

## High School Essay

### Honorable Mention

#### Homosapien

By Naomi Smith, Centennial High School (Ellicott City, Maryland)

9:42 a.m., someone enters my room. Previously fast asleep, I wipe the grogginess from my eyes to see a glowing 5'11" figure—my best friend with a smile stretching dimple to dimple.

In order to comprehend the perplexity of the image in front of me, you have to understand that this girl once yelled at me for bringing her coffee (her beverage of choice) before she was fully awake (she later apologized).

I smiled and invited her in to sit on the covers next to me.

She never told me straight up that she was gay—she did not believe in coming out. She was, she is still the same person.

“Who can I tell?” she asks.

The natural, in-passing vulnerability, the trust she gives me to guide her, the (rightful) expectation of no judgement—laced with a twinge of paralyzing fear that she had evaluated me incorrectly—these are the things I will never forget.

Hours later, I lay on the floor with my legs propped on the wall, her sitting next to me, both our stomachs aching from laughter.

“Thank you,” she says suddenly. Tears spring to my eyes.

“Thank you for letting our skin touch without flinching,” she adds.

I blink to keep my vision clear. I didn't know how to respond. How could I adequately alleviate these fears of a differing world experience that I can only try to understand, that would never have crossed my mind? Pretend it isn't cliché, that it's a totally revolutionary idea: love. It pains me to think there are places where and people with whom she will not feel as accepted as she should be, as she felt with me—but it warmed my heart that I could help her to know that she is not, is never less than.