in a pair of blue jeans and a lacrosse camp T-shirt; I didn’t realize I was so threatening. I was scared, I was offended, I thought of my mother who came to America from apartheid South Africa; I thought of my father who was raised on the south side of Chicago. I wondered what they would do in my situation, but I felt helpless; in that moment I thought of the civil rights movement, of Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, and the Black Panther Party. I thought of horror stories of racist police officers shooting down young black men only for the reason of being black. As the officer ran his hands up the inside and outside of my pant legs, my arms, chest, and waistband, I saw a crowd begin to form; I saw three more squad cars arrive as backup. It was my first major run-in with the law and indisputably the most embarrassing moment of my life.

After interrogating us I was able to breathe again, releasing us because they were convinced that we actually were not the culprits of the shooting at Mellon Park. In my quest for enlightenment in the field of stereotypes and race relations in America, this was a groundbreaking moment. This warm summer afternoon it was substantiated in my mind that racism still existed in America and that it was a major problem. It cast a shadow on my opinions of racism and stereotypes and my attempts to beat them. It dawned on me that the way that I saw myself was not nearly as important as the way that people perceived me. Racism is clearly still around and is cemented in my mind by the fact that eight police men had to stop two young boys, only for the reason that one was young and black. Incredible steps have been taken towards the end of racism, but although integration has already become part of our society, eliminating racial stereotypes is the next big step towards social equality, and that’s monumentally more difficult.
Many expectations come with being black in America today, the stereotypes that have been enforced since African people were enslaved in this country. Stereotypes play a large part in the psych of American society; whether you are black, white, Latino, or Asian, there is an image that you are expected to encompass and live up to. In my life this simple fact has had two sides to it, it seems as if living up to these stereotypes is just as condemning as rebelling against them, my life has been a clear example of this truth.

Being raised in a black household had an undisputable effect on my personality as I grew up; with my older brother as a role model, I grew up absorbing what was African American culture. With my brother and his African American friends’ influence I grew up listening to, wearing, and speaking like an African American was expected to in America, not because I felt like it was who I was, but because I felt it was what I needed to do because of what I was. I was force-fed the latest fashions, the newest and most popular music, and taught that to be cool, one must “act black.” This part of me was fiercely combated by where I was raised, a primarily white community, and the school I attended where the majority was white as well.

I would attend school everyday being one of the three African American students in my class, and I would live up to being one of the lone black students. I aimed to be the one to show off the urban music I listened to, or the latest fad in clothing to all of my white friends who didn’t quite understand. I would go out of my way to flaunt the slang I was taught by my African American friends from outside of school. It was only midway through middle school when I took the time to contemplate why I spoke the way I did, and the influence of the music I listened to and why I wore jeans two sizes too large and shirts that hung low to my knees. This was a crucial turning point in my life where I decided that I didn’t want to be the stereotype that those around me expected me to be, that I would take this moment of realization to change and decide for myself who I wanted to be.

From those I knew well this break from the stereotype set by society was well received, but from black friends of mine there was a definite and immediate alienation. By not “acting black,” it was accepted that I was “acting white” and therefore was not cool. Unfortunately these relationships were unable to be revived.

Stereotypes are obviously present in America, and stereotypes lead to racism. In my break from black urban culture I felt as if disassociating myself from the stereotypes of black people relieved me from the racism that went with it. My friends stopped viewing me as their black friend and began to see me only as their friend. But where this new persona of mine helped me to identify with those who I really wanted to identify myself with, it estranged me from all else. Upon meeting people for the first time, they would see my skin color and be surprised by my refined speech. They would ask me why I spoke so well or be confused by the music I enjoyed to listen to. These questions of my character were as piercing to me as any racist comment, as it was blatant racism. By acting black all I was doing was enforcing an age old stereotype and prolonging racist thoughts toward African Americans, and by not acting black I was met with disapproval and dirty looks. Black people I would meet would take one look at me and see that I was different, and think less of me for it. It took me quite a while to accept who I am and not become offended by either side, what they saw me as and what was expected from me.

In my indistinctness in deciding what race’s characteristic’s I would most like to possess, I began to disassociate myself from my race, to be whatever I wanted to be without the burden of my skin color deciding who I was. The people I surrounded myself with embraced my racial independence and I felt like stereotypes and racism were things that could never affect me again, until I was shocked back into reality. I had been told many stories from my father about instances of racism against him and the disadvantages that his race brought with it when he was a child, but I had never encountered such circumstances until one day in the summer before my junior year
For a Day the Air is New
Claire Matway

We trundle along in our yellow school bus, eighth-graders with the world high above our heads. Hot sun blows through our open windows with the last breezes of spring, gloriously harsh light on rough, potholed streets. We’re seated as usual; a cluster of black kids in the rear, white kids sprinkled along the middle, a few mixed groups in the front. The day smells like new leaves and we breathe it in. Someone says, “Hey!”

Here, a sudden shift in the atmosphere’s texture! Here, words move like paper airplanes: “Hey, you—white kids! Come back here!” choruses from the black kids in back, and we turn around, grinning.

“Why’re none of you back here? Come on!” they say. The season changes and it is time for our migration—“Yeah, let’s go!” we yell, and stumble through the congested aisle, brown rubber of the seats slick under our palms.

We smash in five to a seat, shouting back and forth, exploding in laughter, skin warm in the air. Reorganize the layout, destroy the map! We are together for today; if only for today, our own voices have allowed us to break the rules. When the bus’ tires slow against the gray of the road, we surge outside, blinking sunlight into our eyes, then walk to the school’s doors in a quickly formed chain (black, white, black, white), holding hands and singing, singing—we are young, we are spring-filled, we are spirit-filled, we are eighth-graders with the world high above our heads; we are linked together and we are laughing.

six-hundred and forty-four before she became too weak and passed away. But the people of the same nursing home would not let her cranes go to waste, for they finished the rest of the cranes and made a statue dedicated to her. I saw this statue because it was behind the memorial and I had never seen such a beautiful statue in my life. By the time I reached Sadako’s display, I had experienced a great deal of the suffrage of Hiroshima, and now I realized that I was destined to arrive at Hiroshima ever since I was a child.

When my mother and I exited, we walked towards the T-Bridge where the bomb had been dropped. As we walked along the river, we saw an artist who was painting a building. When I looked closer, I saw that the building he was painting was nearly destroyed, and I realized that this was one of the few buildings that withstood the atomic bomb. It had been an old building with a dome top but was now only half of what it used to be. We reached the T-Bridge and I closed my eyes and imagined what the atmosphere was like back then. The screams and pain that must have radiated from the city scared me. I had not been nervous before, but I certainly was now. I had not known the horror that Hiroshima had been put through because of America. I was now afraid that the Japanese hated me. I would have thought I could have sensed it, but in all my time there I could not sense any rage from Japanese. I say this because not a single Japanese person looked at me with anger or hate, but just wonder.

Though the rage might have been gone, the fear still remained in some. My mother and I boarded a ferry to take us to an island where one of the most famous Japanese gates stood. The man who worked the ferry sat with us and happily conversed asking us about ourselves. My mother asked him for his help to get us back to the train stations to catch the bullet train. He smiled and said he would be more than glad to help us. Then he asked us where we were from, assuming we were Canadian. When my mother told him, his persona altered. He was no longer smiling, and his eyes grew wide. He pardoned himself and retreated to the upper deck. I looked at my mother and asked her why he did that and she told me because she said we were Americans.

