

*BRIDGE 5 - Narrative Focused Argumentative Essay*

*Donovan*

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*Integrative Seminar 2: Fashion*

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There was a boy that would always stay near the middle of his history class. He would sit near the front of the front but he didn't want to be called out for talking to someone next to him. Donovan was his name and he had a routine to follow each day. Getting out of bed little past his alarm, going to the bathroom to clean up and change him into his clothes. Checking his backpack to make sure that he isn't going to leave his homework behind.

The only thing, this is the day when he forgot his homework. And by the time he would realize this, he would already be an hour away from home. With Donovan's school being near midtown and him and his mom living two trains and a bus ride away, it was impossible for him to go back without being late. That's where his routine would become different from the people he would be around. Donovan had to leave his home at a time when he knew most of his classmates would be waking up. And within an hour of his commute, the people that would walk on his block by him were not the ones that would walk down 34th street.

Donovan, in comparison to his teacher, faculty, and the other students, was moving between two spaces. One space is familiar, it looks like him, and the stories that make this space are normal and shared comfortably. The other space is not, it was a loss of energy. Stories would need to be explained before they can be welcomed, and changed before being understood. It was more than just people not looking like him. This is how it feels to be a Black kid in an all-white school with all-white teachers. All the issues that come from this Environment would end once he comes to see your mom, and hot food on the stove. The only thing is that he still needs to commute again, and decide how he'll move within those two spaces.

Those spaces can feel like two worlds. In better words, a double consciousness, the internal conflict that comes with being a part of a community that has a part in everything, and everyone you'll interact with, as well as being a part of a community that has been historically oppressed to this day. To be both be Black and American is a constant balancing act, a battle to have a healthy grasp of one's identity, and the ability to put that identity away when you walk outside. This reality has remained the same since America's rough transition to seeing the Black body as equal. W.E.B. Du Bois in 1903 in his book *The Souls of Black Folk* said "*The Negro is a sort of the seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world,—a world which yields him no true self-consciousness but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world.*"<sup>1</sup>. The reality is that this is systematic, and is going to be like this for a long time, and there are dangers that come with it. In the form of physical and psychological violence starting when from youth. It starts with the people that have power over ideals, education, and warped imagery that's meant to represent your identity or lack thereof. School, media, and bias are the deciding factor of how a Black child is going to develop and move. And there is an issue that comes with both conformity and defiance.

Donavan still needs to give in his assignment. And knowing that this would be his second time forgetting his homework this week, he has to go back and get it. He has around five minutes until the next train to Canarsie is going to take him back home.

He's thinking that he doesn't need to worry about running into his mom to explain why he isn't in school, since she is at work. And then there's the map of his apartment that's grilled

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<sup>1</sup> Du Bois, W. E. B. *The Souls of Black Folk*. Chicago: A.C. McClurg & Co.; [Cambridge]: University Press John Wilson and Son, Cambridge, U.S.A., 1903; Bartleby.com, 1999.

in his head after retracting his night about a hundred times over. He's also thinking about what he's going to hear from Ms. Carter after missing her class and having another late assignment. It was around a week ago that he came to class without his homework, close to half their history class did the same, but that day Carter's arms lost there to swing, her stare was a thin needle and her arms were locked to the table by the time she was facing Donovan. With no exchange of words, the boy understood that he was going to hear something different from his classmates. Carter ends her change in performance by saying "I know that you don't want to see yourself fall behind the class Donovan, I'm not going to grade any more empty assignments." Despite that Donovan has been passing all the reviews and would once and while finish his work early. It would be common for him to not get recognition unless it's punitive. Not all teachers are like this, but the chance to be treated differently than his peers is only boosted by the expectations and personal views of someone that can't relate with him, or try to sympathize. They have no personal gain or need to support you. That's clear for anyone to see it. Carter will never have the need to outright target the few Black and latinx students that's in her class. Where voiding their voice casual by the start of 8:30 AM each weekday will do the same. *There was a study made by the American Psychological Association in 2016 that states that compared with white students, Black students are more likely to be suspended or expelled, less likely to be placed in gifted programs, and subject to lower expectations from their teachers.*<sup>2</sup> to be more specific *"Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Sean Nicholson-Crotty, PhD, at Indiana University, and colleagues found Black students were 54 percent less likely than white students to be recommended for gifted-education programs"* was gathered from there Journal

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<sup>2</sup> Weir, Kirsten. "Inequality at School." Monitor on Psychology, American Psychological Association, Nov. 2016, [www.apa.org/monitor/2016/11/cover-inequality-school](http://www.apa.org/monitor/2016/11/cover-inequality-school).

