

Benny Nguyen

Ms. Canevari

CP English 9

5/25/2023

All Successes Come from Speaking Up

An American writer, womanist, radical feminist, professor, philosopher, and civil rights activist Audre Lorde once said that “[people have] been taught that silence would save [them], but it [will not]” (Lorde). She implies that if people do not speak their voices up, they are not helping themselves. People will never achieve their goals if all they do is stay silent and wait for others to lend their hands. The theme of speaking up is often seen in a variety of texts. In the novel *Piecing Me Together*, by Renée Watson, the character trait of timidity seen in Jade Butler when she cannot speak up during the conversation with her counselor evolves because, in the end, she realizes that she is confident and able to speak for what she wants and needs, which reveals that people should learn to advocate for themselves in order to achieve their dreams and fulfill their desires.

Initially, the conversation with the counselor at the beginning of the story shows that Jade is lacking courage, is passive, and is unable to speak up for herself; since then, Jade has gone through many challenges, develops and eventually, she feels confident and is now able to speak for what she wants and needs. To give an instance, Jade is nominated for a mentorship program called Woman to Woman. She wants to ask about the study abroad program that the school promised, “but instead [she] ask[s], ‘Why was [she] chosen for [that]?’” (Watson 18). The author’s use of the word “instead” connotes that she wants to ask about the study abroad

program, but then she changes her mind. Noticeably, this is her junior year at St. Francis, which is the year that students are picked for that program. For Jade, the study abroad program is significantly important as her family could not afford an international trip, so Jade is really looking for it. Despite her wish, she decides not to ask for her spot in the program. Jade's words show how timid she is. She wants the study abroad program, she needs it, but she could not speak for her desire. That lack of courage costs Jade - as she thinks - the one-of-a-lifetime opportunity as it is later given to her friend Sam. The evidence reveals that in this society, people do not always have enough confidence to voice their opinions. There is still something holding them from opening their voices, from fighting for their needs through communication, and they result in losing the opportunities they deserve, therefore being filled with regret. Afterward, during the Woman to Woman meeting at Mia's museum, Jade wants to apply for an internship but is afraid to ask. Even so, with the help of her mentor Maxine, Jade changes her mind and believes that "[she] can. [She] can speak for [her]self" (Watson 229). Jade's thoughts characterize her as a grown-up, full-of-confidence girl. It has been a while since she joins Woman to Woman and becomes Maxine's mentee. Throughout those months, many events have occurred. There are new relationships, happiness, and laughter, along with discrimination, arguments, and tears. Those events are the reasons for her transition. Her thoughts reveal that she has "said goodbye" to her old self, the self that brings her tears, and takes away her joy, her opportunities. Now, Jade Butler is a strong, active girl who dares to do anything she needs and says anything she wants that is beneficial for her. In this society, people themselves are the ones that can change themselves from the inside. If they can remove the timidity, believe in themselves, express what they want, and never let themselves live in regret, sooner or later well-deserved results will come. In conclusion, the obstacles, together with tears and regrets have

become lessons for Jade to change from a lacking-courage, passive girl who could not advocate for herself to a bold person who is now able to assert her wants.

In the end, Renée Watson has developed her character Jade Butler in the novel *Piecing Me Together* perfectly; the timid girl who could not voice her opinion while having a conversation with her counselor has now become so confident and could open her voice for her needs; she is the lesson of speaking up to accomplish any dreams and fulfill any desires. In this society, there are a lot of people who have the potential to change the world. They have talents, efforts, and ambitions. The only thing they are missing is the ability to speak up, to express their thinking. Significantly, most successful people are good at opening their voices to express their thoughts. Take Steve Jobs - the founder of Apple - as an example, he was well-known as a great public speaker and knew how to keep people's attention. His voice also had a big impact on the company's decisions, which explains why Apple's products were considered top-class at the time. If everyone could overcome that barrier, this world would definitely be better, thanks to those astonishing people who would dare to think, share, and do.