We left the ferry and walked around the island to see the gate and then returned half an hour later to the ferry. The man stood waiting for us, and on our approach he shifted where he was standing. We told him our train was going to leave in ten minutes, and we needed his help to get back. At this he seemed to have forgotten his fear for Americans, because he ran with us upstairs, downstairs and over railings in order to get us to our train. We caught our train just in time, and I never forgot the kind man who overcame his fear to help us when we needed it. I found it hard to believe that one man was scared of my nationality when I was intimidated by his. When he took the time to humanize us, to see us for the people, we were and not where we came from he knew that there was no reason for him to not help us.

Through my experiences in Japan with Mochan and the kind ferry worker, I believe that Martin Luther King’s words not only relate to black and white, but to all races.

"Let us all hope that the dark clouds of racial prejudice will soon pass away and the deep fog of misunderstanding will be lifted from our fear drenched communities, and in some not too distant tomorrow the radiant stars of love and brotherhood will shine over our great nation with all their scintillating beauty."

Mochan had already taken King’s words to heart, whether he knew them or not. He had overcome the “racial prejudice” and welcomed it into his home with his warm, smiling face. Others, such as the ferry man, were still living in the "fear drenched communities" and had to see through his "fog of misunderstanding" in order to see the "stars of love and brotherhood." The ferry man did see through his fog, and I thought it was one of the bravest events I have witnessed in my life. I saw the transformation from a fearful person to a racial accepting person, and that has always, and will always, stay with me. When I was born on August 6th, I became linked to the suffering civilians of Hiroshima, and I was destined to understand and experience their sorrows.
foreign place. They did not know Japanese and hardly knew where they were going. Mochan successfully brought together these twenty people, including my mother and me. Thus, his new family of twenty shared a small Japanese home with one bathroom and no air conditioning in the summer. During the day Mochan would take his family to beautiful places that tourist would never normally go to, and at night we would all wind down with chocolate fondu. In all honesty, without Mochan, we would never have found some of the most magnificent places in Japan. In the four adventurous days with Mochan my mother and I traveled to an authentic tea ceremony where we had to drink bitter green tea and a delicious flower that tasted purely of sugar. We visited gushing waterfalls, and ate lunch across from Mount Fuji, which was completely covered by clouds. We attended a Japanese fireworks show where we took four long tables and placed them in the middle of a field and brought enough food to serve the fifty people that joined us. My favorite part of the whole trip was living with Mochan and making the friends I did there, and I will never forget the kind and open hearted man who took all of us in as his family.

The part of Japan I anticipated the most was Hiroshima. I never made the connection until I entered the memorial that I was a Caucasian American who was born on August 6th, the anniversary of the day the atomic bomb was dropped in Hiroshima. The exhibit began with a quote, "A dragonfly flitted in front of me and stopped on a fence. I stood up, took my cap in my hands, and was about to catch the dragonfly when..." The fact that Hiroshima had no idea of the horror that was in store for them until it had already happened made me realize that I was in for an overwhelming memorial. Up till this point I had not known that the memorial would change my view or feelings about what happened at Hiroshima, but it did.

I walked through the memorial and I could feel the angst and sorrow that poured from the words and figures that it brought me to tears. I felt guilty. I knew I had personally had done nothing wrong but I could not help but feel as though my nationality had caused another so much pain. I had never seen a memorial so devastating as the one I saw in Hiroshima. In two displays along the wall there were two personal items in clear boxes, a set of children's wooden shoes and a lunch box. I walked over and read the stories that followed and I felt my eyes tear up. The lunch box was damaged and blackened and was full of burnt food that had been made by a young boy's mother, the story stated, who never saw her child again. In the next container the children's shoes were worn out and a slightly destroyed. The story informed its readers that these shoes were found next to a set of a child's clothes and a burnt body. The personal influence in the exhibit made me wish that this had never happened to Hiroshima.

The memorial had models of what the city looked like before and after the bomb, and this is the part that was burned in my mind. On a huge circular display they had a model of Hiroshima before the bomb was dropped. It was a beautiful city with gorgeous flowing rivers, small cozy houses, and high intricate buildings that touched the sky. The table next to it showed a much changed city. It looked as though someone had taken a blow torch and went over the city with it, except the buildings were not just melted, but disintegrated. The model showed only nine buildings that had parts of them left; the rest was all ashes.

Not only did they show what the buildings looked like, but also the people. As I turned the corner of the exhibit, I stopped dead. I stared at the display for at least five seconds before my eyes started to burn. What I saw made me shiver; the mannequins were of a small child holding onto his mother whose face was crying with a distorted face. The problem with the mannequins was that their skin was melting off their body. The bomb had turned everything within reach so hot that even the skin of people melted and started to drip off them.

As my mother and I reached the end, there was one more exhibit that was there. It was of a young girl named Sadako who had gotten leukemia from the bomb's radiation. However, I had not needed the exhibit to tell me this because I had already read about Sadako and her thousand paper cranes when I was young. I could not believe that not only was I born the day of the bomb, but I had read an inspiring book about it before I even knew what it was. Sadako, after she developed leukemia, lived in a nursing home and passed the time by folding paper cranes. It was a myth that if you folded a thousand paper cranes you got one wish. Sadako managed to fold only

**How in the World**

Taylor Randall

So check this, one day I’m watching the *Tyra Banks Show*

And there was this girl on her show right

Tell me why she said she doesn’t like black people

I’m thinking to myself how in the world do you not like black people when you’re black?

I’ve never heard of somebody being racist toward their own race

My face turned all types of ways

If I was there I would have wanted to say to that lady

Listen here woman, I don’t know why you don’t like black people but newsflash you’re black

But I sat there and watched it

And heard what she was saying

She said to Tyra she hates being in the same place with black people

She hates being in the same aisle shopping with us

But what in the world have black people done to her?

I want to know so badly

What frightens her so much about black people that she hates us?

Is it wrong for a woman to be racist against her own race?

I mean, people like what they like

And dislike what they dislike
Walking down the street
Four white men corner me
Wanting to take my shoes off my feet
And beat me
I looked up and started to pray
Lord let these crazy men go away
But no they decided to stay
They wanted to play and have their fun
With spray cans and guns
They turned my face into white in just one night
Put the gun to my head and said if I let out one word
That’s your life
I ran home so fast and washed the paint off
Cried and cried until the morning sun
Began to soak up what was rest of my life
I refuse to let this happen again
Everyone else is speaking upon
Their past
But I would rather let it go
So I decided to speak at last.

My mother and I stood at the doors of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial; I could feel the intensity creeping through the doors, urging me inside. I knew there was no turning back now; I had been destined to travel to Hiroshima at some point in my life. The fact is I am a Caucasian American who was born on August 6th, the anniversary of the day that the atomic bomb struck Hiroshima, Japan.

The story behind how I arrived at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial was a life-long build up. As a young girl when an adult asked me when my birthday was I would respond, "August 6th" with a cheerful smile. They would look at me and turn to my mother and ask, "Isn’t that:-?” but my mother would never let them finish. I approached my mother and asked out of curiosity if anything event worthy had happened on August 6th, when she nodded and said a bomb was dropped I thought it was rather unexciting. I hardly gave the bomb another thought, for I did not grasp the true importance and devastation that the event held until I was much older.

