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Grade 11

CD5

Every year, on the third Monday of January, all of the approximately 250 young women at my high school gather together in our darkened auditorium lined with soft scarlet seats to watch selected students stand on the stage before them. The students stand in a line across the midpoint of the stage, passing the microphone down to the next as each recites one portion of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr's "Letter from a Birmingham Jail." Somehow, his truth and story telling nature reveals something even more impressive each time. Somehow, I am reminded of how words are timeless, and so is justice. From one known collection of his words to another, Dr. King's "I have a Dream" speech reveals just what that justice looks like to him. He defines this dream as one where his children would be judged solely for their character, where children of different races can exist and play in the same place.

My freshman year, I sat in that auditorium beside the people in my grade—girls of different backgrounds, colors, shapes, and sizes—watching the mature social justice leaders in our student body stand on that stage. Since sophomore year, I have joined such leaders. Each year, I walk into the spotlight with my fellow heads of social justice and affinity clubs as we pass down the microphone. Each year, I look out into the sea of teenage girls before me and see the variety of individuals before me, hopeful that I see all of them for their character, and not for anything else. Each year, however, I realize just how far we still have to go to reach the entirety of Dr. King's speech.

My school, a private institution intended for white, heterosexual, and female identifying individuals, is still very much filled with that distinct type of student. It takes noisemaking by affinity groups to raise attention to racial awareness and respect in our community, as students of color only make up about 30% of the student body. The reality of reaching such a dream extends to the world outside my school. The people in my own community back home are fearful of votin and filling out the census due to the threats of governmental forces like ICE. My own dream, then, is to see more active equity in the world. In order for all to be judged for solely their character, students must learn the histories of all cultures. For example, the history of slavery told from the slave narration is more rich of a narrative than one told from a white professor. Furthermore, citizens of voting age need to be encouraged and taught all of the information needed to know who and why to vote for. Billengual voter drives and pamphlets on issues important to specific communities could make all voices heard equally.

I suppose it takes some more noisemaking for my own dreams to be reached, but what's a little noisemaking to reach a dream?