Food Bank Reflection Paper

Volunteering at the food bank was an interesting experience. Because I did it with one of my friends, I really enjoyed myself and had a good time. While I was working, I did have time to reflect on the things I was seeing. There were lots of observations to be made. The first thing that caught my eye was the type of people that were volunteering with us. While there was a variety, most of the men and women helping out looked ragged and a bit rough. Some may have been assigned there for community service, but others seemed to be there just because they wanted to help. I, a very lucky girl born into a loving and financially stable family, would have never thought of taking time to volunteer for this organization just because I thought it was a worthwhile cause. Meanwhile, the people around me with obviously much rougher pasts were doing their two cents to help the community. Volunteering opened my eyes to how selfishly I can live my life, and also how sheltered and blessed I’ve been in my upbringing.

I’ve never been afraid of hard work. I don’t necessarily love hard work, but I was raised to know that someone has to do the grunt work, and I am no more entitled than anyone else. I am willing to help take care of chickens or mow an acre of lawn at home. I consider myself a hard worker because I know hard work is what gets you places in life. Working at the food bank, I couldn’t help making judgment calls about the people around me, especially those receiving food. I automatically assumed they just didn’t work hard enough to be able to provide for themselves. While this may be true for some people, I think it’s easy to overlook the multitude of other circumstances that can influence an individual’s position in life. Like I said, I can work hard because I was taught doing that was important. The difference is that I never HAD to work hard in order to just survive. Perhaps these people are doing the best they can and working hard, but it simply isn’t enough. Maybe they have language barriers, or they made a mistake long in their past that hinders their ability to find employment. Maybe they were just laid off of work or maybe their spouse just died. Regardless, it’s not my place to judge any persons work ethic based on the fact that they need a little help in a specific moment in time.

Even with trying to keep an open mind, I still would NEVER want to have to get food for my family at the food bank. I really think it’s a great and needed program and I love that it’s available for people. However, the idea of being dependent on someone else’s charity is not comforting and lacks the security I need to feel in my life. Self-sufficiency is an interesting subject. When I first think of self-sufficiency, I think of being able to grow my own food and making everything I could possibly need for myself. However, self-sufficiency (in a broader sense) is more the ability of being able to provide for yourself. There is something really empowering about being able to control your own future and life. While I’ve never thought about it, self-sufficiency is a characteristic of mine that I’ve always valued because it brings peace of mind. In moving into college, the goal is to be able to take care of myself. With picking a major, the same thought process was still there. I wanted to major in something that would allow me to get a job and be marketable. I needed to be able to provide for myself and a family in case I ever needed to face that reality. Self-sufficiency can be applied to multiple aspects in my life and is something I want to continue to work on.

I learned a lot about hard work and self-sufficiency by fulfilling this assignment (along with a little bit about judging and seeing outside of yourself). I think it’s so amazing that service allows you to lift up others while growing yourself. This whole experience was a really neat opportunity.