A few months before my sixteenth birthday my mother and I were at a jewelry store looking at merchandise. I was eyeing a star necklace with an inlaid gorgeous, light blue stone and a silver ring with a periidot heart in the center. I was having difficulties deciding which one I wanted to purchase when I asked my mother if I could possibly get both the necklace and a ring. She looked at me and smiled and said, "Well, if I get you both, I guess we can't go to Japan.” It took me a moment or two to register what she had told me. Going to Japan was one of the dreams that I never thought I would accomplish in my life, but here was my mother telling me that I would. When I asked her if she was serious, she laughed and she nodded her head. My mother bought me the ring and necklace, and to this day every time I look at them, all I can do is smile and remember the day where my dream came true. On July 21St, 2008, I left for Tokyo, Japan.

I kept a journal throughout my trip, and as I was flipping through the pages I noticed a line, "Japan is not what I expected it looks like Pittsburgh but somehow different." I read that line now and make the connection that truly nowhere is too different to not be similar. In Japan there are cities with large skyscrapers that reach towards the gorgeous blue sky; schools with buzzing students and shopping stores with loquacious shoppers. There was an aroma of food roaming the air that seemed to make me always hungry for more delicious gourmet. The heat from the radiant sun was so overpowering that I realized that having a personal fan and a handkerchief was a necessity. I could not help myself from smiling; as I looked around I knew that there was a sense of Pittsburgh in Tokyo.

Not only are nations similar, but so are people. Going to a new place should normally excite people or make them nervous. It is true, I was deeply excited, but I was neither nervous nor scared. I was intimidated. I was not used to being surrounded by a different nationality; I was too comfortable with being exposed to mostly Caucasians. When I was in Japan, I was one of the only Caucasians for miles around. For once I was the different one. When my mother and I were riding the escalator to the trains, I took a moment to look around, and all I saw were hundreds of deep brown eyes staring back at me. When their inquiring eyes gazed at me with my light hair, pale skin, and blue eyes, I blushed a deep pink. I was not used to being the attraction of a crowd.

After Tokyo, we traveled to Shizouka to live with a Japanese man, Mochan who has his own business called the Wish Club. He named it this because his wish was to bring as many diverse people to his home to stay with him and learn all about them. Mochan was the most welcoming, sweetest man I encountered during my time in Japan. He always wore a headband pulling back his long black hair, and he was always smiling and laughing. I lost my feeling of intimidation from my time with him, because this section of the trip I had never felt so at home. I lived with people from all around the world: Poland, China, Korea, Canada, Germany, Israel, Switzerland, Sweden, and France. These people were just like me, because they were exploring a
communicate with him was through body language and some words from Russian dictionary. One day we went to grocery store to buy vegetables, snacks, and meats. Unfortunately, we didn't know how to say cucumber in Russian, snacks in Russian, or pork in Russian. We believed with the house owner's help, we could buy these things. So we went to the grocery store with him. Every time we bought each item, we taught him what those were called in Korean. Even though he did not pronounce the words fluently, he was excited to speak and learn Korean. More and more we taught him Korean, more and more he tried to use Korean words to communicate with us. There was a strong connection growing between him and us.

As we were getting along well with the house owner, we prepared to help the poor people of the town. We decided to paint some houses and clean up the roads. We tried to make the kids smile. And lastly, we worked to share Korean culture with Russian-Koreans, so that they could learn about their native culture.

We painted three Korean-Russians' houses. Whenever we were there, the house owners appreciated us by saying thank you in Korean. It was the only sentence they could say in Korean. It was so impressive thinking that they practiced the sentence to say it to us. This made us feel even happier to help them. Although it was a hard work to paint a house, from their support we were able to finish each house with joy and love.

We prepared clothes, food, games to make kids happier. One day, a kid was crying, so I turned into an elephant to stop his crying. I've never felt that stupid before. I learned that trying to get kids to smile is not easy. However, whenever I saw them smiling, I felt like I was also happy like them. We were not just adults who were only there to help the kids, but were there to become their new friends. I still remember the day one Russian-Korean kid invited me to his house. He was about six years old. I could not forget his name if I tried. His name was Dlanya. After I played with him and gave him clothes, he pulled my arms. At first I did not understand what he was doing, but after I followed him, I knew he was taking me to his home. There was a chicken in his house. He ran in front of the chicken and grabbed an egg. He then ran back and gave the egg to me with a full smile. I did not know what to say at that time. He knew that I was helping him and wanted to show his appreciation by giving me the egg. It was the most valuable gift I have ever received.

On the last day of our trip, we invited all the Russian-Koreans to a party. We sang traditional Korean songs, and prepared Korean traditional food for them. They were all impressed by our performances and the food. We were not only sharing the food but also sharing our feelings. Even though we did not speak the same language, we could communicate somehow and smile at each other. I believed this was because we had had the same Korean ancestors. Despite their never having lived in Korea and never having spoken Korean, their ancestors were the same as ours. We looked the same and felt the same way. All the members were happy that our plans worked well to get close to Russian-Koreans. We could never forget this memory from experiencing the true voluntary service. Even though the diversity of race could feel difficult to get close to them, from this experience, I have learned there is always a way to get close to each other. They may have been Russian-Koreans, but they were pure Koreans in our hearts.

I Come From
Aaron Holness

I come from races that determine the fastest bike. I come from the constant cleaning and practice that gives the rider hope on first place. I come from winning after failing and failing some more, failing is in my blood it makes me stronger, and it makes work fun. I come from humiliation after getting the math problem wrong. I come from the doubts and shouts from my voice. I come from making the right choice, letting the right choice earn me less break time, and fewer clothes in the winter, while the summertime soldier gets it lightly, but weigh him down heavily. I come from evolution, the transformation that changes you like Pokémon, and makes you stronger than anyone except HM. I come from many things all swimming around like an abstract painting. Pinpointing to where I come from will narrow my definition by 4 letters, look at the whole and you will find a trillion.
Somewhere Close to Georgia
Arbil López

I can’t distinguish Virginia from North Carolina, and I don’t think I could then, either. It was one long plain of barns, horses, colors so rich they looked like you could dig into them with a brush or a spoon. I don’t remember days, just evenings; the sun ladled out like honey as it sank behind the strip malls, the purple parking lots turning to fields as the light faded.

At one point there was a reunion for a family that wasn’t ours, black faces and white smiles, our own skin rosy and jarring in the crowd. Everyone had accents, thick and sweet, and there was an entire table for pies. Red, orange, a purple darker than nighttime, glittering under lacework crusts. Someone’s mother told me we had to eat the open-faced one quick, before the flies go to it and it was ruined. I fell asleep in her lap before anyone even started eating, and she and my mother sang songs so sad and beautiful I could hear them in my sleep.

