

## EDUC 203- Personal Narrative

As George sang the praises of his student leader, I took a good look at John and immediately surmised that he was probably a street-level drug dealer. With gold teeth in his mouth a thick gold chain around his neck, and a beeper at his waist, John fit the profile that I had come to know well. (City Schools and the American Dream. p.2) This description of John is exactly the struggle that I had encountered during my k-12 years. Starting off at McNear Elementary school where I had developed such a reputation in such a short time. When I first started there I was a quiet guy that kept to myself, however by the time I reached the first grade you would find that not only had I been in my first fight, over a juice box, but I had fed in to the program of the urban youth at the school. What is this program you ask? It was the be tough, be stupid, and don't care program. Though I was a smart individual who tested in to the GATE program and had substantially high test scores my school was more than willing to sign the papers that would land me in Vanguard Middle School which at the time went from the 4<sup>th</sup> to the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Upon arriving there I expressed to myself that I would have a fresh start and that I would do all my work and be brilliant and leave the fighting alone. However this goal of my was short lived as I found myself in a place with just a larger population of urban youth who cared less about education and more about impressing each other through shows of masculinity than through rational thinking. I was in a place where the majority of my life would be spent fighting through school literally. The sad part is that it wasn't just physical fighting but mental as well. At minimum, they may enroll their sons and daughters because they knew that even at a failing public school their children will have access to a warm meal and adult supervision while they are there. (City Schools and the American Dream p.5) this reality hit as I could find that the

teacher's only concerns were their pay checks and good reputations. I found myself being able to find one teacher whom I knew truly cared for me and my success, David Bensinger my 5<sup>th</sup> grade math teacher as well as my 8<sup>th</sup> math teacher and my 8<sup>th</sup> grade free period advisor. I first encountered this guy as he broke up one of my fights and after talking with him and he letting me know how stupid I was being he let me go. This was not something I was used to I didn't understand his words and jester until a later time. He made known to me his expectations and would not lower the bar. Mr. Bensinger easily became not only my favorite teacher but a mentor for me as well. While during my 8<sup>th</sup> grade year I had decided to get things back on track with my school I still had a many of people at the school who could care less about me. I had counselors whom told me that I was nothing but a good test score for the school and that they would have gotten rid of me if that wasn't so, I also had one who would withhold the King/Drew application from me so that I could not attend then turn and tell my mother that I said I did not want an application to attend that school. So with only one option left I took matters into my own hands going to Verbum Dei to get my own application. I however was denied access into the school because of my past history and what I seemed like on paper. However though the efforts of my father I was able to go on condition. Meeting the requirement of the school intellectually I believe I really amazed them when they found out that I had a summer job. Yes I was in school, playing football, and working all at once. Showing that I was capable of doing what they required of all the students. Though I was still in an urban setting this setting was more challenging and a better environment than the others I had to face. However problems still occurred there. Being an institution that served the underprivileged youth or the urban community of Compton, Watts, and Los Angeles there were those students whom had a life

similar and even worse than mine. Those who not only depended on the school for a safe haven, but it in fact was a last attempt at saving their lives and trying to make it to the next level.