

Daya Stanley

Personal Statement

In my education, I have come to sit at both sides of the table and eaten from both sides of the plate. But as I sit at what most would consider the better side of the things, I came to wonder whether I should continue to eat or leave my seat.

As a child, I had started school a little differently than others. I did not start school until I was old enough to go to first grade. This late start was not the result of some unfathomable genius that had been given to me as most think when hearing me say this nowadays. No, it was in reality, the simple instance of the school staff not wanting to do a homeless student enrollment that lead to this situation.

Regardless, this was not what gave me my seat at the table's worse end. The decision to put me in special education was what gave me my seat. While my time in special education was short lived, this year long stunt had given me a good helping of what was served at this side of the table. I was given the isolation of being in a different class. I was given the exclusion on field trips that was brought by certain opportunities not being for those who were different. I was given the expectation to be unsuccessful as I could not be expected to do better as someone who was different.

I would later come to learn as I improved my grades and test scores that while you might seat at a different seat at the table, it does not mean you will not be served the same thing. Upon having a good academic record from 8th grade and having continued it in my first year of high school, I became a part of my school's "smartest cohort". In this cohort, I found myself in the same situation. Isolation now resulted from me being too "different" in skill for my classmates to keep up. I was now given opportunities most were excluded from as these opportunities would be a wasted on those whose were not in advanced classes. I was now expected to be highly successful as I was now capable of nothing, but that. It was in the treatment that I received that I realized my ability to be a scholar was determined by titles I have and the name of the classes I have taken.

Having experienced both situations, I have come to question my own choices regarding my education. However, every moment when my mind turns to the thought of just dropping out of these advanced classes, I come to remember why I stay. I remained not because the work challenges me, but because to fully change the system I disagree with, I first have to fully understand it. And for something such as education, understanding is only gained through experiencing it fully. Although, I am not fully ready to set a new table, with the knowledge and opportunities given to me by others; I do work to put more on the plates of those I can.