

# THE BOY'S SELF-CONCEPT IN ALICE CHILDRESS' *THE WORLD ON A HILL*

Asih Pujiyanti\*  
Linusia Marsih\*\*

**ABSTRAK.** Artikel ini tentang konsep diri tokoh Boy dalam drama Alice Childress berjudul *The World pada Hill*. Fokus dari penelitian ini adalah karakter utama yang diidentifikasi sebagai The Boy atau Winston. Masalah yang akan diteliti dalam penelitian ini adalah (1) Apakah konsep diri The Boy?; (2) Faktor-faktor apa saja yang mempengaruhi konsep diri The Boy?; dan (3) Bagaimana konsep diri The Boy berkembang? Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan intrinsik (karakter) dan ekstrinsik (psikologis) dengan ancaman penelitian deskriptif kualitatif. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa konsep diri karakter utama (Boy) berdampak terhadap perilaku dan mannerismenya. Ada tiga faktor yang mempengaruhi konsep dirinya: penampilan fisik, tujuan dan harapan, dan kondisi keluarga. Konsep diri Boy berkembang dari pemahaman dan penerimaan kelemahan dan kekuatannya dan kemudian mulai mengatur prioritas dalam hidup untuk membuat mimpinya menjadi kenyataan.

**KATA KUNCI:** *theme analysis, self-concept, mannerism, behavior*

## INTRODUCTION

Self-concept is one of the most popular ideas in psychological literature. Reviews of literature have found at least 15 different "self" terms used by various authors. Terms such as "self-concept," "self-esteem," "self-worth," and "self-acceptance," are often used interchangeably and inconsistently, when they may relate to different ideas about how people view themselves. Self-concept generally refers to the totality of a complex, organized, and dynamic system of learned beliefs, attitudes, and opinions that each person holds to be true about his or her personal existence (Byrne, 1996). Self-concept is one aspect of personality that will greatly affect the behavior of individuals. As an important part in the lives of individuals, self-concept is a reflection that is seen, felt, and experienced by adolescent's individuals about themselves. The existence of the self-concept is to support individuals living their lives because they see themselves as well as their life.

Three basic components of self-concept are the ideal self, the public self, and the real self. The ideal self is the person the individual would

like to be, such as a good, moral, and well-respected person. Sometimes, this ideal view of how an individual would like to be conflicts with the real self. This conflict can motivate an individual to make changes toward becoming the ideal self. However, the view of the ideal self needs to be realistic and obtainable or the individual may experience anxiety or be at risk for alterations in self-concept. Public self is what the individual thinks others think of him and influences the ideal and real self. Positive self-concept and good mental health results when all three components are compatible. A positive self-concept is an important part of an individual's happiness and success. Individuals with a positive self-concept have self-confidence and set goals they can achieve. Achieving their goals reinforces their positive self-concept. An individual with a positive self-concept is more likely to change unhealthy habits to promote health than an individual with a negative self-concept. A person's self-concept is composed of evolving subjective conscious and unconscious self-assessments. Physical attributes, occupation, knowledge, and abilities of the person will change

\* Asih Pujiyanti, S.S., alumni Prodi Bahasa dan Sastra Inggris, Fakultas Sastra, Universitas 17 Agustus 1945 Surabaya

\*\* Linusia Marsih, S.S., M.Pd., dosen dan Kaprodi Bahasa dan Sastra Inggris, Fakultas Sastra, Universitas 17 Agustus 1945 Surabaya

throughout the life span, contributing to changes in one's self-concept.

The present study focuses on the idea of self-concept as proposed in Alice Childress' *The World on a Hill*. Alice Childress (1916–1994), actress, director, playwright, novelist, columnist, essayist, lecturer, and theater consultant. Alice Childress established herself as a cultural critic and champion for the masses of poor people in America. Her writings reflect her commitment to the underclass whose lives are often portrayed inaccurately in American literature. Her works explore the debilitating effects of racism, sexism, and classism on people of color as they struggle daily to maintain their dignity. She portrays African Americans who triumph largely because of familial and community support. Childress's works censure American government for its exploitation of the poor in the name of capitalism. Her writings clearly speak against a government that would rather support African Americans as charity cases than allow them to succeed or fail on their own. Her integrity as a writer is evidenced by her refusal to recreate versions of long-held negative stereotypes of African Americans, even though this has cost her financial security.

