

First-Year Writing Seminar: The Podcast, Season 3

Episode Transcript: Carolyn Huff on “Cultivating Self-Awareness and Integrity”

Good morning and welcome back to another episode of “This I Believe,” podcast. Here on this podcast, we believe that everyone has a story. We’ve heard from everyone ranging from A-list celebrities to just ordinary people like you and me. Today, we are hosting a college student all the way from Nevada Missouri. She is a freshman at Cottey College and she is here today to talk about Cottey’s belief in global awareness. She has a great take on it and I can’t wait to hear what she has to say. Take it away Carolyn!

Hello! Thank you for having me on your podcast! I’ve learned a lot in the few short months I’ve been attending Cottey College, and I can’t wait to share it with you! Cottey College is an all-women's college and they take education very seriously there. All freshmen are required to take a First Year Writing Seminar class and we are currently learning about the four dimensions of global awareness. I quickly decided that dimension one, Cultivating Self-Awareness and Integrity, was far more important than the others. I believe that dimension one is the most important because it is not something someone can give to you, and once you have it, it can’t be taken away. You as a person, have to make the conscious decision to have integrity and self-awareness, and that is what makes the character traits so special. In a world like the one we live in today, it can be hard to find these traits in strangers. I have brought with me today a couple of stories to help articulate what dimension one truly means to me.

[Music]

My first story takes place during my Sophomore year of high school.

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I’ve always been a speech and debate kid, well more speech than debate but I made it work. An important thing to note was that I was naturally good at it. One entry that I was specifically good at was Radio Speaking. I know it sounds weird, but 24 hours before the tournament, the contestants had to write a 5-minute long spiel about important news events and perform it pretending to be radio broadcasters. I remember mine clearly, it always began, “This is Carolyn kickin’ it here for you 97.6 The Classics. Things are getting heated here in the news world, so without further ado let’s get started!” This was a sure-winning intro. One weekend, I went to a tournament and got nearly all perfect scores, but apparently, they still weren’t good enough to break me into the top seven that would compete for the trophies. I talked to all the contestants as they waited to compete the last time, and mentioned how tired I was from staying up all night writing and perfecting my piece. A boy waiting in line said, “Really, you write yours? My coach wrote mine.” At that moment I was enraged. That, by MSHSAA state speech and debate rules, was illegal. My coach had earlier informed me that I was one contestant away from making it to the finals. I was baffled and offended that he had not put in the hard work and labored over his piece as I had. I envied his neat piece of paper with the plagiarized words that

he was pretending were his own. HE was the reason that I didn't get to compete for a trophy. That boy went on to win first place, but to me, it didn't matter. He wasn't performing the first dimension of global awareness when he performed that piece, and although he may have won, he didn't have anything to be proud of. As for me? Although I didn't even get to the final round, I was still proud that I had worked hard for it and shown self-awareness and integrity in my writing. Without showing the first dimension through your work, I learned there is nothing to be proud of.

[Music]

I was so frustrated that he cheated and was rewarded for it. I didn't know it then because honestly, I didn't know much back then, but he showed me that I would rather be honest and risk not winning, then cheat and have a trophy I don't deserve. It was a hard experience for me, but it was humbling. I believe in the first dimension, and that experience showed me how important it is to follow it. Nothing is more important than having self-awareness and integrity.

[Pause]

The next story I want to share with you is a story that I hold dear to my heart, and it all began my freshman year.

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Since my first year of ag classes, all I'd ever dreamt of was being FFA President. I became an FFA officer for the next two years and absorbed all of the knowledge that I needed to be the best president my chapter had ever seen. Everyone assumed I would get the presidency and even the advisors had taken special care to ensure that I would know what I was doing when I got elected. I walked into my Chapter interview room and gave the best interview I had ever given, and by Senior year, I was pretty good at interviewing. I had never felt so confident in my life. Once Monday rolled around, the officer slate was published. I had not received President, not even Vice President.

[Short Pause]

I was absolutely crushed. What was worse was that a girl that I had had a serious falling out with had gotten a higher office than I had. I cried the rest of the day, and when one of the teachers asked me how the interviews went, I cried even harder. Finally, one of the seniors let me in on a big secret. The girl that I didn't get along with had talked about me in the interview room. She drug my name through the mud and that is why the judges didn't think I was fit for President, funnily enough, it backfired and she didn't get the presidency either. After having some time to think, I realized that I possessed a character trait that that girl did not. I had integrity and self-awareness. I realized that I did not need to drag someone else's name through the mud to make myself look better; honestly, I hadn't even considered doing so.

[Music]

Holding the first dimension close to your character is SO important. I never said anything about what she did because I knew it wasn't worth it. Complaining wouldn't change the outcome, and I didn't want to hurt my two best friends that were awarded the President and Vice Presidents spot. My senior year was a long one because I had to live knowing I didn't get the presidency, but I stayed true to dimension one. I helped the new president every time he needed it, not belittling him because he was new to it, but nurturing him the same way I had been. This story often calls for a time of self-reflection. I am proud of how I handled the situation. I didn't cheat in the interview room, and looking back I don't regret not doing so. Sometimes it is not about what you do in the heat of the moment, it's how you react once you've been burned. I reacted with integrity and self-awareness and honored dimension one.

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These two stories I have shared with you today have helped shape me in different ways. That boy from the speech and debate tournament made me realize that there is no honor in winning if you can't do it fairly and with integrity. It made me realize the importance of honesty, whether that be over a silly speech and debate tournament or a serious college paper. Honesty is something that should not be taken lightly. My second story shows how your decisions affect other people. That girl did not have any self-awareness when she talked about me in that interview room, and she didn't feel her lack of integrity when she ruined my chances of being my FFA chapter president. I'm proud of how I handled these situations and because of stories like these, I believe the first dimension of global awareness will always be the most important. If you remember nothing else from this podcast today, remember that self-awareness and integrity are not things someone can give to you. You have to cultivate them and learn the traits on your own, but once you have them, nothing is holding you back.

Until next week, this is Carolyn Huff signing out.

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