

## **Writing Assignment Two: Personal Narrative**

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## **Unsure Horizons**

I graduated from Potomac Senior High School on June 4<sup>th</sup>, 2019, with a 2.8 GPA, and few accomplishments. My mother asked me why some students had cords on their necks and why some students like me lacked such distinction. I was too embarrassed to ask that question, it is fair to say my graduation left more to be desired. This was a sentiment that was shared amongst the member of my family, and it led to a loss of belief in my intelligence and my work rate. It only got worse when my older sister dropped out of Virginia State University. Hence due to my performance and this unforeseen circumstance, my father and my uncle told me to go through the military route. I have never been a fan of the military, but they pay for my school, so I felt like I had no choice. However, I did still want to go to school, and hence I found a middle ground by joining an ROTC scholarship program at Old Dominion University. That summer I had to feign my happiness with my decision to potentially head into the Navy after college while my father and my uncle praised me for that decision and claimed I was finally "maturing," and making the next step in my life. With each passing day in the summer, I look at the date of August 21<sup>st</sup>, 2019, in pure unadulterated fear until the day finally came. A sense of optimism was in the air when my parents dropped me off at school. ROTC college students came two days early hence when I entered my dorm that optimism had turned back into anxiety and loneliness. It is then that I finally realized that I should be in control of my future. I agreed that I should mature and make the next step but that will be done on my watch, rather than theirs.

## **The Burning Phoenix**

I decided to give the ROTC Naval scholarship a shot, however, I decided to quit the moment I found something unfavorable to me. ROTC students were permitted to wake up at 5 am and head to Constant Hall, approximately a five-minute walk from the dorm I was located at. After turning in our medical work, they announce that in response to the scholarship students must serve in the Navy for six years after graduation and will be shipped anywhere on the planet. It took only less than an hour for me to hear something I did not like, that was enough for me to back out of the Naval ROTC scholarship but perhaps at that point I lacked the courage and gall to go against the wishes of my uncle and my father, so I continued. After this two-hour meeting, they drove students to the Hampton Naval Base and informed us that for the next week we will be at boot camp. Normally, I would not mind as I love physical activity but the emotional and physical toil of boot camp on a boy whose heart is not fully all in will probably break him, and it did. I believe it to be one of the worst days of my life but not because of how hard boot camp was but the immense guilt and failure I felt at the end of it. We arrived at the Hampton Naval Base around 8 am and after being screamed for an hour in the rise of the sun. We were told to drop our belongings in the mud and a rundown of how the first day will go was announced. I just wanted to go home, I thought to myself "why am I suffering for my father's dreams, or perhaps his fears." As I thought this, the Gunnar Sergeant called me out and asked for my name to which I responded "Timothy – Timothy Attah," then he exclaimed, "A foreigner, I figured you did not understand English boy." When these foolish words hit my ear, my mouth soured and my face

scoured, the Gunnar Sergeant as well as everyone in the yard that day felt the flash of my anger grow as my eyes fixated on his eyes. "I was born in the United States of America, in the nation's capital," he yelled "Gunnar Sergeant! That is what you are supposed to say after every sentence you say to me." I kept my mouth shut, I refused to extend grace to a bigot whether he was my superior or not. This act may have been seen as noble in the normal world but in the military, it was a big taboo. This act put a target on my back and hence every Sergeant, Midshipman, and Naval Officer took their liberties in giving me a hard time. After that exchange, we were taken into a room to finally sign the contract to finally sign the next ten years of our lives away in the U.S Navy (4 years of service while attending college + 6 active duty). Everybody signed their contract, only me and two women hesitated to put pen to paper. I ended up not signing at all, I was not willing to give away the next ten years of my life for something I did not want to do. However, it was a shot to my masculinity, and I recalled my failures in high school that led me here to begin with so with tears welling up in my eyes I told them no and I left. A Naval Officer stopped me and saw my inner turmoil, the woman asked for my story, and I told her, through her eyes, I can see she cared. It felt good, for the first time since I graduated high school somebody cared for what I had to say. She told me her daughter had gone through the same I am going through, and it caused a rift in their relationship. I felt the emotions behind her words when she said, "I wish I hadn't pushed her so hard," these words brought tears to both of our eyes. After that I called my parents and told them I was not going through with this, my mother told me she always believed in me. She never wanted me to go to the Navy, you always did well with school, and I just thought you got lazy but one day you will find your place again. Perhaps it was a day full of shock, my mother was the last person I expected sympathy from but alas here she was and

that is all I needed to face my uncle and my father. I told both and they were angry at me so I made a promise to myself that I will graduate college with the highest honor. I refused to speak to my uncle and my father for the entire first semester, so I decided on Cyber Security that night. As I created a plan that will allow me to pay for my school and never rely on my family or anyone ever again. Cyber Security was the fastest growing industry and the industry that will allow me to achieve my goals. After a day such as that, cyber security was the easiest choice as my plan to prove the whole world wrong through success began and I arose like a burning phoenix from the ashes of failure.

### **The Fruits of Labor**

As of writing this essay, I am approaching my final semester with a 3.86 GPA. I am currently studying to attain the Security+ certification and I ended up getting an academic scholarship in my sophomore that allows me to pay for school without the help of my parents. I never looked back on the military until this day, at the time I felt horrible but now I know that day was necessary for my growth. If that never happened, I would not have had such conviction over these past four years to keep going after time when naturally I would have given up. I am now reaping from the seeds I sowed on the worst day in my life, today I am enjoying the fruits of my labor.