*of Educational Psychology*.<sup>3</sup> This is what makes the need to get his work to class different, versus other students. The risk is higher, and Donovan has been put into a position where he can change anything about it.

A little under an hour has passed since Donovan decides to go back to get his homework. As he expected his mom was gone, his work was on his kitchen table just like the picture in his head. It was in a purple plastic folder that still had the blue and yellow 2 pocket sticker on it, with his name written on it along with HW. Two trains and a bus ride past and Donovan is in front of his history class's door, and he has 5 minutes before the period is over. Once he catches his breath from the stairs and the sprint from the train station, he opens the door. All eyes are on him, he never felt this before, but none of the looks are positive. Carter ends the pause with the words.

"Donavan, I'm going to need to wait outside,"

Donavan is still by the door, with his goal to give Carter his work before they get the chance to talk.

"Ms.Carter I didn't want to be late, lemme talk to for second"

"Well, I'm talking to my class, and what I need from you is to not disturb my class with your issue."

"But can I — "

"I'm not going to do that Donavan"

Donavan is able to pick up on her tone again. Frustrated he continues talking

"Lemme finish, I didn't finish. Can I leave my home— "

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<sup>3</sup> Sean Nicholson-Crotty, Jason A Grissom, Jill Nicholson-Crotty, Christopher Redding, Disentangling the Causal Mechanisms of Representative Bureaucracy: Evidence From Assignment of Students to Gifted Programs, *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, Volume 26, Issue 4, October 2016, Pages 745–757

“Wait outside”

“I’m not disturbing a class that has already finished, you just don’t want to talk to me.”

“Donavan, I’m not dealing with you yelling at me. The only person you're going to take is the dean. Go to room 506”

Donavan understands that he’s not going to win from talking, so he closes his mouth and walks down his floor’s hallway. He's in a situation where he would need to win a fight that he didn’t attend to be in. Despite that, he was pushed out of his class. Embarrassed, without answers on what he has done wrong, or given the space to voice his perspective. Now he’s going to need to face that again with his dean. This is the first time that Donvan is going to meet the Dean face to face. And only time that students need to talk to the dean is if they are about to be suspended or that in the honorall. Report cards coming a month from now and he just got in an argument with his teacher. *In 2017 Urban youth collaborative and The Center for Popular Democracy, two New York based organizations made reports that show the divide in disciplinary actions in public school. It found that Black and Latinx youth make up 92 percent of all students arrested and 91.7 percent of students given summonses, far out of proportion to their presence in the school population, which is 67.1 percent. The report continues with data showing that Black students were 4 times more likely to be suspended, and a student is more likely to be arrested if they have been suspended<sup>4</sup>, but the chances to be removed from his school and it becoming a pattern would put students like donovan in either 2 places. One where suspensions continue and the issues would grow and lead to them being arrested.*

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<sup>4</sup> The Center for Popular Democracy, and The Urban Youth Collaborative. THE \$746 MILLION A YEAR SCHOOL-TOPRISON PIPELINE. 1st ed., vol. 1 1, ser. 1, The Center for Popular Democracy, 2017. <https://populardemocracy.org/sites/default/files/Executive%20Summary.pdf>

Where it's no longer a teacher but a police officer being the one to irvine. Second is that the student's relationship with the teachers and staff around them will be based on fear, and any issues that would come up in their life would be theirs alone to manage, and unhealthy practices will become a habit and would find themselves a place outside of school.

