

哈佛 50 篇 essay--2。观点

哈佛 50 篇 essay

第二部分 观点 point of view

By Daniel G. Habib

My childhood passions oscillated between two poles: St. Catherine's Park and the 67th Street branch of the New York Public Library. Located across Sixty-Seventh Street from one another, the two crystallized the occupations of my youth. On a typical day, I moved between a close-knit group of friends at the park to largely solitary stays at the library. My recreational pursuits were communal; my intellectual pursuits were individual. The guilt was pronounced: friends rarely joined my mother and me as we meandered among the stacks, and the books I obtained from the library never accompanied me to the basketball courts or the jungle gym. Generally, I slipped away from the park during a lull in the action and returned as stealthily as I had gone, foisting Roald Dahl paperbacks on my mother and scrambling to rejoin my friends in arguing the relative merits of the Hulk and Superman. I never thought to integrate these passions; they remained firmly segregated. That Clark Kent and Willy Wonka should never cross paths was a given; the giants existed in separate realms of my life.

More than anything else, my Regis career has reversed that assumption. I now recognize that my intellectual growth and my peer community are inextricably linked. I have come to regard those who surround me not simply as a network of friends, but most vitally as components in the ongoing work of education. I understand that an individualized process of learning is intellectually impoverished. The most startling of my educational epiphanies have occurred in the context of fellow students. Case in point: my acquaintance with Albert Camus' absurdist manifesto, *The Stranger*. My first reading of the classic, in sixth grade, came in an atomized intellectual climate. As a result, my understanding of Camus' philosophy was tenuous, so much so that, feeling

incapable of defending or even articulating my interpretation of the work, I eschewed any discussion and shunned the chance for error. Satisfied in my ignorance, I disdainfully explained to my inquiring parents, “Oh, it wasn’t much of a murder mystery. You know who kills the Arab all along. And that whole mother angle just doesn’t fit.” My second encounter with Camus came in my junior French elective, this time in the company of an insightful octet of Francophones. As we grappled with Camus’ vision of the absurd world and Meursault’s statement of revolt, an understanding emerged from the sundrenched Algerian beach. Each member of the class offered his insights for consideration, risking the scrutiny of the group but confident in its intellectual generosity. The rigorous standards of the class, and our common desire for understanding, led eventually to firmer comprehension. My balanced interpretation of Camus derived only from the intensity of discussion, the contributions of my peers, and our mutual willingness to share our insights.

Through my participation in Regis’ Speech and Debate Society, I have continued in my quest for the acquisition of knowledge through the group. Extemporaneous Speaking requires that a speaker provide a thorough analysis of a current events/policy proposition, after considering and synthesizing numerous sources. Speakers engage each other on subjects ranging from democratic and free-market

reforms in Boris Yeltsin’s Russia to the prospects for a Medicare overhaul in the Republican Congress. Practices involve evaluation by fellow team members and success depends intimately on an accurate common understanding of the issues. Lincoln-Douglas Debate, similarly, entails team formulations of argument based on philosophical principles. We prepare as a team, and I have been privileged to benefit from teammates’ sophisticated applications and elucidations of issues as diverse as social contract theory and international ethical mandates.

The group character of the team’s intellectual strivings was brought to bear most strongly at the Harvard Invitational, in the winter of my junior year. Debaters were asked to evaluate the proposition that “American society is well-served by the maintenance of a separate culture for the deaf.” The evening before the tournament began, sixteen debaters massed in one hotel room at the Howard Johnson’s on Memorial Drive, and, fueled by peanut butter and marshmallow sandwiches and gallons of coffee, we wrangled over the specifics of the unique resolution. The assimilationist camp suggested that the achievement of group dignity and a private identity for the deaf had to occur against the backdrop of a larger public identity. The separatism inherent in ASL or deaf schools fatally divorced the group from meaningful participation in the American democracy. True cultural uniqueness required a common frame of reference. Conversely, the deaf separatist partisans maintained that this decidedly marginalized minority deserved a distinctness of culture

commensurate with the distinctness of its experience. Separation allowed dignity and empowerment.

