

# Cultivating Learners and Creating Leaders

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Goshen at times does not promote the acceptance of differences. Cultivating learners and creating leaders was the theme of my school every year during elementary school. Although the learning part was always easy, and most teachers told me I was a leader, I didn't know what a true leader was because no one around me was. You are often told in Goshen but especially in Indiana that there are certain expectations for you that are already set. Don't support certain people, stay quiet and put your head down when injustice is happening, and try to lead a perfect life to make God happy. Growing up this was always a normal and daily routine trying to be a perfect christian girl that was happy and thriving. I started questioning this as I became older and was very confused by the magnitude of how closed minded people could be around this subject.

I find it unreasonable and unnecessary for people to bring up certain subjects time and time again when they won't hear other opinions but their own. This is often how it is in Indiana when trying to get your opinion across but getting knocked down everytime. When I was a child kids would often come up to me and tell me they didn't support people who were gay at random points in the day. This often shocked me as this was completely out of context and irrelevant to the conversation we were having. I remember one time people came up to me and said this.

"God doesn't support gay people." Completely taken aback and bewildered I responded saying.

"That's not true." All to have them tell me over multiple times that what I said wasn't true. I was sick and tired of being shut down when I gave my opinions about what I believed. I was supposed to believe what they believed. This didn't sit well with me as I am my own person and I deserve to have my own opinions, so I made the scariest decision of my life. I switched schools.

When I transferred for the first time I felt important, that people cared about my input on certain topics that for so long people have told me I wasn't allowed to speak my mind about. I was told to question opinions and question the way people treated one another. For the first time in my life I didn't feel like I had to quiet down when injustice was happening, I could speak my truth and tell people what I believed and who I supported and that the way Goshen is, isn't okay.

Many people in Goshen aren't true leaders. They don't know how and it's not entirely their fault. Growing up in Indiana you are taught to be quiet and keep your head down. It's the way it's always been, but it's not the way it has to be. If more people have safe spaces to talk about certain issues that many people will shut people down about. Goshen I believe can be a place where people can accept each other and learn to trust each other when talking about issues in the community. Goshen should be a place where people can express their opinions and having more places in Goshen like that is something that needs to happen. Goshen is a place where we can cultivate learners and create leaders truly if we just take a little action. Goshen needs to learn to promote the acceptance of differences if we truly want to make a difference.