

ENG 100: Second Place

No Filter at the Table

by Devin Torres

The heart of the social lives of many high school students resides within the lunch table. This is where food is eaten, beef is exploited, bets are placed, and “yo momma” becomes the universal target. Like a heart, the lunch table has veins; the veins are the people seated and the blood that is pumped through the veins is the conversations held at the table. The veins consist of Chris Castracane (Mr. Italian fashion), John Arrieta (the white kid that can ball), Ezekiel Velasques (the tall-ass Mexican with the bush on his head), Larry Mendez (equivalent to a dumbass), and last but not least... Devin Perez (the one who starts all the shit). Communication between the people sitting is important; it shows how close we are as a group and how interesting we are individually. The most intriguing features of the table are our greetings, requests and demands, and especially the way we joke around with each other. When approaching the lunch table, one must be prepared to hear the *no filter effect*. What this really means is be prepared to hear some inappropriate, ill-mannered, and uncensored conversations.

Often enough we greet each other through a series of natural sayings, “yo where the fuck have you guys been?” or “move the fuck over; I barely fit on the fucking bench.” If you haven’t noticed yet, this group of young men are prone to use the “f word” more often than most. No one is sure how this trend began, but it has been there since sophomore year and it hasn’t gone anywhere since. While the lunch table does use profanity in around eighty-five percent of all their conversations, they don’t let that get in the way of recognizing when someone isn’t in such a great mood. If Larry, John, Chris, or I were to sit down at the table without saying a word, one

of us would speak up and call them out. Should someone be in a bad mood then we'd try to break the plane of silence and replace it with laughter instead. Half the time the response is "fuck off," followed by "okay, fuck you too."

As we joke around with one another, each member understands the basic set of rules: recognize the level of play, and the most important is not to get butt-hurt when someone comes at you personally (at that point, you just take a swing). Everyone at the table has a mutual agreement that if any joke goes too far, you must be prepared for any consequence, including the physical ones as well. Fortunately, we are all good friends and know each other well enough to not joke around a sensitive area. Some of the most frequent topics we tend to joke about include: someone's nasty-ass food, their shitty-ass job, any mishaps with the ladies, and just about anything that comes out of Larry's mouth.

Joking around brings out the best in our relationship because no matter what, everyone is bound to be a target of the shit talk. And the best part is that we continue the jokes through any conversation. People always ask us, "Why are you guys so rude to each other?" We all look at each other and laugh; then we briefly explain that that is the way we talk to each other. Then out of pure instinct I'll tell one of them,

"Shut up, you skinny fuck."

"Dev, you fatass, I'll beat the livin' shit outta you."

"Okay bet pussy."

Thus beginning one of our sessions. We use these jokes to make a conversation less tense and brighten up the mood. This really shows how we try to stay away from any mood-bumming conversations.

Another important feature of our conversations is the way that we request and demand things from one another. The range of favors differ, going from “Hey, could you grab me a napkin?” right to “Lemme borrow the calc homework.” For the most part, we take each other seriously because we treat each other as if we were actually brothers. Depending on who you ask, everyone has their own way to request and demand things from us. When John wants something done and needs us to take it seriously, he holds a dead stare towards one of us until we listen. Larry, on the other hand, becomes a grade A kiss-ass to get what he wants. Other gestures such as waving their hands, voices getting louder, or making a scene at the table help land a favor. For instance, one day we were all just eating and joking around at the table while Chris was trying to get our attention so we could help him with a paper he was working on. Larry, John, and I had seen this and began to intentionally ignore him, and as we continued to tune him out, he began to get frustrated. It came to a point where Chris stood up and slammed his hands on the table all dramatically just to get our attention. The three of us jokingly turned our heads in slow motion and all at once said, “We’re eating. Fuck off.”

After reminiscing about high school, I realized how important that worn-down table was to me. It had helped introduce me to some guys that I am close enough to refer to as brothers. The table also symbolized a piece of my day that I really enjoyed; it was my escape from the other annoying kids and teachers that didn’t speed up my day. I believe this is very important because some students don’t pay as much attention to their social lives, and they should because the stress can be overwhelming. Not everything has to come down to books and pencils; sometimes laughter proves to be the best medicine.