As the hours wore on and the dialectic raged out of control, positions became more entrenched, but paradoxically a truer comprehension arose. The eloquence and persuasiveness with which each side advanced its interpretation furthered the exchange. We acknowledged and respected the logic of those with whom we disagreed, and we reinforced our own convictions by articulating and defending them. At 1:30, bedraggled, exhausted, and happily not unanimous in perspective, we regrettably dispersed to our rooms, to sleep off the effects of the session.

If I began my educational career as an intellectual monopolist, I have evolved into a collectivist. On our last day of summer vacation, a dozen Regis students spent an afternoon in the Yankee Stadium bleachers, arguing the possible outcomes of the American League pennant race, then returned to Manhattan's Central Park to attend the New York Shakespeare Festival's arresting and hyper-controversial production of *Troilus and Cressida*. As we exited the Delacorte Theater, we reflected on the modernization of Shakespeare's message. Some praised its transmission of bleakness and pessimism; others joined critics in attacking its excesses and its artistic license in manipulating the original. Our consensus on the Bronx Bombers' chances in October was firmer than that on the Greek conquest of Troy, but the essential truth remains. Regis has wonderfully fused the communal and the intellectual phases of my life.

ANALYSIS

Writing about an outstanding learning experience is a fairly common approach to the personal statement. But while many applicants may choose a defining and distinct moment – winning the state speech tournament or setting the school record for the highest GPA – as an experience worth retelling, Habib instead chooses to chronicle the gradual process of intellectual maturation. By choosing this topic, Habib has the opportunity to reflect on his education and recount several formative experiences, not just resort to trite descriptions of winning or losing.

Habib's thesis – that one's communal life and intellectual pursuits are only enhanced when fused together – is a somewhat abstract and difficult argument to make, at least for a high school senior. The fact that Habib makes the argument successfully, through the use of details and concrete examples, makes the essay all the more impressive.

Still, the essay isn't perfect. It's long. The sentences can be complex and a bit convoluted. The language used, while enough to impress any Kaplan SAT instructor, could be toned down to make the essay more readerfriendly. Habib could have easily shortened his statement by using fewer examples of real-life learning experiences. Or the experiences he shares could have been shortened: the admissions committee may not need to know the exact arguments and counter-argument Habib's Lincoln-Douglas debate team drafted for the Harvard tournament.

Overall, Habib's essay helps distinguish him from other applicants by taking an interesting approach to a common theme and using concrete supporting arguments. All in all, it is a well-written essay enhanced by personal insights, examples, and the all-important details.

"On Diplomacy in Bright Nike Running Tights"

"On Diplomacy in Bright Nike Running Tights" By Christopher M. Kirchhoff

Beepbeep.

Beepbeep.

Beepbeep. With a series of subtle but relentless beeps, my faithful Timex Ironman watch alarm signaled the start of another day, gently ending the pleasant slumber I so often fail to enjoy. With the touch of a button I silenced the alarm, falling back on my bed to establish a firmer grasp of where I was and why on earth I had set my alarm for 5:45 A.M. Slowly the outline of my soundly sleeping roommate came into focus. Beyond his bed was the window. Across the Neva River the view of the Hermitage and Winter Palace, illuminated brightly with spotlights, faded in and out of the falling snow. I was definitely still in St. Petersburg, and no, this wasn't a

dream. “Oh yes, running,” I remembered. “Must go running.”

Temperature??? I dialed the front desk. “Kakoy temperatura pozholsta.” Not fooled by my Berlitz Russian, the voice responded, “Negative 7 degrees” in crisp English. I reached for my running tights, glad that meant negative seven degrees Celsius. I took another look into the darkness outside. Negative seven degrees Fahrenheit and I would not be running. The hotel lobby was empty except for the guard and the woman at the desk. As I stepped outside, I pressed the start button on my Timex Ironman and began jogging.

It was a pristine morning. The November wind promptly reminded me just what winter meant at 60 degrees north latitude. With the sky awaiting the break of dawn, I started making my way through the newly fallen snow. Soon the sound of my labored breathing came through the rhythmic swooshing of running shoes dancing through the snow. As clouds of breath collected in front of me, I passed slowly through them, marking my forward progress with each exhale. Around the corner I found a freshly shoveled sidewalk. Following the inviting path, I soon came upon the shoveler, an old man sporting the classic Russian winter outfit: fur cap, long coat, and mittens. Time had left its mark on his wrinkled face and worn clothing. Despite the falling snow, which accumulated at a far greater pace than the man could keep up with, he continued to shovel relentlessly, barely glancing up as I jogged by him. I respect his perseverance. He was working fiercely in the Russian spirit. And as the war medals proudly displayed on his coat indicate, he had been doing so for a while. Perhaps this man was one of the few that survived the Nazi siege on Leningrad, a living reminder of why the United States must remain deeply involved in world politics.

