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My Educational Experience:

The Chapters of Privilege

            Every person carries a unique story written by the circumstances of our lives, and for me, my life contains personal experiences written within chapters of privilege. Each page in my book of life is created by my family tree. Without my family, I fear my book would be empty. My family has been my biggest supporter, motivator, and encourager from the very beginning of my life. The illustrations are purposefully black and white except for the hearts in the tree. The hearts represent my family members, and the colour contrast shows the importance of them over anything else in my life. Each book within the illustration represents how privilege has positively impacted my educational experiences and journey. Through socioeconomic privilege, able-bodied privilege, white privilege, and the support systems I’ve had access to, my path to education has been decided by advantages that have shaped my success.

My family strongly believes in the importance of education and did everything they could to support my educational growth. This belief in my potential was a privilege many others might not have had. With the help of my parents, I was able to focus on my studies without the weight of financial worry or familial instability, which are often limitations for students facing different challenges. I always had access to resources such as books, tutoring, and extracurricular activities and I was able to participate in after-school activities. This is a luxury that many students don’t have, and it has played a significant role in my educational achievements.

Another aspect of my educational privilege is how I have grown up in a body that is able and healthy. An able-bodied privilege often goes unnoticed, but it has positively impacted my educational success. I have never faced the physical barriers that many students with disabilities encounter in their journey of education. I’ve never had to navigate accessibility issues, worry about special accommodations, or struggle to find schools that would meet my needs. This advantage has allowed me to take for granted the ease with which I can attend school and engage in all the activities expected of a student. This is a privilege that has paved the way for academic success and personal development, and it is one that I recognize as central to my journey.

White privilege has influenced my access to education and has made my path smoother in ways I’ve only recently come to understand. As a white student, I have never had to question my place in predominantly white schools, and I have not faced systemic barriers to success based on my race. I’ve been given opportunities that many students of color, despite their talent and drive, may not have had. My experiences have been formed by a society that, for the most part, favors those who look like me and have backgrounds like mine. While I acknowledge this privilege, it has also inspired me to think critically about the educational system and work towards creating spaces that are equitable for all.

As I continue my journey of becoming a teacher, I believe in the importance of learning, reflecting on my life experiences, and understanding that other experiences are different. Stephen D. Brookfield provided great insight in his book *Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher:* "Seeing ourselves through students' eyes makes us more aware of the effects of our words and actions on students. This helps us clarify our assumptions and decide when they make sense and need to be changed or discarded." This quote expresses the impact of teaching and the importance of considering students' perspectives. For example, students may be unmotivated to learn due to various factors but the ability to feel their perspective can benefit your teaching. Being a teacher includes understanding and acknowledging different privileges and how life experiences can alter educational motivation and experiences.

The pages of my educational journey are not simply the result of my efforts; they are heavily influenced by the privileges I’ve experienced. From my supportive family to the advantages of being able-bodied and white, I’ve had access to resources and opportunities that have allowed me to succeed. As I reflect on my own experiences, I am reminded of the importance of recognizing privilege, not just for personal success, but to ensure that all students, regardless of their background, can write their own stories of success and fulfillment.

References

Brookfield, Stephen. D. (2017). Becoming a critically reflective teacher*. Chapter 1: What is critically reflective teaching? (1-20).* <https://moodle.tru.ca/pluginfile.php/3780828/mod_resource/content/1/Becoming_a_Critically_Reflective_Teacher_----_%28Chapter_1_What_Is_Critically_Reflective_Teaching_%29.pdf>