



2017 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Art, Writing, & Multimedia Contest

(Insert title here)

The title of this story is not important, for the story that goes on deserves more attention. Years ago in Pine Intermediate School, fifth grade, I would always hang out with a group of friends. In our assortment of colleagues was one kid that I didn't mind hanging out with, but everyone else seemed to have a yearning to just make him have a horrendous time whenever he decided to appear within eyesight. It was terrible to witness the comments and actions composed upon a single peer. They would do anything to annoy him, like call him offensive names (so bad I don't even want to type them out), as well as straight out push him to the ground, getting away with it most of the time. The martyrdom continued at lunch, where they would purposely keep moving to different tables, and inviting random people over to fill in an empty seat just to occupy space to make it so he would not sit down with anyone but himself, if he managed to sit down next to anyone they would shout, "Man I feel bad for you," or "Dude you're so unlucky." to whoever he was adjacent to (even if they were across the table!), and they did this daily. This misery came with framing him for doing sort of bad act at recess forcing a teacher to take him away for a few minutes.

It was just terrible to see something like this happening to someone who thought they were part of a group but was just the instrument of torment played to entertain. They did these terrible actions to this kid repeatedly, as well as seem to enjoy seeing him sad and even cry on some occasions then mocking him doing so. It was terrible to see him do this and I felt as though I had to do something about this horrendous behavior or something bad might happen to this kid.

It was at lunch one day when I decided to speak up for the unacceptable behavior to someone who was kind and really fun to hang out with. They were busy doing their daily routine of torment with the name calling and switching seats, but all of a sudden I seemed to have noticed the victim starting to tear up. Something inside me went off and I felt as though I had erupted like a volcano full of abhorrence, ready to bring my wrath of justice on to their gang hate. I had stood up (not to leave the table) only to vociferate, "HE IS HUMAN TOO, AND TO BE DIFFERENT IS WHAT SEPARATES US, AND MAKES US UNIQUE, SO IF YOU CAN'T ACCEPT WHO HE IS, THEN I AM GOING TO EXEMPT YOU FROM BEING IN OUR GROUP UNTIL YOU REALIZE HOW IT FEELS TO FALL VICTIM OF DISCRIMINATION BASED ON LOOKS AND FEELINGS!" They all then looked at me like I was crazy, like something inside had been imploding with flames just let out to the power of a nuclear blast, they have always seen me as the quiet kid that didn't seem to do much. All of them then left the table leaving me behind with the kid. Even some of my best friends then and today left me without thinking twice.

It was really quiet lunch after that. The kid and I sat in what seemed to be a soundless moment frozen in time. I would try so say something but before it come out of my mouth I stopped thinking it would make it more awkward. He then stabbed the suffocating silence with smooth simple word and said, "Thank you." Those two words had almost made me cry (tears of joy that is), those two simple but elegant words made me feel stupefying wonderful on the inside. I replied with a, "No, thank you." He had given me the ability to stand up for what I think is right and that is all I need in return. If I had not done that I would probably still be quiet and to myself, but now because of that I feel like I can stand up to what I think is right and it was all because of a small act of kindness mixed in with a dash of courage.

The next day everyone came back to sit at our table and it was relatively soundless. I could tell that they all had thought about what they had done. After lunch they all had apologized for whatever that felt like they did wrong. It was probably because of that moment I am still friends with some of the people in that group today.

Owen Conway
8th Grade Writing Winner
North Olmsted Middle School, North Olmsted
Nora Jones, Teacher
Thomas Dreiling, Principal



Driving out Hate

