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Mute

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Mute by Charley Garcia

I don't talk much. It's not that I physically can't. It's just that I choose not to. Don't ask me why. I just don't. I never feel the need to talk. It just seems like people nowadays overuse the privilege to be able to talk. They talk about nothing. It doesn't make sense why this makes people happy. Why must I talk in order to connect to someone? Why are we as humans programmed this way? I have plenty to talk about. It's just that I'm making a statement, mainly to myself, that I can have friends without talking. It's overrated and over-used.

Speech is a way for me to release all of my thoughts and expressions into words. I of course express them in an appropriate way, at a speech tournament. I don't even talk during practice after school. I just absorb all the knowledge I need and kick butt at tournaments. My technique is unique, but who says being unique is bad?

School isn't really a problem. The only problem I get in school is when the teacher thinks I am being rebellious when he or she asks me a question or asks me to read, and I blankly stare at him or her. Eventually over the course of about a month or so, the teacher realizes I'm mute or one of my classmates explains.

Somehow a rumor got out that I've taken a vow of silence because I'm going to the Air Force. I have a feeling that it was my English teacher. I remember the first day of high school, she told everyone my last name was Rodriguez instead of Gomez. I didn't realize it was her doing until a year after, when she confessed it was she who told everyone my last name was Rodriguez. Now that I think of it, she was very apologetic, so she probably didn't do it on purpose. To this day, people, even close friends of mine, call me "Rodriguez."

The mere fact that the student body needs an explanation of why I don't talk is

extremely amusing to me. The word got out to all of the school that I was going to the Air Force. I heard one rumor that I was going to revenge my brother's death in Afghanistan. I don't have a brother. It's gotten so ridiculous that I have gotten letters in the mail from the Air Force themselves saying that they have heard my story and would love if I would go to the Air Force Academy. They didn't give me a scholarship, which I was unhappy about, but then I realized I couldn't care less because none of my story is actually true. I have respect among my peers. People in the hallways, including teachers, shake my hand firmly and look me square in the eye. I even get the occasional pat on the butt, with a, "Go get 'em!" I just smile and occasionally chuckle and nod. My life would be perfect if I had the same mindset as everyone else in high school. The constant need for attention that people crave is amazing.

There are few people like me at my high school. We call ourselves "observers," and our favorite hobby is to people watch. If you are not familiar with the activity, I highly recommend it. It's exactly what it sounds like. You and a couple of your friends pick a public place and you all just watch people and how they act. Not only is it hilarious, but it also opens the mind to new ideas. I saw a lady the other day smack her kid in the face. My parents have never touched me in a way that wasn't affectionate, so this was a shock to me. What really took me back was how she didn't hold back from doing it. She wound up her arm and wham, hit him just below his cheek bone. That was sure to leave a red mark or possibly a bruise.

The tournament was very big. A lot of people from around the country were there. They all were wearing street clothes and baseball caps. I thought it would be a breeze. Every competitor I went up against was an all out battle, but I eventually won first place. It was a humbling experience, and I learned that I should treat each tournament as if it were my last.