

First-Year Writing Seminar: The Podcast, Season 2

Episode Transcript: Tobi (Destiny) Swearingen on “Demonstrating Empathy and Respect for Difference”

I Believe in Compassion, Chance, and Creating Room at the Family Table

Hello and welcome to another “I Believe Podcast”, my name is Destiny Swearingen but my friends call me Tobi. I will be the special guest for today's podcast as well as your host! I am here to state my I believe statement and story. It's not much of a story, nothing with a mesmerizing or life changing ending, but it's a snippet of mine. A story that I learned from, and live by. I hope you enjoy and also learn, even just a snippet.

I believe in many things. But for this podcast I want to focus on my belief in chances and when and who to take them on, that they can change everything we see in the world and in ourselves, and opening up a spot for them. I believe in taking different perspectives in all aspects of a life, aside from my own and using our empathy and respect for people in those aspects that affect more than myself.

In my life I felt out of control, nothing was of my doing. What the world said went. When I was younger I grew angry at this notion, so angry I refused to see others' reasons or circumstances with the excuse “where's my justice? I deserve love too” growing to even hate my siblings for a long time, I lacked that empathy. Without it, I found myself in a form of despair and heartbreak, as well as causing others to feel similar, I attacked their differences or traumas. In a story I felt most victimized I became the villain. In time this built a wall neither side can see over.

From the very beginning of my life nothing was in my control, if anything my world was chaos. Being the eldest of my mother's 7 children I watched and understood before most of my siblings stood. Once we were relieved from foster care and from my mother I was old enough to see the contrast between me and my siblings but not old enough to avoid jealousy and envy for my siblings when even they too were too young to control anything.

I let this anger fester and grow a wall between my siblings, who I rarely got the gift to see for months on end. I was angry they had siblings with them, I was angry they had a bigger family, angry they had more money, angry people pitted them, angry about the life they had that I didn't. I was selfish, lacking empathy or involvement in my love for them. It wasn't until I was able to hold my baby sister for the first time that I realized I was naively blind. I wasn't listening or even trying to understand what was truly at work. That they must hurt as well regardless of what they had compared to me. As I held her, already almost walking before I was able to see her, I saw the heartache from my little brothers. They missed me and her without even needing to really know her or me. They had family, yes, but there were pieces missing, causing a cavity to grow. Being the oldest I unknowing let that cavity grow by never involving myself or reminding myself of compassion and acceptance of them. For the first time I felt their pain on an honest level.

This is, in a way, how I've understood society. We are too busy acknowledging what we don't have or what we want fixed in regards to our own needs. So much so it creates these cavities in our biases and respect or empathy for others. With this people begin cutting themselves off from one another, refusing to accept and have compassion for those less or more fortunate than ourselves. Emphasizing differences and outwardly attacking those differences. That was until I gave my heart a chance to understand. To change, I needed to learn to love instead of waiting around for that love. I took the chance, opened my mind to perspective on more than my own life.

What happened to me was not fair or just. I still wish for justice and empathy, but even in me deserving such things I mustn't let it cloud my respect and empathy for others more or less fortunate than I. In some cases accepting others and eliminating those stereotypes or jealousies may actually give someone the path to healing and love from the world they so seek. Take chances on people. Learn their name or story. Pass along a smile, stay open minded. Avoid being judgmental and biased. Understand your pains and use that to want to understand others. Respect those around you regardless or outward characteristics.

I believe in chances and when and who to take them on, that they can change everything we see in the world and in ourselves, opening up a spot for them. I believe in taking different perspectives in all aspects of a life, aside from my own. I wish to see others' lives and understand their pain and care for them and accept them regardless of differences or material things, respect them and maybe even fall in love with their differences. Listen to their story before I assume or place mine above their own. In the end we are all like brothers and sisters, all with different stories and pains. From the color of our skin to even our preferred dessert we are unique and all deserve a spot at the family table. To be heard, to be understood, to be respected, and to be accepted. This, I believe.

Attributions

I used the music "Doghouse" "Alley" and "The Green Room" Provided by the app Anchor