As I turned and ran across the bridge leading downtown, the battleship Potemkin came into view. The Potemkin began the second Russian Revolution by training its guns on the Winter Palace. Still afloat as a working museum, young sailors in full military dress cleared its decks of snow. While I ran past the ship, a sailor stopped to wave. As his inquisitive eyes stared into mine, we both recognized each other's young age. I waved back, shouting, “Doebroyah ootra,” wishing him a good morning. A few seconds later I glanced back, noticing that the same sailor was still looking at me. I must have been quite a sight in my brightly colored Nike running suit treading through a foot of new snow. “How ironic,” I thought, “here stands a high school aged Russian sailor shoveling snow off a ship which I studied in history class, while each of us is equally bewildered at the other's presence.”

By the time I reached the Hermitage the sky was clear enough to see my reflection in the cold black of the Neva River. While running past the Winter Palace, I quickened my pace, half expecting the Tsarina to step out and stop

my progress. I sprinted through Revolution Square, glancing left to see the spot where Tsar Nicolas abdicated and right to see the monument commemorating the defeat of Napoleon. While trodding through historic St. Petersburg, I reflected on the last discussion I had with Sasha, my Russian host student. Sasha, top in his class in the “diplomatic” track of study, had talked about his political beliefs for the first time. What begun as a question-and-answer session about life in the United States became a titanic

struggle between political ideals. Sasha’s tone and seriousness clearly indicated that our discourse was not for pleasure. He wanted to know about our government and what democracy meant for him and his people. Being the first U.S. citizen Sasha had ever met, I felt obligated to represent my country as best I could. Realizing that my response could forever shape his impression of democracy in the U.S., the importance of my mission as a student ambassador became even more apparent. For Russians, democracy remains a new and untrusted method of government. Clearly, Russia is still in a state of change, vulnerable to the forces of the past and skeptical of the future. Sasha, unable to share my faith in the democratic political process, listened patiently to my explanations. I tried my best to help Sasha conceptualize what the United States is about and just what it means to be an American. For the sake of both countries I hope he accepted my prodemocracy argument. It was conversations like these that brought a new sense of urgency to my time in Russia. Through the course of my visit, Sasha and I came to know each other and each other’s people. His dream of serving as a diplomat may very well materialize. Perhaps someday Sasha will be in a position to make decisions that affect the United States. I hope my impression will in some way affect his judgment in a positive manner.

After jogging up the hotel steps, I pressed the stop button. Not bad for a morning run I thought. Sixty-four minutes in deep snow, about seven miles’ worth. Press Mode button. Time zone one: E.S.T. Columbus, Ohio. It was Saturday night back home Thinking of home, I remembered the student in my homeroom who cried, “You mean you’re gonna go and meet those Commies? So you think you can change the world?” Press Mode button.

Time zone two: St. Petersburg, Russia, November 4, 1995. greeting the dawn of a new day I thought, “Perhaps! Perhaps in some small way I can change the world, one conversation at a time.”

ANALYSIS

The month that Christopher Kirchhoff spent in Russia as a “student diplomat” undoubtedly provided him with more than enough experiences to include in an admissions application. But in his essay “On Diplomacy in Bright Nike Running Tights,” Kirchhoff successfully avoids falling into the trap of many applicants whose statements are based on once-in-a-lifetime opportunities.

Kirchhoff easily could have written something along the lines of, “My time in Russia provided me with a rare opportunity to witness an emerging democracy grappling with its newfound freedom. Armed with a keen interest in the post-Communist plight, I set forth to learn from my Russian brethren and to teach them about their American peers.” These statements are not necessarily untrue, but they are also not especially original. Such an essay would hardly stand out among a stack of statements written by students retelling the glory of winning the state debate/football/academic challenge championship.

