

CouRaGeouS Cuentos: A Journal of Counternarratives

Volume 1

Article 1

2016

Full Issue

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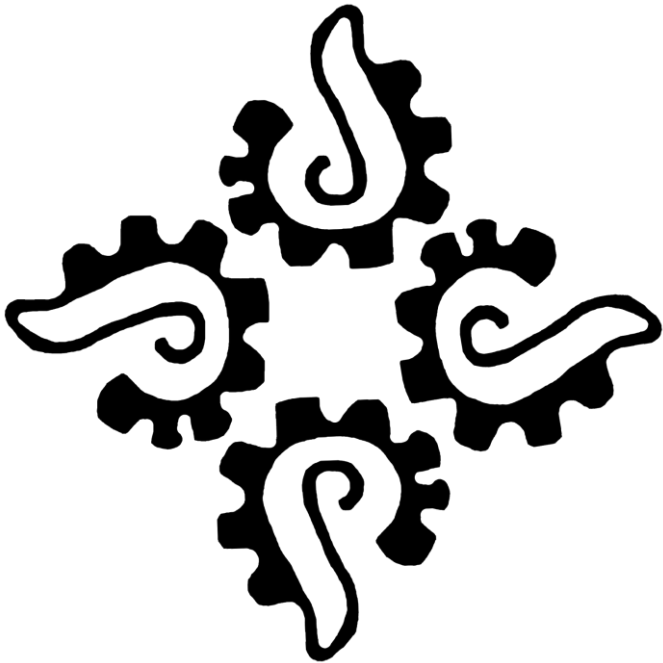
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CouRaGeous

Cuentos

A Journal of Counternarratives



Volume 1

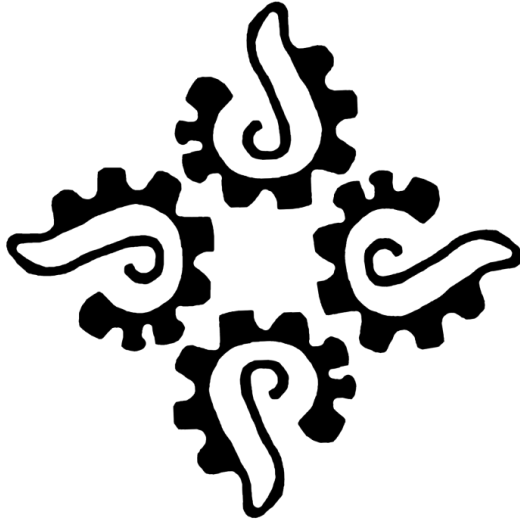
2016

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CouRaGeous

Cuentos

A Journal of Counternarratives



A Journal of the Department of Critical
Race, Gender & Sexuality Studies

Humboldt State University
Arcata, California

About This Journal

CouRaGeouS Cuentos is a library-based publishing journal and includes the creative writing of students in classes offered by the Department of Critical Race, Gender & Sexuality Studies. At this point, the works published in the journal are by students in the Ethnic Studies 107: Chican@/Latin@ Lives class since they initially envisioned the idea. They wanted to make their stories, their counternarratives, available to their families, their communities, and any other students who could relate to their stories. The scope of the journal may, in future issues, include CouRaGeouS counternarratives by students in other CRGS courses.

The journal is published annually with the creative work by students in the spring and fall semesters of each calendar year. The editing of the written works is a collective effort beginning with the students in the class peer-editing each other's writing and followed by an editing and review process done by the issue editors. The Associate Editor is always an undergraduate student and Teaching Assistant for the class. The Editor in Chief and the Assistant Editors are faculty members in the Department of Critical Race, Gender and Sexuality Studies.

Every student in the class has the opportunity to publish their work on a voluntary basis. The students submit three pieces of writing and both the instructor and TA identify the strongest piece that each student may choose to include in the journal. The students, however, have the choice to publish up to two pieces, not including their reflection of their own writing.

This journal is a publication by the Department of Critical Race, Gender & Sexuality Studies (CRGS) at Humboldt State University with submissions of creative writing works by students in the Ethnic Studies 107: *Chican@ / Latin@ Lives* class.

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Artwork

The hieroglyph (glyphs) artwork was created by Michael Tjoelke, an undergraduate student at Humboldt State University.

The glyphs used throughout this Journal were inspired by the Nahuatl hieroglyphs used by the Aztecs in Mesoamerica. The single glyph, tlatoa, denoted speech, specifically important speech, speech spoken by individuals who held social, political or religious positions of power and thus was worth writing.

This Journal reclaims the glyph to foreground the power of speech, of cuentos and knowledges that students have. We further assert that individual and community ways of knowing are valid and worthy of being written and published. We use two glyphs side by side to represent a dialogue. Orienting four glyphs towards a center is meant to be read as an important community dialogue and highlight the power of speech and conversations within community.

Acknowledgments

The editors wish to express our profound gratitude first and foremost to the CouRaGeouS students of ES 107 Chican@/Latin@ Lives, Spring 2015, who envisioned the journal and wrote the creative works within.

To Professor Kim Berry, Chair of the Department of Critical Race, Gender & Sexuality Studies (CRGS), whose leadership and advocacy secured the approval for ES 107 to be offered every semester since August 2014. We thank her for her unwavering support of the class and for her excitement about the journal from the beginning.

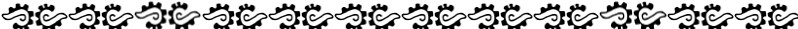
To Professors Barbara Brinson Curiel, Janelle Adsit, and Christina Accomando for their generous guidance through the myriad considerations the production of a journal entails. To Cyril Oberlander, Dean of the Library, whose enthusiastic support for this journal and introduced us to the magical world of digital publishing. To Kyle Morgan from the HSU Library for his creative solutions to publishing woes. To Michael Tjoelke for the artwork. To Chrissy McGrath and bepress who made the idea concretely tangible. To the staff and faculty of the Department of CRGS for believing that our cuentos cuentan, that our stories matter, and that they ought to be published.

This journal would not have been possible without the full support of Dr. Ken Ayoob, Dean of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences.

¡Muchas gracias a todos!

CouRaGeous Cuentos

A Journal of Counternarratives


Volume 1 **2016**



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Editors' Introduction

That moment, when students in a class understand a new idea, one that illuminates their world a little more and allows them a deeper understanding of their lives--that moment, is sheer magic. We are lucky to get a glimpse, as if looking at the firmament and catching a shooting star off to the side of our gaze. For students, the moment excites them so much their eyes get big, they lean their bodies closer to the front of the classroom, slightly lifting themselves off their seats. We teach for those moments. The genesis of *CouRaGeouS Cuentos: A Journal of Counternarratives* was one such event. The singularity of this moment is that it was collective and organic, a veritable meteor shower. It struck the students, as lightning making contact with the earth, full of energy, unpredictable, and powerfully beautiful—at the same time.

This is how it started. In 2014 Humboldt State University had been recently designated by the U.S. Department of Education as a “Hispanic’ Serving Institution.” Intending to meet the curricular needs and intellectual interests of a growing Chicanx and Latinx student population at HSU, the administration approved a new course, *Ethnic Studies 107: Chican @/Latin @ Lives*. Students read literary work by U.S. Chicanx and Latinx writers, and together we discuss salient themes of identity, resistance, and oppression.

Marginalized communities critically analyze language as a tool of power and constantly seek a new language that is self-proclaimed and more inclusive of the beautiful and complex diversity within it. When the course was created @ was used to challenge the patriarchal linguistic convention in Spanish where the masculine noun can be used to label a whole community, thus erasing people who are not identified as masculine or male. The @ symbol is read as an “a” and an “o” including both the feminine and the masculine together. Important critical interventions, however, have asserted that gender and sex are not binary categories. This understanding has compelled language to shift the spelling from Chican @/Latin @ to Chicanx/Latinx as it honors and includes people who identify at various points along the spectrum of gender identity. We will use the Chicanx and Latinx to

denote the singular or plural sense of the word and its meaning can be understood in context.

