

Emily Ramos-Niaves

Timmerman

SPCE 201

9/10/15

### The First Time I Saw a Person with a Disability

“Just because I am a disabled veteran doesn’t mean I can’t do anything on my own!”

Ignacio R. Ramos; my grandfather used to say this all the time. We would all rush to get the door for him or pick up something he had dropped and he would be grateful. He then would yell at us later for helping too much. He explained that just because he was confined to his wheelchair and had no legs didn’t mean he couldn’t do anything for himself, as goes for all people with a disability. My brother and I grew up surrounded by people with disabilities knowing how capable they all truly are. They might not be as independent as my grandfather or as stubborn but they all had the potential to be just as strong of a person, and this allowed us to view people with disabilities in the exact same light that we view everyone else.

The first time I ever saw a person with a disability was when I was born. My grandfather lost both his legs in the Vietnam War and is confined to a wheelchair. I never knew my grandpa with legs and I am thankful for that in the sense that I am more aware of his needs as well as the needs of others. In addition to not having legs my grandpa has PTSD, this affected me in ways I never realized until I was older. He never watched the fireworks on the fourth of July, he rarely came out of his room and lives on a scheduled routine. It wasn’t until many years later that I found out the reason why. He is constantly sitting and that time he is home the only thing he can do is lay down to get off his butt. His routine is due to his severe Diabetes. Even with all these challenges he works for the government as a therapist for veterans in the Department of Veteran

Affairs. Growing up with my grandfather, I catch myself picking up on his habits and being more sensitive towards others. My grandfather is very independent and refuses to let anyone help him with anything he can take care of himself, just because he has a disability doesn't mean he can't do anything for himself. I carry everything I have learned from him in my day to day life.

When I was younger I had wanted to be a therapist like my grandfather and help people the way he did. I changed my mind from therapist to counselor many of times. It wasn't until I spent more time with children with disabilities that I realized I wanted to work with children. It took spending a summer with my great grandparents and working in classrooms to realize that I wanted to teach. My great grandfather was born with only one ear and has hearing issues which effected his speech ability. He instilled in me the importance of education and his pride in me that I will apply to college. His enthusiasm for learning and helping children with disabilities learn inspired me and gave me a true purpose in the life I want to lead. Without his words and my grandfathers example I would not be in the place that I am or nearly as excited to begin working towards my future.