

What Being Tall Means to Me

Reva Sobti

My source of pride and accomplishment came from being in the front of the line for picture day. Why? Because that meant I was the tallest kid in the class. I thrived in the self-importance my extra inches over the class gave me. However, being the tall kid was more than just bragging rights, it came with a set of expectations. Being taller meant being seen as older and more mature, and as a young child I relished in the sense of responsibility my height gave me. I enjoyed being chosen to be the line leader and getting things for students where they couldn't reach. As I grew older though, and continued to grow taller, my height no longer felt like such an advantage.

I remember standing in front of a mirror with my friends to take a photo and it really hit me. Nearly a foot between us, my height didn't make me feel like a hero, but an alien, awkwardly towering over my peers. Every room I walked into, I felt the divide. Every first interaction I had with people would always circle back to my height. "How tall are you?" turned into "Why are you so tall?" or "Why don't you play sports?" or "I've never spoken to a girl taller than me before." While I knew no one genuinely meant harm, these questions felt charged. They made me feel as if I had done something wrong by simply being me. I tried to shrink myself by slouching to be less noticeable in photos and while talking to people, trying every way not to stand out.

However, nothing worked so in eighth grade I caved and joined the one activity where, supposedly, I wouldn't stick out, Volleyball. Being a 5'10 teen girl, I thought I had found my true calling in volleyball. But— when I showed up for my shining moment at try-outs— I was abysmal. As I looked around the gym, I saw girls of my height confidently dominating the court, but the more I looked, I saw girls of all sizes excelling at the sport. I was not made to play volleyball like everyone claimed I would be because of my height, I was simply like any other person trying a new sport for the first time. Being the worst player on my team helped me realize that my height is a characteristic that adds to me, not defines me. I found comfort and my confidence in the gym, not because I was surrounded by other tall girls, but because I no longer felt the need to make myself smaller. What I didn't have in skill, I made sure to make up for in grit and determination, fighting hard on the court to prove myself as a capable player. My coaches taught me to reach through my body and extend myself while I play and as I got over my resentment towards taking up space, I began to succeed. Soon as my confidence grew, I felt myself grow into my height. My height does provide an advantage in taking a killer swing on the court, but my height would mean nothing if I didn't have the strength to back it up. When I step on the volleyball court, I see how all my teammates of all different heights come together to complete each other and it

reminds me that what it takes to be a great player and person, is not just physical stature, but self-assurance.

So when I am asked to describe what my height means to me, it means embracing the entirety of myself. It means to reach for the highest shelf to help someone out, own my height in every photo, and use all my 70 inches to represent how proud I am to be me.