

The achievement of desire

Life



Growing up is something inevitable to all cultures and people. We have all gone through that time in our lives when we move on from being a child and become an adult. However, in the reality that education is the fact that starts this transition, Richard Rodriguez brilliantly focuses on the realization that education itself gives us the “ways of speaking and caring” about this transition. In the essay “The Achievement of Desire”, Rodriguez explains how his own life can be seen as his achievement for the desire to be the “scholarship boy”.

Throughout his early years, Rodriguez defines himself as a good “imitator” “anxious and eager to learn”(546). He would constantly take in what his teachers taught him and then take these new ideas back to his family. This kind of “scholarship boy” to Rodriguez could be described as a model student who simply brings up the information obtained through his teachers yet doesn't develop his own idea. Rodriguez himself became, from an early age, that model student, superior to the rest of his peers.

However, he also notes that being this kind of person, also meant he didn't express anything other than the thoughts provided by his teachers and books. Nevertheless, Rodriguez goes deeper into his “scholarship boy” situation and questions the motivations behind his actions, in other words, he questions his ability to originate ideas. What he realizes in third grade is that his education was actually changing him and separating him from the life he once had and loved. This realization was very important for Rodriguez because it meant that there would come a time when a choice would have to be made.

A choice between keeping the ways of education in his home life, or choosing to abandon his home life and start his journey to a successful, independent, educational life. A choice between allowing his parents, who he loved more than anything, teach him or allowing his teachers to teach him more completely. It is at this point in Rodriguez's life that he sees the education system as a kind of permanent examination and chooses to follow his own ways of learning and goals. In essence, he ends up developing the "ways of caring" about this transition.

Rodriguez admits that all of us, one time or another must go through this kind of transition and separation from our past. However, he rejects any belief that education and the home culture can actually exist together. He describes these two 'worlds' as extremes throughout his life growing up. The choice between these two worlds, these two extremes, is not a mysterious one, but it is an obvious one according to Rodriguez. To the scholarship boy, both the choice and the sacrifice it requires are obvious, and it is that decision which gives the person the "ways of speaking and caring" about the decision that is made.

The scholarship boy fully understands the decision at the moment of making it, and so engages in a way that will allow him to reflect about it in the future. Nonetheless, Rodriguez also argues that most people are not as changed by education as he was. Rodriguez himself was a very special case. Having been born and raised by his uneducated parents, his culture and education allowed him to exceed the academic level of his parents. This environment was especially hard for him in his high school years, as he

was embarrassed of his parents because they were not like his teachers. Over the years his parents lost their authority to him.

This made him look for something else, whether that was knowledge given by his teachers or their authority towards him. For Rodriguez, he could not afford to admire his parents. As he moved from fourth grade up, he slowly developed the skills to hide the secret of his success. What he was actually doing was hiding his enthusiasm about his separation from his parents and his home life. In doing so, he found the tools required to both care and speak about the changes he knew were taking place with him. Eventually Rodriguez does get to the top of his education when he graduates high school and is accepted into Stanford University.

Everything he had worked so hard for was finally worth it, as he could enter the real world of academics. Pleased with the idea of entering this new world, Rodriguez found that the academics community was lacking something. This is evident after his return home and not being able to connect with his family anymore, he also comes to the realization that he has been removed from the everyday life of his family and friends. In his sacrifice to become formed by education, he has in effect been changed deeply, so deeply that its not possible to connect with that past life.

As he grew up and experienced changes of such importance in his life, Rodriguez learned and developed a number of scholarly abilities that provided him the “ ways of speaking, reading, and caring” about his own life. He developed a professionalism in language as in a way to separate himself from his parents. Not only that, he also developed an incontrollable hunger

of knowledge whether it was from books or teachers, which allowed him to study those who were like him or had ideas like him. For example, his article turned around proving wrong Hoggart's idea of what a "scholarship boy" really was in the inside.

In fact, his article proved that scholarship boys were not those who absorbed information and repeat it afterwards, but those that could use that information and education to form original thoughts and opinions as well. He demonstrated that "ways of reading and caring" were valued in the academic community. He explained his desire of becoming a teacher as for the knowledge and the "desire for knowledge" that he had. Rodriguez shows a desire for something, a desire to understand ideas. He explains this by saying that what he "withheld from his mother and father of what mattered the most: the extraordinary experience of first-learning".

This kind of desire to achieve the ways of reading, speaking, and caring about academics and life in general is why he had "always been a successful student". Lastly, Rodriguez's view on the definition of education and what it meant to be a "scholarship boy" in this article made him an independent thinker, which is what Rodriguez desired most, to have his own opinions and thoughts. He finally had changed from being a simple "scholarship boy" to become a real independent thinker. Everything in his life, his family, his teachers, his schooling, his books, and himself led him to discover the true "achievement of desire".