The drama *The World on a Hill* tells about a young black man, The Boy (Winston), who meets a White woman in a park. The story begins when the Boy who is chased by the police, runs up to the park bench where The Woman, who is a White person, is sitting to have her picnic lunch. He frightens her and threatens her not to move or scream. His threat does not discourage her. Instead, this makes he admits that he actually does not have a knife and challenges her to call the police and scream, which is ignored by her. He mocks her and continuously tells lies which all are known by her. At last he is persuaded to tell the truth. He thinks that the truth is shameful and hurtful. He tells lie because he hate The Whites. He tries to tell her about his life, his dream to be a great doctor but he can't make it come true because he is Black.

The questions to be answered in the study are: (1) What is The Boy's self-concept?; (2)

What factors affect The Boy's self-concept?; and (3) How does The Boy's self-concept develop? This study is expected to give contribution to the readers who mostly are the student of English literature; especially to the study of drama in general and to the study of Alice Childress, *The World on a Hill* in particular.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Self-concept is defined as "a person's perception about him or herself," (Calhoun & Acocella, 1995:67) or more in depth as "the accumulation of knowledge about the self, such as beliefs regarding personality traits, physical characteristics, abilities, values, goals, and roles" (Hurlock, 1974:372). In addition, Hadley and Hair (2008) define that self-concept refers to self-evaluation or self-perception, and it represents the sum of an individual's beliefs about his or her own attributes. Self-concept reflects how an adolescent evaluates himself or herself in areas in which he or she considers success important. An adolescent can have a positive self-concept in some domains and a negative self-concept in others. This constructs "can be separated and observed in different categories, such as personal self-concept, social self-concept, and self-ideals" (Gale Group, 2001). Self-concept is a system made of schemes "some of which reflect individual aspects of the self, such as personality", while others "reflect relationships with family, friends, and social groups".

William James (1980), one of the founders of modern psychology laid the groundwork for the study of self-concept by noting that self is both content by what one knows about one's self and also process like cognition, motivation, and attentive process. Self provides answer to key existential question "who am I?" and "where do I belong?" and also the self is cognitive structure that mediates and organizes everyday experience, regulates effect and channels motivation (Markus and Wurf, 1987). Therefore, making sense of self-concept provides a tool for making sense of everyday choices.

Self-concept itself is formed through a process of learning since the growth of a human

being from childhood to adolescence. Attitude or response of parents and the environment will be informational materials for children to judge who he is. Therefore, often the children who are grown and raised in the wrong parenting and the negative or unfavorable environment tend to have a negative self-concept. So the children judge themselves based on what he experienced, and get out of the environment. If the environment gives a good attitude and positive, then the children will feel themselves sufficiently valuable that grows positive self-concept. There are several factors that affect the formation of self-concept, among others are physical appearance, goals or expectations, family condition, peers, and school (Hurlock, 1974:372). The factors that affect the formation of self-concept include: (1) physical condition, (2) goals and expectation, (3) family condition, (4) peers, and (5) schools.

Physical condition is the most visible, so that the physical conditions are important in influencing the self-concept. The physical condition of the body is very clear in the characteristics of self-perception (Burns, 1993:191). Feelings of high self-esteem are strongly associated with the acceptance of one's physical condition, especially teenagers that they are unstable age. Physical condition or physical-self includes the following subscales: sport competence (sport), physical condition (condition), body attractiveness (body), physical strength (strength), and physical self-worth.

Goals are something that is certainly desired by someone or self-expectations (Calhoun and Acocella, 1995:71). Goals or expectations are essential for the formation of self-concept. When teens have aspirations what are not realistic, they will fail. This will lead to feelings of inadequacy and reactions persist where they will blame others for their failures as well as provide a poorer negative self-concept.

Expectancy is the belief that one's effort will result in attainment of desired performance goals. It's usually based on an individual's past experience, self-confidence and the perceived difficulty of the performance standard or goal. Factors associated with the individual's Expectancy

perception are self-efficacy, goal difficulty, and control. Expectancy proposes that a person will decide to behave or act in a certain way because they are motivated to select a specific behavior over other behaviors due to what they expect the result of that selected behavior will be motivation of the behavior selection is determined by the desirability of the outcome.

