Debbie Rosenfeld

English 101

Heather Julien

Linear essay

Most teenagers entering high school have similar experiences as their friends. Most teenagers live relatively close to school and their friends and leap through the four years on the same page as their surrounding classmates. I had a slightly different experience that needed a little more adjustment than others would. I needed to learn how to accept some of the hardships of attending a high school in New York City while living in a suburb in Westchester country. I also had to learn to appreciate the benefits.

 While during high school I spent most of my days on the upper east side of Manhatten, this was not always the case. I live in [Westchester](http://onelifetwoplaces.weebly.com/westchester-rituals.html), a suburb of New York City. My extended family lives at most ten minutes from my house and my friends live close to me as well. Westchester was the only place I had ever thought of as home until highschool. My [friends](http://onelifetwoplaces.weebly.com/my-city-family.html) have known me since I was five years old, they know my family and my backround. The thought of leaving them and my hometown to go to a different school in Manhatten had never crossed my mind until I was 15. The decision to switch schools was my parents. Ever since then, I attended school between Madison and Park avenue. I slept in Manhattan occasionally during the week but the majority of time I came back to westchester every school night after a long day that ended earliest at 4:45. In Manhattan my family was not around the corner. It was me as an individual rather than a girl who always had someone to pick her up and drop her off. It was tiring but worth it because of the many different people I now call my best friends. I was able to gain a different perspective of my surroundings and learn how to be more independent by leaving my familiar area. One part of my life was filled with mobility and growing as an individual, learning my way around the busy city and adjsuting to a new environment. The other, was my comfort zone and it was a quieter, slower version of my life.

 The trip connecting the two lives was major part of my experience that would to most seem unimportant. The Supertrans bus company drove me from my home in Westchester to my school in New York City every morning and evening during rush hour. For this reason, I chose a school bus as my artifact.As insignificant as it may seem to most people I have spent hours upon hours on these buses. To me, the school bus symbolizes a buffer zone between my two lives. I constantly raced by the hudson river and the George washington bridge, breaking into places not too far away from eachother but that hold two different personalities. I listened to music, did homework and befriended the other students who were on my bus. Everyday morning at 6:45 am the yellow bus would be waiting outside my house. It was the start of the journey to my day and every afternoon at 4:45 I would leave school, walk to the corner of madison and 78th street and get on the bus for the way home. Sometimes it was long and frustrating when all my friends could walk home in ten minutes. Other times, though, I enjoyed the time on the bus. It gave me a thirty or forty five minute period where I had no obligation to do anything but listen to music and think. I was able to reflect on my day, my week or even just different events happening in my life at that time. I can honestly say this time on the bus kept me balanced as a person. What the inconvenience of living far from school, and the school bus, has taught me is the importance of leaving a comfort zone. Being forced to stay on a bus with the exact same group of students every morning and evening, I learned how to refrain from judgments more. I met people I would have most likely never spoken to if it were not for being put in a position with few people in a confined space. I realized to look deeper into people before I confirm my opinion. Ultimately, the people on my bus knew more about me than some of my close friends. They saw me in an element where no one was judging, in my tired state in the mornings as well as my hyper state in the evenings when school was finally dismissed. The bus was an escape from reality which in fact, was enjoyable. It was a symbol of relationships made, long treks back and forth along the Hudson and an experience that not many people have. It often seemed like a burden although it was an opportunity to take myself out of the fast-paced social bubble in disguise.

 The school bus, though, was not the only hidden benefit that I did not realize at first, but my friends that soon grew to be more like family were also vital to my experience. Out of my close friends from school, I was the only one who did not live in Manhattan. I started my first day knowing one person who I trusted. Over the course of the four years, that number grew. My friends acted as family to me. I was constantly at their houses in between classes, for dinner after school or stayed over on the weekends. The doorman in in my friend stephanie's building knows me from going in and out of her apartment so much he does not even make me sign in. I have a toothbrush designated for me at most of their apartments and have probably slept in their beds the same amount I sleep in my own. Not once have they complained or said no to me. Their friendship and support was worth the inconvenience. I have become close with their parents and babysitters as well as their siblings. Although being in their homes should have made me feel as if I was not in my own, I felt completely at home. I can say everyone of their adresses just as fast as my own. My friends, or city family, made my adjustment easier than I could have imagined by making me feel so at home.