There was a lake in the backyard and I took off my clothes and jumped in just like the rest of the kids, my body the only one that glittered when we jumped into the sun. When we came back to the party I was covered in red mosquito welts, but I couldn’t see them on anyone else. They told me they were there, and one girl took my hand and placed it on her shoulder. I felt the red, knew she would pick and scratch at it for the next week as well. They were roasting a whole pig

Equal Souls with Equal Ancestors
Yongsu Ryoo

“Preechiett, Gggagghbs Jaubut.” I could not understand a single word when I got to Vladivostok. “What am I supposed to do? I should’ve brought a dictionary.” I was totally confused. I saw a person who looked like a Korean, so I ran in front of him quickly as if I had found an oasis in the middle of a desert. Of course, I was speaking Korean.

“Excuse me sir, are you here for voluntary service? I am looking for the members. Could you help me find them? I can’t speak any Russian,” I pleaded.

“Oh! Are you Yongsu? We were all looking for you. We were supposed to meet outside,” he answered.

“Thank god, I thought you left already. You have saved my life.” I was relieved. After all the voluntary members got on the bus, I was thinking about the reason why I was in Russia. When I thought about Russia, the first impression I could come up with were coldness and snow. Also, I usually didn’t think of poverty when I thought of Russia, so who was I supposed to help? People who came to Russia all applied for volunteering service for this organization called Copion. It is a well known volunteer organization in Korea. It usually helps the poor around the world including Russia, China, Philippine, and Thailand. However, unique system about this organization was that the members created their own ideas to help people. We had an online meeting and talked about the things we were supposed to bring. There were about fifteen members. Half of the members were high students including me. The other half was college students.

While we were at bus, I asked one of members who sat next to me. “I thought Russia is cold in summer time, but why is it not cold? And to tell you the truth, I’m wondering who are we going to help in here?”

“Well, as we are in Vladivostok it is not as cold as Moscow. The weather is almost similar to where you come from. At first, I was also confused about who we were going to help in Russia, so I’ve searched Vladivostok and its history. We are here to help our people.”

I could not understand what he was talking about. How could we help our people in Russia? It was a totally different country with a different language, land, people, and culture. “What do you mean our people? This is Russia, not Korea,” I asked with curiosity.

“When Stalin controlled Russia, his main goal was to make the land prosperous. In order to achieve it, he brought Koreans to Russia by force because he knew people in Korea were good at farming. Since then, people with our blood have stayed in Russia specifically in Vladivostok,” he replied.

He also told me that Koreans in Vladivostok live in poverty. They do not have wealthy lives. This circumstance made me feel sympathetic towards our people. Also, I was curious to see what they would look like and how they would speak.

After thirty minutes, we arrived at small town. One word came to my mind right after I got there: “countryside.” Cows, ducks, and all kinds of animals moved across the road. Some people were walking with their bare feet. Some were walking around without shirts on. Kids were running around. However, when I looked closely at them, the clothes they wore were ripped and dirty. The houses were unpainted and covered in cracks. I understood why the members chose this place for volunteer service. As a result, we all gathered and to share ideas for how to help people in the town. We stayed in a Russian-Korean’s house. Before our members came here, other members had supported the building of a house for one of Russian-Koreans. Since then, when any volunteer members came, he not only let them stay but also cooked lunch and dinner for them. Consequently, we were able to stay his house.

When we all met the owner of the house we were all surprised. As we knew he was Russian-Korean, we were expecting a guy who looked Russian. However, he was a Korean who looked exactly the same as us. Here was a Korean guy speaking Russian. The only way to

As I reflect upon these moments and memories, I see only prejudice. Be it my own, that of those in my own family, that of distant relatives, or that which caused a war, Dr. King would not have condoned a single action taken herein. Racism and prejudice is not limited only to America, and it not only done by those who do not write essays about racism. It is ubiquitous; it is omnipresent; it is invisible. Behind these eyes, in the temple of my mind, lies prejudice that does not want to come out, and, if it does, be it in war, in a bazaar, in a simple handshake, it is still prejudice that Dr. King would have fought vehemently against with every iota of his strength.

under a tent,
and in the house there was a parrot
that ate vegetable chips
and swore if you told it to.
I was hugged goodbye
by what seemed like an entire state,
dark limbs darker in the twilight,
a million soft voices
hushing me to sleep.
When we left the air was damp
and the fields were purple.
I didn’t know where we were going,
but there were parakeets in the trees
all the way to Georgia.
There are cracks in my front steps, there are scrapes on the brick. The carpet is old, the paint is thick. It’s a collage of every era it’s survived. Victorian, Roaring 20s, The Great Depression, World War II, Civil Rights Woodstock, Disco, Hairspray, Grunge, and Technology. It’s stained with wood paneling, greased with hairspray stains in the bathroom. The beds have plaid pillowcases, Jimi Hendrix fills the record player. The library is filled with speeches and books and history. Overlooking the fireplace is Dr. King. He wears an expression as if to say, “Hello, how are you?” He watches you, his eyes follow you, they light up when you pull out his favorite books. Then the gunshots go off and Dr. King shakes his head right when the sirens sound.

4. East Jerusalem, Jerusalem (where the New City keeps its lowest caste),
East Jerusalem was once separated from the west by a wall; where it stood, there is a neighborhood called the Seam. The Seam now stands a gentrified neighborhood full of shopping carts and condos and mistreated in khafias. Women wearing burqas are sanctioned to the land of the Qur’an.

A sanctioned boy walked past our van; I assumed he was on his way to school. I saw it as a chance to say “They’re just like we are” with one thousand words. I swung up the lens, shooting through a tinted mirror, and, as the click sprung from our van, the boy turned, staring into the lens. Click. Our Israel tour guide turned around; everyone seemed to be silently staring with the sides of their eyes. “It’s best not to take pictures here,” he said, voice low and guiding through the rear view mirror. I put the camera down, a little ashamed.

Through my shame, the penury of the city around me shone through. I watched Arab boys and girls walk by, and, in the temple of my mind I wondered if they were going to a school where they could do nothing but recite the Qur’an. In the temple of my mind I indulged the paranoia of talking heads. I saw their rag-tag clothes and barely-covered feet and I guarded my wallet (still inside the van). I passed the thin line between careful and prejudice. The animosity embraced me.

5. Western Wall, Jerusalem.
The devout men here pray by a section of wall where only men are allowed. We less-observant chosen ones look to them and feel guilty, just as they might like. They daven and they mutter, whispering incantations and arcane hymns of David to the Lord. Rain drips down from the tips of His fingers, hitting the paper yarmulkes of those less devoted. As I go to the wall, as I touch it, I feel nothing. No great revelation from above comes down to strike me like a bolt of lightning. I simply feel guilty.

I do, however, look over to my right. I see the women’s section, considerably smaller and made for the same number of people, and my sister and mother crammed in among covered heads and long sleeves, standing out in their comparatively garish stripes.

Here, the ultra-orthodox stand a foot taller than all others so that they may better look down upon us.

As I take a barely-working elevator to my great-aunt’s apartment, I can recall no memories of her. I know that she was my Grandmother’s sister, and that she also survived the Holocaust, but I also know she wasn’t in the camps—rather, she lived in Budapest. I don’t know which floor to go to. The lights are out at every stop. As the halting contraption finally brings me to the right level, I leave, and there my family stands, waiting for the bags.

The apartment door opens as we approach. A wrinkled woman, wizened by age and experience, stands in the doorway, waiting. She is the only member of my family who would let us hug her that day.