Family is the primary environment for individuals who provide education; parenting adopted by parents will greatly affect the child's self-concept, especially the youth who need extra attention of parents. In addition, harmonious relationship among family members also affects a child's self-concept. According to Burns (1993: 257), children who come from families where there is acceptance, mutual trust and the compatibility between parents and children, cope better, more positive about themselves (have a positive self-concept). Positive self-concept may grow when the children are treated well and given positive expectations, especially teenagers in the labile age. In the other words, patterns of parenting and relationships within the family have a significant influence on the formation of the individual self-concept.

When entering adolescence, the self-concept will grow because of the increasing number of a teen interaction with one's peers. He has a broader relationship than just relationships within the family. He had more friends, more acquaintances, and as a result, he has more experience. Peers influence adolescent personality patterns in two ways: 1) adolescent self-concept is a reflection of the assumption about the concept of his friends about him; 2) he is under pressure to develop a personality characteristic that is recognized by the group. According to Weiss and Smith (2002: page) the quality of peer acceptance in the physical activity domain relates to important motivational factors in children's physical activity. Studies with older European American children have shown that the quality of peers and or social acceptance is associated with the enjoyment and continuance of engaging in activities (Patrick, Ryan, & Alfred-Liro, 1999).

School influences self-concept in two ways: educational Achievement and guidance and counseling. According Burns (1993,357) self – concept and educational achievement have relevance, because in fact educational institution is an arena in which individuals are forced to compete, to compete they are forced to show their abilities and the pressures applied by the teachers and most parents to achieve success. It is expected that students will have a good academic achievement; they will feel competent and feel mean. At school, counselors have a responsibility to address the students through guidance and counseling, in which the purpose of the counseling is a way to help students develop optimally. The theory of self-concept looks at how his perceptions about himself and how his environment affect his perception, behaviors and mannerisms.

Self-concept is established through the connection with others. Teachers, parents, and peers are significant others that play an important role in the development of self-concept. The development of positive self-concept in the physical domain is a primary goal for children's participation in physical activity. Stress the importance of self-concept development in the physical domain as children place much importance on their ability and are an important factor in children's general self-concept. It is important to create positive self-concepts in children early as once self-concept is firmly establish-ed it is difficult to change. Adolescence is a critical phase in the process of self-making because it is a time during which youth create and outline of the self-concept that they will become as adults. The choices which are made during adolescent are likely to get important consequences for the future.

Self-awareness, in the form of self-consciousness, becomes particularly acute during adolescence, in contrast with late childhood when the self-concept seems to be more stable (Rosenberg: 1979). It is sometimes argued that unreflective self-acceptance begins to disappear during early adolescence and the self becomes more volatile and evanescent. According to Erikson (1968), he believes that in their effort to find coherent,

unified self-adolescents are often preoccupied with what they appear to be in the eyes of other people and with the question of how to connect earlier roles and skills developed in childhood with their new sense of ideal characteristics for themselves and others.

Identity is an interrogative concept that is used to capture the diverse, complex components of the adolescent's personality development. According to Erik Erikson (1963) the description of identity development is applied to practically anyone of any age who feels a loss of identification or self-image who can't understand with him - self. Identity is important throughout a person's life. It is only in adolescence that identity development reaches crisis self-concept of him. During adolescence, the self-concept becomes important to an individual. Adolescents can experiment with different roles, trying them out and seeing which one they like. The youth who successfully copes with these conflicting identities during adolescence emerges with a new sense of self that is both refreshing and acceptable. The adolescent who is not successful in resolving this identity crisis becomes confused.

## RESEARCH METHOD

The present study adopts qualitative design that concerns with the collection and analysis of information in as many forms, chiefly non-numeric, as possible. This is taken with the consideration that the data are collected in the form of word instead of figures, in the form of word of description rather than numbers (Blaxter, Hughes, and Tight, 1996:60). The data of this study are quotations from Alice Childress, *The World on a Hill* that is related to the topic of discussion. Thus, *The World on a Hill* serves as the primary data source. All data are classified, arranged and then interpreted. The analysis adopts intrinsic and extrinsic approach. Intrinsic approach means the study is based on the literary elements of the drama such as theme, plot, setting and character (Abrams, 1979:26). The specific intrinsic element here is character. The extrinsic approach is the discussion that is focused on the study of other aspects outside literary element

which have a great influence in shaping the literary works such as sociology, philosophy, psychology, etc. (Wellek and Warren, 1997:78). This study applies psychological approach. According to Wellek and Warren, psychological types and principles within works of literature? It means that psychological approach brings psychology and literature together.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The analysis is divided into three parts: the boy's self-concepts and their impacts toward The Boy's behavior and mannerism, factors affecting his self-concept, and development of his self-concepts.

