

Prompt

We all have special places that for many reasons remain in our memory. In a concretely developed essay write about such a place and why it has stayed with you all these years.

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Once, when I worked at Domino's, a mechanic jokingly asked me if I could put his order under the name Bill Gates. I told him yes, because why not? Why should a black mechanic who worked day after day for minimum wage not enjoy a few minutes as a millionaire? Whenever I donned my black visor and navy blue polo, customers didn't see an art school feminist who loved banned books, French films and protest songs. I was a face, a face who took orders and tossed pizzas. I could have been anyone.

My favorite thing about working at Domino's was interacting with the assortment of people that pizza unified. I felt so anonymous in uniform, confident enough to answer phones and talk to strangers. Eiad, our pizza chef from Pakistan, resembled Bob Dylan and sang folk songs from his homeland when business was smooth. One of the other insiders played guitar, managed a costume shop and once welded a statue for Marvel Enterprises in New York. Teenagers came in, grass-stained and sweaty, immediately after soccer practice. Men in flannel with babies in their arms and two kids trailing behind them allowed their children to choose what to order. Elderly women in floppy sunhats and fake pearls would call before Bible school and ask for 20 large cheese pizzas to satisfy everyone.

Domino's was like an Island of Misfit Toys floating in the middle of Alabama. My coworkers all joked about each other for what made us different: Richard was a walking Star Wars database, Mike was O.C.D. when it came to stacking pizza boxes, I was a vegetarian who often had to package the meat. Kristen, now 40, had worked at pizzerias since she was 14 and was currently filing applications to enroll in college. Terry preached to a small congregation when he wasn't delivering.

Ever since I moved here, I've felt like an outsider in my community. I live for the arts while my town prioritizes football and fishing. The general population is Caucasian, Christian, Republican, anti-gay, and pro-guns — or so I thought. At Domino's, three of my coworkers fasted for Ramadan, one of the drivers read novels while waiting for deliveries and both of my bosses were women. The people who came in were far from homogenous, as diverse as the pizzas they ordered: Caucasian, Asian, African-American, and Mexican lawyers, firemen, construction workers, stay-at-home mothers, house painters. Many were married, some were divorced and some were single. Many had kids. Many were still kids. I couldn't help but admire them. They made enduring irate customers, drunken phone calls and crying children worth minimum wage. All were just ordinary people trying to build lives in America. All were united and equivalent when in need of pizza