Her Orthodox daughter and granddaughter come to talk and then lunch with us. The daughter would shake hands, and my father was surprised—the last time they met, she turned down his tacit invitation. However, the granddaughter remained pure, untouched by other men. She checked out of conversation, not willing to speak on topics outside of her box. As she left, she looked down at my hand; nothing was said, and nothing was done—what had happened was tacitly understood.

Here, the ultra-orthodox stand a foot taller than all others so that they may better look down upon us.
Behind These Eyes
Ari Schuman

1. Jerusalem, Israel.
“This is my rifle. There are many like it, but this one is mine.”

Tan boys and girls laugh with rifle butts sticking out of the unsure space between their arm and torso. My ever-learned sister reassures me that it’s normal here; everyone carries a gun when they’re on leave—it protects them. I wonder within the temple of my mind just how ubiquitous hatred and suspicion must be for there to be polished Kalishnakovs in every 18-21 year old armpit.

I imagine lines of tan Israeli boys and girls, good Jewish citizens, being handed guns. The shaky ones are simply told, “This is normal,” and the sure ones grit their teeth and stamp their feet, ready to fight. After hours of drilled reassurance, the shaky ones grit their teeth and stamp their feet along with the herd, ready to fight.

The animosity as the servicemen walk by an Arab stand or a grinning Yemeni man (leading his donkey and offering rides) is palpable. Every shot over the border strengthens it. Every rifle butt in an eighteen-year-old’s armpit gives it fresh life.

2. Just Outside the Arab Quarter, Old City.
A small Arab boy pops up from behind an ancient, decrepit truck, a truck that screams sky blue with clouds of rust. I see his teeth.

“Hey! American!” he yells, in his high-pitched Arabic accent.

I turn, thinking my track jacket singles me out from among my family of Americans, and see more than the glimpse I barely caught. Bang. Crack. He’s hitting the side of the truck, trying to get our attention.

“Yeah! You! American!” comes from somewhere, in the same high-pitched Arabic accent.

I shake off the yells. I think, in my quiet prejudice, that he is just trying to get me to buy some hawked goods just like the boy in all the movies. I think, in my quiet prejudice, “Thank God for rifles on leave.” The next ancient archway couldn’t pass over me quickly enough; the animosity had embraced me.

3. Arab Quarter, Old City.
The streets here are strewn with rubbish. The cobblestone roads of this old bazaar reek like the breath of a camel—pungent and acrid, the stench forces me to recoil. I do a little dance to avoid stepping in shit. I avoid the center of the road.

Indentations run through the middle of these ancient streets. The standing water, full of unimaginable bacteria, draws my eye. It’s dark and dirty and I almost want to call it disgusting, but I can’t bring myself to do that—even in the temple of my mind. To many of the wandering tourists here, the water is a microcosm of the Arab quarter.

Shrieks, yells, cries come from corners and catacombs. They all yell as one in a Babel of languages: “For sale!” Open recesses with blinding fluorescent lights guide tourists in and out of religion. Men compromise themselves for thirty shekels in a place where, on principles, city sanitation is not accepted. A scant few Americans venture into the places with scattered light and original wares, and they are simply resented while Yemeni and Saudi visitors are welcomed with open arms.

My brother and I dive into these corners and are pulled back by the scruffs of our necks, being warned of the danger. We don’t see why we can’t walk the winding streets which are only lit by occasional beams of sunlight. We don’t see that our clear markers of Americanism single us out and turn the society against us. In our naivety, our guide says (reiterated later by our mother), we could have been killed—don’t we know what’s going on in Gaza?

Crossroad Complexion
Ekin Erkan

The sepia, caramel swirl of my mother’s skin.
The Arab olive texture, sultry, and swarthy.
Theseinky, coils of luxuriant hair.
Moist black eyes, and long, dreams of eyelashes.

And my father, his narrow, willowy, flushed red snowman nose.
Meager, svelte fingers, ashen and coarse.
Attenuated hair, vibrant gray threads amongs the ever black.
A white man, a pale man, one who easily cooks under the summer sun.

I, the crossroad.
The honey suckle music of harmony allying two cultures.
Accord of two colors.
My stout, lingering nose, yet every greasy skin.
Thick lamb tufts of nut-brown locks.
And my mother’s protruding eyelashes.
My skin is that of peaches, bright crimson at parts, a sweet primrose at others.
I don’t scar under the sun.
I grow brown.
Past, Present, and Future
Amanda Lawson

I come from traveling people with accents
I come from a line of suffering
Physically I come from the hustle and bustle of Steel City
I come from a torn-in-two household
I come from a line of battered and scorned
I come from a line of believers
I come from a line of proud Lawson's and Harris'
I am going to a higher place
I am going to achieve my goals
I am going beyond barriers that stood in the past
I want to go the summer breezes that swayed my ancestors to sleep
I am going the land of milk and honey
I am heading towards success

Summer semester was a nightmare to me. I never got over 80% in any work that required personal analysis and opinions. It was inevitable as I was a "wrong" student who was different. I was definitely a child left behind, a child who could not follow the majority's opinion. I began doubting my academic capabilities, and I could do nothing independently.

My parents' conversation soon came up with an answer: studying in the United States. As a seventh grader who experienced foreign countries only with parents, it was horrifying. However, it took relatively short time for me to decide where to study. I experienced American education in New Zealand and Canada, when I was ten years old. Having faith, I prepared various examinations to get in a school I want.

As I expected, the first class in America drove me into a extreme tension. In spite of such problems I faced in Korea for being different, it took only one week for me to get used to America and start showing unexpected ideas. Ironically, the first chance came from English class, as a project to present my own analysis about a literature.

Because it was a long time ago, I cannot remember the exact writing. Compared to the analysis I presented in Korea in my first class, I was less satisfied because of language barrier. I tried to overcome it by spending more time and effort. I was still afraid of wholly expressing my idea because it was evident that my answer was going to be very different from majority of other analyses.

I was given an advantage of being the last one. I earned extra two days to elaborate my presentation but it did not make a big difference. When I opened my powerpoint presentation file from my email on Mrs. Lee's computer, reaction of my classmates was same to that of my Korean classmates who were shocked. Instead of choosing praising George Orwell for his masterpiece, Animal Farm, I chose to criticize him. It might be accepted as a profanity if I tried in Korea because a middle school student criticizing a great writer is easily thought insane. I challenged that insanity in America. Even though I explained what I truly felt, I did not feel nervous because I did not expect being praised or rewarded by a good grade; that was what I learned from my experience. Technically, I knew it was going to be different, but I could not feel that.

Returning to my seat, I thought, "I did all I could do. If this fail here, I guess my effort to find haven for difference is in vain." When Mrs. Lee was counting all the scores, I heard other students saying: "Wow. That guy obviously doesn't know how things work. What makes he think he is better than Orwell?" I expected such thin 6 and Mrs. Lee gave me grading sheet with criteria. Nothing was written there, but one thing: "Come see me after classes."

All my other classes were in doom. I could not concentrate in math and science classes, my favorite ones. I finished the classes anyway, and I headed to Mrs. Lee's classroom, in excruciating anxiety.

What I heard was extremely shocking. Even though I knew American education aims for different goals compared to Korean education, I could not believe what I heard. Until now, I thank her for encouraging me and playing same role as my parents.

