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ENG 1101

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A Jewish Girl

I revised my paper by first looking at my professor's and colleague's comments on my previous drafts. Looking through the comments helped me see where I can start my revising. The Comments say I need to work on making my writing clearer and start spacing my paragraphs. While revising, I did take the advice and hopefully cleared up my writing to where my reader can understand the point I am trying to get across. I incorporated the advice because when reading my writing, I was not able to understand it myself. I found adding the comments given by my peers and professor into my writing made it clear for my readers to understand.

It is a beautiful spring day walking to high school in Crown Heights, Brooklyn. The high school I go to is a Jewish all-girls high school where we learn both Jewish subjects and English subjects such as math and history. Walking in an hour late, at 9:40 am, I knew I missed *Davening* (prayers). Around 500 girls in uniform burst through three large glass doors exiting the *shul* (prayer room), making their way up to two giant staircases on the right and left sides of the lobby. My principal calls me aside, and asks me, formally in her English accent, to button up my white uniform blouse to my neck bone. She also requests that I put my hair back in a ponytail because it was not *tzniut* (modesty). As the day goes by, it is becoming tiresome having to remember all these different subjects. The first four subjects are Jewish subjects, and when those classes finish, I have no energy for the five classes that follow lunchtime. The five classes are English subjects. Due to not keeping up with Jewish and English subjects, the school sent

other girls and me to modified classes. Most of these girls were not as orthodox just as me. I did not find this a coincidence, and it made me feel like the school did not care for us as human beings. This situation made my definition of education tangled with a person's religious status.

It is now 2:30 pm, and some friends and I decide to skip one class and hang out in the *shul*. Looking at the head of the *shul*, I can see the brown marble stage and its carpeted red velvet floor. In the center are two magnificent satin drapes are dangling down on both sides, covering the cupboard holding the holy *Torah* scrolls. Suddenly, I hear my name echoing from across the room. It is my principal calling my name. She guides me to her tiny office up the top floor of the school. As she tries to warm up the conversation, I know something is wrong. Finally, the words escape her. She wants me to attend a different school next year. I feel my stomach drop, my throat tightens, and I'm speechless. This school has been my school for life, through Pre-K until now, high school. She informs me of a different school she has in mind, a more chilled-out school. So, that is what ended up happening.

It is now next year, and I am a junior. I am attending a Jewish high school for girls located in Crown Heights. The school is very much the same as the first and it is overbearing with Jewish and English subjects. One day the school calls my father because I have written on myself with a pen. My principal assumes something unfortunate has happened because what Jewish girl would willingly color on herself with a pen? This situation once again makes me feel like the definition of education is tangled with a person's religious status.

Months into the school year, I am called aside and instructed to wait in the principal's office. As I nervously wait in her room, my palms begin to get sweaty. I can hear the principal's two-and-a-half-inch heels walking my way. She walks in and gets straight to the point, informing me that I am expelled with no explanation. Twenty minutes later, my friend comes out she has been expelled as well. Later in the day, I hear seven girls are expelled, including myself. At this

point, I am not sure what education even is. Is it only for intelligent people? Do I have to be orthodox to be eligible for an education? By now, my education is up in the air.

In hot summer August, I came across an all-girls Jewish private school where I may finally be able to thrive. I excitedly let my parents know I would like to attend this school for the next school year.

A month and a half later, I am in a room between twenty to thirty girls sitting around a white rectangular table. It is my first day in the new school in Flatbush, Brooklyn. The temperature felt a bit breezy from the window being left open behind me. The bakery goods on the table aside from me are making the room smell delicious. The room is half the size of a regular classroom, and all the walls are painted white with a simple diamond pattern. I pulled out my Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) book and began to read. It is 9:00 am, and we are all eagerly waiting for the elected staff member to come in and greet us. Many of the girls are texting on their phones, and others are getting to know one another. Looking around, I can see the girls had similar situations as I did. I was able to tell by the way they dressed and spoke.

After the welcome speeches from the assistant principal, I walk into my first class. There are about nine girls total in my first class. The classroom has two sun-beaming windows on the left to where I am sitting. The corner of the room has an old rusty, black cabinet placed with a locker lock. The desk is brand new and shiny. The air smells like Autumn, and I can hear the brakes of the city bus outside in action. This school is very different than the others. They do not go by grades but by what students know and their levels. The reason for this is that most of the girls were not able to receive a lot of credits due to struggling with both English and Jewish

subjects. Girls also couldn't receive credits because of constantly being kicked out or switching schools.

Thankfully, there are only two Jewish subjects, and here the rest are English, which will help me get better grades. Being in a school like this opened my eyes to the actual definition of education. Education is like a horse race. There are so many obstacles in the way, and sometimes I might have to run the lap again and go through the same obstacles until I finally reach that finish line. Once I am at the finish line, every obstacle becomes worth it. My goal is to finish high school no matter what, and even though I was given a lot of obstacles, I found my finish line and am making sure I make it through.

I have never been to a public school, so I can't even pretend that I know what it is like or what needs to change in their systems. I know for religious, Jewish schools, they need to lower expectations and realize not everyone can balance all these subjects. Also, they must not give up on each kid who isn't perfect or is not the ideal Jewish student and send them to the next school. Going through this experience has pushed me into writing and expressing myself by journaling. Just like the reading, "Maybe I could save myself by writing" Olivarez (2018), he used poems to express what he went through and to connect with his readers. Going through experiences in life, I believe one should express themselves in writing. Journaling is very healthy and great for destressing.

Reference:

Jose Olivarez (September 12, 2018) "Maybe I Could Save Myself By Writing" *Gen*

<https://gen.medium.com/young-chicago-authors-maybe-i-could-save-myself-by-writing-poetry-latinx-teen-79752108d0b5>