### The Boy's Self-concepts and their Impacts toward his Behaviors and Mannerism

The Boy, Winston, is one of the main characters in *The World on a Hill*. He is a sixteen-year-old West Indian Negro who has desperate and unhappy life. He is described as a young thief who likes to tell lies. His meeting with The Woman, another main character who is a white person, reveals the reason why he likes to tell lies. His confession to her about all of the truth that he has hidden reflects his self-concepts about himself and the factors affecting his self-concepts. Most of his self-concepts are negative and these greatly affect his behaviors and mannerism.

One of The Boy's negative self-concepts is his feeling and opinion related to the White's stereotype of Black people that they like to threaten White women. 'Threaten' itself is included as criminalization, and it makes somebody suffer. This condition is a picture of Black persons as having bad social image, low social condition and poorness. The White people have a reason to feel suspicious with him.

The Boy : Don't move. (She sits down and continuous to sip the drink.) And don't scream.

The Woman: I won't. You may have my purse, take it and go. Take the

money and leave, I won't scream.

The Boy : I don't want it.

The woman : Please, please don't, I beg you.

The Boy : I know what you mean. You must think you're some Pretty. You're no movie star. I tell you.

The Woman: Thanks God. I want to go home, if you don't mind.

The Boy : I have a knife in my pocket, if you move, I'll cut you with it.

The Boy has a negative self-concept because his behavior and perception from people about Black. So, his self-concept makes effects to his behavior and mannerism. He likes to tell lies. When being confronted by her, he can't tell the truth because is useless for him.

The Boy : Yes.

The woman : Well, I never. Can't you tell the truth at all?

The Boy : No.

The woman : Well, honestly, I do declare... Why can't you?

The Boy : It's very hard for me to tell the truth.

The woman : It must be a curse or something.

The Boy : I'm ashamed of the truth. The truth is too terrible.

He always thinks of the discrimination between the black and the white people. He distrusts the white people because they treat black people as low class. His negative view about the White people makes him feel isolated from society, and all communities will see him as a bad person with bad habits, especially towards White people. He always give up for his live because he Black. The truth is shameful for him. So, he becomes a great liar.

The boy feels inferior with White because his life is not fair for him. Black doesn't have anything like White. Blacks were enslaved with

no access to any form of education, while whites were becoming more educated with each generation.

He feels inferior with all White because they have everything they want, but not The Black who is being kidnapped, having their families torn apart and their cultures destroyed not to mention the treatment they received as slaves. To be inferior with White make him have self-concept about himself to be ungrateful person. An ungrateful person never sees the positive side of things and chooses to look at the negative aspects of every situation.

The Boy : Gratitude, I'm sick of it. My mother says my trouble is I'm ungrateful. I am. If we mostly have beans for dinner she says I should be grateful because beans are better than nothing. She's always grateful for the rags we wear, the junk we eat.

The woman : My husband says I should be grateful that we have plenty of...almost everything.

Gratitude is a positive feeling while complaining is a very negative feeling. One of these feelings makes you feel good and joyful while the other feeling makes you feel bad, bitter and negative. Gratitude is also the better feeling and emotion to have because gratitude has proven to improve your life while complaining constantly about your life will decrease the quality of your life. It will also make you sick in the long term and it will not allow you to achieve all of your goals and become successful. So it is much better to choose to be grateful.

The Boy's perception of his race is that the blacks have the lowest intelligence.

The woman : What do you really want to do? What one thing do you want to do more than any other?

The Boy : I want to go to school but they won't let me because I'm dumb. I am dumb.

The Boy feels disappointed with his being Black and dumb. He needs to make the bright future life but he cannot do it, because he is stupid. In *The World on a Hill* a Black and a White in the different life situation, and one had access to a job, money for food, education, clothing, survival mode should kick in. The White have negative image of The Black. He always thinks the Black has no same level with the White.

