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Character is revealed in the midst of adversity. One can either dodge the problems life catapults his or her way, or face the issue head on with an open mind. The way I view the world was changed by a particularly memorable mantra of Aibileen, a resilient character in Kathryn Stockett's *The Help*: "You is kind. You is smart. You is important" (Stockett). As an African American in the early 1960's working as a maid and nanny amongst racial prejudice, Aibileen's resilience despite those wanting to see her fail was an inspiration. This mantra has come to carry an very impactful import in my life as it represents three valuable aspects of character: kindness, intelligence, and self-worth. Possessing each facet separately may allow an individual to excel emotionally, physically, or mentally, but this success will only extend so far, for we live in a world that is constantly demanding personal adaptations to various situations. It is kindness that connects us a whole, intelligence that allows us to remain connected through the sharing of ideas and culture, and self-worth that allows us to feel important and maintain this sense of purpose.

"You is kind". Without a doubt, 2017 was one of the most challenging years for me, and by challenging, it was the year for the most growth. With my parents' divorce came significant familial change; I witnessed the ending of some chapters and the beginning of others. Moving out of the only home I could remember since birth signified a severance from the familiar and a harsh shove into the unknown and uncomfortable. I found myself feeling overwhelmed, drowning in stress while adjusting to splitting holidays between my mom and dad. Instead of closing myself off from everyone that cared about me though, I chose to use this emotional hardship as a way of connecting to others through kindness. When I found out one of my friends was dealing with severe health issues amongst her parents, I did everything I could to be there for her. We spent late nights together at her house staying up to finish our homework, laughing

wholeheartedly with gleaming smiles over the smallest things, or purging ourselves of the daily vexations of life by sharing with each other in confidence.

“You is smart”. Sometimes adversity is not only the product of the opinions of others but one’s own mentality. For me, my battle was constantly being fought against self-doubt. Being part of the Commonwealth Governor’s School, a college preparatory program for high-performing students promoting research in an accelerated learning environment, fueled a doubt that I had to overcome. As one of the only two African Americans within my grade in the program, it was sometimes a challenge to feel connected with my peers despite the open atmosphere created by the teachers. While applying, many people had doubted my ability to be successful just because my skin color was not a shade amongst the majority, but I did not let that stop me. Instead, I decided to challenge my own standards. I raised my hand to express my opinion in class discussions, incorporating a unique perspective that further extending the relativity and depth of topics beyond the norm. During a year-long research project, while others explored the exciting complexity of world health issues, I chose to pursue my passion of the unspoken: photojournalism. As a strong proponent of actions speaking volumes to words, there was something intriguing about the ability to capture those actions in a single snapshot. I dared to be different, displaying my intelligence in the arts.

“You is important”. I believe importance is defined by finding your role in the world, and I am still in the process of discovering mine despite the rough terrain. As I take the next step in my academic endeavors, I am continuing on the path to find my calling, whether that be fulfilling my desire to become a doctor or discovering another dimension entirely. Through my experiences, I have acquired more respect for others, demonstrated kindness, built upon my intelligence, and learned the importance of the journey over the destination. Each individual is on

a different path toward self-realization, an experience that is drastically enhanced by the temperamental triad of kindness, intelligence, and self-worth. There is nothing but hope as I look forward to taking the next few steps into the uncharted.

Works Cited

Stockett, Kathryn. *The Help*. New York: Amy Einhorn Books, 2009.