

## *What Being Tall Means to Me*

*By Tinuade Omoregie*

To me, being a tall woman does not define the entirety of my essence, as the average echoing voice presumes. Instead, it affirms it. Growing up, I wrestled with my emotions and outlook towards my above average height. It was the first thing anyone ever pointed out upon their first glance at me – even prior to me gaining consciousness. My mother tells me that in her labour room, upon my arrival on Earth, the nurse observed my noticeably lengthy fingers and toes (which remain apparent today, of course) and predicted my above average height. It appears they were correct. To be frank, initially, I was not self conscious about my height. In fact, I felt nothing but balance and believed everyone was simply below average height – and that was okay. I was used to going above and beyond for others both metaphorically and literally, as I reached out to the top shelves for them effortlessly. I smiled through the “you should model” comments, wondering if my facial beauty alone would be adequate to warrant the same suggestion in the event that I was a few inches closer to the Earth. However, I know I carry more depth than length and wish it were evident to me then. I silently shed tears in a corner of my room, reviewing photos from the outing with my friends a few hours earlier and scrutinizing every pixel I occupied within that image. I hated how awkward I stood, especially with scoliosis. I hated how long my arms looked along my side and the way my legs measured more than half the length of my friend’s entire body. I cringed at the sight of my size eleven feet taking up more space than my introverted self desired. I hated all of it. I was overwhelmed with anger and unsure of where to channel it. Consequently, this anger presented itself as the tears rolling down my cheeks and onto the fabric on my mother’s shoulder in the middle of the second Walmart of the night because we could not find pants long enough. Being female makes being a tall individual a particularly more difficult experience. Males are often considered more attractive, the taller they are, while it is commonly viewed as odd when it comes to the average woman. Towering over boys my age did not feel “feminine” back in elementary school. It isolated me when it should have empowered me. Standing out was tougher than ever. On my first day of school, when my short 6<sup>th</sup> grade science teacher told me she wished she could cut off my legs and connect it to hers, I nearly told her I agreed. After all, it would have been a symbiotic relationship.

Fast forward to today as a seventeen-year-old high school senior, I still find myself on the journey of fully cherishing my height and accepting the difficulties that accompany being tall, if even possible at all. However, I recognize that I have certainly made considerable progress, which I am proud of. This progress stems from romanticizing the little things that my height positively adds to my life. From being able to reach high shelves, I gain independence and even incredible scholarships like this!

To me, being tall means everything because it is what I am, yet not all I am.