In spring 2015, students were expected to respond to a prompt with a freewrite at the beginning of each class. The prompts were personal and sought to help the students make connections between the readings and their own lives. They were also vague enough to allow all students a point of access into the conversation regardless of the constellation of their multiple identities. When the writing was over, a few of students could volunteer and share what they wrote with the whole class. Soon, it was clear that students couldn't wait to write, couldn't wait to share, couldn't wait to listen to what their peers had written about their dreams and hopes, the stories they survived, and the tales they hear and tell. With great courage, the students wrote about their always complex, frequently beautiful and often painful lives. The students showed kindness to their fellow authors and affirmed their strength and resilience. Bearing witness to their peers' intimate and silenced stories, more and more students wished to share their writings with the class.

A couple of weeks into the semester the students bemoaned they couldn't listen to more stories because of our limited time constraints. They paused, their lips slowly curved upwards. Corn kernels subjected to heat, their ideas and questions popped simultaneously. "What if we post the freewrites on moodle so all of us can read them?" "What if we make a pdf file that we share? What if we posted the pdf file on the CRGS website, on the internet, then everyone, everywhere could read them!" Full of vigor the students argued tenaciously, what's more they demanded, that I help them tell the stories of their lives, in their own words, in their own language(s), and importantly in their own voice, *en su propia voz*.

They wanted to write for the whole world to read. They wanted their friends and family members to know, the ones who did not have the opportunity to pursue higher education, that lived experiences are valid knowledge. They wanted other students, students like themselves, the ones who got to college, one that is far away from home, the students who feel homesick before their families have the time to drive away, to know they are not alone. Ultimately, they wanted to speak for themselves, to challenge the stories about their communities spun by someone else. They

wanted to tell it like it is, la pura neta. “Why not María? Can we do this?” Inspired by their enthusiasm we said, “Of course! Why not? ¿Y porqué no?” ¿Quién dijo que no se puede? It was pura magia.

In doing so, we would be cracking a fissure in the ivory tower, the place where the worth of one’s life is affirmed by the knowledge that is produced there, where such knowledge has not, until the last four decades, included the stories that resonate with the lived experiences of the majority of the students in the class. Reminiscing about her writing during graduate school Sandra Cisneros recalls,

I was trying as best as I could to write the kind of book I had never seen in a library or in a school, the kind of book not even my professors could write. (Cisneros, 127-8)

Literature by, for and about Chicanx and Latinx lives is growing, and numerous authors have forged critical paths of inquiry relating to the experience, status and condition of our communities within the U.S. Our voices code switch and the stories reflect the heterogeneous nature and complex history of Chicanx and Latinx in the United States. We have stories written by accomplished and eloquent authors, by talented and creative poets, and storytellers. The published voices that speak to the experience of Chicanx and Latinx college students’ lives, the voices that reveal their arduous trajectory to college and insights into what it means to be a person of color, in a predominantly and historically white university are loudly absent. The students of the *Ethnic Studies 107: Chican@/Latin@ Lives* class yearn to write such narratives; the kinds of stories that their professors, indeed, cannot write.

On Language. The journal is a venue committed to honoring the authors’ voices, language(s), and forms of expression and do so in a non-academic manner. The students are the peer-editors of their peer writers. The editors of this journal edited the work again, for clarity and consistency. In the Chicanx and Latinx community the issue of language is fraught with a sense of belonging, internal colonialism, and oppression. Following the U.S. invasion of Mexico in 1846 and the subsequent territorial annexation of the southwest, newly established institutions did not recognize legitimacy of Spanish. English was, and is, the language of the power; in the courts, in the schools, and the labor

market. People of Mexican descent did not have access to jobs because they could not speak English. Spanish speakers were tried in courts of law where they could not defend themselves because the lingua franca was English. Children heard whispering in Spanish in the playground could be subjected to teachers smacking their knuckles with rulers. Worse yet, Spanish speaking students were not receiving the full benefits of an education when the instruction was delivered in English.

In California, bilingual programs seeking to address this unequal access to education were legally dismantled in 1998, when 62% of California voters passed Proposition 227 during the statewide primary elections. Wanting their children to have better opportunities, to experience less discrimination, to salir adelante, many parents chose not to teach their children Spanish. An ongoing movement of immigrants across the Mexico/US border bi-directionally keeps Spanish in our barrios, in our tongues, music and stories, alive and clear.

For these reasons we deliberately chose not to translate, not to have a glossary, not to italicize--in order to avoid highlighting the preeminence of one language over the other. Then again, we may choose to do so at times. Gloria Anzaldúa has named the borderlands as a place in-between, one that is much more than geographic, but also cultural, historical, and linguistic as well. She reminds us that we are a hybrid people, with "forked tongues," and direly need languages that speak to our plural experiences. Thus Chicanx and Latinx speak Spanish, English, Spanglish, Caló, Tex-Mex, Pocho, code switch and any combination of the above.

Until I am free to write bilingually and to switch codes without having always to translate, while I still have to speak English or Spanish when I would rather speak Spanglish, and as long as I have to accommodate the English speakers rather than having them accommodate me, my tongue will be illegitimate. (Anzaldúa, 81)

Our purpose is to have the students write in their own voice, style and language; influenced but not directed by the diverse authors they read. In the process students reflect upon and articulate what is important to them about their own lives, in the context of the dominant narratives and counter narratives they

analyze throughout the semester. A central course theme is the importance of claiming one's own voice and the authority to speak. This journal will make this theme vividly real to them. Importantly, this academic journal will speak in multiple non-academic voices. We feel strongly that retaining the language of choice of the author is the most inclusive way to articulate the contextual linguistic complexity among Chicanx and Latinx.

El bautismo, the naming of the journal, was a series of deliberate choices. *CouRaGeouS*, as an adjective, acknowledges the students' courage inherent in both the writing of their intimately personal stories and making them available to the public. Students are learning that stories create communities, offer perseverance and resistance, and at times can save lives. The spelling of the *CouRaGeouS*, with certain letters capitalized, identifies the journal with the department where I teach and where the *Chican@/Latin@ Lives* course was created: Critical, Race, Gender and Sexuality Studies (CRGS). *A Journal of Counternarratives* explains what the journal endeavors to include: stories, based on lived experiences, that challenge, correct, amend, or complete the dominant narratives about the Chicanx and Latinx communities. The naming of our identities is an ongoing and evolving process.

Cuentos. *Cuentos* is the necessary Spanish word to signify the source and context of the journal's creation--the *Chican@/Latin@ Lives* class. Linguistically and semantically, *cuentos* is a tremendously versatile word. As a noun, a *cuento* is a "story." In the context of academia, personal stories, are not historically recognized as important ways of knowing. Cherrie Moraga challenged that notion with what she called, "Theory in the Flesh" (Moraga and Anzaldúa, 25). This journal foregrounds *cuentos*/stories as an important source of knowledge that the students already and uniquely possess. As a verb, *cuento* is the first-person, singular form of saying, "I tell (a story)." *Yo cuento*, is an emphatic assertion of "I am the one who tells the story, the story-teller." *Cuento*, as an intransitive verb, is a claim in first person that "I count, I am important, and I matter." "*Yo cuento cuando cuento cuentos que cuentan, y mis cuentos cuentan*" employs a variation of the word *cuento* six times, "I matter when I tell important stories, and my stories count."

