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A Child's Innocence in Healthcare

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A child's innocence can be deceiving. Their beauty, laughter, and carefree nature can easily blind anyone from seeing and understanding a child's true reality. On my first pediatrics rotation as a third year medical student, I met a little girl with Ebstein's Anomaly, a rare and serious heart condition. A condition that can present with bluish discoloration to the lips and skin due to lack of oxygen. When this little girl first walked into the examination room, her smile lit up the room and her laughter instantly made me forget why she was even there. After getting lost in her laughter for a few minutes, I started to notice how blue she was. Her hands were blue, her lips were blue. She was a beautiful blue little girl with a big smile that almost made me forget that she just had open heart surgery 3 weeks prior. It was this experience that taught me to admire a child's innocence, but to not be blinded and underestimate the physical and mental struggles that children live with.

ARTIST STATEMENT: ALICIA KILIAN



THIS IS A PHOTOGRAPH OF NEVAEH CARTER WHO JUST FINISHED EATING A BLUE LOLLIPOP.

THIS PHOTO IS INTENDED TO PORTRAY A CHILD'S INNOCENCE AND HOW I FIRST FELT MEETING THE LITTLE GIRL I DESCRIBED WITH EBSTEIN'S ANOMALY. IT WAS SO EASY FOR ME TO GET LOST IN HER LAUGHTER AND BEAUTY AND NOT INITIALLY NOTICE HER BLUE LIPS AND APPRECIATE LIFE CHALLENGES.

My niece, Nevaeh Carter is in the photograph however, the little girl who was the inspiration for this photography, I met at the Boriquen healthcare center in Miami. Her name is Sophie and she is the same age as my niece and with similar physical characteristics.

One day I was at the park with my niece and she just finished a blue lollipop, and that's when my encounter with Sophie came to mind. I wish I could explain in words how enlightening the experience was for me. As a medical/public health student, this experience made me think about our perception of children and their innocence and how it influences how child medicine is practiced. It made me think about how we can unintentionally underestimate what a child is experiencing and therefore may not effectively address their health needs.