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The Complexities Behind Identity

When I think of history, I think of stories waiting to be told. In a way I see history as a life source to the memories of those who past, and the imprint they left behind. It keeps me connected to the timeline and never lets me forget how it is we find ourselves in our current position. History has shaped my thoughts and behavior and through it I have found myself.

I used to be naïve to my surroundings and kept an optimistic heart. Truth be told that didn’t last long because I soon realized that in order to survive such cruel world you had to fight back. The United States in predominantly white in people and in thought. Being different, standing out, is not taken well.

I moved to the United States 10 years ago and have experienced bullying, discrimination and racism throughout the years. As a Hispanic female minority, the color of my skin is my master status. People fear what they don’t know. Societies preconceived notions on culture and how they go about showing what they’ve been taught to think is hurtful in concrete ways.

However, change is in our presence. Before, what it was we could do, was all limited. There was consequence if you did not follow and abide by societies rules. Now, we are protected, our rights are protected and we have a voice, though not loud enough. The world is a cruel place with cruel people. But that’s reality, being able to accept that, but not let it stop you from progressing, from making change.

Opportunities that are available for women today were not possible before. Women were oppressed and limited. They were taught to believe that their only purpose was to be a house wife. They were seen as tools, not people. If they defied this view, then they would be shamed by their community. However, today, women’s voices are being heard and listened to. A woman today can achieve success above that of a man. However, there are still people who are against this and do not support equality rights for both men and women.

I myself and taking advantage of the many opportunities offered to me. My leadership experience varies all across the spectrum. I have served as President for the Amnesty International chapter at my previous school, Salt Lake Center for Science Education. We participated and get involved in lobbying, campaigning, petitions, research projects, and we really brought awareness to injustices occurring all across the Globe. I’m also a Peer Mentor Leader and tutor for the ESL population, specifically for adult learners with mathematics and the Accuplacer. I’ve also served in committees with the Peer Mentoring Program, Una Mano Amiga and have planned events that are culturally enriching and at the same time very educational. I’ve been involved and I’ve written for the Stegners Young Writers Institute program, which has provided me the experience of communicating and articulating my thoughts. I’ve also been heavily involved with Women in Transportation, a program that empowers young women to go into fields of Transportation/ Engineering/ STEM.

As a woman of color and minority student, there is a difference in opportunity, and being able to articulate my thoughts, and my experiences through the doors and windows of opportunity that I’ve gone through have been really rewarding and have also provided me greater leadership and awareness to the limitless possibilities out there. The only requirement being, that you take the first step.

For me its either go big or go home. I don’t want society to limit me, I want to pay my respects by reaching success to those who fought for women to be recognized. A quote I feel is really applicable to me is, “I never loose. Either I win or I learn.” This quote speaks truth to me and my desire to advance. There is no such thing as failure in my book because I will never stop trying. History helps me value and see that anything is possible.

One would expect that with all the advancements in opportunity the same would be applicable to bringing an end to racism and discrimination. Though there’s been progress it not enough. An example being that society believes all Hispanics are Mexican.

I will never forget the feeling of anger and disbelief that passed through me when I was asked, “In what part of Mexico is Peru?” We rarely move beyond our comfort zone. We categorize and label things in our world. This certainty makes us feel “safe.” Consequently, there are false set thoughts regarding Hispanics. Not everyone who speaks Spanish or is of brown complexion is Mexican. Culture and race go beyond appearance.

Society’s preconceived notions opens discussion on inclusion. Diversity, for *some* people, may come to represent an overall significant virtue however; such virtue becomes a vice as soon as it threatens what the dominant discourse considers acceptable. History in and of itself can validate this because people don’t like change. People fight with it or against it. America can act as witness to this because it has changed drastically throughout the years. The people fought for change. They did not want the cycle of that current lifestyle for that era to continue.

Change is possible. Its attainable but many do not take the first step because they believe that their contribution will result in nothing. History can attest that if one doesn’t take initiative then nothing will ever change. We wouldn’t find ourselves where we aren’t currently if someone hadn’t spoken out. Opportunity would be out of sight and obedience would be what’s followed.

The world is a big place and injustices occur everyday. Which is why people should be asking themselves more often, “What can I do to help?” By living in the United States you have the rights ordained to you, one being, freedom of speech. Become an advocate and ally for those who don’t have a voice. Use it, don’t hold back.

Education is a privilege. A lot of people don’t see it that way in this country and view it more as a right. However, our country has rights because people spoke out and made change happen. A lot of countries don’t have offer this, and if they do its limited or either offered to only one gender. Look beyond what you have and you will see that you have more than most.

People like pitying themselves and like being viewed as victims to escape responsibility. The United States faces lots of issues and people use that to justify their actions. Something I remember from years back was a friend of mine telling me to, get over it! And to not let that stop me, limit me because then I would loose. A quote I feel applies to me is “Activism is the rent I pay for living on this planet.” This quote speaks truth to me because there are atrocities occurring all around us and I want to be part of the change that fights against it.

History is impactful. Through it we are able to learn of what it is that has left us and what it is that continues to grow. We have uncovered and learned so much from that in a way it has shaped us. Our countries history, our generations history and our own history influences our life choices and actions. We often don’t see it that way because we only like to reference ourselves but we have to take into consideration what it was that brought us to our current position. My family is very academic centered. In ninth grade I began a graphic design certification at the School of Applied technology in Salt Lake Community College, which has really given me the preparation to pursue College classes. My academic goals are to complete High school but at the same time take the opportunity Innovations, the current high school I attend gives me to pursue an Associates degree.

A long-term goal of mine is to go into Civil Engineering but current goals I have is to become more educated on programs that are in conjunction with engineering but also programs that can enrich my knowledge for college. I truly believe that in order to be a successful student/scholar you shouldn’t only focus on your ultimate goal, you should also incorporate various different subjects to your plan. Goals that are specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time bound are key ingredients for my success this school year.

History is endless, whether you let it define you is up to you alone. When my family and I immigrated to the United States none us knew how to speak English. Each of my family faced difficulties in this country because of our inability to speak the English language good. I had an accent in school and I struggled with coursework. A lot of people did not believe in us, believe in us achieving academic success. But we did, we did not let their views on life and us deter us from our goals. History is good to reference but what I think is most important, is the history you leave behind, the one you make for yourself.