This project closely mirrors the concept of *Papelitos Guardados*, which is introduced in *Telling to Live: Latina Feminist Testimonios*. The authors assert that *papelitos guardados*

evoked the process by which we contemplate thoughts and feelings, often in isolation and through difficult times. We keep them in our memory, write them down, and store them in safe places waiting for the appropriate moment when we can return to them for review and analysis, or speak out and share them with others. (Acevedo, 1)

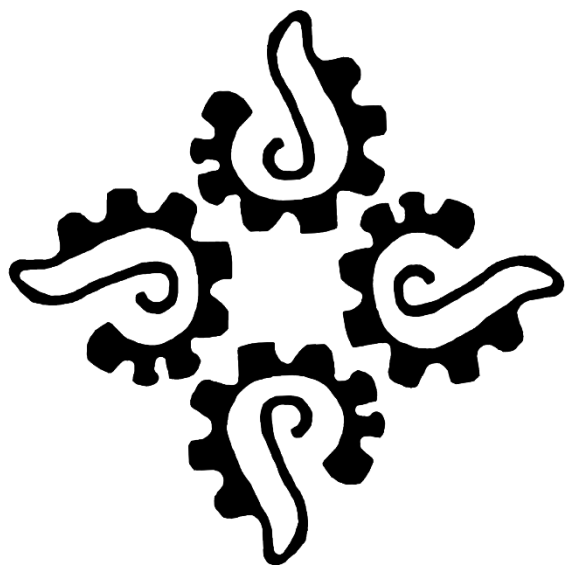
Through encouragement, the *papelitos guardados* are turned into *Testimonios* (shared stories); where reflection, healing and empowerment are born through community engagement and support. As the authors note, *Testimonio* has been a powerful tool in movements of liberation throughout Latin America in the manner that they offer an artistic form and a methodology to create politicized understandings of identity and community. Within the classroom, students often shared how the literature and reflective assignments prompted them to critically reflect, often for the first time, on their personal identities, community, and the institutions they occupy.

As editors and on behalf of the students of the Ethnic Studies 107 classes of 2015, we invite you to join us, escúchenos contar nuestros cuentos, listen to our stories. Welcome to the inaugural edition of *CouRaGeous Cuentos: A Journal of Counternarratives*. ¡Bienvenidos!

María Corral-Ribordy,
Editor-in-Chief
Carlos Molina
Associate Editor

Arcata, California

Counternarratives & Reflections



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Those Hot Summer Days

Karla Amaya

When I signed up to join the Upward Bound program, a college-prep summer program at Cal State Long Beach, I didn't know that I was also signing-up to clean out the garage before I left. California summers are as hot as fire, and the sun rays were like needles barely breaking the skin. Imagine being in a garage with one window and one door surrounded by mountains of unfolded clothes everywhere. Some piles even reached the roof of the garage. My sister and I did not want to stay in there all day and fold clothes in a hot garage with barely any ventilation, so we decided to climb the 'mountains' and jump off when we reached the tops. Of course we folded some clothes every now and then, so it wouldn't be obvious how slowly we were working.

One day my grandmother walked in on us climbing the piles of clothing, she had angry eyes, and her voice shook like an earthquake when she spoke. She sat down and began to cry endless tears as if her eyes held oceans. My sister and I were confused, yet we also felt sorry for being caught, we felt sorry for making our grandmother cry. My grandmother, seeing our confused faces, began to tell us about her times back in El Salvador. She worked in a factory folding shirts and sewing missing buttons back on. Sometimes there weren't enough sewing machines, so she would have to sew by hand.

As she was telling us her story, I couldn't help but notice her hands: they were bigger than usual due to the surgeries she'd had on them as a result of carpal tunnel syndrome. The surgeries did more harm than good leaving her unable to close her hands more than seventy-five percent and leaving her unable to find work. I thought of my dad, how he works every single day, from six in the morning to whatever time he comes home, which is usually ten at night. How he collects aluminum cans, plastic and cardboard just so we can scrape by through another month of rent and bills.

I thought of myself.

I am ashamed because I couldn't endure a couple days of folding clothes, whereas my parents have endured so much more than this. The guilt in my heart took control of my body; I picked up a shirt from the mountains and began to fold. I had climbed the mountain of understanding.

Reflection

The first day we began to write was the day I began to feel lighter throughout the semester. I felt as if my words were being written for others, for them to learn from my experiences and the things I've endured. Since we had a different prompt each day we met, it was easier to write about more than one subject and really express the thoughts that rose to mind at that moment. I wrote about many things, but there were some subjects I wrote about that I hold dear to my heart, such as my parents, my childhood memories, and about faith.

Even though there were *many* prompts, there is one that I will reflect on titled "Those Hot Summer Days." The prompt was to describe a moment of intense work or labor, and so I did. At first, I was going to just speak about my parents' labor, but later I decided to add how I was told my grandmother's story, which happened to be in the summer, hence the title.

It was a normal day for a soon-to-be ninth grader who had just signed up to be a participant of the Upward Bound program at Cal State Long Beach. Those who participated took summer classes at CSULB that Upward Bound provided. It was also a college-prep program assisting students in applying to colleges (if they were seniors) and aided high-school students with SAT fee waivers and SAT review classes. Those days during my high school career were when I played sports and did well academically; they morphed me into the butterfly I am today, but so did my parents, who got me into the program in the first place. Without them, I definitely wouldn't be the person that I am today.

This led me to choose to write about their labor and share their experiences with the class, the HSU campus, and whoever else is interested in hearing my thoughts and memories.

As I began to write their story and mine, I couldn't help but feel sadness as I remembered that hot summer day. I remember the tears my grandmother cried, they were never ending, a waterfall. I remember her hands, scarred and swollen. I remember how distant her eyes were as she told my sister and I about the hard times she endured back in El Salvador.

I also remembered other times of labor; my older siblings and I went with my parents each day during the summer to deliver phone books to houses in huge areas. We would start at six-thirty in the morning and finish around four in the afternoon. Thank god we helped our parents, because without us, who knows what time they would have come home. Our parents work hard for their children, no matter the task, because of the love they hold for us. They work hard, so that we don't have to, as my beautiful grandmother has always taught me.

Being able to write about your most cherished childhood memories or the things that have caused you to reflect on yourself and change for the better has enabled me to grow as a writer and as a person. If I am able to share this with my campus, then I can share just about anything. Most of the pieces I wrote in class were about my parents and loved ones, so it's time I've opened up to writing about anything. As I continue to write, I realize a mirror will provide you an image of your reflection, you on the surface. But a mirror does not allow you to reflect on the inside, on what allows you to grow—that, you have to find for yourself.

Mis Berrinches: My “Otherness”

Jacqueline Barrera-Pacheco

Back when I was youngster, I did not know much about what disadvantages or privileges I did and didn't have. I did not even know what that meant. Never heard of it. I sort of knew what it looked like, but did not know what to call it other than *mi mala suerte de ser pobre*. Last semester I just learned that “*mi mala suerte de ser pobre*” excuse had terms, a background, a cause, and which are the institutions behind it.

My mom calls my supposedly molestias y tristezas como berrinches; she did not fall for any of them. “¿¡¡Amá, porque ustedes no tienen dos carros o porqué nunca salimos?!!” I would say madly, especially during the summer when living in a two-bedroom apartment was not the place where I would want to be. Knowing that my friends were in Disneyland or Raging Waters made me wish I were rich. My parents worked and still continue to work at a 7 AM to 5 PM job and work even on Saturdays. So yeah, taking my brother and me somewhere was not in the picture. We could only go to the neighborhood park. I am not saying I did not appreciate it, but I was at that age where everything my friends did I wanted to do as well.

During high school, I constantly heard that I lived in an “at-risk, low-income neighborhood,” South Central, Los Angeles. I, along with others in the neighborhood and surrounding neighborhoods, were and are at-risk of: joining a gang, doing drugs, dying, dropping-out of school, getting pregnant as a teen and much more. The main factor that would ensure those outcomes was not having money at home. Many claim that money cannot buy you happiness, but it sure does make a family who lives off of their parent's paycheck week-by-week want to do something to support them. Money needs to be used wisely, sure here and there you can splurge on yourself, but knowing what you need to pay off first matters the most. Many people I knew in middle school knew the privileges they did and did not have at the

age of 14, precisely the age in which many of them dropped-out to work and help their families.

I did not judge them, I knew that they had troubles at home and only had one parent in their life to make the rent on time. If anything, I looked up to them and wondered how they had the courage to take the initiative to create their own path at a young age. I really thought about working and not going to school, but I did not have that “necessity” although I knew how much my family needed it. I knew that the unequal pay my mom and dad received was not fair, I heard them talk about how bad their bosses treated them and the sarcasm used and maldades their co-workers did amongst the rest of the workers. I heard their daily conversations (and still to this day) through the crack of the door, how they wish they could stop working there and leave, but it is easier said than done and looking for another job would take weeks. And when they did leave that job, it was not weeks but months that it would take them to find another job - and it always ended up being the same work environment as the previous one.

