

Mono Lake Committee Scholarship 2015

As I venture down the saline infused dirt trail to the lakeshore, I am almost instantly hit with the intoxicating aroma of sage and salt water. When I reach the silent shore I take a seat amongst the exposed tufa, remove my shoes and dip my toes into the icy, slick water. I close my eyes and inhale the light spring air and listen to the gulls' song to the lake; I think of how the impending summer will bring thousands of migratory birds to the area. As each moment passes, I am less aware of the stress of the modern world, and the sound of the water lapping against the tufa towers lifts away my burdens and becomes a mantra to relaxation.

Upon opening my eyes I see the lake's stark, volcanic landscape and oddly sculptured tufa towers that form a surreal landscape. The setting sun creates a gentle hue of light that seems to wash across the landscape and accentuates the gold, melting colors of the grass around me.

While sitting on the shore I become aware of the hundreds of organisms in my vicinity. I am overcome with the sensation of having the blessed opportunity to exist peacefully on the shore of this giant, saline lake with so many diverse creatures. As I take in my surroundings I become increasingly conscious of how important Mono Lake is to understanding human relationships with nature.

We, as humans beings, are consumed by the fast-paced race of modern society. Places like Mono Lake are more and more necessary to understand our connection to earth. Among all the chaos of the world, one can venture down to Mono Lake and immerse oneself into a quiet, peaceful environment and provide oneself with complete tranquility. Even within the few moments of my sitting on my own at Mono lake, it caused me to become aware of how truly blessed I am to live in such a beautiful area. This gorgeous landscape has influenced my life everyday, allowing me to be thankful to my parents for bringing me to this area as a young child and raising me in such a caring and giving community.

Finally, the sun drops behind the Sierras and twilight settles across the Mono Basin. Once again, my breath is taken away by the pallet of colors that stretch across the landscape and I am hypnotized by the view of the Mono Craters. Spending time at Mono Lake assures me that I *need* this place. I need an environment that can calm my nerves and reassure me that my connection to nature will never be lost. I know I will forever be thankful to call Mono Lake my home.