

Three Pages a Day Keeps the Robot Students Away

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In a society where individualism is emphasized, it is curious to find that students in educational institutes are expected to follow a cookie-cutter role. College is supposed to be a place for higher thinking where some of the greatest ideas are spawned, but it is not uncommon for professors of different disciplines to treat students in a similar fashion. In an exercise to write three pages of free writing, I found that profound thoughts willed themselves onto the screen in a fashion never experienced in my college career. This is where the individualistic and higher thinking occurred for the first time as a student in this institute.

As I woke each morning for the past 18 days, I was doing something I have never done before: writing three pages of just unstructured, free flowing thoughts. Most of the time, the thoughts poured onto the page were that of just events I had remembered, but occasionally, profound social issues found its way onto the paper. These issues included expectations of roles placed on people, labels we are given from the very day we are born by society and what happens when we do not play the part. The latter mentioned issue is a confusing one, especially when compared to the expectations of a student.

It is emphasized that students are expected to engage in higher thinking, or “thinking for yourself” in the college setting. I find this confusing because as a student, we are expected to play the part a certain way. We are given assignments, complete them in a timely fashion, and follow a type of rubric of productivity expected by the faculty. If we are to do what is expected of us, where can we fit our own critical thoughts on issues at hand? Understandably the assignments are designed to reinforce and enrich our skills to be applied in the real world, and real world being the work environment, but critical thinking and individualism should be encouraged because it can be applied to any aspect of living. The professors and classes that challenge students to be individuals and engage in deep thoughts about social issues are few and far between. I think there may be a downside to being an individual where conformity is expected.

When I think of a student being an individual, I think of a student who is rallying others to protest issues that concern them. The image in my head is a student on a loud speaker speaking against the changes in the school system, the budget cuts, government politics, etc. Faculty members often distance themselves from these students due to the

fact that if they are involved, their career may be in jeopardy. When thinking of this, it is not possible to be an individual like society wants, nor be the critically thinking human educators want us to be. When I think of students that is playing the role of what the school wants, they are the ones that walk by the student who is protesting, not even so much as looking at them, let alone listen to what they have to say.

In my quarter decade of living, I have found the world is a confusing one, and confusing may be an understatement. Roles and expectations contrast each other in such extremes that it boggles the mind. Individualism is sought after, but conformity is what gets rewarded. As soon as we are five years of age, we start school and are expected to continue for the next 13+ years of our lives, and afterwards we are to get a job or start a career. With such a large portion of our lives already laid out before us and expected to take its course, there is no room for individualistic behavior that would let others consider us as an individual. Opportunities are rare in where we are not treated as a robot, but as an individual where the hands are completely off and we are allowed to express ourselves in our minds and our hearts. This is where the great minds and get thoughts of people flourish. I am fortunate enough to experience something like this in my college career by doing an assignment, which hardly felt like an assignment but rather a suggestion, and find myself lost in thoughts of subject matter in which I would only hear or read about. If people were simply shown the door or window rather than pushed out of it, I feel the world would be a much more lovely place.