I did not end up dropping out the moment I started to realize that I knew what it was to “look poor” and be poor thanks to the media, neighborhood police officers, teachers and neighbors. I knew that I needed to stay in school fo’sure. As I transitioned to middle school, I complained about why my parents were not looking for a house, not an apartment, but a house. They said that they did not have the money, but les reclamaba diciendoles que hay familias que tienen cinco hij@s y tenían casa y dos carros. Man I would get mad because how difficult could it be to find a house when the total family members in the house are four?! We did not have two cars or payments for having bought a brand new couch or refrigerator - I did not understand why it was difficult to get a house. “Ama agarra Section 8, una casa de dos pisos estaría bien, acabo no nos iríamos lejos de la área,” I would tell my mom. She would respond by telling me, “No. No voy a depender del gobierno sabiendo que yo puedo pagar mi propia renta. No quiero que tu tampoco dependas en eso.” I would still be mad though, but she had her reasons.

My aunts and uncles have a home of their own, all paid! A nice home with their own front and back yard, basement, three rooms, big kitchen, I mean what more can you ask for? Oh yeah, and they had two cars. But most importantly, they have their own home that they only have to pay utility bills for. I never told my mom that though, I knew she would get mad at me or even worse, feel that I was ashamed of how I was living. I got even madder because she is the oldest, and she did not have a home of her own, but her younger siblings all do. I was not ashamed, if anything, just jealous, and to be more honest I'm still jealous.

Even people in the neighborhood have good cars, unlike my dad, whose last two cars were stolen. I saw the second one get stolen, but I did not scream at the cholos who stole it because what good would that do? What sucks even more was that those cholos were the same ones who lived two blocks away and I would see them pass by like nothing. But I have seen them do far worse things at night to innocent people, so lo deje en las manos de Dios and just hoped that the next car my dad got wasn't stolen. Plus, snitching was not the route to take since everyone ends up finding out anyways.

To be honest I do not know where this essay is heading, it seems more as if I'm ranting about what I did not have when growing up.

Then attending a University happened. A class I took, in *Race, Class, Gender and Sexuality Studies* taught me the disadvantages, advantages, injustice, and privileges that I have encountered without even knowing that I have. Terms such as *discrimination* and *internalized oppression* caught my eye the most because I really think that everyone in the *hood* projects those two at all times. If I were to look back at when those moments happened I couldn't point them out even though I faced them hundreds of times. The wanting of better things and being unhappy with the way how I was living is internalized oppression because I wanted what the privileged people have, a fancy home, more than one working car, and a fair and equal paying job. I let it go though (honestly to some extent) but now that I know that receiving a higher education is a privilege I know that I will have those things one day and I'm glad. It is not my fault, nor my family's, nor my community's for how we live.

My otherness is not unique; many know of it, many have gone through worse. But seeing how it has made me feel worthless, feel ashamed of my culture and background, of my skin, my color, my identity, my persona at a young age of just 11 years-old makes me feel glad of the privilege that I did obtain of being able to learn at a higher education institution. I'm PROUD TO BE MEXICAN. Proud and blessed to be the daughter, cousin, granddaughter and niece OF MY FAMILY. My otherness, I'm also proud of.

Reflection

When responding to the writing prompts over the course of this semester, I did not know that I had a lot to say about a question whose response only mattered to the person telling the story. Who cares about what a young Chican@/Latin@ student has to say? Who cares about our struggles? Who cares about our story? That is what initially crossed my mind because I come from a community where people's stories like mine are just used for the benefit of the elite who just need an area to donate their money to. We were, and still are, being used. We tell our stories to the media because we want the truth to come out, but it is always misinterpreted and written differently for the benefit of others who we do not even know.

In other situations, when I was asked similar questions, just like the ones in the writing prompts I used to lie and did not speak about it. I did both of those things because I was upset that my story did not matter. I lied because it made me stronger in knowing that others were not going to say the usual, "*I feel sorry for you. It really amazes me how people like you have survived so much,*" because those phrases coming from outsiders were always just said para sacarnos más información para sus organizaciones que ni nos ayudan y nos hacen sentir peor de lo que ya estamos. I did not speak about it because I did not know what good it would do. So why start now? Why should I truthfully write about it in class and re-read my story just knowing that it would make me more homesick than I already am?

I continued to truthfully respond to the prompts because my professor and my classmates gave out a vibe that made that classroom our safe space. A space where I heard my classmates write and tell their most intimate stories to the rest of the class. An

environment where we were able to relate to one another and even relate to our professor. How often does that happen in an institution where we are often looked down upon and belittled? It does not happen often. So being able to cry, laugh, become stronger, admire, and learn from those around us in that classroom made me write my stories truthfully and genuinely. We were not reporters, we were not just any other outsiders trying to profit from each other's stories, and we were not the type of people who would ever exploit one another.

It was not easy reflecting back on "Write about a time when..." nor was it easy on having realized hours later that you missed out on the chance to share your story out-loud. But knowing that there was going to be at least one other person who would relate to my story continued to make the writing process easier, even if nobody would read it other than me. I liked the fact that my professor did not give us guidelines, other than continuing to write without stopping because it helped me jot down stuff that I was previously discouraged from saying. I was encouraged to actually write about my "otherness" and about my feelings, something that I would not dare write about and that would only be kept in my mind. Writing my stories made me become proud of whom I am, was and will become.

Remembering the Forgotten

Briana Corona

Monique, it's hard to forget. It's hard to forget your big-lipped smile. Your teeth were so prominent and white, when you smiled, everyone's eyes' seemed to float in your direction. I remember when you would take all of our other cousins on a ride-along and buy us tostilocos and Mexican candy from the *paleteao*, but would always stop at the Qwik-E-Market and get your favorite drink-Bud Light Chelada. When you would enter the car you would smile and say "Don't tell your tía!" Damn Monique, it's been one hell of a time since you've been away. I fucking miss your laugh. It echoes in my head, like that one time when that poppin' Biggie song came on and you started dancing. You thought you were one of them backstage dancers. You were known for your big butt too Mo. Like that time, when all of the cousins bet that you couldn't pick up the beer bottle with your buttcheeks, and you fucking did it! The family laughed so hard I remember everyone's red faces, out-of-breath, dying with laughter, and you with your big-ass smile.

I remember when you were on the news Monique. They said the border patrol shot you outside of your apartment. They shot you 19 times. Damn Mo, if only they could see that big-ass white smile. I miss you Valeria Monique Tachiquin. I wish they knew what they took from our family. They left 5 kids behind with no mom. I miss the times you would take me to church, and I made fun of you for believing in something so foolish. Regardless, you took me and somehow I knew I had a little bit of faith. When I Google your name, all I see is news reports with your body laying halfway out the car. I just wish I could plug my brain into the Internet and upload every beautiful moment you created for us. I wish I could upload the images of your smile, your dance moves, and all of the drunken memories that have never been bad. I miss you Monique and I wish people saw and remembered you like I do.

Sábado

Patricia Cortés

Sábado:

No sólo otro día de la semana
El sonido de la estufa me despierta.

Son las seis de la mañana,
el día todavía oscuro,
Y la luz de la cocina prendida.
Media despierta, me levanto,
apenas con los ojos abiertos.

¿Qué haces, Apá?
Lo veo bien cansado, en paz,
Y con ojeras.

Nada, mi amor. ¿Y tú?
Voy y lo abrazo por detrás.
frágil,

como una pluma.
Mi papá comienza su día calentándose un vaso de té.

Sábado.
Quisiera que este día nunca llegara.
Sé que pronto llegarán los insultos y los gritos.
Labor.

Un modo de vivir.
Una maldición que no tiene fin.
Mis papás trabajan en una florería,
dónde también se rentan cosas para fiestas.
9 años.

Todos los días encerrados.
Sábados son días para celebrar fiestas:
Un cumpleaños.
Un bautismo.
Una quinceañera.
Una boda.
Todo.

