

College Essay: Respect

Respect is a lesson that I have learned over the years. The ability to treat everyone with respect and equally, is an easy trait to learn, but a difficult trait to carry out. I try my hardest to never single anyone out or make them feel uncomfortable in any situation. Respect has to be one of my most valuable assets.

With respect, comes a better and more clear way of life. It feels great waking up in the morning knowing that I have not caused anyone to feel bad because of what I have said or done to them. When I was younger, I had a white male friend named Josh; and I am black female. We used to hang out all the time, great times we shared. However, I do recall one day when his father was home and we had come from playing outside. I was standing on the porch, in my old native Clarksville, Tennessee; temperatures blazing hot. Josh had asked his dad, "Dad, can my friend come in?" I could see Josh's dad sitting in his football recliner with a beer can in his hand, rocking back and forth. He looked at me in his chair with a twinkle in his eye through the screen door and saw that my skin was not the same as he and his son's. Through my disappointment, he snickered and said, "No son. She's black." I'm not sure if he wanted me to hear that, but I did. That moment kept playing over and over and over again in my head, thinking to myself, what did I do to cause him not to like me. Then I realized that my skin was the cause. Josh was one of my best childhood buddies. The day he moved, we were both sad. Before he left me, I went by his house and said goodbye to him, his sister, and mother. His dad walked outside on the porch and every bit of me wanted to say bad words, yell at him, or say nothing at all as though I didn't see him.

Then I remembered what my Uncle Larry had said to me, as we rode from Tennessee to Virginia. He pointed out through the window and said, "Jess, look out. What do you see?" I looked and replied, "Colors!" He looked at me with reflection in his eyes and said, "Yes, Many! People are just like those colors outside. They come in many

shapes and sizes of color. Every color is unique. When you look at the leaves on the trees and the clouds in the sky, between each crack and crevice, there will be a ray of sun shining down in your eyes and you'll know it's me looking down at you, with a smile." I never understood what he meant up until that point. I felt his ray of sun on my face and I knew he was smiling and protecting me. Cancer took his life and he devoted much of it to respect. So instead of going through life being ignorant and not respecting other people differences, I smiled and said goodbye. He smiled back and said, "See ya later kiddo."

That experience alone has made me a much better person. I encourage my peers not to make fun of others and dislike them just because they are different or because they feel that they are better than anyone else.

I was pretty much a tomboy growing up, which I think today has also helped me develop the skill and ability I have dealing with others. I can interact with all types of people. I can also see the hurt that people could cause each other.

I'm part of every crowd. I hang out with everyone; cheerleaders, jocks, basketball players, geeks/nerds (the smart crowd), preps, punks, Goths, even that guy or girl that no one understands and doesn't fit in. I'm multi-cultural. I love everyone, on sight. It may not be that unconditional love like falling in love, but I care about each and everyone. My mom says that my way of thinking and living will get me far. My African American friends say that I don't act black, I act white, and I sometimes talk white. But what's acting and talking black or white? Just because I like country, rock, and pop, that makes me white? You have to open your mind to as many things as you can. I love music and I hope to have a career in music. With that being said, I need to be able to related to everyone, without boundaries. I want to have fans in many cultures, no matter the color, but it first starts with respect for others and most importantly, yourself.