



has suddenly taken over every administrator, every at NCSSM in recent months. We have had panel discussions, assemblies, and (who can be honest, open and truthful discussions? When to use the Stentorian as a sounding board for us, we hoped for complete honesty that would help us. We would like to believe that the students about their personal experiences wrote without me to understand that what is often left unspoken, as well. The conversations that spark at 12:30 of hallmates will probably remain within the a wonderful, diverse and accepting atmosphere North Carolina, but we can never forget that we are discriminated against on a daily basis because of our orientation. Beyond the walls of this utopia, we must way to prepare ourselves as future leaders of change and thoughts out. The understanding and

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BLACK MALE JR.

Attending NCSSM has caused me to question and reevaluate my long held beliefs on many social and racial issues. As a young black child growing up in Colorado, I began to form many biases based on my experiences. Every school I attended as a child was predominantly, but not overwhelmingly, white. Even though I lived in a racially balanced community, I was still exposed to the racist views that my classmates picked up from their parents. At an early age I began to understand that there were people who wouldn't like me based on the color of my skin. No matter what they said to my face or how nice they seemed, I would often hear these same people telling racist jokes or using racial slurs. Some of these comments were directed to me, generally in a joking manner, by "friends". No matter how funny they seemed to think the joke was, I was never amused.

As a result, I began to consciously avoid white people as much as possible. I had two or three white friends I grew up with whom I never felt uncomfortable and genuinely believed were not biased. This kept me from believing that all white people were ignorant, as many of my other friends felt. But after leaving elementary school and beginning middle school I lost touch with my white friends. Afterward, I made no attempt to get to know any other white people and my biases were cemented by my other friends. So from middle school on, I had no close or long lasting friendships with anyone who was white.

All of this has changed since coming to NCSSM. I began to question my own racist views as I came into close contact with whites who showed no signs of overt racism. As a result, I've opened up to many people I wouldn't have considered talking to a year ago. Despite the healthy racial climate I feel this campus provides, old habits are hard to break. The majority of my friends and associates here are black. It is just a simple fact that I will always feel more comfortable around people I can identify with. This doesn't mean I haven't realized that racism is a bad thing, no matter who it comes from. Living here has helped me to put the past into perspective, and judge people based on the content of their character and not on the color of their skin.

people promoting good-old "family values"? Hate is not a family value. It has taught me one thing: only let those know who you know will accept you. Or at least not hurt you. Which is why, I guess, so many of my friends at NCSSM know the real me. The fact that I'm barely passing my classes doesn't matter as much to me as knowing that there is at least one place where I can be safe and, to some extent, accepted for who I am.

EAST ASIAN FEMALE SR.

Coming from a moderately sized school with a relative balance in the two major race categories, I existed largely without a category of my own. There was a small handful of Asians in the school with me, and we were mostly excluded from any real relations or friendships with others. Sure there was the casual respectful acquaintance, but there, I felt Asian and different. There was obvious and open racial tension between whites and blacks to the point that all other races were basically forgotten as separate entities of society. It is difficult to see where I fit into the world because of the stress placed on "white or black". I don't appreciate when people mention racial tension and expect you to think of only white vs. black, ignoring the existence

of others. I couldn't tell you if writing this was necessarily a good thing to do, nor could I deem myself worthy of passing judgement on the racial opinions and expressions of those around me. Sometimes being open about one's feelings has its advantages, but sometimes it doesn't. At times, I felt like I couldn't win because both whites and blacks made fun of my being Asian. It was as if two armies fighting against each other had joined forces for the moment to battle a small troop. As a child, I found myself at odds, frustrated, and often crying. When I came to NCSSM, I found many more Asians, but I often found more tolerant, less ignorant people. I still feel Asian, and I doubt I would

BLACK FEMALE SR.

My experience at NCSSM has been one in a million. Since around 6th grade, I have always been tormented about having more white friends than black. I did not "act black". I didn't wear "black" clothes. When I started high school, I only prayed that things would get better, and they were okay for those two years I remained at home.

What made me decide that NCSSM was the place for me? I noticed that I was looking for people that were in similar peer groups as I around school. I was searching for people who hung out with a certain number of whites and a certain number of blacks. One day it dawned on me that I could not continue being concerned about what others were saying to me. Yes, the torment and name-calling hurt, but I had to learn that people do not change at

the tip of a hat. Even though I thought I lived in an era of equality, many kids were taught by their parents, who did not exactly agree with that doctrine. I had to get out.

I was so scared when I got here. I hoped that everyone would be open-minded and that this would be a community of equal people. And my dreams came true. The people here are not concerned about you or your business. They are interested in your mind and what you are capable of doing, not what you are like or what you are trying to "act like". Each student has enough concerns of their own, trying to re-adjust and make new friends, that they, unlike myself, look for students with similar qualities that they would enjoy spending time with.

I have built relationships here that will last a lifetime. When I was at home, I was "that black girl". Now I am a person with intelligence and a positive attitude.

HISPANIC FEMALE JR.

When I first arrived at NCSSM it seemed like a diverse campus, generally tolerant and accepting of other races and cultures. I was shocked, however, when I walked into PFM. When looking beyond the chaotic scene one huge division is apparent, blacks on the left and whites on the right. For a while this seemed an incomprehensible behavior since NCSSM appears to take pride in their multi-culturalism; we have one of the most diverse campuses in the state. But now, as a student who has been directly affected by this imaginary line, it is obvious that it goes deeper than a student's preference of left or right in the cafeteria.

For most students, NCSSM is a personal struggle to find their identity. When you first get here, who you are is unclear; for the first couple of months you are torn between who you were and who you are becoming. To maintain sanity in this struggle, students feel the need to find something familiar with which they can identify

with. Many students at NCSSM find this refuge in those of their own race. But what about those of us who do not have that racial safety net? Because of the small percentage of Hispanics at NCSSM, I learned to live with the sitting arrangement. For me it was never a difficult decision; I simply sat where my friends were sitting at the time. I have a wide variety of friends and whether I sit on the left or the right I feel welcome.

I, as many others, would like to walk into PFM and see no race distinction within the sitting arrangement. This will never change however, because the first friends you make here are your closest friends since you undergo the whole adapting period with them. The only reminder of how things were when we first arrived is the only thing that remains constant, our meals at PFM. We try to recreate this time of ignorance and optimism through the friends we made then. So PFM remains segregated, and it is all right.

ome school is different: the constant harassment of my so-called "friends". Have your parents ever gotten an anonymous phone call at 1:00 in the morning threatening the life of their child? What my parents told me these callers said echoes in my mind. "Faggot." "Queer-bait." "We will kill him." When I would go to school and I would hear the same things, from the same people who were my best friends before they found out I was gay.

Have you ever been afraid that by the end of any given day you could find your skull colliding with a porcelain urinal by

others refer to the friend beside us, and this school should stay that way. Now, it is quite hard for me to tolerate my hometown, where the ghosts of discrimination still haunt the people —black and white— while I know that three hours north I have a haven for true equality, despite the ethnic group to which anyone belongs.

ever lose the sense of my ethnic background, but I feel Asian and equal. Different people are willing to become my friends here. This surprised me at first, then became a standard I feel I should hold up to the world and not just the NCSSM community. Obviously, biases can be found anywhere you go and I do not claim that NCSSM is in any way an exception. It is useless to think that we should defy all natural laws and exist as a utopia, or even come close. But relative to the grand scheme of things, and relative to my old schools, NCSSM is the closest I've come to any type of utopia.