Mesas, manteles, sillas, forros, brincolines, flores, globos...
Se renta todo.

Pero, no para nosotros.
Mi papá está cargando la troca,
Levantando más de 60 sillas.
más de 8 mesas.
Herramientas, más de 100 libras.
Labor.
La causa de sus gotas de sudor.
Acabado.
Derrotado.
Cansado.
Pero lo más peor de eso era que yo no podía hacer nada.
Él sabía que viéndolo así me estresaba.
Entonces, el único momento que me sentí útil fue cuando le
llenaba un vaso grande de agua.
Se lo daba,
Y en el instante se lo terminaba.
Emitiendo un suspiro de alivio.
Como si el agua lo hubiera revitalizando.
Pero en cualquier momento,
El estrés provocaría a los dos leones.
Mis padres se pelean,
con gritos que se pueden oír de lejos.
No pensaban, solo gritaban.
Yo me preguntaba, ¿Cuándo terminarán?
Gritaban tan fuerte que los vecinos llegaban preguntando si
estábamos bien.
Labor.
La labor mata.
Labor.
Labor en una economía que nomás esclaviza.
Nuestra condición:
Mexicanos.
Indocumentados.
Pobres.
Yo sé que ellos se pasarán toda la vida trabajando.
Sábado.
Como mi papá dice, ¡Pues, ni modo, hay que chingarle!
Sábado.

Cómo odio los sábados.

Así Es La Vida

Patricia Cortés

Me siento sola, aislada, vacía, en una comunidad donde no pertenezco. ¿Qué vendrá? Pura corrupción se ve en las noticias; homicidios, drogas, pandillas, asesinos. No es nada nuevo, lo mismo de siempre. ¿Apoco la vida siempre va a ser así? Negros, ilegales, Mexicanos. Siempre criminalizados. ¿Y porque los gringos no? Aquí estoy, sentada en mi cama. Mis padres trabajando tarde. Otra vez. Apenas y alcanzamos para la renta. ¿Entonces para qué vivimos? Es más ¿Para quién vivimos? Esta economía sólo sirve para abusar del trabajo de mis padres. En los ojos de esta sociedad, somos considerados: ilegales, inmigrantes, espaldas mojadas, pobres, huevones. Ellos dicen que nosotros dependemos del gobierno, pero lo que no saben es que el gobierno depende de nosotros. Trabajadores sin trabajo. Que ironía.

Mis padres se escaparon de un gobierno corrupto. Cruzaron la frontera aunque la migra los capturó dos veces. ¿Y para qué? Yo veo que el modo de vivir es igual. Pagamos por una casa que no es de nosotros. Manejamos, pero no tenemos licencia. Por 25 años, hemos vivido en los Estados Unidos; pero, todavía somos ilegales. A veces pienso si hay un Dios. Si hubiera, ¿Por qué llegamos a la casa todo los días cansados? Estamos cansados; cansados de trabajar desde la madrugada mientras esos pinches gringos se toman sus vacaciones en sus barcos. ¿Por qué permites esto, Dios? ¿Por qué la vida no es fácil?

Reflection

Throughout all the poems I have written, I noticed a lot of resentment I seem to have towards society. However, I noticed that I am tending to appreciate my family more and more throughout time, for they have endured several forms of oppression for the sake of bettering my life. What I noticed throughout my writing is that it comes a lot more naturally to

describe the hardships that my parents go through on an everyday basis in Spanish rather than English. For some reason, I feel like it is because my feelings are translated into the actual phrases and words my parents would say in the face of societal defeat. So, in reality, the experiences of my family hardships imply the resentment and hatred that I have for a system that puts certain communities in a disadvantaged position.

Almost every prompt that was covered in class always related to my family one way or another. I noticed that my responses to the prompts are usually poems because I don't really know exactly how to describe my experiences in a way that isn't figurative. Every day is always a little different, and sometimes when I come to class a little stressed, my writing become a little tense and heavy. The same goes for when I come to class while I'm having a hard day and I seem a little saddened and weighed down. As a result of that, my writings become a little more sad and super personal, not to say that my writings are not personal in general. I was mentioning at some point that when writing is actually done with a piece of paper and a pen it seems to be a little more real to me, humanistic in fact. When I started typing my poems it somewhat had a different effect because sometimes handwriting can hint of personality traits and perhaps the life context of a writer. For example, my writing isn't neat, it's somewhat a little messy. My life, at times feels a little messy, unorganized and scattered, which sometimes makes me anxious. In contrast, I would feel that neat writing consists of a controlled mindset and a steady well-being.

Stolen Innocence

Magdalena Cortez

Looking back and thinking about an injustice that was done to me I can think of many, but one that comes back to me each time is when I was 15. Actually, it's been on my mind a lot this semester. It was all brought up again when one day, during a class discussion, we realized how that some people think that *not* talking about something makes it less real. I used to think like that. If I don't talk about an issue that had a huge impact on me, I tend to just pretend that it didn't happen.

It all comes back to me as if it were yesterday. I was 15-years-old. We were living in a new house, in a new city. I was sleeping in my new room. My mom had gone to work and my sister was sleeping in her room. I don't even want to mention the name...That person will be referred to as HE. HE came into my room early in the morning and got under the covers next to me pressing HIS body next to mine. It took me some time to fully wake-up and realize that it was HIM. I told HIM to stop and I sat up in my bed. HE murmured something and left. What the fuck was HE thinking? I couldn't believe it! I was so confused. I couldn't go back to sleep right away after that. I was extremely paranoid and kept imagining HIM coming back into my room. I quickly got up from my bed and locked my door. It took me some time to actually go back to sleep. I laid there crying, unsure of what to do. I knew it was not right, HE made me feel uncomfortable.

I woke up and got ready for school, not really school, it was technically still summer. I had to go to school that morning to take an exam. As I was preparing my food in the kitchen HE walked in through the back kitchen door. HE walked a bit towards me and looked me in the eye. HE said sorry about what had happened. HE told me not to tell my mom or María, my sister, because that would only ruin things. (I'm getting so frustrated writing this). Looking back now and realizing what HE said to me makes me want to yell and tell HIM off. I can't believe HE had the audacity to turn this

around and make me feel guilty about “ruining” things. I had trusted this person. At that point all I felt was embarrassment and guilt, which probably explains why I never told anyone until recently.

After that day, I never felt comfortable in that house ever again. I still pretend like nothing happened between us. I have only told two people and that was only recently. It still affects me. It affects me in very personal ways that I am still trying to overcome. I almost came close to telling my family one night, but I guess I chickened out. I was recently asked by this incredible woman, who so happens to be my mentor, why we, women, feel like the “chickens” and I honestly don’t have one answer. I think it all comes back to what we were taught growing-up.

I know if I tell my family they won’t judge me, but I feel if I tell others they may question me and ask what I did to that person to provoke HIM. I think that is what scares me the most. Having people come up to me and blame me, the victim, when in reality that is all I am, a victim.

Months have gone by since this occurred, almost a year. One day HE picked me up from a party and it was night time. We were at a red light. I can’t recall the exact words, because like I said earlier, I tried to pretend like it never happened and blocked it out of my memory. HE took my hand into HIS, already making me feel uncomfortable. I knew it was inappropriate! HE told me HE loved me, like a “man loves a woman”. I told HIM I didn’t feel that way. I thought of HIM differently. I was extremely uncomfortable, that red light seemed like eternity until it turned green. I couldn’t believe it again. A year later and it was all back.

I realize that this is affecting me every day. I do have trust issues. I honestly don’t know how I opened up to some people. Back then I felt like I couldn’t speak-up. I was embarrassed and afraid, but most of all I felt ashamed. I now know that I shouldn’t have felt those things. It wasn’t my fault. I never asked for any of that to happen.

And I noticed that by me not stating HIS name on paper and capitalizing HIS pronoun gives HIM much power, which is true. HE still holds power over me because I have not confronted HIM about what HE did to me. HE sincerely took my innocence away from me. I’m not comfortable writing HIS name down

because someone might find it, but at the same time, each time I talk about this experience it's a way for me to cope and making it more real.

