



Common App Essay – Final Draft – Student B

9/28/2016

Discuss an accomplishment or event, formal or informal that marked your transition from childhood to adulthood within your culture, community, or family.

In Alaska, the Bush refers to the large portion of the state inaccessible by roads or ferries. Its seclusion endows it with a sense of bittersweet beauty. Unfortunately, the isolation that lends the native villages in the Bush their serenity also creates an environment that is all-too-conducive to alcoholism, domestic abuse, and suicide. Just this past fall, four Hooper Bay residents killed themselves in a suicide cluster. Seventeen years ago, the elders of a village asked a group from [REDACTED] to come and assuage the wound left by a similar incident there. Since then, the program has developed into two teams that each visit three Bush villages to help out in the schools and work with at-risk youth to instill a sense of hope in them.

Sounds like perfect essay fodder.

Last year, I went about things as though I were a Fitzgeraldian caricature; a vapid sprite interested only in opulence and prestige. Like [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], I seized every single tenuous opportunity I could in order to impress people. When [REDACTED] Team 1 announced that it needed more members, I saw it as just another opportunity to augment my college applications. My asinine aspirations were swiftly amended when, as I was holding the door for kids exiting the Stebbins gym, a boy named Michael asked me if I ever felt lonely. It seemed like an innocuous question at the time, but it connoted the sense of desolation that plagues so many in rural Alaska.

Up until that point, I was rather taciturn and reserved, content to let myself languish away as that quirky guy sitting in the corner studying biology. After it dawned on me that Michael was implicitly pleading for companionship, I made an effort to come out of my shell and connect with him and anyone else that I met. It was a clunky, awkward, and oftentimes uncomfortable experience. They frequently lampooned my gawky demeanor and glaring lack of prowess on the basketball court, but laughing at my faults established a feeling of acquaintanceship between us. Only through demonstrating genuine love to the kids could I make a difference in their lives.

I'm an acetic introvert. Love is not my forté. I would much rather hold a cat in my arms than another human being. Nonetheless, as a Christian, I am commanded to love my neighbor as myself. When I interacted with the village kids, people who have been through unimaginable heartache, the only thing I could do was love them.



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To love someone is to respect them unconditionally, recognizing that they are every bit as human as I am. Our circumstances may differ greatly, but underneath our pretenses we all experience the same need for compassion and camaraderie. Working with kids out in Bush Alaska taught me that I'm not better than anyone else, no matter what my test scores say to the contrary.