

Incident



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Running Header: Ridicule A Plus Sized Ridicule College A Plus Sized Ridicule

This indelible incident, which happened when I was an eight -year-old kid, could have been instrumental in molding me in to the maverick that I am today. As a child born and raised in San Francisco, playing tag and shooting hoops in the vacant lot next to the community center was a daily afternoon ritual of all the “ in kids” on the block.

That summer, the afternoons were hotter than usual and our group of Tag and hoop buddies was feeling the heat and the humidity, which took away the pleasure of usual playing. We sat around after few rounds of “ tag... ur it” and just talking shop. My mind had drifted off to recall the conversation at the kitchen table in the morning where I heard momma telling my dad of the intended visit of our grand parents for the summer. Having my grand parents for holidays made my days shine. Grand pa with his erect frame and ruddy sun tanned skin from countless hours in the outdoors brought me memories of great cowboys. Grand ma always reminded of softness with her twinkling blue eyes and beautiful soft skin. Her voice was so gentle and soothing that I loved to fall a sleep in her lap, listening to the stories and songs she read or sang to me at bedtime.

I came out of the reverie of my grandma’s soft cocoon of love when I heard Tim, our implicitly appointed group leader chanted in a high pitch tone “ Here comes a Wadley Sack.. he he he he” and I looked up to see the woman of an extra bulky frame walking pass the lot. Tim was right in one sense in that she was hardly walking but waddling along with a difficult gait. She looked in our direction as the chanting got more boisterous with the rest of the boys, Sean, Steave, Mat and Harry joining in the ridiculing of the plus sized lady. I watched her, expecting to see anger and distaste in her

expressions but was surprised at the kind and conciliatory look in her eyes. “Wow... she must be eating like a giant!” said Tim, and everyone laughed aloud. I looked at her once again and thought that though she was rather big, she looked kind and pleasant with her redeeming smile. In the silence that followed, my “tag & hoop” buddies turned questioningly at me. I have not uttered a single word up to now, nor had I joined in the laughter, which rankled the humid summer air.

“Alan? You don’t think she looks like a big sack of potatoes?” Questioned Tim and I waited as if the cat got my tongue. “Oooohh... Alan likes her! He doesn’t think she looks that bad!” Exclaimed Tim, the gang master in mock exaggeration and the others provided the desired cackle of laughter to back him up. At that moment I had a feeling that our so-called “in kids in the block” are not that cool after all.

I have been raised amidst kindness and compassions. My momma always told me, “Do what ever that makes you happy... but never a thing that hurts another” and I wondered whether laughing and chanting insults at this lady passing by was of any fun. All this thoughts passed through my mind in a second of silence with five young bullies who are my buddies peering at me expectantly and I knew what their expectations were.

Team inclusion was important to me. So I wanted to make sure I hurled the best insult at her, so that I will be one of them and not be ridiculed and left out for the circle.

“Oh Yeah! I like her so much... She is just like the Hippopotamus we saw at the zoo last month! And look at her jaw hanging... just like that big ugly hippo” and as the words rang out above the normal buzz of intermittently passing traffic near the vacant lot, I realized what a coward I was. For not

standing up to what my inner self believed in. For not being man enough or even a boy enough to stand up and say, hey “ Live and Let Live” surely not exactly in those philosophical words, but in my own boyish vocabulary of “ Hey guys, lay off. Let her be... Lets play out hoops.” But what’s done was done and the plus sized lady waddled off with a crestfallen look and a barely audible remark of how unfortunate that her malfunctioning thyroids were making her bloat like a hippo.

We shot hoops for a while and gave each other a hi five and went our ways and when I came through the back yard and opened the kitchen door, I heard the musical voice of my Grand Ma and the booming laughter of Grand Pa, mingled with the voices of my parents. I rushed in and hugged Grand Pa briefly and threw myself at Grand Ma who wrapped me up and hugged me close. In the cozy, warm and ever soft cocoon of my grand ma’s arms I closed my eyes tight and felt the sting of tears wanting to erupt behind my eyelids. I wondered why and whether I have missed my Grand Ma so much since the last vacation but through all the self-denial, I knew why I wanted to cry. So, I let the hot tears flow on to the softness of my Grand Ma’s comfortingly oversized bosom and cried for betraying my own oversized Grand Ma by joining in the ridicule of the Plus sized woman at the vacant lot. There on that day, amidst the surprised expressions of my loved ones who could not figure why I had missed my Grand Ma so much, I decided that I shall never go with the crowd if its against what I believe in.