Writing this is extremely difficult. I feel like crying as I'm finishing this up. Perhaps this explains why I am the way that I am. I don't feel comfortable when I'm around HIM. I probably never will be again. I always feel like I'm being objectified when I'm around HIM. However, now I feel like I have the language to speak-up. Hearing many stories about survivors of sexualized violence and rape victims helps me see that I'm not alone. I'm just really thankful it never escalated or continued. This event will forever be a part of me, but it will not define me.

Past and Future

Magdalena Cortez

Faith, I'm not too sure what it means to me. When I hear the word, religion pops into my mind. I don't go to church. I consider myself Catholic, but I do not support everything that falls under Catholicism. I believe in Dios y en La Virgen de Guadalupe. But if we are just talking about faith I guess I believe that everything happens for a reason. Sometimes it's hard to accept that, but I think in time it begins to make sense. For some mysterious or unexplainable (at times) reason, things happen to us. We may lose a loved one, we may come across people that we would have never imagined. People who we find interesting, people that frustrate us, that challenge us, people that motivate us and want to make us become a better person for ourselves. Perhaps we may find ourselves in a difficult or unbearable situation that to us may seem like the end of the world, but in the end it happened to us. Why? We may not always know. But I believe that those things happen to us because they need to.

Some things are unavoidable, they may simply be out of our control. However, they do happen. They happen to teach us a lesson, to motivate us, to question ourselves, and/or to help us completely evaluate ourselves and perhaps change entirely. I'm not sure. Faith is something that people believe in. It's whatever people want it to be.

Not sure where I am going with this. My parents' divorce comes to mind. What happened when I was 15 comes to mind. Were these things always in my path? I don't know. Perhaps. What I do know, is that I am extremely grateful to be where I am today. I can't live in my past, I can only move forward and use my past experiences to guide me in what the future holds for me.

Reflection

As these prompts were assigned in class, I couldn't help but to begin writing before she even finished talking. The fact that we would get time in class to write about ourselves was incredible. There are very few instructors that give students time to reflect on their life experiences and get them down on paper. Perhaps it has to do with the short amount of time they have to teach us all the information they need to. Or perhaps they just don't care. Whatever the reason may be, as a result of writing, I was able to discover some profound things about myself and my peers.

When we were told to write about a time that we had experienced or witnessed an injustice and did not have the language to speak up, one memory quickly came to mind. It was definitely not easy going back to that time in my life. I had learned to block it out of my mind and I never thought I would have to talk about it again.

As soon as I began writing in class that day I noticed a shift in my body. I could feel the tears gathering in my eyes. I could feel my pen moving faster and faster, my handwriting becoming less and less legible to read. It's as if I was waiting for this moment all along. During class the students are asked, "Who would like to share?" I love sharing and hearing other students' experiences. This time I did not raise my hand. I simply looked down at my paper and just listened to everyone else who raised their hands to share.

As soon as that class was over I usually meet up with my best friend. That day I couldn't have been happier to see her. I spoke with her about my prompt and she listened. She was one of the two people I had recently told. I knew she of all people, she would definitely not judge me. Being in this class was probably one of the best things that could have happened to me at HSU. I met some incredible people, learned some really intimate stories about my peers, and most of all learned a lot about myself as a young Chicana.

Having had the opportunity to write every day in class about myself was extremely empowering. In a way it makes me think of the movie *Freedom Writers*. All of my classmates, along with myself, each have a story to tell and what better way to tell

our stories than this. Yes, this does make us very vulnerable because it is available for the public to see, however for me, it helps me overcome some of the issues I've have had

since I was 15.

Spanish to English

José Manuel Hernández

“Ho-zay Her-nan-diz?” she called out.
“Here” I replied.

I remember when my name, José Manuel Hernández, turned into just “Ho-zay”. I was just in preschool or kinder when it happened. I remember it being awkward because I was transitioning from speaking only Spanish at home to learning to speak English.

One day I came home and came across one of my neighbors, who is of Mexican descent but mostly speaks English. She told me that my name in English was different than it was in Spanish. My name in English was Joseph Manuel and not José Manuel. I was only about 5 or 6 years old and she was an adult, so she must be right, I thought to myself. If I was going to learn English and be like everybody else, I had to at least know how to say my name in English. So later that day at home when my mom called for me, “José Manuel!” I approached her and told her that my name was “Joseph Manuel.” She was surprised and confused and at the same time she thought it was cute and funny. She asked me where I had gotten the idea that my name wasn’t José but rather Joseph, so I told her.

She then explained to me that in English Joseph was the translation of my name but that my name will always be José Manuel and not Joseph. Despite having clarified that, at school no one ever said my name the way it’s supposed to be pronounced, in Spanish, except for my cousins and siblings. Everyone else just called me “Ho-zay.” And since technically they hadn’t changed my name, I put up with it. Nowadays when I meet someone new, if I feel like they won’t have a problem pronouncing my name correctly, I introduce myself as José.

A Foundation of Labor

José Manuel Hernández

A strong Mexicano! Medium build, tough, rugged hands, wrinkly skin but not ugly, just worn out and sun-kissed. You wouldn't expect this man to be able to move the way he did, but he could put up a six-foot wall in less than a day. Lifting ladrillos and cinder blocks as if they were his grandchildren. I could see it was hard work. Every now and then he would stop to drink some lemonade or ice-water, but the cigarillo never left his mouth. Maybe that's what gave him the energy to keep on going, I don't know. My grandpa and his brothers were men of labor. Construction workers and landscapers! A thin mustache sitting on his upper lip just like Pedro Infante and a tejana perched on his head to shade him from the sun. He could mix cement with the tip of the pala as if mixing tuna with mayo.

When he labored it looked so easy. He could go on all day, but when I tried mixing the cement my arms were useless. The cement went nowhere, and then I understood what labor he went through. Instead I just watched from my bedroom window as he cleared the dirt from my backyard and laid down the cement. I watched him effortlessly lay cinder block after cinder block until the street behind my house disappeared. Lazy Mexican? No, tired...perhaps this is where I got my strong work ethic. Nothing short of impressive! Looking back and understanding the hard labor my grandpa went through in order to get his children and family by, lets me appreciate how far my family has gotten. His labor got all his children through college and his efforts to make sure his children didn't have to do physical labor were not in vain.

Reflection

This free writing project was very fun. I had never done anything like this before, not even in my English classes. This was a very interesting process for me since it was all new to me. Being able to just write freely about a topic and not worry about the

content that came out of my brain had somewhat of a therapeutic effect. Some of the topics/themes were very relatable and I was able to really write from the heart and not feel pressured to please the teacher with proper writing techniques or standard paragraph form. A few of the topics were difficult to relate to, but the majority of them I was able to express myself by using more creative styles of writing which is something that throughout my college, and high school career, I was not able to do. I have been so accustomed to doing research and factual-based essays and papers that being given the opportunity to actually write freely was strange at first.

After the initial awkwardness though, I noticed that I would get into a “zone” where I wasn’t really aware of the things around me. I just wanted to write and get what was in my head on to the paper. I have always overlooked poetry, not because I didn’t like it, mostly because I never read for pleasure, but after this experience, I feel like I will begin to write more on my free time. I really felt a therapeutic effect and feel as though I want to get more things off my chest, even if I’m not going to show these to anyone. Maybe I will publish a few pieces, or maybe I’ll just do it privately. I really enjoyed this class.

Literacy Relates to Me

Lei Hou

When I was little, my parents were teachers. They both enjoyed reading very much and spent most of their income on books. Their interests directly influenced me; reading became my favorite form of relaxation. Books enlarged my world. When I was 22 I was in a car accident. After the accident, I was confined not only to a wheelchair, but also to my home. Chinese society considered disabled people as inept, so as a middle school teacher I suddenly became a hopeless and jobless person. Being eager to understand why I am in the wheelchair and learn how to deal with my new lifestyle, I started to read more books, day after day, year after year. At the time, everybody thought that it was the end of the world for me. Friends, relatives, neighbors, even strangers all showed pity to me when they saw me in a wheelchair. However, their attitudes did not disturb me, because I have built a stronger belief system from the stories I read. No matter Scarlett O'Hara or The Count of Monte Cristo, none of the characters in books have an easy life. Actually the hardship they experienced became their treasures and eventually built them beautiful personalities and good stories.

