

A Birth of Ruminations

By Stephanie Lee

In May of 2012, I wrote an essay about the goals of a young person aspiring to teach and open a learning center for children. Throughout the course of the Master of Arts in Education (MAED) program at Michigan State University, I have learned about learning and thus learned to learn about myself. Much of what I studied in the courses focused on decision-making, more specifically the adult experience of making decisions and how those decisions impact the self, the workplace, and/or the related cohort. In a similar vein to the adult career development trajectory, it is evident that the stages of one's life can only be reflected upon through the lens of the past.

In truth, my driving factors for studying education have changed for the better. I initially wanted to teach children in a private learning center for opportunity and income. However, I am now finishing the program with a sincere desire to analyze the adult learning experience and how adults end up where they are. Through conversations with friends, family members, temporary acquaintances, and complete strangers, I have learned that people know things and individuals, if willing, all have stories to tell. My thinking about education and learning is no longer about children, but is now focused on adults. What we, as adults, do is a result of a series of decisions we made at certain points in our lives. Even through the analysis of a picture book did that become apparent—the Caldecott Award winner explained that she finally felt ready to illustrate. There are stages, or phases, that shape and influence adults toward different routes. Where we meet, intersect, or never pass is fascinating if not captivating.

Reflection, in all its beauty, is how I have spent the greater part of the past two years. In addition to the MAED courses, I enrolled in dance and yoga classes so that I could learn to connect my mind and body. Although both heavily relied on full-length mirrors, it was yoga that really changed how I used my mind to control my muscles. With this reflective mental strength, I felt that each thoughtful exercise helped to refine my thoughts and therefore my behavior and choices.

Having arrived at these realizations, I now strive for meaningful experiences in all aspects and opportunities of learning experiences professionally and personally as well as the gray areas betwixt and between. Earlier this year, I gave birth to a baby girl and abruptly embarked on a career in motherhood. Navigating the learning spaces of a newborn is puzzling, but my dedication to aid and help my little baby seems merely a natural extension of my curious mind. With less time for leisure reading, I challenge myself to seek, recognize, and reflect on meaningful experiences every other day in order to identify and extrapolate the very essence of human development of both mind and body. Even still, I am still learning.