

## Growth

I have the most peculiar relationship with my former humanities professor. It began when I was a much younger boy. My mother wanted to buy my sibling new shoes so I went to Marshalls with both of them. As we were checking out my brother was calling me names and that I would work as one of the clerk ladies. I blurted, out of childish anger, "I would never because they are uneducated." Out of the corner of my eye I caught a glimpse of a clerk lady with a disappointed face and a deformed hand.

Several years later I was a high school senior taking dual enrolled classes. I sat down in the front row of my humanities class. I remember the moment I first saw my professor because she gave a subtle look, as if I was bad news. She seemed lovely and incredibly friendly. She introduced herself and informed us of her impressive educational background; almost two PhDs. She concluded her introduction with, "And yes I have phocomelia, that's why my hand is like this". I honestly didn't notice her hand until she mentioned it. I was excited for this class, because there were many open discussions and we talked about ethical concerns. I had recently taken ethics so I had an edge in those conversations. I truly put a lot of effort in making constructive conversation.

I put so much effort in that one time I decided to do a social experiment. For my friend's birthday I told her that she can bring any clothing she'd like and I will wear it for a period of time. She brought the shortest shorts you could ever imagine being worn. As you could imagine everyone loved it and she had a great laugh as my birthday gift. I mentioned in my humanities class that it is almost hysterical to see men in women's clothing, but is it totally normal for women to wear men's clothing. I think that there is a lot of food for thought in that simple sentence.

Later in the semester, my professor was telling us a story, as she commonly did, and she told us that she had worked at Marshalls and that she remembers hearing someone utter the ignorant phrase, that clerk ladies are "uneducated!" My heart sank and I realized who she was. I remember she looked at me when she told her story. It was the same look I had seen on the first day.

I received an A in her class and I asked her to write a letter of recommendation for me because she was my favorite professor. In her letter she wrote: "His engagement with the world is refreshing and full of the joy of life. He throws himself into the moment, the assignment, the discussion in a way that demonstrates intellectual curiosity and a love for learning coupled with a sense of self and of being present in his own life that is surprisingly developed for someone who is yet so young"

I believe she knows it was me who uttered those horrendous words. Sometimes I feel like telling her it was me. Sometimes I wish I could change what I had said. And sometimes I feel like she knows I've grown.