Step by step, I accomplished some of my dreams. Every time I've heard people exclaim, "How could you do it? As an able person, I had never thought to do it." "You must be lucky. I wish I had your luck." When I heard what they said, I usually answered with an old Chinese proverb, "Reading can take you anywhere." From reading, I learned that there are some places which are wheelchair accessible, so I decided to come to the U.S. to try. So far I am happy to see this is a different world where people look at disabled people the same as themselves.

Reflection

At first I didn't believe that I could do the prompt writings, because in my mind writing should be a serious activity with many preparations. However, when I did as instructed, "Keep writing without stopping." I found that I could do it and I like to do it. While writing, I felt that some of my memories woke up little by little. They are the stories and feelings that I had forgotten for a long time. Sometimes the topics or prompts asked us to think and write about reminded me of spoons, which can dig inside the soul to help me understand things I have never thought about before.

Eventually I found that I like writing.

Unprotected

Idette López

To My Best Friend.

I know things happen every day to people who are different. Different, meaning not being White, Male, Heterosexual, a U.S. Citizen and the list of differences goes on. Sometimes being different can put you in life-threatening situations. Here I write about one situation out of many out there that are being silenced and ignored.

I was just dropped off by my dad and his friend in front of the bus stop. I was waiting for my best friend. All my peers were starting to show up. Finally, my best friend shows up and started to cross the street to get over to us. Suddenly, I see a small car come out of nowhere and two white males around their twenties came out of the car. I noticed they were taking something out of the car. They have poles like the tetherball ones. They start yelling at my friend calling him names and then I hear words like “faggot” and “Gay”. They beat him.

Over
and
Over

I didn't know what to do, I was scared. I knew it wasn't going to end well. Right when I started to walk over to the edge of the street, I saw a familiar car.

It was my dad! He was yelling at the people who were beating up my friend from inside the car. The guys ran inside their cars and drove away. My dad, who is still undocumented and doesn't have a license, followed behind them. (He didn't catch them, instead he drove back to us and waited for the bus to show

up.) I ran over to my best friend and picked him up. His face was bleeding and swelling. He looked like he had several broken bones all over his body.

The bus arrived. We told the bus driver what happened. He alerted the other bus drivers and the school. We picked up the rest of the students and headed to our middle school. Once we got there the nurse and principal came and got my friend. That's all I really remember. My best friend the next day thanked my dad. I thanked my dad. I wasn't able to do anything, but my dad, who isn't protected or recognized by the United States, did something.

Up to today my best friend and I have been best friends for almost 15 years and counting. He is gay and proud. I'm happy for him. I don't know when exactly the world will become more accepting of others, but I hope it does happen soon.

My dad is still a great person who stands up for what is right. He is still undocumented, but is working on getting his papers; he started the process about two years ago. Oh and for those who don't know, it may take more than 15 years to have the right to apply for citizenship. Hopefully, fingers crossed my dad gets them soon.

All people should be protected regardless of their differences to one another. We are all Human. We just live different lives.

Reflection

During the process of writing, I noticed that what I wrote about the most were things I had forgotten. As I wrote down my thoughts on the page, I would picture the scenes in my mind and then try to understand what was going on at the time. At times, the image was soothing but others were more upsetting so that I eventually broke down and cried in class.

All our class members wrote about their own lived experiences and that requires a lot of courage. There are many things that we all experience, and at times they are too much to handle, but these stories have to be shared. The three freewrites I ended up choosing were events in my life that I wrote about often in the class. These came up so often that I felt they had to be

shared. Although I picked three, there are two that I want to share. The one about working in the fields is important to share because I want people to imagine what happens in the fields. The days in the field turns into routines for the piscadores.

The second freewrite that I shared was about my best friend. He is proudly gay, but being gay isn't accepted in society. Sharing that specific story is relevant because he isn't the only victim of hate. In order to share this story, I asked him for permission and he let me share it with you. I believe I am not a very strong writer, but that doesn't mean my stories are not significant to share. The people in these stories all have lives because we all are human beings.

The Brother No One Talked About

Tyree Love

Growing up I was the child who was often forgotten about whenever someone asked my mother how her children were. People would often say, where is TJ (my brother)? I've always interpreted this as a representation of my otherness because I wasn't the light-skinned, long-haired one everyone adored. I was the dark one with nappy hair, which seemed to be qualities that were not popular or "in." I can also remember the preferential treatment my brother got, especially in regards to chores. In my household every night our house had to be cleaned spotless, but most nights my brother would get a free pass. I often wondered what was it about him that made my mother believe that he deserved special treatment.

I would describe myself as being a really close to a perfect child. I say this because I always did my chores, and homework, and I excelled in school. This is what differentiated me from my older brother, and sadly my mother didn't see that. For a while I thought I should be a problem-child just so I could get special treatment like my brother. In my mind, bad behavior gets rewarded and good behavior gets brushed off. I realized this as early as elementary school, which is when one could say I became aware of my "otherness."

Reflection

Writing the three poems I selected for publication was very emotional for me. In regards to the poem about my brother, this was the poem that was the closest to my heart. Growing up, I always felt like I was “the other” and never the main subject. I remember writing about this in my poem and I could see visual images in my head from my past. To my surprise, I didn’t find myself getting upset all over again when I wrote about the special treatment my brother received. Although I was saddened that I was not appreciated, I didn’t allow it to affect me because this is in my past. Writing this piece was rather exciting because it gave me a blast from the past. As stated earlier, I had never shared some of the stories with anyone and it was rather courageous of me to share with the class and the world.

My Best Friend and I

Zitlaly Macías

My relationship with literacy is very intimate. A point in my life when I became closer with literacy was when my father was incarcerated. I felt every letter I wrote to him signified a chunk of my life shared with him. At the time I was a freshman in high-school. I had a deep connection with my father, his sudden leaving made me feel empty. With the help of literacy I was able to fill in the gap. Through my letters I expressed myself in every possible way. Even when I wasn't writing to my father, I would write in my journal expressing my emotions. I viewed it as if it were a therapy for me.

Literacy and I became best friends. She knew everything intimate about me and that directed me to control my emotions by writing them on paper. She kept my relationship with my father going where we never lost touch. I'm so grateful that I have earned the gift to write and read because with it, I'm unstoppable.

Reflection

Through my process of writing it wasn't easy expressing myself eloquently as well as sharing a piece of myself with the class. What encouraged me to do so were the meaningful memories I have engraved in my mind. They burned right through and left me scars, just memories that I could only express through literacy. This class has really taught me how to put my writing in action. Besides the great encouragement, I really felt heard and appreciated on what I expressed. It was hard choosing a specific freewrite to publish because I saw many that had potential, but overall I chose "My Best Friend and I." The reason I did this was because I have an emotional connection with it.

"My Best Friend and I" is about the importance of literacy to me. Before I had never really thought of those people who weren't privileged to have this ability. Unfortunately, my grandmother was

one of those people who couldn't read much and not write at all. Being able to have these abilities made me become very aware of how grateful I should be to have obtained that power. Though my grandmother couldn't read or write, this poem really hit me in the heart and made me think of a point in my life where I really put my skills to use.

Literacy became my best friend through my struggles, being able to express myself to someone was hard for me and it wasn't something I really wanted to do. The reason I didn't want to do so was because at the time I was going through a lot emotionally and I really didn't believe anyone could understand my situation. Literacy became a way to let everything I felt inside out, all my emotions drowning me were written in a journal that became my lifesaver. With my realization of utilizing this ability I became more comfortable doing so. Through this process I came up with "My Best Friend and I," and I was able to name Literacy as my best friend who knew every intimate part of me.

I know that there could possibly be someone out there feeling the same way I did and who could relate to my struggle of feeling that no one understands. Hopefully this poem is one that hits the heart and makes my audience think of a time when Literacy became a lifesaver to them as well. I hope they realize the importance of it, as well as its value because not everyone is given that gift.

