

Biography

Chance Brown is a first-generation college student from a working-class background, raised with the understanding that education was the path to a different life. This understanding shaped his commitment to academic excellence and led him to Vanderbilt University, where his studies have centered around the intersection of race, class, and educational equity.

Artist Statement

This autobiographical piece reflects my disillusionment with education. I arrived at college after a rewarding high school experience with a deep belief in meritocracy. I knew my background would present challenges, but I also believed that hard work alone would allow me to overcome these difficulties. Instead, I encountered rejection and systemic barriers that shattered my naivete, quickly revealing how different my upbringing was from that of the “typical” Vanderbilt student.

What inspired me to write for the journal was a professor’s mention of the decline in Black student enrollment. When I checked the common data set, I discovered that the class of 2028 had an 11 percent Black admission rate. Within one year, that number was cut nearly in half, as just 6 percent of the class of 2029 is Black. This decline, alongside the dismantling of DEI initiatives, creates a vicious cycle where lessening the Black presence today ensures an even smaller Black presence tomorrow.