



Kelly Yarber

is a senior at Strongsville High School. Kelly is involved in many school activities—she throws shot put for the Strongsville High School track team and plays trumpet in the school marching band. Kelly is also a Girl Scout and helps out with the junior troop. She will be attending Ohio State University in the fall, majoring in biology, and molecular genetics. She plans to become a surgical oncologist specializing in breast cancer.

Walking in the parking lot with my friend last year, we were suddenly pelted by a bunch of snowballs from unseen enemies behind us. Upon turning around, it was apparent that the snow had come from a group of senior boys that were now approaching us. As we stood there and watched them walk past, one of them snickered “faggot” under his breath. My friend turned away from them, and I just stood there, too afraid of what the guys would do if I said something in return. Once they had passed I tried to say something to my friend, but he just walked away, and ignored me for the rest of the day. When he finally spoke, he said he was hurt because I didn’t bother to stand up for him. Although I was in our schools Gay Straight Alliance, when it came time to publicly show what I believed in, I just stood there and said nothing. I did nothing to stick up for my beliefs and more importantly, nothing to stick up for my friend who had needed me.

Unfortunately, this is not usually noticed as an act of discrimination. The act of not speaking up is more often overshadowed by those who go out of their way to discriminate against others through their actions and words. Sometimes it is the lack of words and actions that can be seen as the greatest form of discrimination because there is opportunity here to stop hate that is not utilized. If more people stood up for others and their own beliefs when the time came, it would be easier to educate those who prey on anyone who is different. The silence can hurt more than any active form of discrimination. Some would argue that this is not discrimination, but what else could it be considered? It’s only when we are too afraid to stand up, that the silence begins and that is often the most hurtful thing that could be done.

In our schools there is a way we can stop this silent discrimination. It is by using the exact silence that continues to hurt students from every different culture, sexual orientation, and religion. The Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network started a movement called The Day of Silence, where students stay silent for the entire day. If this day was implemented in schools, it would show everyone just how empty these people feel when their need for support is met by the silence of their friends. The day would not go by unnoticed, because everyone will be able to feel the silence, heavy and lingering in the building. The Day of Silence is a good solution to get students to see that, as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said, “In the end, we will not remember the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends.” A message I have taken to heart in the year since the incident in the parking lot.