

Essay Title : Pride

"I am an Indian! I am Indian you hear?" My father shouted from the highest reachable point of the mountain closed to public. His echo seemed to crescendo louder and louder around us as if the mountain was eager to cast a shout of pride off its lumpy rocks and lustrous sand glazing from the broken glass bottles. Only my father was not shouting for the city to hear, he shouted to hear it himself and he shouted to make sure I was listening. He continued to cry out his arrogance and finally satisfied he sat on a rock, drank from his bottle and looked at me.

"And you my daughter?" he chuckled, "who are you?" Staring at me for just a second he was soon uninterested and impatient and pulled away. He threw his bottle and danced in circles with his arms soaring and feet pounding he yelped once again to be heard. While I watched my father's foolishness, I contemplated his question. I have never taken much consideration to what he had to say, but that night was different. That night I questioned my point of view of my heritage and my pride of

being Navajo. I saw something beyond the city lights, something of the past, something of my "real" home. This inner thought/vision enlightened my future goals, all this totally unknown to my father.

I understood my father's pride; it was he who did not understand mine. While my father grew up to be strong and stoic, I have taken a different path. My childhood consisted of succeeding in my education and excelling in sports, thus pulling me away from the traditions of my people. Mine was not a unique experience, I found that many, if not most Native American's were in a similar situations. That night I had discovered the sudden realization of who I was; I was young and ignorant of my culture. As I have matured I have come to the realization; I have a strong desire to teach. However, recently I became more aware of my surroundings and circumstances; I noticed the dire lack of interest in education, native culture and a personal identity with one's native roots, a sad commentary of most young Native peoples.

In the cities and reservations of Arizona, three out of ten Native American high school students drop out before graduating; the highest rate of dropouts of any ethnicity in the United States (American Indian School). Due to these disturbing statistics I have made a commitment as a future educator, to in

some way use my skills to keep Native American students in the class room. I hope to one day expand my knowledge of my Indian heritage, as well as other Native American cultures, to offer classes to the younger generation of Native American students. In teaching these courses I hope to shed light on the little known facts and traditions of forgotten Native cultures and I am confident I will create learning opportunities interesting enough to keep students in school. Most schools lack such courses and those that do, offer very few classes where beginning Native American Students have much chance of ever discovering their traditions and back grounds, of finding what traditions they represent and seldom ever do they find the small part of who they really are, the essence of "nativeness"

"It's not hard to see that some students have interests in their culture," says North High school's Native American Advisor Sunshine Bia. "They just express it the only way they know how. All my students have shirts that read 'Native pride' or the ladies wear Indian jewelry, mostly turquoise or beaded jewelry. They live in the inner city; their parents usually carry on their own traditions by gambling or drinking and never go back to the reservation, so the chances of these students expressing themselves traditionally are slim. However, they are city Indians and they have pride."

Pride. The main problem I see in my community is the lack of pride. I have learned throughout my childhood and past experiences that pride in one's culture is influential and self-assuring. Pride can bring together the strength within a culture, the strength of a nation and the strength strong enough to keep structure and belief alive.

I hope to bring my students the same realization I had while gazing upon the bright lights of a city, of my home. And yet it wasn't the home, house in the city, rather the lights were those that came on in my mind's eye, the lights which shown brightly displaying the home of my ancient ancestors, the one yet alive with hope, life, and a promise of better opportunities and reachable goals. I may never experience the traditions of my heritage, I may never speak the Navajo language spoken by my ancestors, and I may never bring back the glorious past of a proud nation, but I will endeavor to make these opportunities and possibilities come alive in the minds and hearts of young Navajo students, in ways that seem to have been long forgotten.

EssayWorksCited :

Works Cited

"American Indian School Dropouts and Pushouts." *American Indian Education*. 2009. Northern Arizona University. 30 Apr 2009
<<http://jan.ucc.nau.edu/~jar/AIE/Dropouts.html>>.

Bia, Sunshine. Personal interview. 14 April 2009. Interview.