### **Factors Affecting The Boy's Self-concept**

According to Erickson (1993) the most important factor that affecting the self-concept is not only from family, school or peer's factors but also the physical appearance, especially for adolescent. In the drama, the first factor that affects much of the Boy's self-concept is physical appearance, because he always thinks he is a Black person who is from low class in society. Second, he always gets different treatment from White people around him. The vivid evidence is he is never allowed to use the same public services as the White people have. Physical appearance here means he gets unequal right and treatment in his society.

Self-concept of physical appearance is important determinant in the promotion of the increasing level of physical activity (Biddle and Matie, 2002:184). The Boy's Physical appearance is also called self-esteem. Self-esteem is the affective component in self-concept. Self-esteem is the motivational factor of The Boy to build his self-concept.

Winston "the Boy" is sixteen years old, a Black person, who lives in United State. He is a young boy who lives together with White people community in the whole of his life. In his relation White people around him. White people have suspiciousness to Winston as a Black person, what the Boy does is not get good appreciation from them. He is considering as bad person, criminal, uneducated, and the heir of slaves who has low class in society. Shortly, he does not respect in his society. It happens from for the whole of his life, he lives with differentiation and unfair and it is become a part of his physical appearance as Black person.

The first factor that affect the Boy's self concept is Physical Appearance. He describes himself being an adolescent that is coddled at home and his socially unacceptable behavior is never thwarted by white. The Blacks want to be able to decide freely for themselves in such matters as what careers they will pursue, whether they will go to school or into military service. At the same time, however, many adolescents have a deep fear of making the wrong decision and of failing. The physical appearance in White is more wonderful and has intelligent than Black. The average white person is blessed with more intellectual gifts than the average Black. This makes the Black always feel inferior about their physical appearance in White.

The Boy : Are you happy?  
The woman : That's none of your business.  
The Boy : Because I am Black.  
The woman : Stop saying that.  
The Boy : Black business is your business but White business is none of mine.

The Boy understands that being a Black means poor and fool. He describes his dream but he can't make it become true because he is Black.

The Boy : I always imagine that I'm famous, very often I imagine until my father knocks me on the head. "Stop looking like a damn idiot! What the hell you strain' at? Get up and bring some fire-wood, such a be-damn good for nothing." And then my brothers and sisters laugh and mock how my mouth hangs open. (Slants his head to one side and gapes in imitation of their mimicking.) Go on laugh if you want to.  
The woman : What do you see when you imagine you're famous?  
The Boy : Different things, it's seldom the same. Sometimes I'm a

doctor who has made a great discovery. I've discovered a sure cure for cancer, but I'm Black, see?

The woman : Yes?

The second factor is Goals and Expectation. The boy realizes that the Black needs to understand that they have to seize on a critical moment to evince and illuminate their greatness. Black has to understand that they have to do a better job of helping one another to increase, improve, and further develop skills, talents, and knowledge. The Boy in the World on a Hill always imagines being the same level with White life. It can be seen in the statement above:

The Boy : ...unless they change their ways. Then they do change and they're grateful to me because of my discovery; white people give me medals and black people send me millions of letters thanking me for what I've done to make them all free. I'm chief advisor to presidents and kings, I'll visit Buckingham Palace, and the Russians will give me a welcome like they do the astronauts. [...]

The Boy : Sometimes I see my self as a famous movie actor, like Sydney Po-ten-nay... I stand on a platform and everyone is cheering and applauding. Other times I'm just rich, for no particular reason except I was may be born rich. I have the best of everything. I'm dressed in fine suit, not store-bought but made for me especially. [...]

The Boy : I see my self married to a wonderful, beautiful girl and she..,

she's crazy about me, mad about me.

The woman: (Bitterly) and when she wants talk to you, you won't say, "I'm busy"?

The Boy : Oh, no. [...]

The Boy : it is whenever you look at it like this and talk about it straight out. It loses something because, well, I don't know, even if I couldn't have a great large house, I sure would like to have a room to my self instead of sharing one with three brothers; a nicely painted, clean room. I'd also like a pair of corduroy trousers and a Sunday suit.

The Boy : It's true. I'm stupid when you compare my marks with my brother's. but I'd like to go to school anyway.

The woman: Yes, you go to school ad study hard.

