

## Untitled

I have snowboarded the illustrious mountains in Chile, swam in the warm, beckoning waters of the Dominican Republic, and danced until my feet set afire in the Gulf of Mexico. I have ventured out on a sixteen-hour road trip to our nation's Lonestar State, Texas, shopped until I dropped in the fashionable boutiques of Florida, and toured the golden coast of California. Throughout my travels, I have endured the driest of desert heat to the snowiest of winters, and I resided in some of the most affluent and guarded communities to the starved-yet-welcoming. In retrospect to each and every place I have explored, I can proudly say that there has never been a place like New Jersey.

New Jersey is the only place where I have felt cold water place a tender kiss upon my ankles while basking in the rays of endless sun. It is the only place where I have watched the forest ignite into a dazzling inferno of crimson and gold, only then to wither away into bare trees. I have witnessed Old Man Winter blanket the ground with glistening snow and breathed a sigh of sparkling ice upon the bricks and branches. I have skated upon the lakes. I have climbed the white hills and, at its peak, hear the birds happily chirping songs, amidst the dead of winter.

I have marveled at the turning of spring with its blooming Viola Sororia, thriving Northern Red Oaks and all of its secret treasures. I have discovered the secret before. If you dare to venture into the green scenery, hidden in the woods, past the racing chipmunks and graceful deer, past the abandoned tracks and the fallen logs, there are waterfalls. Waterfalls that laugh and bubble into the creeks. They slap the rocks, brush my hair and hold my hand. I swear to you--this is only in New Jersey.

When I am in New Jersey, I could close my eyes and hug the familiar, winding roads like the curves of my fingertips. The rich soil and untamed trees plant a smile upon my face. I know the communities with the dedicated workers who built and created my generation and the next. I am familiar with the bustling noises of cars and conversation. I feel at peace when I hear the sound of chirping birds and shaking leaves in the middle of the night.

Despite all of my travels in and from America, this is the place I call home. This is the place that has molded me, raised me, educated me and believed in me. My community, especially, has brought me to my feet when I collapsed onto my knees. These are the people that have formed my childhood. Who have even helped me begin my career as an educator. New Jersey is the place that will always have my heart in a tight grip. I always find myself eager to get on the flight back home because when I travel, I am always reminded that New Jersey has everything. In New Jersey, I can experience all the seasons, not just one. I can enjoy everything that this state has to provide, from its secret treasures to its blatant beauty. I can fall to my lowest of lows, but I know that I will never be alone on my way up. I have yet to see something special like that anywhere else. I have yet to find a place that provides as much beauty and as much life experience as New Jersey.