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Level II Honorable Finalist

Letter to poet Shane Koyczan concerning his poem, "A Letter to Remind Myself Who I Am"

Dear Shane Koyczan:

Many people go through their lives with believing that contentment and satisfaction are obtained right after you are born. Straight out of the womb with an immense dazzling smile appearing across your tiny, fragile mouth. I know that you are mindful that this is not true at all. You have to gain happiness. You just aren't born with it. Growing up was so burdensome for me. I was so insecure of my appearance. Yes, of course in elementary I was taunted and called names. "Fat." "Hippo." "Walking tub of lard." I've heard them all. Taking in all of these name callings made me additionally insecure about myself.

I scarcely wanted to eat because I wanted to make myself set out to be the perfect image that everyone desired me to be. I fell into a deep trench of sadness and depression. I told myself that I wasn't worth it. I had never felt worse about myself. I began to believe that my world would never be the same. Kids are cruel. They're heartless little scapegraces with such appalling attitudes, claiming that don't have the slightest intention of damaging someone's happiness! I hated everyone and everything. I assumed that the whole world was out to get me. So, I just gave up.

When I was 13, my school had a meeting with my grade, and they showed us your video. It was "To This Day." I fell in love with it, so much so that the first thing that I did when I got home was type in "To This Day" in my search engine to see what came up. I wasn't sure who it was read by, but I knew that it described the things that I have always wanted to hear.

I eventually found it, and much more of your spoken poetry. I just listened and listened, and then listened some more. One night, as I was going through You Tube, exploring more of your astounding words, I came across what I now call "my realization poem." That poem is called "A Letter to Remind Myself Who I Am."

Not only did you stitch the broken parts of my heart together with this poem, you helped me become the ardent teenager I am today. I am less insecure. I love myself more than I did before. It brightened up my smile and perked up my attitude. This poem allowed me to invite people into my life. I actually walked up to people and talked to them. I actually wanted to socialize. I made many friends. I started going out with my friends to movies and social events. I was finally able to live the life a teenager should be living. I no longer cared about what people thought of me or my appearance.

You inspired me to make music! I was driven to stress my new love of the world on paper and let it be heard. I wrote lyrics upon lyrics of how much beauty there is in the world. You inspired me. And I hope that one day, you will get to read this letter and know that you really do save people.

Your poem caused me to find the better person in myself and to let her be free. "Be yourself," is what this poem screamed to me every single time I read it or listened to it. "Who cares if you're not what they want you to be! Don't give up on yourself! Love yourself!"

"Despite everything that will be said to weaken you against the towering odds that stand before you like a mountain kissing vertigo onto your grip and daring to look down. Climb." I took this line deep into my soul and I just smiled through the tears. This time, it was not a fake "Hey, don't worry, I'm happy" kind of smile. But it was a REAL smile. Instead of my life being what felt like a never ending fall into a vat of mean words and endless torture it became a place where I learned to love myself. I respected myself and the people around me. I made new friends and even called my brothers and sisters because I was longer afraid to talk to people. I'm not worried about them judging me.

This poem didn't only put its fingers around my frown and perk it up to a smile, it also grabbed my heart and actually made it feel as if it were pumping inside my body once again. And I thank you, Mr. Koyczan, for helping me realize my potential in one poem.

Sincerely,

Macey Parker