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CNS 743

Assignment 1.1

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I remember as a young girl I used to create booklets where I would illustrate and define things that I enjoyed. I found one such booklet that was designated to my favorite fruits; on the first page a banana was drawn and it was written “bananas are yellow, they have a firm shell and a soft light yellow inside that is sweet, very delicious”. I have always enjoyed writing and expressing myself through text. My mother used to tell me that before I had known how to write I would take a tablet around and pretend to interview her and my siblings and pretend to jot things down. Prior to my parents divorcing my mother made an attempt to create her own toy business, which primarily focused on selling educational products. At one point she gave me a “toy” where you design your own book and it was sent somewhere and eventually it would be bound and returned to you, this was one of my favorite projects. I can’t remember what I wrote about now, nor do I know where that book is or if my mother still has it but I do remember how exciting it was for me to create. It is interesting that it took me such a long time to really acknowledge my love of writing and storytelling in a professional capacity.

The earliest career interest I can remember was in the field of education. I adored my kindergarten teacher Mrs. Burton, she was a very nurturing and it reflected in her

relationship with her students, it also helped that at the end of the day she would give you a stamp on your hand that smelled like lime. During the time I was in Mrs. Burton's classroom she also was pregnant with her first child and that was really cool to me because I was the youngest sibling of three in my family so I was always curious about babies but didn't see many. I never did meet Mrs. Burton's baby, as she didn't return to school following her leave of absence. Shortly after I completed kindergarten my parents divorce would be finalized and our days in Florida would become limited. My mother had decided at the finalization of my parents divorce that she wanted to return "home" to where her family resided which also happened to be on the opposite side of the country in Idaho.

Moving to Idaho was a huge transition for all of us, even my father, who my mother did not disclose our relocation until we were already there. Most people would wonder how could it be possible that a parent would not know his entire family relocated until after it happened. At the time we moved my father was working in West Virginia at a hospital in a small town called Point Pleasant. My father is a radiologist and has been practicing medicine since he graduated medical school in the seventies. Fearing being drafted during the Vietnam War my father enlisted as an officer in the Navy. It was during his deployment that he met my mother who was an x-ray technician, despite being her boss a romance budded and the rest was history. After returning to the states my father continued working as a radiologist in Philadelphia. When my mother returned to the states she and my father married a year later and mother began her life as a homemaker. After my older sister was born my father decided to return to school using

his G.I. Bill to get his Juris Doctor, which he completed, around the time of the birth of my older brother.

Fast forward to our move to Idaho my mother joined my aunt working at her toy store in downtown Boise. Her employment at the toy store didn't last long neither did any of her other jobs after. I remember being frustrated by her lack of drive, always demonizing employers for various reasons, and I was embarrassed to bring my friends around the house. I think this inspired my early career and college planning, I remember in high school having a close relationship with my guidance counselor and my school career counselor. I loved reading books about different college majors, fields of study, and prospective job outcomes. I graduated from high school early with honors and was accepted into every university that I had applied too. My decision to attend the University of Central Florida was an easy one though because of the proximity to my father; he was no longer going to be a 7-hour plane ride away but only a 45-minute drive. My decision about what to major in didn't come as easily.

At my freshman orientation I and thousands of other future students spent two days going over campus rules, touring the campus facilities, and major exploration. Despite all the reading I had done about perspective career paths I had no idea what I wanted to do and when the students were broken into groups to meet with faculty in the departments of their chosen majors I just randomly decided to declare myself a market major. In retrospect I wish I had just said I was undecided perhaps I would have received more guidance than if I had pretended to know what I wanted to do, though I'm sure I was not the only one in that boat. Over the course of the next four and a half years I would switch my major approximately four times. In August of 2011 I graduated with my

bachelors of arts in Creative Writing. I loved what I had learned and been able to experience in my program and had aspirations of becoming a children's novelist. As many young writers quickly figure out you can't live on writing at least not straight off the bat, fortunately I had been working while I was in school in retail at Nordstrom and I continued to stay with them for about a year and a half before deciding to apply to graduate school for a MFA in Creative Writing. I did not take the application seriously and I was not admitted to the sole program I applied to which was somewhat discouraging and also a bit of a relief. I knew that I didn't want to stay in retail any longer so I moved in with my father and began working at a bank while I tried to figure out my next move. It was here I met a colleague who was going to school to become a teacher and I thought to myself I *could do that too* and I could incorporate my bachelor's degree by teaching English. It wasn't long before I enrolled in a teacher certification program roughly a year later I was hired to teach high school English to tenth, eleventh, and twelfth graders.

My first weeks in the classroom were a reality check. Since I had already received my bachelors and opted to obtain my certification in condensed program I had not experienced a traditional internship rather my total experience before being hired had been interning approximately two weeks at a magnet school with a highly gifted student population. Upon accepting my first position teaching high school I felt confident I could handle any student population because I had substituted in various schools in Orange County, which allowed me to work with various populations. I had absolutely no idea what I was getting myself into until I was in my own classroom that first year, I had been assigned not only to teach four sections of standard English but also two sections of

remedial English to juniors and seniors who had failed state mandated testing since beginning high school. I came into the classroom with an idealized notion of what it was going to be like, my principal used to refer to me as Erin Gruwell the teacher from Freedom Writers, and I strived to make that impression a reality. Obviously as a first year teacher this was very daunting; I had limited experience with my student population, with common core I was in charge of creating each of my lesson plans, collecting and transcribing data on my students, among other duties. I spent many of the first weeks crying after school in my classroom everyday over the amount of work and stress I had. Other teacher would tell me that I was assigning too much to my students, that I was working them and myself to hard, and my teacher mentor even told me that if I was so miserable I should quit. Some of my students liked me and some didn't and I was struggling to break through to them until I took a step back and reevaluated my teaching persona. I had only the highest expectations for all of my students and when someone would under perform or didn't complete their assignments I would take it personally, the politics involved in teaching didn't help either my administrator was constantly breathing down my neck about how my curriculum was too advanced for the students I was teaching and there was no way they could possibly be comprehending what I was saying to them. Being the person that I am I continued to teach my students with high expectations but I stopped taking their failures or missteps personally and when over 75 percent of my reading students passed their state examination I felt as if I had proven my case to my administrator that my teaching methodology was in fact more effective than prior veteran teachers. It still wasn't where I wanted to be though and at the end of the year I left teaching to again reevaluate my career path.

Shortly after leaving my teaching job I married my husband. I began working at Starbucks while I started exploring other career options. My sister explained that she thought that I would make an excellent attorney, a field, which she has been practicing in for nearly ten years, she highlighted how I could use my degree and even offered me an internship if I decided to take that route. I again thought about the ease of transition and the benefits that would come with a professional degree. My husband was on the fence about my decision to follow the career path of becoming an attorney because he knew so many young attorneys around town that were unemployed. I decided to sign up for the LSAT and shortly after found out I was pregnant with our son putting things on hold temporarily. Getting pregnant was another game changer it really put into perspective what I wanted to do and that was work with and advocate for children. I thought about all my experiences in school as a student and teacher and really felt that my calling was still in that arena so I applied to Wake Forest and now here I am.