

Assignment 1: Observational Exercise

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Introduction:

The City of Newburgh NY established in 1706 was a bustling town in its heyday, pictures show it to be exquisite, vibrant, and full of life; surrounded by beautiful mountain ranges, and positioned on the western edge of the Hudson River, undoubtedly, a perfect location to begin creating and building a flourishing community. In the time since, today's Newburgh has transformed into a haven of drug activity, violence, and dilapidated buildings.

Questions:

Would it be better to teach GED classes at a cash-strapped community college, or an esteemed well-funded community educational learning center?

Why change from teaching in a revered community college environment to an electrifying, challenging, and personnel milieu?

Observation:

The Tower building on the campus of the Community College is immaculate with a beautiful newly architectural design, six floors surrounded by green paned glass that glows from the eastern sunrise and emanates the western sunset. It is a beacon of light in a city looking to make changes within the community. Opened in 2011 as an education building with solid traditional construction sitting on the Eastern end of Broadway, (the

main throughway running through the heart of Newburgh) just across the street from the Newburgh police station, which essentially keeps riffraff off the campus. Between the Tower and the police station are three serene lookout binoculars allowing incredible and fascinating views of the Hudson River and the surrounding mountains.

Once through the front entrance of the Tower building with gifts for the Adult Education Coordinator and the Adult Education program secretary; I flashed my ID at the security guards along with a morning greeting and they reciprocated. I made my way to the elevator and headed to the fourth floor. Getting off the elevator and walking through the hinged glass doors to my right from whence, I expected to see the secretary sitting at her desk as usual - she was nowhere to be found. The entire floor of 15 offices felt deserted. I questioned myself, why didn't I call before I came? It was early Friday morning, and I expected the secretary would be there. Nonetheless, I put the gifts on the table beside the printer behind her desk, then walked over to a single chair with a fold-out study tray positioned to look out over the river, giving a vantage point with a magnificent view of the Hudson Valley; especially, for a railroad buff like myself, because CSX railroad runs freight along the west side of the Hudson River that traverses between the college campus and waterfront food establishments.

As I sat taking in the scenery, I called both the coordinator and the secretary and left a message stating "I'm in the tower building, sorry I missed you, I put a gift on the

secretary's desk for both of you that I think you'll like". I didn't mention what it was or what it was for; the gifts were a goodwill gesture because I had given a 30-day advance notice that I wouldn't be returning this fall semester. I informed them, that I needed to devote myself to developing research because hopefully, I will be presenting my dissertation next year. The coordinator seemed to be ok with me not returning, as he stated, "That's great good luck". But the secretary, on the other hand, was broken up, her voice cracked as she said, "I don't know what to say". I immediately comforted her saying, "Don't feel bad, It's all my fault. I should have found a better way to tell you". She gathered herself and said, "Good luck we're here if you need anything".

As I left the tower thanking the guards, they responded in unison, "Thanks, be safe". Security at the college is congruous, cameras everywhere and it appears as if security guards are at every turn – providing a riff-raff deterrent.

I was undecided whether to leave my car parked where it was or walk a few blocks up Broadway to The Best Resource Center. I thought about taking in the ambiance of Newburgh, so I decided to walk. City Hall is one block west on the same side of the street as the police station. On the next corner, opposite the side of the street I was walking on is a huge head structure of the late Civil Rights Leader John Lewis. In the following block at Broadway & Johnson was a gigantic fenced-in tent with multiple rolls of white folding chairs throughout, seen through a wide entrance on its side. I proceeded through the

opening and noticed a big tub in the left corner covered by a blue tarp, musical instruments were in the right corner: a guitar with amp, a drum set, a keyboard, a couple of colorful tambourines, and two 4 by 3 speakers. Between the tub and instruments, a wide-screen TV with flowers at its base and two microphones was sitting on a makeshift stage 20'by 20', in diameter propped up one foot off the ground with a red cloth backdrop. Wait! someone was lying in the middle of the stage covered in a blanket, he popped up, when I yelled, "Yo". He stared intently with an inscrutable demeanor, neatly braided hair, trimmed beard, and dressed in a blue Nike sweatsuit, he didn't seem homeless. I ask, what type of church is this? He responded in a snappy tone, "Seven Days Adventist". He stood up and walked towards me; as he got closer, I could smell alcohol emanating from him. I told him I teach GED courses in the area and was curious about what was happening in this tent. Walking together towards the entrance; He stated, "I need my GED". I responded, "Well, there's an opportunity to get it all around you - the College down the street by the river and The Best Resources up the street. In fact, if you go to Best Resources, I'll be your instructor". He said, "Man, that sound good, I need to get my GED". Then he asks for a dollar, which surprised me because he didn't seem like a panhandler, though running into panhandlers can be expected walking down Broadway in Newburgh. I went into my pants pocket and pulled out two dollars, and told him, "I only got two dollars, you can have one". He said, "No that's Ok, I don't want to take your last dollar". I assured him it wasn't my last dollar. Giving him the dollar was magnanimous, the least I could do

