

College Admission Essay

I was nervously doodling on the back of the yellow schedule sheet in the hallway trying to avoid socializing. The November sun filtering in through the tall windows dimly lit the area. Other kids dressed in their crisp black suits were sitting at tables talking quietly among themselves. They all seemed pretty calm in contrast to the butterflies trying to perform a circus routine in my stomach.

It was the second speech tournament of the season, and I had broke into finals for the first time in my speech career in a speaking event I had barely picked up two weeks ago. After a whole season of coming in dead last for prose reading, I had decided to try something new this season - impromptu speaking - figuring I had nothing to lose. Now, sitting outside of the classroom for the final round, I was in a state of shock and denial.

When the break poster announcing the roster for finals had been put up an hour earlier, I had been content to spend the rest of the tournament munching away on my chocolate chip cookie. My friend soon alerted me to a change in plans when she ran over exclaiming, "You broke!"

At the time, I was sure it was either a mistake or I was dreaming.

I was called into the classroom by one of the judges. I could hear the trickles of applause from the audience for the previous speaker. The room was small, with desks lined up in rows and filled to the brim with kids, eyes expectantly on me as I prepared my speech in the two minute interval. When I finally stood up, I could feel my legs shaking, and I barely avoided tripping over the heels that I was still unaccustomed to wearing.

I gave my speech. In retrospect, I talked a little too quietly, stuttered, spoke at the speed of light, and barely remembered what eye contact meant as my eyes scanned the room. When my mind had calmed down enough for me to process the faces of my audience, I came to understand how amazing it is that so many people would be willing to listen to me talk for six whole minutes without interrupting me. To them, my incoherent stuttering meant something: it had a message, an argument to prove, and a lesson to be learned; and to me, it was a chance to let my voice be heard.

It was different from all the times freshman year when I would sink down in my seat whenever I realized I was next on the roster. It was different from all the times I would open my prose book to read only to be met with an audience yawning and rolling their eyes. This time, I was not telling a story my coach had forced onto me, but rather I was talking about something I came up with and believed in the potential of. I was not just here to win a competition; I was here to talk about something I loved and believed in.

I've since stopped letting my voice be buried under the crowd. Being able to convey my thoughts and not being afraid of the new opportunities that come my way has changed my outlook on life. I was no longer content with staying quiet and watching events unfold before my eyes; I wanted to be apart of the change. Having people who are willing to listen to me and my ideas is a privilege and a gift, and it is wasted if I don't speak up because that is how we inspire change in our world.

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