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A Self-Churning Discovery: From Chocolate to College

Should I put my trust in those around me or myself? Prior to attending Milton Hershey School (MHS), I did not trust anyone except for my mother. MHS is a private co-ed boarding school named after Milton Snavely Hershey, philanthropist and chocolatier. The school is located in Dauphin County, PA. MHS welcomes warmly, low-income students from pre-k to 12th grade that have social or financial needs. Although many consider boarding schools only for the rich, MHS is an exception. Because those enrolled at MHS come from unhappy circumstances, not all have bundles of money to spend, instead, many students value life on a higher level through their own experience growing up at MHS. Attending MHS was like experiencing Plato's "Allegory of the Cave" because in leaving my dysfunctional home, I discovered I could trust people and now attending Point Park University I am able to feel comfortable with whom I am as an individual.

Before I went to MHS, I went to a public school with a low-self esteem and constant harassment about my sexuality. In addition to this, my domestic lifestyle was difficult to overcome, but my mother was my fuel and inspiration every day. All these issues started when my mother divorced my father, and therefore I lost a parent when we moved out. My father would make promises to pick up my siblings and me up for a long weekend or a holiday, but then he would cancel unexpectedly or not show up at all. Since this constant feeling of false hope, I grew to understand that people are not reliable and questioned why I should confide in their promises if those promises are only meant to be broken and ignored like my father had did so many times before. Furthermore, as my household drama rippled through all aspects of my life, school was a major constituent. I constantly would distance myself during lunch and recess because I knew how ungrateful, rude, and untrustworthy people could be. Due to this,

my classmates noticed my self-solitary practices and began to make fun of the way I walked or talked, because I was naturally different whenever I did attempt to socialize. Because of the making fun and broken promises, I grew self-conscious and began to doubt myself very quickly. This stage of my life would have been a direct replica of being in the cave and having the sense of ignorance as in the “Allegory”, because there were chains of discrimination that bound me, and I perceived that this was the only life to live. The “slaves” of the cave were all those who surrounded me, including myself. I was not aware that there was more to life than being ridiculed and losing hope until I decided to go to MHS.

I arrived at MHS on January 9, 2006, new to living away from home and new to another school. I embarked on a new terrain with pre-meditated decisions about how I should act and behave at MHS. I remember vividly thinking about not talking to anyone and just trying to focus on my schoolwork and the mandatory community service that all students were required to do. However, there was something different about MHS, but I did not realize it until my senior year when I walked across the stage for graduation. Many vivid memories passed through my mind on June 14. They were the memories of not trusting MHS staff as well as having an attitude towards my classmates. These incidents were relapses I had because of stepping outside that abstract idea of a cave that Plato refers to in his “Allegory of the Cave”. The consequences of my actions when I did lose control of myself made me see the light as I stepped away from home and the MHS campus. While being at MHS, I had a sudden change in perspective because of the consequences or “pain” of having to sit on the couch for detentions or doing extra chores around the house. The sudden realization of being at MHS helped me understand that the adults issued the consequences because they were doing their job and I could trust them with trying to teach me important life lessons.

After graduating from MHS, I now see a great improvement with my attitude toward people. Since I started at MHS new and safe, coming to Point Park University was very similar because of it being

a very new environment to live in. However, the major difference is that there were no pre-meditated thoughts about the people here at Point Park. I came rather open-minded and trusting that people would be trusting back. Within the past first week of school, I bonded with many people because I was trusting and did not make quick judgments, and they accept me for who I am and so I have the ability to trust myself. This segment of my journey includes my responsibility to inform those who are in that “cave”. I am blind by darkness to the ignorance that is present and so I am able to disconnect myself more freely as I try to help those who are in need of trusting people in the new college lifestyle.

In conclusion, the concept of trust was a learning process for me. Each time I lashed out, I had to pay for my actions; I gained attentiveness to the situation and learned how to accept trust from others and give some trust to myself in order to feel confident in a situation. Raised in a dysfunctional family and attending MHS improved my self-esteem immensely and guided my destiny to cross paths with Point Park University. I have absorbed the light and now it is my duty to permeate the land, which I walk on, with the warm rays of self-confidence and trust. Milton Hershey School has not only helped me, but many others that graduated years before. Milton Hershey’s philanthropic effort is maintained by the support of dedicated students in attendance at MHS and by their endearing parents and sponsors that agreed to enroll their children in the sweetest school on earth.

Works Cited

Plato. “Allegory of the Cave.” *A World of Ideas: Essential Readings for College Writers*. Lee A. Jacobus. Bedford/St. Martins, 2010. 447-459. Print.