for waking him up and invading his space. I left the tent without getting his name, he seemed to be the type of young person I would like to help understand transforaminal education.

Imagine, meeting people on the street having them download my GED app on their phone, inviting them to listen to my GED Aspired Podcast, and giving them my double-sided GED study guide with the links to my website where they would find GED mathematics video tutorials.

Carry on with, walking up Broadway I became very cognitive of the amount of people sleeping in the entranceway of the storefronts. Boardway has a cluster of small businesses along its streets: Spanish Bodegas, Chinese food markets, Jamaican restaurants, medical and dentist offices, community outreach centers, beauty shops, and beer distributors... COVID-19 played a role in shutting down multiple mom-and-pop establishments. These abundant storefronts are an ideal place for the homeless to take refuge.

I finally arrived at 280 Broadway and 9W one of the most active corners in Newburgh for vehicles and people. The building had a big sign that read Neighborhood Business & Resource Center. Best Resources is listed seventh on the sign. The building was built in 1970 as a commercial building with reinforced concrete construction, it's an older bilevel architectural design in contrast to the Tower building at the college. The first floor is

partially surrounded by glass, but the upper floors 2nd, 3rd, and 4th have normal glass windows around the entire building. Right in front of the building is a giant aluminum shark fin standing 20 feet with a huge base that reads 'Freedom of movement', a unique and unusual landmark. As I walked to the row of glass doors at the entrance, I noticed no security guards, but a young lady was leaving the building, and she made sure the doors had closed before I reached the entrance. I told her, I was looking for Best Resources. She walked over to a keypad on the wall; scolding down a list of names with her index finger, and said, "You need to press 4 and someone will buzz you in". Before I had the chance to press the keypad the door buzzed open. The security at Best Resources is in contract with the security at the Community College, and rightfully so, there is a Motel about 100 ft out of site of the building entrance - just across 9W. This Motel is notorious for drug activity, violence, prostitution, and riffraff. Once in the building, I walked past the elevator down a corridor leading to a dead end. The walls were closing on me; the paint was dell but inviting. I could feel the ambiance of an old building compared to the college. I went back and took the elevator to the second floor, getting off the elevator a huge sign read Welcome to Best Resources. When exiting the elevator, you entered directly into the office space. I made a left, then another quick left and the secretary's desk was about 15ft in front of me. She greeted me with a joyful authentic smile, we know of each other, but we never met face to face. I taught online classes for Best Resources while working at the college. The secretary and I have a history. I told her, I'm going to be working here", and she

responded, "I heard, I'm happy to see you". She started elaborating on the abundance and diversity of the student body. She said, "Because of the massive integration over the last year we have a lot of Spanish, Trinidadian, African, and Asian students trying to get a new start in America by first getting their GED". Then she explained that I would need to take a two-day training course. She turned to her assistant and told her to show me around. When I turned toward the assistant I noticed the monitor cameras for the front entrance. This is why the door buzzed open before I could ring in.

The assistant guided me to a room directly behind the secretary. I peeked in and noticed a room full of students, contrasting what I just experienced at the college, there were three long tables and four students per table. They all looked at me in unison, including the instructor sitting at her desk. Each had a momentary head turn, then they returned to whatever they were working on, except for one gentleman, whose eyes contacted mine and linked as if we had something in common. The assistant interrupted this dynamic moment, by pulling me away and showing me a room with twelve cubicles with twelve computers. She said, "This room is for GED testing, we are the only testing center in the Hudson Valley". Then she showed me a quiet room where students could go for serenity. After leaving the building I was exuberant knowing how lively and gripping Best Recourses had become.

While walking back to my car which was parked in the college's indoor parking lot, I noticed the person who was sleeping in the tent, he was coming out of the Spanish bodega smoking a loosie. Now it was made clear, that he needed the dollar to buy loose cigarettes, after waking up from a night of drinking. It is illegal to sell loose cigarettes, but it's common in the hood.