

Briana Ayers
12th Grade
Jean Ribault Senior High
Mrs. Nichelle English

I believe that we as a nation should all experience a brief phenomenon of total blindness for a day. I imagine us all groping along in perpetual darkness, lost and feeble to the vast expansion of nothingness surrounding us, the world becoming foreign and larger than life, a gigantic space of air and solid objects colliding with our pitiful flailing bodies searching for something to touch and feel to remind ourselves that we are still mortal and we haven't drifted into some alternate dimension of space and time, something to remind us that we still belong here in this world that has suddenly become a blank sea of senses melding into each other. And I believe the sense we will fall back to will be the sense of touch. In that unending darkness we'll try to touch and smell and hear to remind us of our mortality, that we live and we do not become a part of that darkness, but in our desperation I imagine we'll mostly be afraid. And in our fear, we will reach for someone to understand our sorrowful fate. And so I imagine all the people of this world seeking each other and coming together as we try to navigate the condescending darkness surrounding us, our hands reaching out for each other. And this would be the day that we truly find global peace and understanding. As we search for someone, our previous feelings, any prejudice, intolerance, or bigotry fade away in that darkness to reveal our human nature emerging through our shared desperation and primal need breaking the surface of what we've been taught to reveal what we have been given from birth. The need to feel another.

Our sight betrays us. Even when we try to be as unbiased as possible our minds are programmed to judge upon first glance, to assume, to arbitrate. And when we see who is standing before us, we assume by their race and their clothing where they come from, what words might come from their lips and what they believe in, and through all of this we forget the most important thing that underlies the color of skin and social background coating over the basic essence of us all. We are all human. And we're all born with the same yearning in the end. Touch. When we are all robbed of our sight, that thing that promises the person standing in front of you that I will judge you, I will ridicule you, I will hate you, I will resent you, the sight that betrays even the most sincerest feelings to accept someone without judgment, the sight that we were probably never ready for, that is when we will finally achieve the world peace that most of us so avidly seek out.

We think we know ourselves. But truthfully, most of us, if not all of us, have no idea just who we are and what we are capable of. We want to believe that we are righteous, we want to believe in the good within our hearts. Yet throughout the years and even today, in the dawn of so much advancement, most of us define ourselves through the face value of

race and not the depths of individual character. The tension between the different cultures inhabiting this earth together is sharp as the edge of a blade and slices through the thin tapestry that is life to reveal our insecurities and our ambivalence, our reluctance to accept. To understand.

This world is a cacophony of voices rising up in a confusion of disparate tongues struggling to be heard above the din of life, so confusing that one wonders if we ever did once speak the same language during those implicated Biblical days. Within those pages it is written that we all once lived in a complete state of equality, the same words leaving our lips and we all understood each other; if anyone cried help, everyone would come to aid them. Then the Tower of Babel was the cipher that changed the fate of this world, separating us forever so that we now not only have the barriers of race separating us, but language as well. So, we ask ourselves how we can come together in spite of so many things keeping us apart. Total blindness sweeping this lonely planet with its upheaval of people all living separate lives? My answer is that if we can find that single voice we all shared so long ago, if we can look without sight for once, that is the answer to our problems. We're all so jaded toward one another, we assume that we are so different, we glance at the person in front of us, the people around us and we know them from the minute we lay eyes on them, that's how it is. But it's not how it should be, and it's something that can change. There is a phrase that speaks volumes with its few words that seem so mundane at first, "Open your eyes." The phrase should be, "Close your eyes", and feel. It is the sense of touch that we have all forgotten the great importance of. No matter how cynical we may be to each other, in the end, when tragedy tears apart the layers of armor we encase ourselves in with its unforgiving talons, when tears go cold upon our cheek and we fold into our arms wrapping themselves around our orphan bodies, we scramble about blind to inequity or fastidious beliefs we might have held before, our hands clawing at the endless chasm before us and our feet carrying us to crash against whomever may be there waiting to remember those slow-passing days when we all understood. And as we suffuse ourselves in that touch that our lost souls yearned for so much, we forget everything. When we can all do that, we will all finally and fully understand.