Life can change in an instant. Every thought, every action can potentially have a profound effect on the course of someone’s life. This is especially evident in Wes Moore’s novel, *The Other Wes Moore*, where two young boys grew up with multiple similarities yet from individual choices as well as from the influence of others and the environment, grew up to be two drastically different men. As the author remarks, “The chilling truth is that his story could have been mine. The tragedy is that my story could have his.”(Moore, 180) This same truth has affected me in college as I attempt to make positive decisions and demonstrate personal responsibility, self-sufficiency, and citizen leadership.

While in college it is essential to have some form of personal responsibility for your actions. Personal responsibility is taking accountability for ones actions and attempting to act in a manner promotes self-growth. In life you cannot predict what situations you may get yourself into. Everyday is a gamble for potentially being swayed onto an alternate route. "I guess it's hard sometimes to distinguish between second chances and last chances.”(Moore, 67) *The Other Wes Moore* focuses on the blurred lines of a second chance verse a last chance.

In the novel the two boys grew into very different people based on the choices that they made such as the issues they faced with drugs growing up in the ghettos of Baltimore. Both boys responded to the situation differently resulting in drastically different outcomes. The author grew up to be educated and successful, while the other Wes Moore sits in jail for a life sentence. Regardless of their the comparisons and contrast of the between the two boys, individual choices shaped the conclusion to their stories. This relates to my experience in college as it is imperative that when faced with a difficult decision or forced into a certain situation that I am capable of deciding the best course of action. College is a time when I will be exposed to a variety of new things unfortunately not all of them good. It is my personal responsibility to make wise decisions now that I am in college.

For many, college is the start of independence. There are fewer restrictions and outside support making self-sufficiency more vital to success. In essence, self-sufficiency is the capability of supporting oneself through decisions and actions. Being a college student I have to be exercise independence daily. The ability to complete task without being reminded, to think for myself and to seek out help when needed are all parts of being self-sufficient.

College is an important stepping-stone to become self sufficient as we see in the case of the author’s mother, Mary. For both of the boys, they grew up without a father and only really had their mothers to depend on. Without finishing college Mary struggled to provide for her children. Not wanting her son, Wes, to fall into the increasingly common poverty and criminal activity of young black men. “Mary realized the letter effectively closed the door on her college aspirations.” (Moore, 17) Mary’s inability to finish college makes me humble and grateful for my opportunity. Reading about the hardships that she went through opened my eyes to the significance of being not only educated but self-sufficient as well.

An education has increasingly become a prerequisite for being successful and happy in life. Through education people are capable of forming stronger values and providing positive contributions to others. The capabilities that an education offers can make a citizen leader. Longwood University defines a citizen leader as someone who “effectively combines three components (education, values, and service) of a joy-filled life” and who “takes action for the benefit of other citizens”. As a student in college, I aim to be a citizen leader who shows kindness to others and is deserving of respect.

In the novel the author describes his first real encounter with someone worthy or respect when he entered the Valley Forge Military Academy. “This was real respect, the kind you can’t beat out of people. That’s when I started to understand that I was in a different environment… It was a different psychological environment, where my normal expectations were inverted, where leadership was honored and class clowns ostracized.”(Moore, 96) It was around this moment that a noticeable change appeared in the author thanks Colonel Bratt who taught Wes how to have integrity and be an upright citizen. I hope to be able to model him so that I can be a citizen leader and help guide others in making good decisions as well.

It is usually extremely difficult if not impossible to reverse someone’s past bad decisions. Whether it is in my college life or any other life, such as the Wes Moore boys, it can be understood that making good choices revolves around having personal responsibility, self-sufficiency, and being a citizen leader. These qualities and values help direct a person onto a positive path. As the author concludes, “Our destinies can be determined by a single stumble down the wrong path, or a tentative step down the right one.” (Moore xiv)