

Nirel Woodson
1/13/21
Memoir Vignette

West Philadelphia, the most beautiful part of the city, and where I grew up. Local parks filled with people walking their dogs every morning, people competing in chess matches, great food and scenery all across the area, diversity, people from all different backgrounds, and that's just a few things that I named that makes this part of the city different from no other. But there's one thing that this community and west Philly thrives on. Supporting each other.

At my elementary school, Penn Alexander, I had a group of friends. Most of my friends in the group are middle class, and they tend to have money on them. Sometimes they spend their money a little carelessly but I don't like to correct them. One friend in my group, his family struggles to bring in money and is always short-handed when it comes to money, but he makes good decisions with the money he has and uses it wisely. We always hung out after school, we would either go to each other's houses and play video games or grab something to eat. We cared for each other and when it came time for us to go home we made sure everyone could get home safely.

One day after school, we were excited for the weekend. The weather was great. It was a bright sunny day. We all had shorts on and are uniform shirts. Everybody's week had been tiresome and dreadful. We were ready to just enjoy our two days off from school. One of my friends had the idea to celebrate by going to a local pizza store a couple of blocks away from the school. We followed up on his idea and we all walked to the pizza store. We walked in, ordered separately and we ate and socialized for about an hour. It's time for us to go separate ways and go home. A friend of mine pulls me to the side and says, "I'm going to see my grandparents today, I spent all my money on pizza and I'm short on money to get on the bus". At that moment, I had

no idea that this was something he dealt with daily. I thought about how hard it must be for him to leave the house worrying that he might not have enough money to get food with friends or even get home. I tell him “ I gotchu. If you ever need anything from me tell me”. The message I was trying to tell him was to never struggle in silence. I gave him some money and called him when he was on the bus to make sure he got on the bus safely.

It was important to me that I always look out for people in my community and mostly my friends. This was something that I was taught growing up in West Philly, to look out for people, and help people in need. Being in this culture has shaped my identity of caring, looking for opportunities to contribute to people in need of help. This incident is not something that you see once every month. Every day you'll see someone rely on one another to provide something that they can't afford or even think about getting because it's just so far out of the picture financially for them. It's the little things that make this community special, and a great place to live in.