

Jocelyn Neill

“What Being Tall Means To Me”

“Wow! You are really tall!”

“Thank you!” I say instinctively.

While I am told this on a regular basis, my reaction never changes. I smile and say thank you, because why should I not? I smile when the first thing people say to me is a comment on my appearance. I smile and laugh when they tell me that not playing basketball is a waste of height as if it's a joke instead of a reminder that I will never meet people's expectations. However, I like to think that being tall is merely a fraction of who I am, genetics that I had no part in choosing, rather than what people see as a defining trait.

I have always been aware of how much space I take up, both physically and emotionally. I have even been told that I am too much. Too happy. Too sad. Too loud. Too tall. It's days like those that make it hard for me to love every inch of myself.

Growing up, I never realized the double standard between tall men and tall women. I started to notice this distinction more and more the older I became. Boys in my class who shot up grew from dorky to hunky, while I stood in the corner with my lanky self. One time, I was told that my red flag was being “too tall”. I instantly responded that there is no such thing as being too tall but only people too insecure to stand beside me. That was the day that what it means to be tall was truly cemented in my mind: standing high above the rest with your chest out, proud to be who you are.

That said, I do like being tall, being able to reach the top shelf and never having my view blocked at the movies. On the other hand, never having clothes that are long enough is a daily struggle for me and constantly getting asked if I am “actually that tall” can be overwhelming.

While I do believe everything I have said about being tall and the advantages and disadvantages of it, I wouldn't change my height for the world.

I believe that we are all created exactly the way we are supposed to be, six foot one inch and all. I have always been raised to be proud of my height and wear it like a badge of honor. I have been fortunate enough to be surrounded by people who have shown me being tall is a gift not a curse some people think it is. I think being tall has given me a unique perspective on life, one that I have truly found value in. I know what it is like to have assumptions made about something one can't control. While my assumptions are quite lighthearted and tend not to have malicious intentions, I know that it still hurts regardless.

I learned early on that being tall means accepting myself for who I am. Not for what I look like but for who I was always meant to be, a tall girl. Every comment, every joke, every laugh is merely a stepping stone on a greater path to self-love. At the end of the day, I wouldn't change a thing about me, because I do love myself. And more importantly, I love being tall.