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Social change has been a central focus throughout history and continues to this day. Although it has been fought for centuries in many contexts, the fight for almost all social movements is still ongoing. One of the areas in need of extreme social change is the difference in schooling that happens in rural (majority white) districts versus urban (majority BIPOC) districts. The difference is not only in the quality of education but in the quality of community within the school.

The way that students are treated at majority white versus majority black/brown schools is drastically different. It is far more common for a school majority of students of color to have more than one school resource officer (SRO) and for the SROs to be more actively involved in the school. In my school in southern Maine, I have one SRO for my almost 800-student population. While Officer Upton would stand in the hallway in the morning, occasionally walk the halls during transition times, and sporadically pick up a lunch duty shift, he was not a consistent presence in my day-to-day at school. He also usually did not command authority from the students; he wasn't "Officer Upton," instead just "Upton." He was not seen as a threat but rather a friendly face that you could joke around with. I never viewed Upton as a person of power, and he was no more intimidating to me than any teacher or administrator. When I arrived at Clark, I realized that this was not a universal truth.

In one of my first CYES classes, I talked to a classmate, and the topic of SROs came up. My classmate was a person of color who grew up in the Boston Public School district. They went to a vocational high school with less than 500 students, 85% of whom were BIPOC students. In their school, they had 6 School Resource Officers. That is more than 1 SRO for every 100 students. This was an incredibly shocking number, especially coming from a school with more

students and significantly fewer SROs. They went on to explain that the SROs always expected to be called “Officer [last name]” and if they ever heard someone not saying that, they would be furious. There was an understanding among the student body that the SROs were not their friends; they were the authority and had the power to make or break their high school experience. My classmate explained to me that they would spend their days trying to avoid the SROs; they feared seeing them in the morning, wanting to avoid an unnecessary bag search. They dreaded seeing them in the hallway during transition times due to an increased chance of a random “violation” landing them in the principal's office. The drastic difference between our experiences didn’t stop at the SRO,s it was clearly seen when talking about how we entered our school building in the morning.

In my majority white school, I arrived at school 30 minutes early and sat in my car listening to music to prepare for the day. After about 15 minutes, I would turn my car off and walk over to my friend’s car, climb in, and talk to her for another 10 minutes. Finally, 5 minutes before we were supposed to be in class, we would mosey through the parking lot, walk through the front doors, wave goodbye to each other, and head to class. We were never stopped by anyone, never asked to open our bags for inspection, and never questioned on why we were waiting outside the school so early. My BIPOC classmate did not have the same experience. At their school they were expected to arrive at school with plenty of time, but not to sit in the parking lot and chat with friends, instead they were made to stand in line and wait for their turn to go through one of the many metal detectors before getting into another line for their daily bag search. My classmates' experience was a traumatizing one, one that made it so they feel more unsafe in their school than I did, even with the additional “safety” features. This is a clear example of racism within schools, I had the ability to waltz into school on a moments notice,

never getting stopped or having someone assume I have done something wrong, While my BIPOC classmate had to constantly be on high alert at school because the people in positions of power did not treat them fairly due to the color of their skin.

The extreme differences between our two experiences at school speak volumes to the deeper underlying issues of racism in schools. Simply because my classmate was a student of color who went to a majority non-white school, they had to endure traumatizing and stigmatizing situations, while I was able to cruise through my school with not a care in the world. This is a clear divide in schooling, one that needs the attention of social change movements across the country.

The idea of how much change is 'enough' change is an idea I have struggled with in a major way throughout my higher education journey. Over the past four years, I have thought, shaped, reshaped, and revised my theory of change time and time again. While my theory will probably never stop evolving throughout my life and career, my current theory of change is as follows: Any change is enough change; big change has never and will never happen without the building blocks of smaller change beneath it.