From the statement above The Boy thinks everything in his way is not perfect because he is dumb. But he wants to get the same right with his sibling. So The Boy wants to tell everything what he wants. Because unless if he show someone something, they won't see it. It is reported that researchers develop successful career more rapidly in environments where expectations for successful performance are explicit and intellectual strengths and career development are supported. Expectations, in the form of goals and objectives, can become a roadmap that allows the trainee to navigate through the challenges of a research environment. Without clearly defined goals and objectives, there is no certainty what the final outcome of training will be. It would be akin to beginning a long journey without a destination in mind.

The third factor is family condition. The Boy always thinks about his self-concept that he is Black people and different with another not only in a common is White people but in family too.

Parents play a central role in the promotion of certain behaviors in his everyday life. Parents have an obligation to providing opportunities and encouragement to build The Boy's self-concept. Parents are important on an adolescent's activity pattern. In adolescent parental support and feedback is very influential to the involvement to build his self-concept. If parents can't care with his son he will make his perception or judge him self with his parent's attitude it will become a negative concept like The Boy.

The Boy : They're not at all like me. Pa just works and never says much. He's a porter in the movie house. Ma cooks and cleans and washes. They go to bed, wake up and star all over again. Everyday is the same.

He feels disappointed with his parent's attitude. He wants them to take care of him. But his family cannot do this to him. These conditions make him isolated from his family. They see him as a stupid person who has bad habits. He always thinks the bad condition will happen every time. He doesn't believe about peaceful life because he is different from the other.

The Boy : there is only enough money for one to go; so the bright one goes, not me.

The woman : that's not fair. Oh, I know what it is to be surrounded by bright ones. They're out to save mankind but they don't realize that I'm mankind also.

The Boy : we have to help my brother because he's smart, smart enough to maybe become a doctor.

The woman : Even so, we're entitled to something.

The Boy : And I hate chopping wood and cleaning yards. That's what I



do, clean up the yards to help him through school when it's me that's wanting to go. All right, I'm selfish but that's how I feel!

### **The self-concept development of the Boy**

Adolescents want to be able to decide freely for themselves such matters as what careers they will pursue, whether they will go to school or into military service. In other word, they want to free themselves from the shackles of their parents and other adults and make their own choice. At the same time, however, many adolescents have a deep fear of making the wrong decision and of failing. In the story *The World on a Hill* The Boy can develop his self-concept to get the positive way. He slowly begins to change his perception about Black. He can accept the opinion from White. He is also determined to tell his parents what he wanted as adolescents who want to get right that he should be. The Boy can change his perception from his life experience and make him survive to change it.

The Boy : And when I get home I'm going to tell them, "Look here, don't you think, don't you dare think..." (Loses some of his resolve.) Oh, they'll be so angry with me.

The woman : Let them. Can they bite you?

The Boy : No, but...

The woman : Can they sentence you to be hanged?

The Boy : No, but when my father is done through hollering at me, I'd rather be bitten and hung at the same time.

The woman : Let them be angry. After all, you're angry with yourself and I'm so mad at me I could scream. Let them be as angry as they damn well please. Understand? People need to hear from us. If they're asleep we'll wake them up. We've

got our rights! Ride on, young man, ride through the storm.

The Boy : (Applauding). Bravo! Bravo! Hear! Hear!

The woman : we're not afraid of anything! We'll tell the world!

The Boy : Lady, I'm not a thief.

The woman : And I'm not a coward!

The Boy : About the stealing, I woke up this morning and I knew something had to happen, I had to make a change, not tomorrow or the next but today!

### **CONCLUSION**

From the analysis, it is clear that the Boy always imagines about his bright future. He has no ability to think hard and can't deal with complex concepts in his life and he only thinks about the negative side of himself. He also has no ability to adapt to changing environments very quickly. He just follows what people say about the Black. He need to spend a long time to understand himself and find his true identity that is different from White that he always hates him. The Boy must think of something before he makes his own concept about being a Black. These are all signs of great self-concept.

The way that the Black needs to correct the problems that he faces is to set higher expectations for them. For example, he has to go to college and be a successful "cool" by doing things that have caused those who are not in college or who are not successful to be where they are today. A new day needs to begin where Black to have the right to be free. In this right to be free came the right to be free from low expectations. The Boy makes a statement to rise up his expectations of him self and to fight against any barriers, people, and institutions that would try to prevent you from being the greatest person he can be.

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