

How My Community College Experience Has Influenced My Life

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If someone had told me a few years ago that one day I would be happily enrolled in a community college somewhere in Texas, I would have laughed in their face. No offence to the Lone Star state, but I had managed to “escape” my hometown when I was just a kid, and I had no intention of returning. I grew up on Main Street, where nothing much ever seemed to change, in a slow little town just outside of Dallas. The shady streets lined with picket fences are lovely for nostalgia but the quaint “Pleasantville” atmosphere of my upbringing bred a restlessness in me that, later in life, only travel could shake. When I was just 13, my father accepted a parish in Albuquerque, New Mexico and moved my family into the foothills of Mount Sandia. I got my first real taste of adventure in those mountains and swore I would not go back to the flat prairie lands of Texas. Whoever it was that first said “the grass is always greener....” must have never been to the desert. But a change of scenery only calmed my gypsy spirit for a short time. I just could not wait for the next big adventure. This was certainly my downfall when it came to education. You see, school was never really someplace I wanted to be. To me, it seemed like my parents and “the man” were forcing me to take a certain path and, like most teenagers, I simply had to rebel; big time. Hindsight is always 20/20. I did not know as a 17 year old with a wild streak what dropping out of high school would mean to my future and I cared even less. All I knew is that I was “free,” or rather, free to join the workforce. As of 2009, only 70% of high school students graduate with a diploma. I did what most of the other 30% will do. I got a job; making pizzas. No offense to pizza, but I sure have a lot more to offer the world than a really good supreme. It’s just that no one could tell that from my resume. I was a “drop out.”

With no intention of returning to the life of academia (I had a 1.6 GPA upon leaving my high school), I jumped from one job to another, one city to another, one dream to another. I spent the last 8

years of my life moving and working the same menial service industry jobs, never really feeling like I was meeting my creative potential. I was bored. I was lost. I wanted things to change. I wanted my next big adventure, but I didn't even know where to start. I guess I had to come to the end of my rope before I could swing to the next; even if it meant going backwards first. I decided to finally go "home" and start anew. "Home is where the heart is," they say, and I would agree. My family had moved back home to Texas years ago while I had gone even further West. "Home" was now where they were, Main Street in Humble, Texas. Life is so beautiful, don't you think? I swallowed my pride and moved to Humble. Real life is better than fiction, and as it turns out, this was just the beginning of my next great adventure. I completed my GED in the summer of 2006 at Lone Star College and began classes that fall. It has been an extraordinary evolution. The things I have learned in my short time here have strengthened me and renewed my confidence as a creative person. As an artist, my instruction here at LSC has been priceless, as the teachers in the Art Department are all quite extraordinary artists themselves. I have been so lucky to have really smart teachers who have kept their doors, and their minds, open to my free spirited ways. It has, at times, been difficult, as I have had to relearn so much that I had forgotten in my 9 year vacation from school, but at least I know that if I can learn college Algebra, I can do anything! I made straight A's this semester! Like many students, I work full time and go to school (I couldn't live with my parents forever!) and I find that the hard work makes the pay-offs that much sweeter. I recently showed my photographs in the Student Art show, exhibited in the Gallery of the Fine Arts building, and won Best in Show. The pride I felt was just a fraction of how proud I will feel when I graduate with an Associate's degree in Art from this fine school. As for the next big adventure, well, whatever follows I am sure that my experience here at Lone Star College has made me that much more ready. Thank you.