 As amazing as my City friends are, my strong remaining relationships with my Westchester friends also made the past four years as spectacular as they were. My Westchester Family has different roots. My four best friends are the people that have known me my entire life. Although we spent  four years in different schools my relationships with them remain the same and have grown throughout the time. They have witnessed my awkward stage and know my parents. They are a part of my real family, who happened to be affected by my commuting life. My parents were devoted to me and made my expeirence as easy as they could. The countless drives to and from New York City at late hours in the night or early sunday mornings to pick me up from my friend's apartments display their efforts to make it natural for me. My friends though, have seen who I have grown into. They have been there for the "ups" and the "downs" of my childhood and hold a lot of history in my life. I cannot say that I am the same person I was when I left them to switch schools. I have changed maturity wise, as did everyone by default of growing up and experiencing high school, but I also changed by becoming more comfortable with myself and grew into my personality. My school was one that motivated students to reach thier best potential, to find things they enjoyed and persue them in any way they could and most importantly, over all of thier other goals, tried to leave a mark in every student. They want to set in stone values and ideas into the heads of the students. My horizons were widened and my eyes were now open to many different ideas. I had teachers pushing for me to do the best I could academically but also who wanted to engrave in me confidence. Once one of my teachers met with me after class, sat me down and told me I need to learn how to stick up for myself better. He said he knows I have a lot of friends and all of whom have my back but realized I needed to be more firm. The fact that my teacher said this was crazy to me. The care he had to go out of his way to not only notice something so small but to take action about it and act as my friend or mentor was so shocking to me. It was moments like those that made me into a little bit of a different person, and my Westchester "family" witnessed the change. They were my outside view of everything. Their opinions on all things always kept me grounded. I changed but having them I would never change too much because of their irreplacable relationship and down-to-earth mindsets that I value so much.

 To get deeper insight into a communters life, I interviewed Mira who is a commuter to a different City school. Mira is a junior, lives in Stanford Conneticut and went to the Spence school on the upper eastside of Manhatten. For her, there were no buses available.

" I woke up at  6:15, got on the train then got off at Harlem 125th stop because my school is closer to the harlem stop than it is to Grand central station. I would take a cab from there but in 9th grade I actually took the subway a lot". It seems simple but for a fifteen year old girl starting highschool it was inf act very difficult for her. "I do sports which is five days a week. I love swimming but it does not end until 5:30pm every day. I would then have to take the train home late at night and the train station was pretty frightening sometimes". Mira even shared an expeirenced once when she was traveling back home and a man came up to her and demanded her to give him her money. She was in 9th grade and petrified. The difference though, between Mira and I, is that she commutes alone. She is the only girl in her entire grade that goes back and forth between Conneticut and New York City. She states “The commute was hard but the strain it put on my social life was getting to be unbearable. Thats why we had to ask a family friend if I could stay with them during the week and go home on the weekend. I don't get to go home and see my parents or my brothers anymore after school it was such an adjustment. I would have no time to see friends because by the time I was done with sports I had to go home finish my work until late hours in the night and then wake up early again for the train". Despite the differences, There were some benefits though that we can both relate to. The train and bus helped both of us focus and have time to finish work.

Mira was not the only one who shared her story. Albert a commuter from New Jersey conveyed his feelings as well. Albert is a senior at my former high school who lives in Englewood, New Jersey. He also takes the bus most days but unlike me he goes across the George washington bridge everyday during rush hour.

I face-timed with Albert to interview him about his experience.

As soon as he accepted the facetime and it connected, we starting reminiscing about our memories. After a few funny stories from when we were in school together I popped the questions. His feelings were actually very similar to mine due to our good expeirence with close friends. Although he came to highschool with five other boys from his old school who remained very close throughout the transition together.

 I asked him how long it took to get to school and he replied " I woke up at around 6:20, it took thirty minutes or so with out traffic but on bad days I spent an hour on the bus". His bus had many more people on it than mine did but despite that they were very close and even engaged the bus driver in conversations. Albert confessed "one time he stopped at starbucks for us on our way to school, and ever since we have our morning starbucks runs with the busdriver and the entire bus before we get on the bridge, hes the man". For me, it felt as if I had two different parts of my life in two different places. I wondered if he felt the same because he entered the school with close friends already. He said "it defiantly felt like my home and school were in two different places but my friends and I went to highschool together so my life was pretty much the same in both places, just the scene is different". I thought it was interesting that the scene was different to him so I asked him to elaborate.

         "The atmosphere is different and how people act and hang out is different. In englewood we all just chill but in the city there always is a plan and much less layed back".

I agree but I also think that life in the city as a laid back aspect to it. Although it is busier and a little more tense there is so much mobility and freedom. Albert agreed with my opinion but also felt the way people socialize there is very different. I found it interesting that me and albet had many of the same thoughts. I know he spends more time in englewood than I do in westchester so he was a little less infatuated with manhatattan and had less of a conenction to it because most of his closest friends live in his neighborhood. Despite all of that, he feels it was a good desicion and many benefits came from the struggles and differences between his two lives.

Right near my high school there was a french restaurant that served hot chocolate. Me, being the chocolate fanatic that I am could not resist but to go there every single day without fail and get my hot chocolate (which I pretended was coffee, of course). When I go home and go into the city it is a necessary stop that I must go to. The great lawn is also one of my favorite spots in the city. It gives me the quiet I need and am used to from home but is in the center of the busy city surrounding it. It is walking into a different universe with a slower pace. It is the most relaxing place to go with my friends during the warm weather months.

The journey through high school, which at first I dreaded, resulted in the best surprise. It shaped me as a person and gave me perspectives I never would have had. This project allowed me to remember and reflect off of the unqie experience I had