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Title about ?????

Life is a struggle of identity. Of course, it's not the only struggle that any of us face, but it's a massive issue that we all face in one way or another along our journey of life and existence. Fragments and ideas of our identity come and go, and they do so in accordance with the ebb and flow of your life's motions and happenings. It's fine not to know who you are, or what you want to do with your life, or who you want to be. No one has the answers from the get go, but what is important is the effort to find an identity that you love and that you're comfortable and happy with.

My path to my current identity has been a long but worthwhile journey. Long before I found my life's strongest identity thus far, I was a young, naive boy who was simply lost and directionless in life. I had almost no hobbies, I had difficulty maintaining friendships, and felt very isolated and lonely until I found theatre. In my sophomore year of high school, I was introduced to a club of students that performed plays and musicals twice a year. I was first exposed to their activities through my sister's membership, but over time, I was accepted into the group on my own merit and eventually, I found my calling. Being exposed to theatre and backstage work gave me a sense of community that was missing in my life, and I fell in love with it. The fact that the community was also held up by the merit of one's actions made it even

better, as merit was fair and equal - unbiased, and people more or less got back what they put in. That meant that people who were held in high regard were treated with respect for their actions and efforts, instead of being treated well because of something trivial like money or looks. It was a system that had a foundation of respect and earning your keep, that was supremely attractive and I fell in love with it. Over the years, I kept at it, learning more and more every year and gaining more and more experience, until finally during senior year, I had earned my way to a keystone position within the club. I had knowledge and involvement within everything that happened in the club, and the difference of who I was when I started out to who I was when I graduated was a massive shift. Through theatre, I found a passion for collaborating with people, a passion for dealing with technology geared towards entertainment, I found a desire to express myself and to bring into the world something that wouldn't exist without me... through theatre, I gained the desire to express my true self for my true self's sake.

Despite all these positives, it is inevitable that problems arise. We live in a human world that has human flaws, and one flaw that has affected my theatrical journey is the problem that it can be hard to find connections and to network within the industry, especially as a stagehand who is only starting off his career. I first learned the severity of this problem during my Spring 2021 semester, when I was fresh off an outstanding Fall 2021 semester. I had earned really high marks in all but one of the classes that I took, I had made friends (or at the very least, acquaintances) within my major, I maintained those connections over the break, and in some of the conversations I've had with them, they've expressed a desire to get their foot in doors and kickstart their careers. The problem within our community of college students seems to be two-fold. On one hand, a problem is the lack of experience necessary to be hired, and on the

other, you have the problem of not having industry connections despite having the skills necessary to be hired. The first problem can stem from our environments. Some prospective stagehands are still learning the ropes in college, and since the difference between high school level theatre and collegiate to industrial theatre is vast, these stagehand students are left playing catch-up unless they have prior experience that warrants a few hires at basic entry gigs. This process of catching up can be very frustrating for the very eager stagehands who desire to get their careers started but lack the skills to do so. The second big issue is the lack of proper connections. This is an especially big one as it's pretty obvious that without connections, workers that deserve opportunities won't receive them.

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