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AFAM/ENGL 2690

The Need for Access

I went into this experience being both excited and completely terrified, but now looking back, it has definitely been one of the most rewarding things I've done at Northeastern. I truly enjoyed being able to do my Service-Learning at 826 Boston. I learned so much from all the students and I also was shown some of the ways in which they viewed the world and environment around us. I found these students wise beyond their years, they were compassionate, creative, and willing to let people help them. I think doing Service-Learning through a class like this opened my eyes to the ways in which youth interact with places and how it affects their perception. Environment has a great impact on the way we see ourselves/each other and it influences the places we feel we belong in versus the ones we feel we don't belong in. I do believe the experiential aspect added to the course. It made us acknowledge the lack of access these schools face and the ways in which Boston itself fails to embrace blackness. The site visits we did in class were also very impactful because we didn't only talk about Boston, but we had the ability to go out and explore the Boston community. It depicts a history that oftentimes tends to be ignored. I have lived in Boston for 19 years and I never knew the Boston Athenaeum existed, and to add to this shock I only found out about the African American Museum around 3 years ago. I think this speaks volumes in terms of the sites the city is most known for versus the ones that tend to get brushed aside.

Throughout this class, we have been looking at access in a multitude of ways and I saw that manifesting itself in the classroom and through the stories these students told. I worked with

students who depicted all the hardships of their world in their writing. I grew up in the Dorchester/Roxbury area and I feel at home there. Yet I went to high school in the Fenway area and my experience was so different in the sense that it lacked so much diversity but had so much access. I had so much access to food and transportation (outside my school) whereas outside the O'Bryant there is limited access to food and transportation. Learning about the history of black Boston has made me pay *more* attention to the access given in predominantly black neighborhoods versus the access given to predominantly white neighborhoods and what that means for the students going there.

I also think it made me acknowledge how much places like 826 Boston *need* people to volunteer (especially college students). I think mentorship is very important, because youth need people they can look up to and trust. Cross-collaboration between institutions (both high school and college) is crucial, because it allows students to be a part of something bigger than themselves. It makes us (college students) become part of the Boston community. I think it's easy to go to Northeastern and not become a part of the community Northeastern is situated in, but it is our responsibility to learn about Boston and give back. Northeastern is continuously infringing upon Roxbury's community. I don't exactly know how we can stop this, but I think educating ourselves, supporting community-run businesses, and volunteering our time in these communities is a good place to start. Though there is always more we can do to try to bridge this gap.

Service-Learning allowed me to dip my feet into the art of teaching made me aware of how much goes into being a teacher. I think when considering being a high school teacher in Boston, one needs to be aware of the discrepancies of school systems and find ways to

acknowledge our student's needs. I think it definitely opened my eyes to role space plays in these gaps in access and how much access is being denied to youth of color.