
Areflection essay on school days and feeling like an underdog because of the racial difference

When I walked into my classroom on the first day of elementary school, all I saw was white. White walls. White desks. White people. My caramel skin and curly hair stood out amongst the fair-skinned students with light straight hair. As the teacher taught her lesson, these students eagerly raised their hands to answer her questions. I was astonished at how quickly I felt like an underdog.

Many black students across the nation have had a similar experience. While some, like me, were able to adapt despite their rocky transition, other students weren't able to achieve to their full potential due to the lack of support. The achievement gap is a prominent issue that continues to deteriorate the progress of the black community. As many politicians and educators scramble to find the ultimate solution to this epidemic, most black students, despite their intelligence, ask themselves the question of why they feel so alienated in their school environment.

The achievement gap exists for a variety of reasons. One main reason is the stereotypical threat. This is a concept that describes how minorities unconsciously feel the harsh threat of stereotypes in the atmosphere. As a result, minorities perform worse than expected and/or decide not to challenge themselves in order to avoid ridicule. I was one of the black students who had to directly confront the stereotypical threat. One day, when I was in 8th grade, I told my friend that I was applying to the Information Technology program at Carver Center. I was hoping for a small comment of encouragement. However, his blunt response took me by surprise: "I don't think you can get into Carver." I was utterly confused. Why not? I was doing extremely well in my math and science classes. The program would be challenging at first, but far from impossible. When I asked him to explain his reasoning, he told me that he saw me more in the field of fashion. This only baffled me more. While I did try to dress well in school, I never expressed interest in fashion. I did not understand until I saw my friend's reaction to another person who was applying to the same program. My friend was ecstatic and encouraged the person to apply. This person was similar to me: we were both strong in math and science. But there was one tiny difference between us: this person was a white male.

I was disheartened at first by my friend's harsh judgement of my ability. However, anger soon replaced the disappointment and confusion. How dare he judge my ability, especially when he is no expert himself in computer science? I grew determined to prove him wrong. I wanted to demonstrate that anyone had the ability to succeed in a STEM field, regardless if they fit the

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stereotype.

That spring I received an acceptance letter to Carver Center for Information Technology. There was nothing more satisfying than to look my friend in the eye and tell him that I got accepted. It's an extraordinary feeling to discover hidden potential because it can lead to undefined greatness. While I'm blessed that I was able to experience this feeling, many black students do not have that opportunity to experience this emotion. I want my actions in the future to inspire other black students that they all possess undefined potential.

In college, I have the intentions to major in computer science. I hope that I can be a role model for girls and people of color to pursue a STEM field and not be confined by a stereotype. I also plan to be a Ron Brown Captain in my college career in order to encourage black students to challenge themselves and excel beyond their comfort zones. In addition, I may take courses in education, sociology, and public policy since I would love to become a philanthropist. I want to create my own foundation to diminish the achievement gap in regards to race, gender, and socioeconomic status. I may even work with top schools to discuss effective strategies of maintaining stability on campus and creating an open atmosphere that welcomes minorities. In the end, I want students to not feel trapped by the confinements of society and to discover their own potential.

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