506 is in front of Donovan, he isn't in a haste to push the door open. He knows what he's going to see once he decides to pull away and all the stakes once he enters the dean's office. He may not be able to put this into words but he knows what happens to boys like him in moments like this. Donovan finishes his pause and proceeds to open the door. Mr. Evans was by his desk on his computer, it looks lived in. There are stacks of papers that have been pushed to the right of his desk, while the other has a collection of nick nacks that have the school's baseball team on them and a photo of him and his family. With that there's 2 chairs that are in front of him.

"Hello, I'm going to guess that you are the student from Ms.Carter history class." Was the first thing that Evans said once he made eye contact with Donovan.

"Well, I'm not going to get the chance to talk to you if you have one foot in the door, grab a seat."

And Evans is right, you can really have a conversation face to face 6 feet apart. Donovan didn't give a response to either of his lines, in the fear of getting another response like Carter. He isn't able to get a clear read on Evans. His attention is set on Donovan, his face is tinted with a smile and there is a bounce behind his words, but his voice, his size, and that fact they're talking because of a heated argument with the teacher conflicts with his body language that he has to offer.

The boy went to take a seat, and went to put down the backpack that he had with him.

“Before I say what I have to say I'm going to need to figure out some things, so I'm asking you some things. Okay?”

Donavan having trouble keeping eye contact, but he replies

“Okay.”

“What's your name?”

“Donavan.”

“What's your last name?”

“Samuels”

Evans took a pause on his computer, then went back to talk.

“Well Mr.Samuels, it's good to meet you, I'm asking you another one. Is that Okay?”

“That Okay.”

“What do you think is the reason that we are talking right now?”

“— Well. I came to class really late, and I wanted to give in my homework before my next class started. Ms.Carter didn't want to do that, and told me that I need to talk to you. I said something that got her upset, so she sent me to your office”

“Alright, thanks for being honest but do you feel that you're leaving anything out?”

“No,”

“She told me that you disrespected her in the middle of her lesson, and if you coming to me now then you've walk the whole for an a half an hour.”

Donavan isn't angry, and he feels that there isn't any space to be sad. He is just exhausted that he may be pushed out again.

“What class do you have right now?”



“ELA.”

“In that class, have y'all read Yes Ma'am?”

“No we're reading a book called The Outsiders, that's all we do in the class.”

“You should read it. It's a short story about Black woman who had her purse snatched by a boy. The boy wasn't successful and got overpowered by the woman. The woman took the boy home and asked him questions on why he wanted to steal her purse. Right now I see you as that thief. I see you as a boy that feels that he deserves something that he can't have. Am I true?”

Donvan is shaky with his word.

“I just wanted to turn in my work, I could've come on time but I forgot it at home and I live in Brooklyn. If I didn't bring it in she could've, I mean will fail me. I didn't want that feeling again, or to disappoint my mom when report cards will come. I wanted to just — I wanted to feel like I'm supposed to be there, and it doesn't feel like it. You don't believe me. You don't believe that I didn't do anything wrong.”

“I do, because Carter called me less than a minute before you came here. And you should be on honorall with your average. So you have no reason to think what you do. I want you to know that.”

“Alright”

“In the story I was talking about, there's this part where the woman said *“I was young once and I wanted things I could not get.”* and soon after said *“You thought I was going to say but, didn't you? You thought I was going to say, but I didn't snatch people's pocketbooks. Well, I*

*wasn't going to say that.*<sup>5</sup> I know what you're feeling. I was in your place once, there's work that's going to be done to prevent what your feeling to happen again."

"How's that going to happen?"

"We'll have to talk to Carter and find out the misunderstanding. On why she couldn't take your work and why you haven't been nominated for honor roll. Since she's your homeroom teacher too."

"Thank You, there are other other students that I think feel the same in my class."

"Well, I'm going to focus on you first, okay."

"Okay."

"I have another question. What was your assignment for her class?"

"That assignment was to bring something from your history that's unique to you and I brought a Poem and a photo of my family when I was a baby. When reading our text books, I haven't seen anything that looks like this photo."

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<sup>5</sup> Hughes, Langston. "Thank You, Ma'am." *Impact Fifty Short Stories*. Fannie Safier. New York : Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1986