

Labels in "indian education" essay sample



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In “ Indian Education” Sherman Alexie tells his story of overcoming racial limitations through the narrator, “ Victor”. At the start, Victor defined himself as an Indian, but later on he distances himself from the label. While Victor was first grade, he was singled out by the other Indian boys, “ the other Indian boys chased me from one corner of the playground to the other”;

Victor was also compared to a white boy crying, despite the fact that none of the Indian boys have seen a white boy cry, “ Once it was Cries-Like-a-White-Boy, even though none of us had seen a white boy cry.” In the second grade he was singled out by the teacher, even though he was not he only Indian. “ She sent a letter home with me that told my parents to either cut my braids or keep me home from class. My parents came in the next day and dragged their braids across Betty Towle’s desk.“ Indians, indians, indians.” She said it without capitalization. She called me “ indian, indian, indian.” And I said, Yes I am, I am Indian. Indian, I am.”

However, Victor slowly realizes that he is not like the other Indians and mentally leaves the reservation in the seventh grade. “ But I was saying good-bye to my tribe, to all the Indian girls and women I might have loved, to all the Indian men who might have called me cousin, even brother.” Like Alexie, Victor also had his educational opportunities limited; the narrator has been shown to be much more intelligent than the other Indian kids, being able to finish a test made for junior high students perfectly.

Again like Alexie, the narrator goes to high school of the reservation. Here he sees the differences between whites, and the upbringing he had, ““ Give me

your lunch if you're just going to throw it up," I said to one of those girls once...Back on the reservation, my mother stood in line to get us commodities." Seeing the difference between him and whites, he made a subconscious connection to the dark skinned Mexican teacher. However, after Victor was accused of drinking by the same teacher he realized that "Sharing dark skin doesn't necessarily make two men brothers."

Later the narrator played basketball for his school team, nicknamed the "Indians", noting that he is most likely the only actual Indian that has played for the Indians. This further separates Victor from the other Indians. Victor then graduates as a valedictorian, the opposites of his past classmates that graduated without the ability to read. The tribal newspaper published the pictures of Victor's old classmates next to his, showing what Victor became, going past the racial label.