

Dear OSAA and League Officials,

My name is Levi Morris, and I have just transferred to Columba Christian from Madison high school. I'm writing this letter in hope of being granted eligibility to play basketball this year. At three months I was adopted from Miami, Florida to Dufur, Oregon. I am African American and my adoptive parents are white. I grew up in an essentially all-white town. I often felt different and hated on by a lot of people. In June, we moved to Portland in hope of finding a school with more diversity. We did find diversity which was great, but I guess I was not prepared for going from a small rural school (Dufur High School) to a large city school.

In Dufur, even though I felt like I was separated from kids, I didn't feel physically threatened. At Madison High School, I have never felt more physically and emotionally threatened in my life. I felt like if I had stayed at Madison I would have probably gotten in to some type of drug use because drugs are a normal thing that students do there. Almost daily I was asked either if I had any pills or weed, or if I wanted to smoke any weed. Sometimes they didn't take no for an answer and just kept asking me. My hope was to play on the basketball team at Madison. I was trying out for the team and had played with the players during summer and fall. The school environment wasn't really a good environment in general. While I was at Madison high school a student managed to set the boys bathroom on fire four times forcing all 1000 students to evacuate the school. One of those incidents included a written threat, using the term "ISIS". On another occasion a threat was received of someone coming to the school on a particular day to shoot it up with guns.

I love the game of basketball but constantly having teammates harp on me on the court and give me dirty looks off the court would make me feel lonely and sad. I would try to be the nicest type of person to them but nothing would seem to get them to appreciate or respect me. Not really having a connection with the players made me not even want to play. Not feeling safe in the school made me worried about going there.

In Dufur, being the only black kid in school, basketball was my place to belong, to be of some importance. Maybe that is bent a bit, but it was the one place I could feel a valuable part of something. I had hoped for the same at Madison.

From my first experience in a visit at Columbia Christian I felt able to relax, not have my guard up all the time. I am excited about this new chance at a smaller, safer, kinder school. I hope you allow me to participate in basketball.

Thanks, Levi Morris