

Educational Philosophy Artifact

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EDL 656: Professional Development and Field Experience in Student Affairs

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September 15, 2021

When this assignment was introduced, I had no clue what artifact I could find that would relate to my educational philosophy. I could have chosen a picture of my family as they are the motivating factor behind a lot of things I do. I could have even chosen the first award I received in undergrad because it led me to student affairs. Instead, I decided to choose something that is a little more personal; a button. As a sophomore, I had the pleasure of attending the 2018 Southern Regional Orientation Workshop (SROW). At SROW, buttons are a major component of the conference. Different orientation leaders (OLs) from a number of institutions bring buttons from their respective institutions and swap with other OLs.

With buttons being a popular item at SROW, I'm sure you may be wondering "what does a button have to do with education?" But, the button that I chose to use as my artifact is special. It is a pretty average-sized button with the words "black at the table" written in black ink on a gray background. The button was mailed to me after attending SROW with a note attached to it. The note reads, "Alyssa, I'm so glad we were able to connect at SROW. Sorry this is so late coming your way, but I am very happy you attended my presentation! Keep being the brave, beautiful and bold Black women you are!"

As we all know, attending conferences and even presenting are normal things that higher education professionals do. As for how my artifact relates to higher education specifically, I believe it sheds light on a community of students who often feel outnumbered, out of place, and unwanted at predominantly white institutions (PWIs). Personally, deciding to attend a PWI for undergrad and graduate school was two of the most difficult decisions I have ever made. The constant thoughts of will I fit in, will I find friends, and even where will I get my hair done, replayed over and over again in my mind. I believe this button represents my belonging. It reminds me that I belong at every table I chose to sit at just as much as the next person.

After completing my philosophy statement last fall, I found myself rereading the note I received at SROW whenever I needed an extra push and validation of why I am doing what I am doing. I consider my education philosophy to be my “why” statement. I believe that is why this button and note are so special to me. They both align perfectly with my why statement, which is to serve, support, and acknowledge students of color. This button means so much because it was one of the first times I was acknowledged and felt validated as a Black PWI student. When this validation came, I made the decision to pursue student affairs as a profession. My greatest aspiration is to provide the reassurance that this button gives me every day when I question if I am still doing the right thing.