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Someone Else's Story
Professor Peterson

Popping "The LA Bubble"

My mom and dad yelled at me furiously when they found out. Their faces were bright red and they were at a loss for words as I stood in front of them. They just gave me a disappointed look and then later explained I did not have it in me to be off on my own for the whole summer. I had signed up for two summer programs behind their backs. My guidance counselor highly suggested the programs for students with an interest in entrepreneurship and business so I went ahead and signed up.

Although I did not really think about the whole 'living on my own' ordeal, I thought the programs would give me the opportunity to broaden my studies. How could my parents not be on board with that? When I broke the news to my mom and dad they were angry, however, they could not say no to my argument when I told them that I had to figure out if I liked the East or West Coast better for a college location. They finally realized that I had good intentions in signing up for the programs and agreed to let me go to Brown and Stanford. After thinking about their side of the argument, I grew worried about being alone and leaving the "LA bubble" that I was so used to. One thing that I did know though, was that I had to escape that bubble which confined me every day.

I stepped onto the Brown campus with a nervous feeling in my stomach. The quad was full of green grass and the Providence air was fresh and welcoming. Still, with that picturesque setting, I couldn't help feeling unsettled as I was used to the sunny city of LA. Coming to the East Coast for the Summer at Brown Program was my idea, but at that moment, I felt scared to start somewhere new where I did not know anyone. I kept telling myself that it was okay because

I was there to study and I was excited for classes that were different compared to my monotonous and painfully dull high school classes.

My parents nagging me to stay with them for the summer kept playing over and over in my head, but I told myself that it would be okay. Suddenly a group of kids walked by already detached from their parents. They had managed to form a clique within the first hour of being on campus and I was still with my parents checking in. I was extremely intimidated, but I finished checking in and said goodbye to my parents. I was living in a single for the three-week program and I never felt so alone. I did not know how to put myself out there to introduce myself, while people were already making friends with their roommates.

I sat on my unmade bed and wondered why I signed up for the program. I could not believe that I thought things would be different here. Everyone at home in LA formed cliques and it was the same everywhere. The walls seemed to close in on me in my tiny single and I felt trapped. I did not want to call home and give my parents the satisfaction that they were right, but so far, they were. Leaving home should not have been so difficult. LA was fun at times, but I needed change after learning the hard way that I had to get away.

The people at my school created a scandal that made the news. They were that mean. It was rumored that the movie, *Mean Girls* was made based on my high school, but the movie *Cyberbully* actually was. The mean girls nearly drove one of my closest friends to the point of suicide because of their antics and I saw firsthand how cruel people could be. I knew not everyone in LA was like that, but I still had the desire to leave, explore new territory, and meet new people. The summer programs gave me that chance, but so far, my parents were right. Being on my own was harder than I thought.

The first two nights, I broke. I called home crying because I felt so alone. My parents subsequently told me “We told you so” and I sat there desolately as I contemplated what to do. I could hear people chattering outside of my dorm and making friends as I was stuck inside my single with the broken air conditioner and myself. The heat was getting to me just as much as my loneliness and I could not stand sweating it out alone so I told myself to go outside and make friends.

Later in the week, I met friends in the Res hall and we clicked. We did not have any classes together, but we got along like we knew each other our whole lives. When I called home that night, I did not cry. Instead, I went on about how amazing the people were. I could not believe my change in attitude. My group consisted of various people. It turns out nobody was cliquy here, they all came and went as they chose to and I ended up meeting more and more people as the three weeks went on. I met my best friends on that first day I called home happy. They were two girls both with the names Holly and Dalia. They lived on my floor and actually knocked on my door that night that I met them. I could not believe people could be so outgoing and courageous to knock on a stranger’s door without knowing who was inside. It touched me and I vowed after that to be as courageous as them.

For the rest of the program, I became a new person. My friends were outside of the LA bubble that I lived in and I loved it. I could not have been happier to meet real people that understood me and accepted me for being me. This program caused me to grow up more in three weeks than I had in years. I expressed my ideas more in class and realized that I was becoming more outgoing and happier as the time went on.

After the Brown program, I had the opportunity to go back to the west coast to take the four-weeklong summer program at Stanford. I was already away from home for the beginning of

the summer so I was a little uneasy to be away even longer. Once again, my nerves faded as I met amazing people in my program. These people were different than the “friends” I had back in LA and I even met closer friends than I did at Brown.

I already learned the basics to living on my own, so then I could focus on friends and classes. I was independent and felt a freedom arising from the same fibers that made up my previous fears. I was also free of LA and the fake friends. Not to mention, I was free of the broken air conditioner back at Brown. This program was even better than I could have imagined. It offered the greatest opportunities to learn hands on about the business industry.

At the end of the four week program, the final project was to present our ideas to venture capitalists from Silicon Valley. That was almost as intimidating as starting all of these programs on my own, but once again, I powered through. I presented my project for an app that allows friends that live in different countries to contact each other. This idea sparked because Holly and Dalia were from Holland and I knew I would want to keep in touch with my new friends. The presentation went smoothly and although I was nervous, the venture capitalists sought me out afterwards to offer me a deal. They actually wanted to create my app and they linked me to a programmer and people that could fund the idea. This app became a hit and became the concrete evidence I had to prove my parents wrong. I named it “Whatsapp” because it sounded like my friends from Brown saying “Whats up?” with their Dutch accents.

The presentation was successful and pitching my idea to people with such high positions and vast knowledge gave me a boost of confidence. The fact that they produced my idea and gave me an early start to my career sealed my newfound confidence even further. I felt that confidence forming each day at these programs and I was so content that I was exposed to the world outside the LA bubble.