If I faced same consequence as the first day of the Korean class, I might quit American school and give up all my academic passion. However, Mrs. Lee gave me hope and reason to study and keep up with endless endeavor. Like other teachers I have met in the United States, difference meant a possibility to another solution. Being approved with the possibility, I will never forget what she told: "Leo, I have taught students with this book at least for ten years. I have two students who did not just praise the writer for his work but gave very objective view with reasonable supportings. The second one is you. I saw you being emotionally confused. That was your difference with the previous student. Beside advising you to be more confident in yourself, I have only one thing to say to you. I enjoyed listening to your opinion, and I truly appreciate you for giving me another door to Orwell."
As a Korean student who studies in America, I have been asked about reasons why I chose to study in America instead of Korea, where my family lives and my favorite food is. Though I am always saying, "I fit better with the American education system," I cannot tell if that is the true reason for my choice. It is not because of the reason is a lie; I am not sure, however, if that is the primary reason to choose American education over Korean education.

I have been taught that being a little different does not mean being wrong. It took a pretty long time to understand that being different sometimes means expulsion from society. As my parents have encouraged me to think creatively, I have been given various opinions about a seemingly obvious topic, sometimes suggesting significantly unexpected opinions. My parents kept encouraging me even though my opinions are often different from the norms. My teachers in elementary schools liked my way of viewing the world and expressing my ideas. Nevertheless, entering endless competition by entering junior high school, where everybody has to run for same answer and same destination, soon gave me doubt if what I had thought, how I had perceived 'thinking differently' and whether expressing my "eccentric" opinion can be accepted.

Highly interested in their children's education, my parents moved to the educational center of my city, Beomeodong. The area's educational passion has driven up the land prices of the entire area, but my parents did not perceive this as a huge obstacle for my brother and my education. Waiting for result of drawing lots to designate students to junior high schools, my family, including my brother, had eagerly to enter "Kyeongshin High School," which is still recognized as the best junior high school in my city, Daegu. Result was very delightful, as I got permission. However, I was naive to believe that teachers' support of my unexpected opinions would continue.

As Korean schools begin their year in March, I had a "winter assignment." For Korean class, I had to analyze a poem. Fortunately, when I had studied the poem at my old school it was my favorite poem and favorite assignment as I had been praised for my unexpected answers. I spent much time to perfect it, and I could not wait for the first class to present my analysis.

On the first day of class, as my last name was alphabetically third in Korean, I straightened out my thoughts while the first two students were explaining their analyses. Their answers were identical, and so was the teacher's reaction. She was very satisfied and expressed a delight for their effort. When my name was called, I walked up to the board, inserted my USB memory stick, opened my file and finished my preparations. I felt something was wrong. The teacher looked a little upset, and I could see some discomfort in my classmates' faces. I could hear my heartbeat; I just tried to look at my classmates' heads so I would not look into their eyes and lose calmness. I felt the time, two minutes, spent for the presentation was as long as the flights now I take back to Korea from Pittsburgh.

When I finished the presentation and stepped down, my teacher was seriously confused. She did not know what to say. After thinking for a minute, she told me something very shocking. "Your answer is very different from what I have expected, and from the previous two students. I see some efforts from your work. However, you are working in a significantly wrong direction. You had better get some extra help with me to correct your way of thinking."

I was shocked. Literally, I was too shocked to say something in front of 80 eyes staring at me. All I could do was say, "OK, I understand. Thank you," pulling out my memory stick and returning to my seat. I fell into a pitfall of depression. Using all my first day of school just thinking about her evaluation, I finished the first day and returned home. The first thing I did was calling my mom for advice. Listening to what happened, she did not give me answer. All she said was, "I should think about this." I thought about nothing but the incident for whole day. That night, as I was trying to sleep, I heard my parents' conversation regarding sending me to another country where "being a little different" is not "being wrong."
New Orleans: A Racial Revelation
Ramsey Daniels

This piece of paper upon which I am writing is white. This is not unusual; most papers are white. Occasionally, there are colored papers, such as the neon pink and purple ones that the “cool” teachers would give us in Middle School, but most of them are just white. For a long time, I believed that the same was true of humans -- most of us are just white. This belief originated when I began attending Winchester Thurston School at the age of five. It was and still is a small private school composed of predominately white students, such as myself. Nearly all of my friends, teachers, and family members were the same color as our school uniform polo shirts: white. Thus, I was raised with the idea that white was the norm, white was the status quo, and that people of color were merely exceptions, like pink paper in Middle School. I didn’t think of white as a race; I thought of it as the absence of race.

My perception of race was irrevocably altered last December when I attended the Student Diversity Leadership Conference in New Orleans, Louisiana. It was held at the Ernest N. Morial Convention Center, the same location where two thousand refugees took shelter during Hurricane Katrina, living like animals without food, water, or medical supplies. Three years after the storm, a similarly large wave of humanity was occupying the building for the start of this conference. As I entered the automatic doors of Entrance A, I fell into an enormous flock of adolescents, and soon became immersed in their midst. Immediately I felt as though I had been freed from the small birdcage of Winchester Thurston and released into the wild. I felt a tingle of excitement crawl up my spine as I was surrounded by people of every type of paper at the mill.

After a little difficulty, I found my assigned group and took a seat in the middle of a strictly rectangular room. Southern sunlight penetrated this carpeted space and provided an optimistic feeling to the commencement of the conference. I registered the appearance of my peers—they possessed varying levels of outward self-confidence and jet-lagged sleepiness. A curvy, biracial girl with wriggling dark hair and spaces in her teeth, a bright-faced short blonde girl with blue eyes and a tall, slightly overweight, godtly smiling brunette all made my acquaintance. We swapped stories about our respective schools and hometowns, and I began to be comfortable in their company. Surveying the room, I figured that this tribe was about as large as my grade at school, and its members were approximately my age. However, there was one glaring distinction between this group and the sophomore class at Winchester—here, being a white person made me a minority.

As we got started, a short, Hispanic boy from New York City volunteered a story that shocked me to the core. “Sometimes, when I walk past old men sitting in their cars in the city, they offer to pay me for sex, because I’m gay,” he shared. I watched his brown eyes light up as he matter-of-factly described his dangerous predicament. Yes, it scared him, and yes, it was one of the painful realities of being gay. I sat silent after he finished, awed by the guts he had to tell that story on the first day. I was intrigued by his life, because it seemed to be so radically different from my own. In a moment of down time, I approached him and said, “That story you shared... wow, that's really scary. How do those men know you are gay?” “They can just kind of tell,” he replied stoically. I thought this was strange, because the first time I saw him I had thought he was straight. I wondered how difficult it was for gay people to hide their sexuality, and marveled at the danger Jack faced walking through his New York neighborhood.

On one occasion, the entire mass of students convened in a humungous circle in the cafeteria, and the conference organizers gathered together to run an activity. Into a microphone, one of them would read commands like, “If you identify yourself as Christian, please step into the center of the circle. Take a look at the people on the inside of the circle. Take a look at the people on the outside of the circle. Reflect on what you observe. Now move back to the outside of the circle.” They went through this process for all of the religions, races, ethnicities, disabilities, and sexual orientations known to man, and each time we were instructed to observe and reflect.

