

The (In)decency of Human Beings
By Eli Betts

Preschool was a time
when the only thing “race” meant
was who could run to the oak tree
fastest
and I could hold hands
with my best friend in my class
and not be scrutinized because
we both had vaginas.
The little things though
started to separate us.
Boys somehow equal blue
Girls always ended up with pink.
Now there's no problem with girls liking pink
or boys liking blue.
The problem is
“Would you like rose pink, slipper pink, or 'river rouge'.

Middle school was when the jokes began.
And it suddenly became a thing
to pray away the gay.
Race wasn't just something that happened in phys. ed.
It became the topic of jokes and debates.
And the colours weren't just pink and blue any more.
Pink was then divided into red, yellow, black, white and brown.
Blue was the same way,
and if you tried to slide from the binary,
well,
I've been told
G-d knows how
I'm going to Hell.

And in high school,
the old man on the train now questions my gender
as I hold hands with my girlfriend.
It feels like the labels are stamped onto us.
Sometimes written on our skin.
Sometimes they are our skin.
Then what's in our pants.
Then what's in our hearts.
“Are you a boy or a girl?”
He asks, just to make us uncomfortable.
Maybe I'm more uncomfortable than she is,
because she answers “He's my boyfriend.”

and ignores the man as he rambles on about the cross around her neck
and my "Jew nose".

And he delves deeper into the hate
because her gorgeous skin
is darker than mine.

So, you asked me what equality looks like.

But, I can't tell you.

G-d knows I never knew.

Maybe equality looks like preschool

before they divided us

into those first groups of pink and blue.

I wish I could tell you.

I wish I could show you a smile that's real,

or engulf you in a vivid description of freedom

peace

and equality,

but I can't.

My generation will never know it.

Because, sometimes, the only thing humans learn

from the humans before them

is how

to hate

yourself.