

## STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

BY LACY COMPTON

# EXPRESSING IDENTITY

For adolescents, one of the primary struggles faced is that of identity (as Erikson noted in his stages of psychosocial development, the psychosocial crisis of adolescence is identity vs. role confusion). When thinking about how to spotlight student work for this issue on the social and emotional needs of gifted students, I realized how I personally found solace as an adolescent trying to figure out my identity—through words, through stories and poems and songs. And then I came across this poem, originally published in *Creative Kids* magazine, and knew I wanted to share it here, too. “Independence Day” was written by Amaris Henderson, an El Paso student, at age 12. Read Amaris’s words, then read them again. Let them tumble across your tongue and feel the weight of them—the importance of what’s being described as Amaris reveals what it means to discover one’s identity and the endless possibilities it can bring.

### INDEPENDENCE DAY BY AMARIS HENDERSON

Life is a precious thing,  
yet so many days, years, hours, minutes,  
and milliseconds are taken for granted,  
and in all these matters of time we are plentiful  
with numerous chances to go out and take action,  
to take total control.

I stand here in awe,  
with the realization that I’m human,  
feeling as if I were once a free spirit,  
my soul captured by surprise,  
trapped inside a body.

Now, I have gained the power to express myself,  
for I smile, I laugh, for I weep, and I scream,  
I have the power to feel,  
to bear pain,  
to delight in happiness,  
to quarrel with ire,  
to mourn in fear,  
to fall in love.

I have the ability to be connected with others,  
to be intimate both physically and emotionally,  
I have the ability to speak,  
to communicate,  
to lay down my opinions,  
to stand for my beliefs.

Most importantly,  
I have the power to reason,  
to envision,  
for I have a mind, for I am able to make wise  
and ignorant decisions,  
I have the power to choose life or death.

Life is a precious thing.  
Every day is filled with numerous opportunities,  
to overcome,  
to forgive,  
to comprehend,  
to love,  
to free yourself from everything  
that has the desire to destroy you.  
Think about it,  
every day could be Independence Day.



### REFERENCE

Erikson, E. H. (1963). *Childhood and society* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Norton.