

### Journey versus Destination

My academic experience from kindergarten to 12<sup>th</sup> grade has been a journey of self-discovery. I've only recently begun to realize the many ways in which my education and all of the situations that I encountered, positive and negative, have molded the demeanor I have today. The pastor of my church has a saying that he refers to very frequently when he delivers a sermon. He would say "Don't confuse your journey with your destination." I am currently in college, and those words hadn't fully made sense until this very moment in my life. I once believed that I was only as smart as what my report card said, and never fully realized my own potential even when my family did all they could to let me know that I had the potential for greatness. My mind was fixed on the idea that I couldn't be any better than what I was. Even now I am faced with challenges that could potentially divert me from my course, but I have, through my educational experience, developed a growth mindset and am now able to recognize that setbacks are all a part of my journey. Through my academic experience I have developed a growth mindset and I am now headed in the direction of the future that I believe I can have for myself, my son, and my community.

I attended private school from kindergarten until high school. I excelled academically, quickly advancing through coursework, I was skipped ahead by one grade level, I received several certificates for my academic achievements, and I was frequently recognized for my scores on different tests and exams. There were also many difficulties that I faced, mostly when it came to social interaction with my peers. I never had any racial issues I was raised in a negative element, but I wasn't raised by a negative element. My mother made sure that I focused on my education from a young age, and I held on to that set of values as tight as I could. This made me different, which made me misunderstood, which in turn made me subject to attack by people who were more closely attached to the negative element that we were surrounded by. Though we were young children at the time and I didn't understand, I realize now that those few small incidents that took place had begun to affect my way of thinking. I was picked on almost to the point of bullying because I was intelligent, respectful, I wasn't really accepted in any social circles so I chose solitude. I was attempting to figure out why I was experiencing these things, and unfortunately, I began to believe that in order to make it stop, I had to be like the people that were wronging me.

In her article "Boosting Achievement With Messages That Motivate" Carol Dweck states "the most motivated and resilient students are the ones who believe that their abilities can be developed

through their effort and learning.” Before I began high school I was fortunate to have changed schools. I was still attending private school, but this school created a consciousness and a cultural awareness in me that would inspire me to later become the person I am today. This school was smaller, exclusive, but surprisingly more culturally diverse. My mother couldn’t afford the tuition, but because she and the head mistress had a good relationship, and shared the same enthusiasm for my future, I was allowed to continue attending for free. At that moment I realized I was more than what I believed myself to be. My school was also located inside the natural history museum, so that was a also a boost of motivation to do what I knew I was capable of and pursue knowledge. Being allowed to attend private school for free because someone believed in my potential motivated me to let go of the negative experiences, and put that energy into pursuing more knowledge.

The transition from private school to public school was a critical point in my life. Entering high school was equivalent to pouring a fishbowl into the middle of the ocean, it was a new world for me, and I was by myself. I knew I was different, and I had already experienced the results of being different around people who don’t quite understand. So I did what I knew, I attempted to fit in. The only difference now was that I didn’t have the same support to pull me out of this mindset so it started to stick. I had fallen lower than ever in my academics and I wasn’t trying to pick myself, nor was I looking for any help. A fixed mindset is a way of thinking that sums up the saying “it is what it is”. With a fixed mindset there is no room for improvement or growth, however things are is just how it’s supposed to be. This was my mindset, I was in public school and this is how everybody was, so this is how I was supposed to be. Eventually I felt I was so far from the path that I had been on, that I stopped caring about my education. I didn’t feel I could do anything to make up for what I had already lost, so I rebelled. I was involved in a few incidents that erupted from racial tensions between Black and Latino groups outside of school that managed to plague the campus. The same latino young men that we were quarrelling with were our classmates, sometimes even our friends, but when it came to racial tension you had to pick a side, and most stuck with their own race. It was at this point that I thought about everything that I had learned from when I was younger and chose to go back to pursuing knowledge. I was also fortunate enough to gain a mentor, and meet a teacher who would be my support system and aid me along my journey.

Ten Years later after all of the obstacles I encountered, after losing my motivation, and feeling that I could never be the man that other people saw I had the potential to be, I am in college. I am

pursuing my teaching credentials and a Ph.D. in English. Whereas I previously believed that I couldn't advance any further than I was academically, I now take on challenges, work hard, and confront and correct my mistakes which are the "rules and practices that promote intellectual growth" according to Dwecks' research. I was prepared to disappoint my family because I believed that they had expectations that I could not reach, but as soon as I entered college with a mind open and willing to learn, my mind began to grow, and now I know that the possibilities are endless. All of my trials and obstacles were only a part of my journey, and every day that I pursue knowledge, I am one step closer to my destination.