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# *Writer's Statement for "Changing Scenes: The Rise and Success of Diversity on Broadway"*

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I have always been involved in the world of theater and the performing arts from the time I was in preschool. It's been a huge part of my life all through my childhood, and it was only natural that I follow that passion into college, choosing to study stage management. So, when tasked with writing an argumentative research paper focused on a topic related to my major, I was excited to jump in head first—but, initially, I had no idea what to write about. I struggled with narrowing down a topic, but I knew that I wanted to write about something close to my heart, specifically diversity in the theater. The initial prompt was open-ended, asking us to research our topic in a general sense before making a decision on the specifics of our paper, a practice that was at first counterintuitive to me, but one that I decided to leap into as gracefully as I could. So, after some poking around on the internet and looking at the discussions happening in various theater circles, it was clear that examining the perception of "diversity" and the steps being taken to increase it on Broadway was a place to start. One of the first obstacles I had to face was defining exactly what constituted "diversity"—was it solely racial? Did it include gender and sexuality? Religious diversity? And, even more specifically, which of these elements was best to focus on in my paper? Furthermore, once I knew what exactly I was trying to talk about, what was the point I was trying to make about it? It was wonderful to get to work with my professor, Dr. Guenzel, especially in the early stages of my paper. I struggled a lot with constructing what I felt was a coherent and strong argument from my collected research, and he was able to assist me in connecting the dots and identifying what exactly I wanted to convey. After many different stages of outlining, combined with several versions of a digital paper trail and annotated bibliography, I had defined more or less the direction I was traveling, and I was ready to see it through to the end.

The number one thing that I walked away from this process with was the importance of these many different paths and hurdles. In short, embracing the many stages that go into creating a paper, as well as the idea that texts are ever-developing. Through the creation of the digital paper trail, and the broad approach we were asked to take towards the initial development of the research paper, I had to adapt to the sensation of not knowing exactly where my final product was headed until I got there. While this was uncomfortable and frustrating at first, I quickly grew to have an appreciation to this kind of approach, starting with just research and building from there. The addition of the research proposal and the research dossier to the process added another level of deeper thinking and developing that I hadn't been previously accustomed to. I learned to be a lot more flexible in my approach, and ultimately I think I was able to take away a deeper understanding of what goes into an argument, and how I can best utilize different sources to create the message I want to convey.

One of the other aspects of this process that I hadn't ever had a real appreciation for before was the process of peer review. As this paper developed through my ENC 1102 course, I had a pool of peer reviewers to pull feedback from, and I was tasked with reviewing their papers as well. I was able to help train myself to recognize higher-order concerns both in my own paper and in others, using the task of reviewing the work of others to hone my own tactics and writing approach. The development of my paper from the first draft to the final was greatly influenced by the feedback that I received. I have always liked to have at least one other pair of eyes look over my work before submitting it, whether it be for class or a professional email or even just a Facebook post, and so the experience and input that I gained from the peer review process was beyond influential to my final product.

At the end of the day, my final paper grew in a way similar to Legos—everything was constantly being built upon, piece by piece, coming together to create something greater than before. Taking my variety of sources, ranging from popular news publications chatting about Broadway productions to academic journals, and organizing them into a strong and cohesive argument may have been a challenge, but I was passionate in my topic and it was fascinating to take a different approach towards a subject that I have always been surrounded by. It was incredibly satisfying to have produced such a complete and thorough piece, and I am so excited to be able to contribute something substantial to the greater conversation on this important matter. There are so many ways we can increase diversity, and so many reasons that it should be a focus, but the first step is to acknowledge it, and then we must choose to pursue it.