

People yelling and talking animatedly, the cloying scent of perfume and cologne acting as tear gas, narrow halls filled with students pushing through the funnel. The first bell rings, and the zoo is in session. Middle school should have prepared me for the first day of freshman year... However, my parents had insisted on sheltering me by homeschooling until high school. When I was younger, I day dreamed of being an artist or teacher, my early dreams slowly faded as most of the girls I met wore long skirts and dreamed of being housewives. My older siblings hadn't even attended public high school, but when my parents decided to separate, I began to struggle academically, even failing Algebra I in 8th grade. With divorce on the horizon, my parents were forced to send me to Delta High School.

When I enrolled in Algebra I at DHS, my failure from 8th grade worried me, and the teacher, Mr. Klein, intensified my concerns by announcing that students who couldn't graph a line by the end a semester would receive an F. I tried to talk my parents into letting me switch to Pre-Algebra, but they refused. Buckling down, I surprised myself with an A at the end of the semester. By the end of the year, Mr. Klein began encouraging me to enroll in Algebra II and Geometry my sophomore year. Slowly, I began to emerge from my chrysalis of low expectations, even researching increasingly more difficult careers and colleges. Mr. Klein continued to challenge me, culminating in my enrollment in AP Calculus and Physics this year.

While I began to challenge myself academically, I still saw the world through my parents eyes. Rather than researching and developing my own opinions, I accepted their biases as my own. My sophomore and junior year, I took history from Mr. Schmidt, who focused his efforts on sharing his ethics and political views rather than teaching students to formulate their own opinions. Frustrated, I transferred to Mr. Smith's World History class. His teaching of unbiased political news regardless of opinion left me grasping to find a worldview that was constant, regardless of changes in political parties or times. Coming from a sheltered Christian home, I

was unprepared for such bold facts, but he taught students to analyze everything we were told, not just accepting what our elders taught us. No longer could I hold one constant opinion, it had to evolve along with the facts.

Homeschool gave me a good a base of education but entering public high school transformed my views, forcing me to evolve with my changes in circumstance. The competition between other students encouraged me to strive to be the best. I realized I could do anything I worked hard enough for. The sky was not the limit, but education was, and I wanted as much as I could obtain. I learned to develop my own views, rather than relying on other people's view of facts. As I apply to colleges, I am now looking for an institution that celebrates diversity and welcomes change. I hope to major in statistics so once I graduate I can bring awareness to social issues through the hard data behind them. High school pushed me to step out of the safety net my parents had given me, and challenge myself, and my opinions.