



Common App Essay – Initial 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 a large portion of the state inaccessible by roads or ferries. Its isolation endows it with a sense of bittersweet beauty. Unfortunately, the isolation that lends the Native villages in the Bush their sense of serenity also creates an atmosphere of depression and helplessness. In Bush Alaska, formal education is regarded as just another attempt to westernize native culture. Consequently, the schools often struggle to get a 70% attendance rate. The poverty and isolation of the villages coupled with the transient nature of rural Alaska create an environment that is unfortunately conducive to alcoholism, domestic abuse, and suicide. Just this past year, the annual Alaska Native Federation Elders and Youth Conference had to be called off because someone jumped from the third floor of the venue. 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 résumé fodder.

Last year, I went about things as though I were a Fitzgeraldian caricature, a vapid sprite interested only in opulence and prestige. I had to get into a well-regarded college at all costs for the sake of my well-being. Like [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], I seized every single tenuous opportunity to augment my application, and when [REDACTED] Team 1 announced that it needed more applicants; I saw it as just another opportunity to impress admissions committees. My asinine aspirations were swiftly amended when, as we were conversing with kids in the gym, a boy named Michael asked me if I ever felt lonely. It was a rather innocuous question, but it connoted a sense of sense of desolation that plagues so many rural Alaska. When it dawned on me what Michael was really asking, I realized that I was exploiting people in genuine need of hope for the sake of a piece of paper with a fancy name printed on it.

What defines a person's worth is their dedication to others, not how many AP classes they took junior year. We were only in each village for at most four days. Tutoring students and performing general grunt-work is helpful, but beyond alleviating a week's worth of work from the community, it doesn't do much in the grand scheme of things. The most important gift that we bring to the villages is love. As an acetic introvert, love is not my forte. 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.



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Prior to last spring, love existed as an intangible concept tucked away in a dusty recess of my brain. Only when I spoke intimately with kids in the Bush did the definition of love become clear to me. It's a steady feeling of trust, patience, and humility. To love someone is to respect them unconditionally, recognizing that I'm not better than them no matter what my test scores say to the contrary.