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ENG 101 -- Composition I

Essay #1 -- Reading a Personal Essay

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Keeping Your Identity in Taneisha Grant's "To Speak Patois"

Personal essays are stories written from the writer's perspective. They tell a story or experience that the writer went through at a certain time of their life. In the personal essay, "To Speak Patois" by Taneisha Grant, the author speaks about an experience that many of her readers might have been able to resonate with. However, while personal essays can be good for connecting to others, they can also be used to spread false information and experiences.

In this personal narrative, Taneisha Grant does not feel challenged in her country, her parents are moving to New York City to provide a better educational opportunity for her family. Grant felt that her homeland didn't have enough challenges for her so in moving she found the challenges she wanted but she felt as if she abandoned her country and her culture. The author says, "I feel a deep-rooted guilt for leaving Jamaica. Though my family's situation was extenuating, I do feel as if I abandoned my country" (Grant 3). In this quote, the author feels that she left her culture, friends and even her identity that she had in her country. Towards the end of the essay, Grant realizes that she does not have to feel guilty about abandoning her country, cultures or identities because she can hold on to all of that through speaking Patois. The author writes, "I speak Patois because it serves as a verbal transport back to my homeland. I speak Patois to rekindle, 'shake up' the memory of other identities and realize that I am still those Taneishas, the one who lives in New York State and also the Taneisha who will be going

home” (Grant 3). In this quote, Grant is able to hold onto her identities and not feel as if she abandoned her home. This realization helps her live in her new environment and still be a part of her old one.

Similarly, my entire life has been surrounded by Caribbean and still is to this day. My family is from Trinidad and growing up, I never wanted to be American even though I was constantly reminded that I was. My older siblings were born and raised in our country and I always envied that, I wanted to be born in Trinidad as well. They had strong accents and I had more of a washed out Trinidadian accent, it felt as though I was a fraud. I was afraid that with going to school and talking to children my age that I will become more American and lose my Caribbean part of me. Just like Grant I was afraid that I would lose by culture or have that part changed, that I wouldn't be the same person anymore. One day I asked my Jamaican father, who has the strongest Jamaican accent since forever, why he never lost his accent even though he lived in America for so long and he told me that being Jamaican is something that will never ever change. That he doesn't try to change his accent for anyone, despite others not being it understand him at time, his accent is apart of who he is and where he is from. I realized then that being Caribbean will never nor will I try to change it for others. Once I hold on to my culture, accent and my traditions, I'll always stay close to who I am and what I know. Just like Grant I was afraid to lose my identity, but I can hold on to it by sticking to my culture as closely as possible.

In conclusion, based on these two stories, a personal narrative is commonly defined as a personal experience told in first person. It is fair to generalize from one's personal experience when making an argument because it's something that is factual, it actual happened. However, personal stories can be used to help spread lies or used for manipulation on social media, for

example. Definitely, personal narratives are a kind of writing that is good for connecting to the rest of the world. They are a kind of writing that readers can relate to. Advertising on TV often uses personal testimonials or stories to sell products. Also, telling personal stories in political speeches could allow a political leader to connect with their audience and persuade them to follow along, for good or for bad. Today TikTok influencers can get thousands or even millions of followers with their personal point of view. As I was able to relate to Grant's story of holding on to one's culture, but one can argue that after you move your environment changes who you are. So just like any source of information, it can be used to argue or debate. Personal narratives are powerful and appealing, and most of the time they are ways of effectively communicating. They give us a sense of someone else's life story and point of view.

(830 words)

Essay #1 – Reading a Personal Essay – Feedback

You may need to work on the following area(s) of your writing:

'Major' Grammar Errors:

- ! Subject / verb agreement (**AGR**) ✎ Fragments (**FRAG**)
 - ! Tense errors (**tense / verb error**)
 - ! Word order (**WO**) / confusing sentence structure ✎ Missing words (**mw**)
 - * * *
 - ! Run-on's (**RO**) ✎ Comma splices (**CS**)
 - ! (Weak) word choice (**WC**) / wrong word (**WW**) / awkward word choice (**awk**)
 - ! Singular / plural errors (**s/pl**) ✎ Missing articles (**mw/art**) ✎ Spelling (**sp**)
 - ! Essay structure: ✎ weak / missing thesis ✎ Paragraph development
- Using Quotes:*
- ! Signal phrases (he says / she says) ✎ Missing quotes from sources
 - ! Incorrect Cite Style (Lastname 100). ✎ **MISSING CITES for quotes / paraphrases
 - ! 'Lonely Quotes' (explain your quotes) (**This is a serious problem and must be fixed!)
 - ! Using transition words (*first of all, furthermore, next, finally, in conclusion, etc.*)
 - ! Other: _____

Grammar and Style:	
Argument / Development / Flow:	
Use of Quotes and Cites from Sources Using MLA Style:	
Overall Grade:	

 **A visit to the Writing Center (B-200) is recommended for some extra help to improve your writing.