Judging people according to appearance is silly. The great Greek philosopher, Socrates, was also an ugly man but he was a wise person, so a lot of handsome and beautiful people wanted to stay with him. Like Socrates, attractiveness is not limited to appearance; people’s individuality can be the strongest attraction for people. During Martin Luther King’s age, white people discriminated against black people because of their appearance. Appearance has strong power so we can easily judge people but we do not judge people according to appearance. If we judge people according to their appearances, then there is no difference between animals and us because many animals such as birds compete to be more magnificent to get mates. Usually, handsome and beautiful people are more confident than other people, whether they are good workers or not, appearances made them confident. Then, their confident attitudes and characteristics are very helpful in their lives. According to statistics, candidates who are handsome and tall usually became the president after the appearance of mass media such as John F. Kennedy, Bill Clinton and Ronald Reagan. Especially, if one candidate is taller than other candidate is then the taller candidate most often became the president.

The standard of beauty has changed over time. When I see pictures of old pop stars, I do not think they are beautiful. For example, ancient people liked fat women instead of skinny women because fat woman could do much more work. Of course, appearance is important but it depends on time and circumstances and thus, we cannot judge people according to that. Many people do plastic surgery in America and Korea. Many Americans do plastic surgery according to the medical report, America is the first place as people who do plastic surgery and Korea is third. We do plastic surgery to become more beautiful. In Korea, a lot of young ladies want to do plastic surgery and it is very expensive but their parents pay money for it. It sounds like people are crazy about beauty but that is not true. People do plastic surgery to help them succeed. When a company hires people, its easy to depend on appearance because candidates are usually similar. However, when we see the person for the first time, appearance gives a strong first impression. Therefore, many people spend money for plastic surgery to avoid discrimination because of appearance because Companies are judging people according to appearances. However, discrimination is not just towards ugly people. It also includes handsome or beautiful people. We usually think that beautiful women are smart enough, like Paris Hilton. Actually, Paris Hilton is a very capable CEO; she increased Hilton Hotel's profit. Although she is not respectable person, she is not stupid as her appearances made her seemed to be.

These days, people really care about appearance more than before: company, school and many other groups and societies judge people by appearance. It seems that we are all slaves of beauty. There are many kinds of beauty in this world; people are going to get older and then lose their beauty. Beauty is not eternal; appearance can say many things such as your age, sex, nationality but appearance cannot say a person internal thing like what kind of person he is. We are not a God so we cannot judge people without any clues and thus we are judging people by using appearances, which is the easiest and simplest way. Therefore, we have to be stronger, we have to try to show our inner beauty, and we need to prepare to see that discrimination is coming from uneducated people.
We Face A World: Lookism
Jehyun Han

We are slaves of beauty. All people have equal rights to hospitality but unfortunately, we judge a person according to their appearances, which is called lookism. Humans get information by using their five senses and the most frequently used sense is sight. There are many people living in this world, who have different appearance, and their faces express their own individuality. Of course, all people prefer handsome or beautiful people to ugly people. However, we can prefer but we cannot discriminate. Do not discriminate against people for any reasons; this was the important message of Martin Luther King Jr.

Teenagers are very sensitive about their appearance and they are young so it's easy to judge people just in external ways. When I went to Korean public school, students ignored ugly people, admired handsome or beautiful people and I was the same as them. We made fun of ugly people but we imitated handsome or beautiful people. Ugly people would get hurt because students judged them by appearance. Especially, female students really care about beauty because many male students treated them according to their appearance. Female students seemed to think of themselves as handicapped. They think that their arms are so thin and they are ugly and they have hundreds of complaints about their appearance. There was a girl who had a pockmarked face. She had that face because of a side effect of medicine. However, in school, many students made fun of her; her mother resorted to us to stop make fun of her but we were too young and we did not stop it. Finally, she left the school. I did not know how she got hurt in her mind but I was too young to think about that and I made a mistake. I was a big boy in Korea, and sometimes, my classmates were careful about me; they thought that I could bully them. Actually, my characteristic was very introverted but I have to be talkative and thus, I always the first to approach my classmate to become friends. I liked to read books, I have read a lot of Korean books since elementary school and my classmates were amazed because they thought I should not read a book because I do not look like a reader. Usually, people think that big guys are not smart so teachers also did not think that I am smart so when I got good grades, they were amazed. Therefore, when I fought my classmates, even if they started the fight, my teachers said, "I know that they started first but you have to be patient because you are big and tall so you need to be careful." I had a lot of chances to do something in front of many guys because I am tall so teachers easily identified me among a lot of students and it worked as a great advantage for me, but also a disadvantage. During the class, teachers pointed me out to answer the question because of my appearance and if I did well, there was no harm, but if I did not do well, it hurt me. I got a lot of stress during my school years because of the word "be a man who pays for your appearance". They wanted me to work as an adult because of my appearance, but when I did the same mischief with my friends, teachers always punished me first because of my appearance. I have thick bones and it made me seem bigger than other guys and I never broke my bones in my life. I think this is good for me but because of thick bones I easily look sluggish. When I was a student in Korea, I hated to listen to people saying, "You are big" because I felt it was making fun of me. In America, people like a big boy but Korea is little bit different, most Koreans are small and I am different from them, and people treated me differently from regular size guys. People thought that I liked to fight. People thought that I should not smart. People thought that I needed to act like a grown-up. People thought that I had to be patient with other guys. People thought that I should carry heavy things and do hard jobs because I am big and tall. Of course, big and tall are good things for me and I like my appearance but sometimes it's frustrating to be labeled and not understand. However, I can overcome those discriminations because of my mom. My mom said, "you are special son. People are jealous of you and you have to overcome and prove yourself as how great you are and love yourself son." My mom gave me power to fight against discrimination about my appearance.

When I heard, “If you identify yourself as white, please step into the center of the circle,” I did as I was told. I was pulled like a magnet towards the clump of white-skinned people clustered in the middle of the cafeteria. When I planted my feet on the outer layer of the white onion, I turned back to face the outside circle. I slowly absorbed the stares of thousands of colorful faces, each one of them a different hue, and none of them white. Then I sensed the presence of a hundred men and women of my own color next to me, and at that moment I came to the conclusion that “white” was indeed a race. When encircled by people of color, I was directly confronted with the reality that white people are a unique segment of society that contribute to the racial diversity of the world at large. I felt satisfied in realizing my white identity, but at the same moment, the stares of my fellow citizens on the outside reminded me of the guilty history of my race. We are the people who enslaved blacks in America for centuries, who pushed Native Americans from their homeland, and who still receive unfair benefits in society, and that is nothing to be proud of.

The keynote speaker for the entire conference was a Hispanic woman named Mayda del Valle, who was born and raised on the South Side of Chicago. On Saturday she performed for us her def jam poetry, several different high-energy, fast-paced rhythmic rivers of words that flowed out of her mouth with euphoric ease. She was a beautiful woman who radiated with pride for her Latin heritage and inner city roots. My favorite number she performed was “Mami’s Making Mambo,” a powerful musical ode to her mother’s fierce control of the kitchen. After Mayda finished her set, students were allowed to ask questions of her, and one Hispanic girl approached the microphone and said, almost in tears, “I think you are such a beautiful and strong woman, and we need to see more strong Latina women like you on TV and in the media.” Another girl said something to her in Spanish- I don’t know what it was, but it sounded really affectionate. I realized that Mayda del Valle gave these girls the strength to embrace their race and Latin heritage.

