



Sarah del Valle

42172609

A Natural Reflection

While this contest deems a picture or essay to be an entry, my picture in the first page is my focal point for submission. I feel stronger in a picture I took representing my feelings and thoughts rather than writing. With that said, I am not treating this as an essay. This is a short story in which I simply wish to share my personal experience of when I took the photo and how I reflected my meaning to be displayed through photography.

When I received an email about the academic integrity contest, I decided it would be fun to participate in and motivate me to start taking photography a bit more seriously as a new hobby. I have only had my phone growing up to take pictures with, and this year, on February 12th, my grandpa gifted me with a digital camera to start taking better quality photos. I don't know anything about photography, and I never touched the camera until May 10th. I don't know the specific mechanics or elements that involves enhancing a photograph's appearance when shooting, but I decided to randomly test it out and walked around Claire Trevor's School of the Arts department at UCI. With students in class, I was alone to explore the area. It was there that I found a flower bush and spent time enjoying the beauty of each flower on that bush.

I took ten photos, but the photo I submitted is the one I held a liking to the most. When I thought about the contest's theme, the moment, flowers, and bee that I chased down, fitted perfectly. I view the bee to symbolically represent a student. The bee goes around from flower to flower and collects pollen. This individualized work is a specific task which belongs to the bee solely and it is a responsibility that the bee produces on its own without having to steal credit from another. Bees therefore have a purpose in working and following through with it faithfully, and it

is like academic integrity. To know that a student's task is to study, work hard, and expand their knowledge despite adversity, is when they have received integrity of knowing and following through to their responsibilities.

I also view the group of flowers to represent the academia aspect. Each flower provides something different for the bee and each flower is not like the other. This represents professors, students, workers, or any individual in which a prospective student can find knowledge and hopefully learn from. It also doesn't matter if the flower is of a different type, color, or age. Fairness would also follow this idea, as each should be treated respectfully and neutrally. A willingness to be open-minded is the commitment to learning should be a key factor for having a strong foundation on integrity.

With that said, I watched the bee travel from one type of flower to another, and it reflects an optimistic reality. Anyone is capable from learning through another. Whether it is through the positive or negative actions that others display, to analyze actions, behaviors, or opinions is a skill to receive in depth knowledge. People don't have to agree with every person they talk or listen to, but to receive their point of view and reasoning is to enhance one's own capacities and outlook of life through morals, views, and maintain clear stances. Again, this is the foundation of how the understanding of honesty, fairness, and respect builds into integrity.

Lastly, I want to talk about the colors of the picture as a whole. The flowers were isolated from others and it creates a perspective of maintaining an environment all on its own. With a hint of vignette added on the camera, and six degrees of contrast added to the photo, the realm of isolated flowers is what I saw in my mind against the background of leafy, green bush. This reminds me of UCI in particular. The majority of students enrolled at this school are in a new and unfamiliar city, for others state, and for some, even country. Yet this campus of local and

international students spans across the world. We are incredibly diverse, and it is through this campus that we have a miniaturized model of the Earth, and it is to every student's benefit that we pounce upon the resource of diverse cultures, religions, and backgrounds.

Like the flower in the top left has hints of pink, or even yellow oozing from the center of each petal in the photo, individuals brighten the world around us so that not everything has to be black and white. We can add our own values and imprints that have a lasting mark on our friends, coworkers, campus, and society. However, I want to focus on the contrast of the white flowers and black background. Together (referring to the flowers as well as individuals) we are united. Together, there is nothing that people can't achieve when they can talk, understand, and maintain upright moral values. Together, we are pure, undivided, and powerful. Against the black background of a perilous, uncertain, and even scary world we live in, together students can withstand these hard trials if we stand together firmly.

I believe in the power of unity, the ability of understanding, and cooperation among individuals; however, a value of admiration towards learning is essential to me. Through this value alone can students have a responsibility, become honest and trustworthy with themselves and others, acquire a patience for respect and fairness, and be sensible in our actions to reflect these motives. Academic integrity is what I previously stated, and if in the world of academia, we all practice this, then I believe not just some individuals, but every individual will grow as whole. These followers will not only see improvement in themselves, but others will see their example and notice a difference in character. These characteristics are admirable and can never be questioned if we practice them purely and faithfully, and, this integrity will enhance our academic life to get greater meaning in every aspect of schooling than what is shallowly stated or observed on the surface.