1st Place Winner High School

Emmitt Schneider

Glenbrook North High School

Northbrook, IL

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As Americans, we are granted the freedom of speech, and this freedom protects our rights to express our feelings and emotions. These inalienable rights allow us to have freedom to become the people we want to be. Despite possessing every right to be ourselves, sometimes other obstacles stand in the way. Many Americans view discrimination as immoral; however, many remain oblivious to the discrimination that takes place in our country, schools, and at our jobs every day. For instance, people in the LGBTQIA+ community have the same rights to discover and share their identity as others, yet they are still being silenced. Straying from societal normalities, members of this community are vulnerable to bullying, intimidation, and violence. Transgender youth are being bullied at their schools everyday just for being brave enough to express who they are. By denying people their right to express their identity, you deny them the right to be human. Depicted in my piece is an androgynous figure that is breaking free from the grip of gender stereotypes. Whether this figure be a girl, a boy, or gender non-conforming is beyond the point, because no matter what gender a person identifies as, they are still a human, and they are still an American.