

Jimmy England

[englandjw24@bishopkennyhs.org](mailto:englandjw24@bishopkennyhs.org)

## Acceptance

In freshman year, I had a group of friends that I would hang out with occasionally outside of school. We would hang out around town together; we texted and called each other all the time; we even trick-or-treated together. I had always felt like everyone in the group was closer to each other than they were with me, though, and it made me a little sad, but I knew I was still friends with them. One day, I was looking on social media when I noticed that one of them had posted a picture. It was a photo of the group hanging out without me. My stomach dropped when I saw the post, and I felt like I was going to throw up. Never before had I felt so excluded from something, especially something involving my own friends. Not too long after, I realized that I had never seen any messages in our group chat about the hang out, which meant that they had to have made another group chat with everybody in it except me. I was so mad that I didn't speak to any of them for days, not even to explain to them why I was upset. When I had finally calmed down enough to talk it through with them, they defended their actions and said that they were allowed to hang out with whomever they wanted. I couldn't find it within myself to forgive them because I felt like I had been wronged so badly. Eventually, we agreed to disagree on the situation and to try and rebuild our friendship, but all communication between me and them slowly stopped, and at this point, it's been a few years since I've spoken to any of them.

Looking back on it years later, I can see where I went wrong. As I mentioned earlier, I could tell that the rest of them were better friends with each other than they were with me. I tried so hard to be a part of their group that I was in denial of the fact that I didn't really fit in with

them. In the end, I believe that is the reason they decided to leave me out of the group. My efforts to be one of them and to make them like me were so forced that, eventually, it all fell apart.

I think that a lot of the time, this type of situation is what causes issues in society. Some people try their best to fit in and be “normal” until, eventually, they start to feel bad about themselves because they think they are unwanted or unliked. It’s important to remember that no matter who you are, you need to stay true to yourself and not conform to anyone else’s tastes. You can change yourself to make someone like you, but in the end, you can’t change who you really are, and any opinions people form about you won’t accurately reflect your true self. You can’t shove a puzzle piece where it doesn’t belong, and if you try, the puzzle just ends up broken and disjointed.

On the other side of that argument, I think we all could be a little more accepting. Yes, people are different, but that shouldn’t be used as an excuse to exclude them. The different talents and traits that people have should be appreciated, not rejected. Anger and resentment build up so easily when we view people are different than ourselves, so, instead, we need to focus on what we all have in common and work from there.

If I could talk to my freshman self, I’d tell him not to worry so much about getting people to like him and that it would all work out in the end. If I could say one thing to society as a whole, my message to them would be to stop judging others and to just accept them for who they are. Only then will our society begin to get along and live in true peace with one another.