

“You are everything you choose to be”

– Shad Helmstetter

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When I read this quote, I knew that it is what I wanted to base my essay on. I feel that many people, especially in America, have forgotten that they are what they choose to be. Many times, when walking through my school (John Marshall High), I hear students saying “My teacher *gave* me an F,” or “My friends *made* me skip school.” I cannot stand to hear students say this, because I know that it isn’t true. When people say this, they are placing the blame on someone else, because they cannot accept the fact that they create their own future, that they are everything they choose to be. This quote has applied to me much throughout my life, and below is the example that stands out most to me.

Picture this: a young girl, about twelve years old, sitting with all of her cousins on a park bench. All of the children, ages nine to fifteen, are talking about school, and they get on the subject of what they want to be when they grow up. Now, this young girl has known since she was in first grade that she wants to become the first female president. When she says this, all of her cousins laugh at her. “You can’t do that,” her oldest cousin says. “You don’t even go to a good school. Nobody from a Cleveland school is ever going to become president.” The young girl, upon hearing this, doesn’t say much for the rest of the day, and goes home feeling very upset. This sixth grader has just had her dream shot down, based on where she lives. When her mother asked her, later, what was wrong, she told her mom what had happened. Her mother’s response was, “No one can tell you what you can or cannot be when you grow up. You can be whatever you want, as long as you set your mind to it. You might have to work harder than others, but you can still make it if you really want to.”

The young sixth grader who wanted to be the first female president was me, 5 years ago. I’m in the eleventh grade now, and I no longer want to become president. Now, I want to become either a journalist or an architect when I get older. However, my change in career choice has not had an affect on my approach to school. I know that I must work hard in order to succeed in life, and I have been working hard every day in school since the day my cousin told me that I didn’t go to a good school and that I couldn’t become what I wanted to. I believe that my hard work has paid off, too.

Three years ago, I took the ACT, a nation-wide standardized test. How you do on this test has absolutely nothing to do with where you go to school; rather, your score is based on how dedicated and intelligent you are. I was in the eighth grade at the time, and my oldest cousin was in the eleventh. We both took the test, and we both got the same score: a 25. I’m not sure if she still thinks that since I live in Cleveland, I won’t amount to much, but I know that all I have to do is try my hardest, and I can become anything I choose to be.