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The Deuteragonists

One's initial environment is based upon the predetermined circumstances given to them and how they choose to react to them. But ever so often people choose to defy the circumstances and create an environment for themselves. In America, there have been negative views on the education system, but my journey through that same system allowed me to elevate beyond the flaws and learn beyond what circumstances were allotted to me. In my life, I was taught that to get anywhere you had to be smart and to be smart you had to learn. But I was also taught for you to learn, you could not turn to the schooling system because it was not going to benefit you. As a younger person hearing that I was intimidated by the thought of not being able to put my faith in the teachers who were there to educate me. Which then put the idea in my head that I'd be alone throughout my journey, being just as confused as my peers due to a lack of education quality. But as time went on, the deuteragonists showed up in the form of teachers who took extra initiative to teach and never skipped the chance to show just how they cared.

A deuteragonist is a person second in importance to the protagonist, helping them along their journey and aiding in the development of the antagonist's story. Some of the teachers I encountered acted as my deuteragonist by giving me a new outlook on school and the importance of education. The first time I met one of my deuteragonists was in Brooklyn, East New York in

6th grade. My teacher was the type of teacher that you wanted to know; she didn't pull any punches when giving you constructive criticism, never being afraid to tell you, "this sounds dumb." But what made this teacher most memorable was the fact that she acknowledged and introduced us all to the fact that, we were born with unfortunate circumstances in all our lives, and although she didn't go too in-depth about it, later I learned about how the neighborhood I lived in affected my school's funding. But she made it very clear to us that no matter what others may expect or the circumstances we have in our lives, we have to set our own goals, reach our own heights, and defy normalities. It was her words and her level of care that set her apart from the other teachers, making her a deuteragonist.

One of the flaws in the educational system is funding "the Federal Government contributes about 8% to funding US public schools." Now, to put that into some perspective, currently, in America, the education system gets about 32.5% less money compared to the military. This means the government holds higher regard for war than future generations. "The local government allocates education funding from the revenue generated by property tax and other fundraising efforts" (google.com). "Property taxes are calculated by taking the mill levy and multiplying it by the assessed value of the owner's property. The assessed value estimates the reasonable market value for your home. It is based upon prevailing local real estate market conditions" (Seabury, 2021). This means that for people who live in poor or run-down neighborhoods there will be a substantial gap in funding compared to those who live in bigger or fancier neighborhoods. Crime rates also play a role in a neighborhood's worth, and for those in crime-ridden neighborhoods, there will be less funding getting to schools. This then limits the resources available to teach and decreases the quality of learning which can and has continued a trend of poverty.

For a select group of people, this is a big defining factor, and it allows children to believe that schooling is not as important, which in turn makes them resort to making money in ways that may sometimes be illegal. From selling drugs to selling knockoffs, the money generated from it is usually enough to sustain people who are trying to feed their families, which can then push a kid to drop out of school to make that same money. Dropping out and doing small things to earn money starts you off, but as time goes on you can start to move up with the intensity of their jobs and as a result, move into the world of crime, which then finishes the cycle of the poor neighborhood's diminishing wealth system. But I chose to pursue a different path thanks to my deuteragonists, the teachers who continued to push against the various constraints and created the next wave of learners.

Another teacher that played the role of a deuteragonist in my learning experiences was my teacher from 10th grade. By this time, I had moved from my school in Brooklyn and I'm in high school in Hell's Kitchen in Manhattan. The environment was different, and so was the quality of schooling, but the struggles that people developed from earlier grades followed them. I went to a school called Park West and it was a predominantly Latino school and we had all come from the more, "urban", areas. Some from the Bronx and Harlem, a few from Brooklyn but almost none of us from the upscale areas of Manhattan. This teacher always kept that in mind as she taught us. Her language as she taught us was never perfect English, but it was understandable. She was a Latina herself, and the times she wasn't mixing English and Spanish terms, she used her retro and most times funny use of our slang terms so we could not only understand but relate to the things she'd say on a new level. She was also the first person to sit me down and tell me that I could write if I had just learned how to organize my mind. She recognized our various life circumstances and chose to, rather than ignore them, integrate them

into our learning to introduce us to a new level of learning and a new way to relate to not only the information but to our teachers.

The circumstances given to me were not what I allowed to define me. I rose above the circumstances and went to chase my own goals and it was the teachers who took extra initiative to teach and cared about their students that set me on the path I'm now on. Although there were flaws in the system in the form of funding and teachers who created a bad learning environment, they went against the flaws and even changed the negative views I had about the system. It was their patience and their ability to adapt to the students that set them above the standard and gave them the role of deuteragonists. Don't allow a negative environment to determine your path. If you want better, get better, and if nobody can give you better, get it yourself. Sometimes you might find that the odds are stacked against you, but with some perseverance, you will achieve, and you might even meet some supporting figures along the way.... shoutout to The Deuteragonists

Work Cited (I Guess)

- Seabury, C. (2021, September 13). *How property taxes are calculated*. Investopedia. Retrieved September 26, 2021, from <https://www.investopedia.com/articles/tax/09/calculate-property-tax.asp>.

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