

Spring, 2018:

In my theory of understanding from the beginning of the major, I illustrate my ideas through a vignette about an experience I had in middle school. In seventh grade, my class went on a field trip to assist classes at a charter school in one of the poorest sections of Philadelphia. Throughout my time in the classroom, I noticed the students gravitating towards another student instead of myself. It was clear that I was anxious as I had never been in an environment where I was the minority in economic status and race, so it made sense they went towards my peer who was a person of color. My anxiety during that trip was truly debilitating as I sunk my head beneath the window during the bus ride in case there was a shooting and I spoke mostly to the teacher, the only other white person in the room. I go on to discuss why my anxiety existed. I speak of the lenses I wore from the things my parents told me, other white peers told me, and what the media told me about these areas and the people in them. In this piece, I speak of a transformation of sorts in that I ask more critical questions of myself when entering spaces where I am in the minority. In addition, I discuss recognizing the full neighborhood such as the culture and the community rather than just what I am told.

Spring, 2019

When I first went back to my piece I was surprised at how little I thought had changed. It felt like an accurate portrayal of my understanding of myself within spaces, but when I reflected further, last year's piece felt "safe." Looking back, I hide behind the word anxiety to cover the prejudices and racist feelings I had. I still believe that I was a product of the environment around me, but I was not anxious for the sake of being anxious, I had anxiety rooted in classist and racist

assumptions. Connecting to the last piece on social inequality, I think I was quick to say that I was critical of myself in settings where I am the “other.” In complete honesty, my previous theory of understanding piece was a reflection of the vignette rather than an accumulation of experiences because I neglected to criticize myself and understand all of the other times I held the same assumptions. I also have a much better understanding now of what it means to be the other and while I had claimed in last year’s piece that I was othered in that classroom, I failed to mention I was actively othering. Lastly, last year’s piece had a tone of “now I have it figured out.” I don’t think I would ever claim that mentality now because I don’t think I ever will. After working at Centro, I have a better understanding of what it feels like to be uncomfortable and be in a place where most people don’t look like you or have the same experiences as you, but my privileges don’t disappear with that. It’s funny because last year it seems as if I was ready to say I’m genuine and ready to self-critique, but a year later, I feel that way again but with better evidence to back it up.