

## Berlin Del Aguila

### Mono Lake Scholarship Essay

As I walk down the trail that'll soon lead me to nirvana, I get a whiff of the dense air that smells of salt and sage; I know I've made it to the lake.

When I arrive at the shore I take a seat near a salt covered tufa and look down on the lake. I see the way the breeze sways the algae back and forth, back and forth, as if they're dancing. I close my eyes and listen to my surroundings. The sound of the water whispers in my ears as it laps against the shore and I listen to the songs of the birds as they take turns singing to one another.

Upon opening my eyes, I approach the lakeshore. I see and feel the dryness of the tufa move onto my hands. The white remains of the salt bleach the lines on my palms making them scaly and rough. I finally hop off the rock, and wade in the lake's unexpectedly warm water. As I step in the lake with all my body weight, I feel the algae squishing up through my toes. I look down and notice the alkali flies kissing my feet as I stand there, frozen in place. When I look over, I see a family of deer taking in the beauty of Mono Lake, just as I am. The doe leads the way with the five fawns following right behind. They do not notice me, so they continue to prance along the old lake bed, until they disappear into the sagebrush.

I turn around to discover the verdant mountains that have hidden behind me this entire time. I find myself closed in between the mountains and the lake, but it doesn't frighten me. On the contrary, I feel fortunate to be surrounded by such grandeur. I watch the sun dissolve behind the mountains and let my thoughts sink in. A peaceful feeling wells up inside me when I realize I have temporarily escaped modern civilization. We, as humans, are so consumed by the fast pace of the evolving world, that we forget places like Mono Lake exist. The simplicity of the lake allows me to view the world and each of its elements without the interference of technology.

The longer I sit near the lake, appreciating the aromas, the songs of the birds, and the wildlife that surround it, I'm able to reflect on life and realize the things that are truly valuable to me. All the stress that has accumulated inside me as I prepare for college leaves my mind and disintegrates into the salty air breeze. The lake has freed me from the pressures of life and led me into a world of tranquility and gratitude.