

You will write a personal essay that combines both academic research as well as personal experiences. As models look at the two essays by Hanif Abdurraqib that we have read in class. Think about a work that you are familiar with; that has influenced your thinking. What does that work say about a particular issue, or theme, and how have you seen that theme in your own life? Think of the ways in which Abdurraqib does this with greeting other black people, and growing up around violence, but being unaware of it. After reading your essay the reader should understand both yourself, and the work in a different light.

Word Count-- 1000 words

Rough Draft-- 2/24

Final Draft-- 2/26

Intro: (Frame the scene) examples from moving neighborhoods when younger, and seeing other Black people in largely white spaces.

I didn't grow up watching a ton of Disney movies. I saw most of the ones from the 90s, and have some memories of them, especially the Lion King. But even at the age of 13, I have more vivid memories of a much more mediocre movie from 1994, Forrest Gump. Hanna-Barbera poorly drawn cartoons from the 60s, such as The Flintstones, and Scooby Doo are more vivid in my childhood imagination than Disney movies. Counter to many around me, I didn't dream of the rides at Disneyland, a place where every Utahn pilgrimages and adores. But even with that said at 14 when we visited my slightly more affluent uncle's home, I saw the Disney coaster on the nice coffee and the picture of Disneyland well framed. Suddenly it represented something more than cartoons and fantasy; it was upper middle class life, a step above my current station.

Perhaps one of the reasons for the desire of Disney parks is explained by Lauren Newell in the essay Happiness at the House of Mouse: How Disney Negotiates to Create the "Happiest Place on Earth". Newell goes on to explain that after entering the park one of the goals of designers is to eliminate the feeling of "higher and lower social status." A strategy that works particularly well for the middle class and below, who receive the benefit of a system in which the more wealthy by and large are unable to pay their way out of some of the same injustices they suffer, such as long wait times. Of course this isn't to say that the design is infallible.

I don't have many vivid memories of that trip, certainly not the feeling of achieving a higher calling in American life. Indeed some of my fonder memories of the trip, perhaps as prelude for my life to come, occurred at the pancake house near the park. The bustling tables and frenzied pace of the staff rings more memorable to me, as someone

who rarely ate out at restaurants, and certainly not breakfast ones, than Splash Mountain. My desire to take step up was also subdued by familial health circumstances.

My dad, a type I diabetic spent much of those years in and out of hospitals, including a leg amputation, and the threat of another amputation. Most of the time he was in a wheelchair, and certainly would be at a place as large as Disneyland.

Conclusion Paragraph: Bring the personal experience and the research/analysis back together.

Example: Twenty five years after that visit to Disneyland I look at different emblems and signifiers of class, the organic groceries, the fine dining restaurant, the brand new car, and wonder how much my desire for them is no different than the fourteen year old who wanted to go to Disneyland to feel like I'd made it. The objects might have changed, but my desire for status hasn't.

<https://www.theguardian.com/film/2016/mar/14/being-working-class-makes-you-happy-according-to-disney>

<https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/disney-pixar-misrepresent-class-struggle-874781>

"The largest bulk of primary characters in the G-rated kids movies hailed from the upper and upper-middle classes. Thirty percent of primary characters in the films analyzed were from upper-class families, like Princess Jasmine in *Aladdin*, and approximately one-fourth were in the upper-middle class.

The biggest disparity revealed in the study was the representation of primary characters who would be considered poor by contemporary standards. Four percent of the total number of primary characters, meaning three main players in the 100 children's movies surveyed, could be classified as "poor." In comparison, roughly 25 percent of American children live in poverty."

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/business/wp/2015/06/12/how-theme-parks-like-disney-world-left-the-middle-class-behind/>

"Disney's made a strategic decision that they're not going to discount to hold onto people at the middle part of the economy," he said. "They're going to set their prices at the top 10 percent of family incomes and make their money where the money is."

<https://law.pepperdine.edu/dispute-resolution-law-journal/issues/volume-twelve/o8-newell.pdf>

In short, Disney's approach to negotiating with its guests is to eliminate, to the extent possible, the indicia of higher and lower social status within the Parks. While this probably stimulates positive emotions in most guests because everyone is treated as being of high social status, it may also elicit negative emotions in those accustomed to being of relatively higher social standing in their everyday lives.²⁹⁶