

The Real Me

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I don't choose to wear makeup. Some people may look at me with disdain, and others wonder why I opt out of such a common practice. I see girls around me with perfect faces, unable to tell that they are covered with the cloudy foundation, and with their eyes painted just right so that I find it easy to look and hard to look away. But I myself find no yearning to be "beautiful," or to look "flawless" simply so that others may be more visually attracted to me. I believe that nobody needs to hide his or her true colors from others, and I believe that hiding your true self can do more harm than good.

My mother lent me valuable advice many years ago that she still tells me even today. It was on a day just like any other, during the beginning stages of adolescence. Girls my age had begun to wear makeup. I didn't quite want the responsibility of painting my face but, like any other pre-teen, I wanted to hop onto the bandwagon: one that included popular girls, and even my closest friends.

I approached my mother that day, after noticing how the faces around me had suddenly become less cluttered and more perfect. "Mom, can I wear makeup?" were the first words out of my mouth.

My mother—not an avid wearer herself—frowned and looked over at my youthful complexion. Pimples had plagued my face, threatening to change its natural color to red. The only words with which she replied were: "Why? You don't need it."

At first I felt like she didn't understand. All the other girls were wearing makeup by now! I had to do it too if I wanted to fit in. But I soon came to realize that that wasn't true. There was nothing I was obligated to do if I wanted others to accept me. Makeup just wasn't me, and I didn't need it for the approval of others.

Hiding my true face just isn't me. I've always wanted to be included in the affairs of others and, when I was young, I thought that makeup would elevate me to that status. But throughout my short years, I've discovered that all it really does is waste my precious time. I've gotten used to the sight of people with heavily caked makeup to the point where if I see them without makeup, I easily mistake them for someone else: their true, exposed self.

At the beginning of the day, I don't have to prepare myself to be someone I'm not; at the end of the day, I don't have to take off my mask. I want people to see the true me at every hour of the day, and to me, a bare face says all. This I Believe.

Katherine Bowman attends Springfield Southeast High School in Springfield, Illinois, and is active in school and community service through her school's chapter of National Honor Society. She is an American Red Cross volunteer, and in her spare time she enjoys drawing, reading, and playing the piano. She plans on attending college in the fall of 2014.