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**“A Unique Presentation of Education Availability Over Time”**

How important is education to you? “The Change in Limits of Education Shown Through Art and Text” appears to be in the style of an exhibit in a museum with the background used in the PowerPoint. It presents the topic very clearly as the title is bolded and capitalized, with the curator’s name in small letters underneath. By looking at the title page, I wondered how art and text could demonstrate limits in education, as well as what kind of limits will be discussed. This drew in my curiosity because as education is widely discussed, there are several different controversial topics about it. Walking in to this exhibit, I imagined what it would be like if I did not legally have the right to any form of an education and how my education may be limited today.

The first part of the exhibit, entitled “What is the exhibit about?”, cleared this up for me. It explains how education has been limited in the past, and how this relates to how it is limited today. I can relate to the cost limitations of higher education today, as I am a college student. This is also a highly relevant topic today, especially in terms of politics and the presidential election.

Education has always been held in high importance to me and this exhibit makes it clear that it always has been important. Before the civil rights movement, African Americans made risks to illegally get an education. This is first demonstrated in the play script *I am Lucy Terry* by Ed Bullins, the first part of the exhibit after the introduction. It made sense to look at the play

first since the entire exhibit was based on it and the values it holds, and I believed it would give some insight to the exhibit to have a background story. This insight gave me an idea to what life was like at the time.

While reading this tattered script without binding, character of a slave stood out to me, and how she is illegally given an education. The play demonstrated the importance and value of an education, even at a time when it was not legal. Since Lucy, an African American, was educated illegally, it introduced the risks that her and her mistress were willing to make. Her mistress, a white female, was her educator as well. Therefore, this showed me that even she saw the value of it for a young African American girl, which may come off as something that would be surprising at the time. This made a lasting impression on me when looking at it, and when I began to look at other parts of the exhibit.

The second piece in the exhibit, *Demonstration of Solidarity* demonstrates people acting on the risks they are willing to take to fight for their education. They are on strike for civil rights, which includes the right to have an education. I believe I may have been placed next in the exhibit as it demonstrates another, more visible risk of the lengths people will go through to fight for an education and prove how much they value it. Although there is no given date with the photo, you can tell it was taken when civil rights were not available to everyone, and the black and white of the photo proves this as well. This is a good starting point to show what the situation was like when there was only education available to white Americans through a visible photograph, rather than only having the words of the play script to explain the situation. The words and the photograph worked well together to explain what it was like at the time for Black Americans without a legal education.

The rest of the exhibit seems to go in chronological order which makes sense because of the type of exhibit with the purpose of demonstrating the changes of education. It is meant to show a change over time and compare the level of education availability from the time without civil rights and with slavery to present day America, known as the home of the free. The first piece in this order, a black and white plain-looking government document, is a report of the Board of Education for people that are free in the year 1864. I believe this was put in the exhibit because of the background knowledge and foundation it provides to its viewers. This was especially helpful to me because I was not completely knowledgeable about what education rights were like at the time. The past pieces of the exhibit demonstrate the passion they have in an education and their fight for it. But, they do not show the consequences they would have if they were to be caught breaking the law for an education or what the law exactly was. That is why this piece is very helpful in accomplishing this. The government document gives a perception of what the laws pertaining to education availability were like and how strict they were at the time, which made it possible for me to compare it to what the laws are currently like.

This next black and white photograph, *Colored school at Alexandria Va. 1864 taught by Harriet Jacobs & daughter agents of New York Friends*, was taken a short time after education became legal for everyone. I was able to visualize the transition from a time when there was no education for American Americans to when schools became available to them, just by looking at the photograph. I imagined how popular schools became for Black Americans once they were made available, because there are many people outside of the school. Once again, this demonstrated to me how much education has been valued, because of how eager they were to jump at an opportunity to an education.

*African American women on graduation day at Howard University* added to the exhibit to show me the success of African American women when given the opportunity to an education. These women at their college graduation demonstrate how ridiculous it was to have kept them and many others from the right to an education for so long. The photograph also proves how far they have come in history. It is interesting to note the change in the progression of education and I thought this photo of black women who have graduated did well in capturing this.

The transition to this century appeared seamless as it connected so effortlessly with the rest of the exhibit. The next work presented is a video of President Barack Obama explaining his plan to expand higher education availability to everyone, no matter their income. This shifts the exhibit to explaining how education is currently limited based on costs, as all races have the same right to an education. The video proves that education availability is still changing, but based on different things. I thought the video was the perfect way to demonstrate why education should be even more available than it already is, and this had a big impression on me. The passion in Obama's speech fighting for free community college to all citizens parallels the passion seen in past works of the exhibit of those fighting for their right to an education. President Obama explains that education is a right not a privilege, which is the same reason that African Americans fought for the right to an education in the past. The main difference is that it is clear racism should not have existed in the past, but not everyone believes a free higher education should exist due to economic reasons currently.

At this point, the whole exhibit made sense to me, I now had a grasp about how education availability in the past and present are connected in unexpected ways. The next piece to demonstrate this is also a video, made 6 years later to show a difference in desire for more education availability is just several years. The video showed how Senator Bernie Sanders

wanted to take it a step farther than President Obama's plan. He believed that public universities should be free as well. Having this happen so recently I can attest that his plan is more controversial, but still popular among many people, especially those associated with the democratic political party. I enjoyed seeing a part of the exhibit that I was familiar with to make the entire exhibit appear more relatable to me and relevant today. This video contributed to the exhibit as to showcase how even today, many years after the civil rights era, there are still advancements being made to make education more readily accessible to everyone to be as fair as possible, and this is crucial to how the exhibit has been presented.

It is also important however to note that not everyone is on board with the idea of a free college education. This is something that came across my mind as going through the exhibit. As I was not completely familiar with the reasons arguing both sides, this video gave me that information. Some argue that they paid their own tuition so that should not have to pay for everyone else's through increased taxes as well. This video of a Fox Business television broadcast is an example of a reporter disagreeing with this plan for free higher education. He criticizes a student's opinion as she believes students should have their college loans paid for and free public universities free. His argument is that taxes are high enough, they should not be raised more. He also believes that if only the 1% of people with the highest incomes are taxed, it still will not be enough to cover the loans and tuitions of all Americans wanting to attend a public university. The student disagrees with this, and although they both argue their points, they are unable to come to a consensus in the end. This is also important to note for the exhibit as you can notice that throughout time, there has always been a disagreement on how available education should be. In the past, many opposed the equal opportunity of education due to racism and slavery. Slave owners did not want their slaves to have an education and felt that they should

be able to control this as well as have control over them. Currently, everyone has civil rights to make their own decisions and specifically a right to an education. But, since there are many that simply do not have the money to attend college, students continue to fight for free tuition. Those opposed to this idea simply do not think that other people should have to pay for the tuition of others, and that elementary through high school education is sufficient to have a career. It is likely that there will always be a push for more education and some opposed to it as well.

You can tell that this exhibit was carefully planned out. It is an interesting concept to be able to compare the limited education due to racist laws and a lack of civil rights in the 1800s to present day with economic issues but still a push for free education. I walked out of this exhibit with a deep appreciation for the education I am able to have currently.