



LEADERSHIP

"The Prius of My Class"

Anonymous

I AM THE PRIUS OF MY class. I am efficient, burning with energy, a friend to the environment, and I go the distance. But I am not your basic package, I come fully loaded including the hard to find options of compassion and leadership. When I come to college, I will bring this boundless force of positive energy with me, I will get things done. My compassion for others and leadership skills are the building blocks I use to bring individuals together to complete tasks. I needed these skills when I had to deal with a kindergartener who was also fully loaded.

Imagine being outside on a gorgeous day. The sun is shining, flowers are in their brightest colors, and an odious smell is in the air. This is not a story about a superior smelling skill or how a bad scent can ruin a day; instead it is about taking a compassionate leadership role to keep him part of a community. My job for the past four summers has been as a counselor at a day camp for elementary school children. One afternoon while the campers were doing an art project, we counselors smelled something vulgar. We subtly sniffed each camper until

I realized that the stench was coming from a cute little kindergartner boy. A bad smell plus a newly potty trained camper could only mean one thing and no one wanted to deal with it. Taking a leadership role, I took the boy aside to make sure that everything was alright. Not only was this a chance to take care of the camper, but it also gave me some time to get to know the boy personally, building a bridge between the both of us.

After I had discreetly pulled the boy away from the group so as to avoid embarrassment, we headed towards the boy's bathroom. Once inside, the camper confessed that he had soiled his pants during the excitement of the group games. The solution to this situation seemed clear-cut: the boy would change into clean clothes and go out to play with a smile. However, the boy had no clean clothes to change into and adamantly refused to wear any other clothes. This is where I had to get flexible. The boy could not remain in his dirty underwear, that would be cruel and ostracizing. I would not just sit outside the boy's stall keeping him company until his mother arrived either. Like a Prius, I went the extra distance. I felt compassion for the boy and wanted to do everything I could to minimize his discomfort in the present situation. So, I found myself washing out chunky brown underwear in a bathroom sink at the boy's request. In the end, the camper rejoined the group with a smile on his face, no indignity suffered, and I learned something about myself. I learned there is great freedom in forgetting myself and being fully present with another human being. I was there for that camper in his time of need and the connection between us still exists years later. When one person in a society suffers, the whole community feels the negative energy. By taking care of the camper, he did not suffer and the connection I made strengthened the camp community as a whole, Prius style.

I have many talents. I am a gifted student, I love music, and I enjoy sports. The most important quality I will bring to campus life is the ability to connect people and myself using my sense of compassion and leadership skills, forming harmony out of diversity. My ability to lead and compassion for others are not just words. They make things happen in life. They are the traits that my peers respect as they have elected me Secretary, Vice President, and currently President of my 120 member nationally known Temple Youth Group. Being part of a strong community is important to me; I thrive in diversity as I can always

find something to connect to, something to learn. I strive to maintain a strong community and to meet the needs of those members, even if they are the needs of a kindergartner.

ANALYSIS

"The Prius of My Class" makes use of an original controlling metaphor. The first line inspires the reader's curiosity—what exactly does it mean to be "the Prius of my class"? The author quickly resolves the mystery in the next lines, clearly elucidating the essay's main arguments. He introduces key words and phrases—"compassion and leadership" and "go the distance"—that become touchstones throughout the essay. In a short essay, especially, overusing the same phrases is a common mistake. In this case, though, the author uses repetition to tie his essay together. He doesn't repeat key phrases so much that they become tiresome. Instead, he uses them as unifying elements that link the essay's content to its overriding message as presented in the introductory paragraph. He also uses repetition to humorous effect, as in the recurrence of the phrase "fully loaded" to describe a Prius packed with features and a kindergartner packed with, well, something else. Sophisticated uses of language like these make it obvious that the author crafted his essay very carefully.

The scene that the essay presents in the second paragraph is skillfully evoked. When the author asks us to "imagine being outside on a gorgeous day," readers get ready to roll our eyes at a tired description of a lovely afternoon. The author makes use of that expectation to amplify the element of *curprico* when he reveals the unpleasant event at the center of the essay. It's a clever move, because it shows that the author is sly enough to employ a cliché yet mock it at the same time.

In some ways, the incident at the heart of the piece is a fairly mundane one. It certainly doesn't scream, "Write a college essay about me!" But it's memorable and it fulfills the most important function of a college essay: providing a meaningful glimpse into the author's mind. The third paragraph walks the reader through his thought process, showing that his claim of being a compassionate leader is borne out by his thoughts and actions. For instance, few people would see a kindergartner's potty training pitfall as an opportunity "to get to know the boy personally, building a bridge between the both of us." Besides the insights it facilitates, the story is just plain memorable, especially when combined with the inventive Prius metaphor.

The only weakness of the essay worth mentioning is that its final paragraph strays a bit too close to reiterating a laundry list of accomplishments from the author's resume. The paragraph is redeemed by the tie-in to the kindergarten story in the final line.