

Kenechukwu
Third Place winner age 13-14

"Don't let nobody tell you your life is over be every color that you are..."

-Aly and AJ

Walk a mile in my shoes. Go ahead, I wanna see you try.

Being a girl today is thrilling, fun and effortless! Ahaha, yeah, I know, really funny. And yet it's exactly what the media wants you to think. Being a girl today isn't all sugar and spice. But pay attention: I'm not saying that every girl today is living a life of pain and agony and should go get a sex change right now, but what I'm trying to get at is that media makes things about fifty times harder for girls.

There are these gender role stereotypes being put out there that are attached to a girl which *forces* her have to be skinny with long hair. She's *has* to have ridiculously loud conversations on the phone and be *constantly* sending text messages her 'BFFs'. She's *supposed* to be *obsessed* with her looks. And depending on her race and background, she may or may not be expected to exceed in life.

She's also forced to do things that she doesn't necessarily want to do. And we're not even talking about sex and drugs. She's forced to choose her friends carefully because in the end, anyone can end up being not so much of a friend. She's forced to dress in the newest, latest fashion and look absolutely 'perfect'. And to who's standards?

The media's.

But what happens when she doesn't say "like" between, like, every other word? Or when she's wearing last year's jeans? Is she still 'Miss Cool'? Unfortunately, she's just a loser or tomboy or lesbian. Which is actually quite stupid because she is not her clothing. Just because she wears a lot of black, it doesn't make her 'emo' or a rebel or a poser, could it just be that she likes the color black? Is there something seriously wrong with that? No, there isn't, but for a lot of people, especially those who own televisions, listen to music, read magazines or even *live* on this earth, it's wrong. These stereotypes tell us that girls are supposed to wear light colors like pink, white, and yellow. *Yay!* (*Not.*) She becomes an outcast and called weird. *Especially* by other girls.

Other *girls!* That doesn't make much sense, now does it? Shouldn't *they* be the ones to sympathize with her? Aren't *they* supposed to be her sisters, through thick and thin? For some reason, some girls these days are solely out to destroy her. And what is this all for? Some people think that it's a cycle. They get bullied and picked on and they believe that it's the way to treat others. Some people say that these girls may just be 'power-hungry' and feel that they need to make someone feel inferior so they can have a sense of (fake) superiority.

And then, there's also the media to blame. Anyone ever see *Mean Girls?*

With crimes, murders, and betrayed friendships on the rise, it's hard to know who to trust anymore. People are always telling her "don't do this" and "don't do that" she knows that it's for her protection but it gives an uneasy feeling of being watched or followed. When was it that you could walk out on the street and not have to keep checking who's behind you? Or make sure that you don't put your last name or your address on instant messages, e-mails, or social networking sites? Everyone is so worried that if a girl goes outside she's definitely going to get abducted. And, true. They have every right to be worried but at times, it can get frustrating and have also caused some girls not to ever open up to anyone because they've obtained a sort-of paranoia to everyone. Even to the few other girls that actually *may* want to befriend her.

Personally, I really don't think that any of this is fair but, you can only don't so much, right?

Well, I'm not so sure. Yes, the damage *has* been done, but I think that just *maybe*, if all girls of today didn't feel that they had to stay 'in the box' to belong, maybe we could create a new face for ourselves in the media and to society. We could prove that it's not about what she wears, or how skinny she is. There wouldn't have to be stereotypes. We can be looked upon as talented individuals. And you would be on cloud nine when you walk that mile in my shoes.

*"Keep on getting' your paper, keep on smiling, look in the mirror, keep on shining
Till the game end, till the clock stop, we're gonna post up on the top spot"*

- TI.