

Fears of a private school girl

May 31, 2023 | Creston News-Advertiser (IA)
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596 Words

From preschool through high school graduation, I was a private school kid.

I think the classic "private school experience" occurred more in high school for me. While we didn't wear uniforms, we still had a pretty strict dress code, which barred the use of sweatpants, leggings, band shirts or unnatural colored hair. We didn't call the kitchen staff "lunch ladies." Rather, we called them chefs.

My parents felt it was important to give me a Christian education, they had nothing against public schools. In fact, both of my parents graduated from a public high school. However, because I had such a separation from public school growing up, public school scared me.

I would hear stories making public school sound like the wild west: no rules, only anarchy. A friend of mine told me about a kid in her class that would bring a whole loaf of bread and all the fixings for a sandwich, making his lunch in the back of the classroom every day. Another person apparently would ride his skateboard through the halls everyday, no care made to the people he would disturb. And don't get me started on school dances... my Christian school girl self shuddered at the thought.

Popular media didn't help this sentiment. Whether social media showing the highlight (or lowlight) reels of high school drama or movies and TV shows sharing mean girl cliques and dramatic fight scenes, the idea of public school scared me. The reality of this, though, is that I was oblivious to what was happening at my own school.

While I was stressing out over school and preparing myself for college, my classmates were getting into plenty of mischief. It wasn't until after I graduated that I found most of this out. The jocks and other popular kids were heavily into drugs, but since their parents gave a lot of money to the school, they never got in trouble. Only the poorer kids had the police called on them.

With my school being a Christian school, there was a heavy fear and hatred for the LGBTQ community. Most students hid their identity while in school, knowing they'd be ridiculed and punished by both the students and the staff. A friend of mine was getting death threats from fellow classmates. When they finally went to a staff member, they were asked, "Have you tried not being gay?"

Recently, the school was in the news for their treatment of two students that were found to be LGBTQ+. Between banning from dances and threatening expulsion, the treatment of these students is sad but doesn't surprise me.

I want to comment that this in no way represents all churches or Christian schools. Many are very accepting and show love to all people, this is just one school/church body.

In the main hallway of my high school, we had two sunken seating areas we called "the pits," where seniors were allowed to spend study hall. It was a couple steps down to a carpeted area which was really used more for messing around than studying. One night when I was wandering the halls between forensics (speech) performances, a couple of public school kids were gathered around the pits, trying to figure out what they were. One confidently decided they were 'prayer pits' and that we must all have to pray here. I found this hilarious, but looking back, I realize that they were as clueless to private school as I was to public school.

There were plenty of issues at this school, but that didn't mean I didn't have a good experience. I was oblivious to many of the issues I now have with the school. I loved most of my teachers, I met some amazing people and Chef Barb certainly made some great food.

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