

## The Importance of Diverse Perspectives

I remember when my counselor told me that colleges would not accept me if I wrote an essay about being gay. I remember how helpless I felt when my disability accommodations application was rejected by the SAT board. And I remember kids coming to the LGBTQ+ club that I ran in high school, crying as they received validation from a supportive community for the first time. I remember the pure elation on their faces when we did what felt like the impossible, succeeding in our campaign to establish gender-neutral bathrooms in our Midwest high school. And I remember how absolutely crushed we were when the ban on transgender bathrooms was implemented not two years later.

Being part of a minority group is a lot like learning to dance, taking one step forward and two steps back. Just when we feel like we have accomplished something, the country takes a step backward, erasing our work in the process. I was devastated to learn about Bill 610, which will abolish invaluable protections for disabled, homeless, and Native American students that have been gained over decades of struggle. I thought of the kids at the LGBTQ+ homeless shelter I volunteered with and how they must feel, knowing they are not welcome in public. I thought of my fellow disabled and special education peers whose support will be taken out from under them. To be told that your presence is not wanted, that you do not even deserve an education, is a crippling blow to your identity and sense of self-worth. We struggle so hard to gain ground, knowing that at any time it can be stolen back in an instant. It disheartens us to the point of wanting to give up and accept that this is truly “just the way things are.” But this illusion only seemed convincing because I had not yet been awakened to multiple narratives of the story.

Before I came to Seattle University, I had never been exposed to a liberal arts education. Learning for the first time in classrooms where queer and feminist perspectives were considered

valid and valuable completely changed my worldview. It made me see the oppression of minority groups and the erasure of their rights in an entirely new light, not as a fixed reality but as something to be analyzed critically and challenged. While I once felt powerless, I now have the rhetorical tools necessary to make my voice heard.

Even as our rights are being wrestled out from our hands, calloused from trying to hold on so tightly, I still feel hope. I feel it in the incredibly empowering discussions we have in class, in our community engagement workshops and phone calls to our legislators. As liberal arts students, it is our responsibility to build our society and culture around open-minded diversity. Being able to think critically about the world has opened my eyes to how I can engage with my community in achieving educational equity and regaining our deserved and hard-earned rights.