On the last night of the conference, students offered testaments to SDLC and the ways in which it had changed them. One awkward looking girl with fiery orange hair thanked the organizers for making her feel safe and that because of them she was no longer afraid to say that she had Asperger’s syndrome. The most memorable was a gangly white boy with curly brown hair who looked straight ahead of him and declared, “On the first day in my group, I tried to say these three words but I was nervous and I almost couldn’t because I was stuttering so much. But now, I can say without a stutter: I am gay.” He then walked back to the edge of the circle in tears, knelt on one knee and was embraced by one of his teachers. After twenty minutes of this, everyone was asked to be quiet and reflect on the experience they had. As soon as it got completely silent, my cell phone went off loudly in front of all one thousand students, and it still stands as my most embarrassing memory in sixteen years of living.

At the termination of the conference, I was still emotionally conflicted over my race, unsure of whether to be ashamed or proud of my white heritage. One year later, though, I’ve figured it out. There is nothing that I can do about the injustices committed by whites in the past, and therefore I should not waste time feeling ashamed of that history. Instead, I need to recognize my responsibility as a white person to make the future and the present a safer place for people of all models and varieties. Attending the conference in New Orleans was a significant first step towards that ideal. One of the conference organizers was a tall, white man named Hamilton, who grew up in a wealthy household but decided become involved in diversity education. If people like Hamilton and myself can dedicate ourselves to reversing the history of injustices committed by our race, then there is no reason why I shouldn’t be proud to be a white man. Jack and Mayda del Valle, among others, showed me how to fully embrace my identity, for better or worse. In fact, realization of identity was a common theme that united the diverse peoples of SDLC, and allowed us to relate to one another. Every human wrestles with the definition of their race and background, and that indubitable truth has the power to unite us all.
The American Boss
Rachel Rothenberg

You think to yourself, I don't know anyone like that. You tell these kinds of stories as if they were the hypothetical-things that happen to other people, things said by other people, people who don't live where you are. Those kinds of people live in the South, in the suburbs, in the red states. You don't live in the South, you don't live in a red state, and, by God, you don't live in the suburbs. So you're safe, you're off the hook. You have already attained enlightenment.

Right?
Here is what happened to me.
My parents had these friends, the Ms, a married couple with two children who lived a couple of blocks away. They were South Africans, white, and used to complain how white South Africans were always portrayed badly in movies, like Russian gangsters and overeducated British men. Mrs. M was a small woman with bayway curly hair and checks that turned red whenever she laughed, which was often. She had voted for the ANC, much to her Afrikaner in-laws' horror, and wore an apron printed with the face of Nelson Mandela.

But this story is not about Mrs. M, or about her husband, whose family had hated Mandela so much. This is about Mr. M's boss, the American one, the one who wore the Obama pin on his lapel the night we had dinner. This is about the boss' wife, who held charity events for the underprivileged. Like I said; it could be anyone.

My father went to San Francisco on business, and Mrs. M, perhaps sensing my mother's loneliness, called and asked us over to dinner.
"The old man's boss is coming," she said, "and his wife. They're awful old people, but we'll have some wine and make the best of it." She sounded desperate, so Mom and I put on our Sunday best and went over.

The American boss was tall and lean, with bright sparkling blue eyes. He looked like a Kennedy, all angles and jawline. He shook my hand vigorously. His wife was small and slim, in a tailored jacket and a well-fitted skirt. They looked like any other professional couple, the kind who represent the progressive establishment of America, the ones who are supposed to lead the way in changing the world.

We had dinner, roast lamb and rice and baked fennel. In time, the conversation turned to my mother's job; a Presbyterian minister, she worked as a student pastor at a church in Homewood. At hearing this name—"Homewood"—the boss' wife wrinkled her nose slightly. It was barely perceptible, just a quick twitch and down, but it was there all the same. In situations like these, I am usually shy and quiet, so I have become an expert in observing. I looked down into my plate, the lamb looking dry and greasy against the white plate.

The Ms' children went to the local elementary school. The boss' children were homeschooled.

"Though," the boss' wife said, "we haven't always done that." She laughed and tossed her hair. "We aren't one of those crazy Christian families!"

"Ah," said Mrs. M, a tight smile on her face. Next to me, my mother's nostrils flared. She smelled blood.

"Where did your children go before you homeschooled them?" she asked. "Oh, Homewood Montessori. But we left because we didn't think it was a very good environment for the children." She added a deep emphasis on the word "environment," as if we knew exactly what she meant.

Except Mr. M, who still struggled with English from time to time, raised his head up and said, "I'm sorry-what environment?"

"Oh, well, you know," said the wife. "Some of those kids-well, the father up and left, went to God knows where, and the mother's never around, since she's working. They're home by themselves. And they're eating processed foods, too. They were giving our kids sugar cereals there. I mean, I'm telling you," she said, "they need a stable household. They need to be civilized."

Mom dropped her knife. "Excuse me," she said, in a tight, hard voice, and ducked to pick it up.

"I'll tell you what the problem is," said the boss. "The problem is this busing they had in the seventies. It was better when everyone could just go to a neighborhood school with ... well, with people like them. Don't you think?" he asked my mother.

She said nothing. I looked from Mom to the Ms' boss' wife and back again, all the time wondering: Did they just hear what I hear? Did he seriously just argue in favor of what I think he argued in favor of? But they were only silent, and so was I.

The rest of the night, whenever they looked at them, I felt a hot constriction in my chest, as if something were about to burst. The conversation turned to the upcoming election, and the boss and his wife proudly told us they were going to support Obama. "Such an educated black man," the wife said.

Not long after, we got up to leave. As I walked out the door, Mrs. M. came up to me. She had been washing dishes, wearing the Nelson Mandela apron. She caught my hand and squeezed it hard, then let me go.

In the car, Mom was silent. I turned the radio up as far as it would go. We turned onto the asphalt darkness of our street, the streetlights illuminating the just paved blacktop. We pulled into the garage and sat there a while. I could almost hear Mom thinking.

Finally she said, "Rachel, I taught you a horrible lesson tonight." "What's that?" I asked.

She sighed and ran both hands through her hair. "If you learn one thing from me, it should be this-when things like this happen to you, don't ever be silent."

In retelling this story to people, I am always met with looks of incredulity. "Did they really say that?" they ask. "And they're from the East End? And he was wearing an Obama pin?" But the fact remains that something that pervasive doesn't come from living with Republicans or living in the South or even from living in the suburbs. It's borne within, somewhere in the most animal parts of the brain where humans learn to hate other humans, to covet material goods and privilege and anything that allows someone to prosper on the back of someone else, and cover it up with a thin veneer of respectability. And, as in all things, only a loud noise, a sudden shock, a lightning bolt of truth, can bring it out of hiding. But it's hard to handle a lightning bolt. I didn't say anything that night, because I was afraid. Fear is what drives every negative human impact. And, as we move into this bold new future of ours, we must learn to be unafraid.

I drove through Homewood a few days later with my mother and a few women from the church. They were talking and laughing and swapping stories. I sat in the back and listened for the hum of change. It was there, I think, barely perceptible but alive. And I leaned back and thought about how much you could miss if you didn't listen, didn't observe. Almost a whole world.