Silent Voice

José Manzo

I've heard, witnessed and experienced hundreds of injustices ever since I can remember, too many, I've lost track. I have to admit that before understanding what had happened, I believed it depended on luck and it wasn't necessarily an injustice. Luck caused most of this pain, but no, it was much more than luck; it was class, gender, sex, race, sexuality, and culture. Your background! The one moment where I first felt guilt for not standing up and ending an injustice was the one that my best friends had to go through. An injustice that not many people realize had happened and its outcome became unnoticed; an opportunity taken away.

At times I think of the teachers that ruined his whole education career by expecting nothing from him, by having no hope, and always looking at him as if he was the worst. He went to school to learn and was taught to sit down and to be quiet. I always wondered what his thoughts at night were, I wondered if he ever thought about going back to school and finishing. He might if it wasn't for the teachers that wouldn't give him an opportunity.

Maybe it was because his father was the town drunk, or maybe because his last name reminded the teachers of trouble. Teachers would compile all of his previous flaws and would professionally say that he wasn't meant for school. It never occurred to them that maybe all he needed was the support and hope that would communicate that he could succeed, instead of receiving the same answer every darn time, "You're a bad student!"

It is the guilt of injustice that I still have that makes me question myself, for if I had stepped in, maybe he would have graduated with me. It was injustice of being picked-on and being the example of who not to be, as if he had chosen the life he was born into. The obstacles that got in my way, that prevented me

from doing something, were my age at the time and a voice that was not being heard. Now, I understand the obstacles he faced and I don't feel sympathy, but a hunger and an eagerness to change the way teachers shape the future of hundreds of kids.

Reflection

During my Chican@/Latin@ Lives class we read books with very creative writing styles that sparked an interest in me and made me want to write with more style and tone. Soon my writing assignments turned into an opportunity to expand myself as a writer, allowing myself to incorporate a part of me into my writing. The first thing I noticed was that I began to critically analyze my writing more often, focusing on quality work instead of quantity. Then I started to try different writing styles and learned how to create my own style of writing. Throughout the whole semester, I was never bored with any writing assignment since I was able to enjoy writing more. I soon realized that I wanted a complicated yet simple writing style. However, when I started to write my writing made sense to me since, I knew what my goal was for myself, but not so much to the reader.

Consequently, during the peer reviews I realized that the lack of transition words made my writing sound chopped. One of the biggest changes that occurred during my writing was becoming conscious and aware of my audience at all times and making sure that they would be able to understand me. At this point I was aware of my mistakes and was able to learn from them. I started to add and change things around to make my writing flow and sound better. Being encouraged to write creatively made me become interested in poems and caused me to start writing short poems too. Therefore, when I write now I think of word choice and then sort it out in the best way to be able to get my argument across. This writing opportunity helped me a lot as a college freshmen since I was able to take into account new writing skills I had never before been allowed to; I was learning from my own experience.

The Innocence of Being a Girl

Amy Núñez

A story from the book *The House On Mango Street*, by Sandra Cisneros called “The Family of Little Feet” connected with my childhood. This story tells about how the girls receive shoes from a family who did not want them anymore. There is a pair of high-heels that the girls were fascinated with. They wore them and pretended to be grown-ups. The innocence of being a girl took over and they felt pretty and really happy.

I remember wearing my mother’s high-heel shoes. As a little girl, I was and still am a curious person. My mother had so many pairs of high-heels and all were different colors. I would wear them and my mom would be yelling, “¡Quítatelos que me los vas a enchuecar! ¡Te vas a lastimar!” I did not listen. I did it so many times. As a girl, we do these things because we want to be pretty like our mother or we want to be like those superstars who dress up, wear the makeup, do their hair, and wear those high heels!

We want to be beautiful! As children, girls are given the make-up set, dresses, jewelry, and the dolls. It’s like we are put on the path. What I do not like is how, in doing this, we are blamed for being provocative! In the story, a bum complimented the young girl and asked her if he gave her a dollar, would she kiss him. Men take advantage of females because society has portrayed us as objects; moreover, we are being blamed when we are being victims. We are not asking or looking for it. We do it for ourselves to feel good, pretty, and happy.

Society is to be blamed for sexualizing women’s bodies in the media and making men feel that they have power over women. Therefore, women themselves are often reduced to those bodies or even just parts of them. The media has pervasive, idealized images of feminine beauty that is fanciful. Fashion is changing and so people need to be more open-minded and accepting because it is not women’s fault! Girls should be able to express

themselves and the way we dress shouldn't affect us. The innocence of girls is abused and we are victimized. A girl's beauty should be respected no matter the age, size, and race. Beauty should not be a harm or danger for any girl.

Reflection

I never realized how writing these journals in the beginning of class for ten minutes would be impactful. When I say impactful, I mean it in the sense that I'm glad we were able to do this. The prompts that were related to the books we read such as *The House on Mango Street*, *Bless Me*, *Ultima*, and *Under the Feet of Jesus* made me see that there was a connection I was able to make with the stories. Through writing these journals I was able to express myself and realize that every one of us can be a writer when we let go of everything else and let your mind just focus on writing.

When I focused on writing the journals, I wrote about real events, thoughts, feelings, and ideas that came from my life. It was a way for me to be opened-up about my life. For some of the prompts it was a way to take this weight off my shoulders, even if it was just writing and no one would be able to know unless I wanted to share in class. I realize that when I'm writing for ten minutes my imagination goes wild. I try to get it all done in ten minutes. It's not a competition, but I want to be able to finish the journal so that the story I make has all the ideas before I lose my thoughts.

Writing these journals has helped me create these stories by using more similes, metaphors, onomatopoeias, and more to be very descriptive and go into detail. To be honest, this is my weak spot when writing in essays or in general. So it has helped me practice and focus on these literary devices. Writing has made it easier for me to practice on these devices. When I am able to relate to the prompt I can go on my own way without following many rules and directions. Writing has also been a sort of therapy because I can relieve my expressions by creating these short stories in ten minutes. These journals had made me believe in myself, that I can be a writer and that practice will help me express myself by going into more detail and using more of the literary devices. It's been an experience that was much needed because I am now able to be creative and descriptive without having such a hard time like I used to before.

The Bitter Taste of Ice Cream

Mireya Ortega

I was in 8th grade. It was after school, my day started out normal. School let out and friends met up to walk home together. Except today was different. I decided to walk a different route home. I was with my best friend of many years. We were walking home together and like in any neighborhood in North Hollywood, there are always raspaderos waiting for school to let out to sell ice-cream to the students. I remember one raspadera in particular. She was in her late 20s or early 30s. She was Hispanic, I could tell by the caramel color of her sun-kissed skin. She was alone, hauling an ice-cream cart towards the school. She stopped in front of the sidewalk.

Students flocked to her to get their daily fix of sugar. I didn't have any money, so I looked back at her, longing for an ice-cream bar in the hot day, but I saw something strange. All the kids were suddenly keeping their distance. That's when I noticed the man and woman next to her, both were Caucasian and had dreads in their hair. They were screaming at her; vile things that only people like her and I would be offended by.

"WETBACK!"

"ILLEGAL!"

She doesn't speak English. The man grabs her cart and shakes it as if it would fall apart right then and there. She does not cry, I am astounded. I turn to help her but my friend grabs my hand,

"No" she tells me.

"They could hurt you." I looked at her in disbelief.

"But,"

"NO!" She yelled at me.

The man tells her to get off his yard. She tries to defend herself with the little vocabulary she's got.

I'm losing sight of her. My friend is dragging me around the corner. We are at the stop light. There is a knot in my stomach. I can't breathe. The day goes by. I am home, my mother is getting ready for bed. I lay next to her, this seems strange to her.

Then I breakdown. Through my sobs I tell her what I had witnessed. How horrible I felt because I did nothing, how helpless I was. She lets me cry into her shoulder. My brother walks into the room, he heard me crying. I am ashamed. That could have been my sister, my mother. That could have been me.

And I did nothing.
I was ashamed.

Reflection

I've always had trouble writing; I have this looming sense of doom that I will end up hating everything that I write down. This is why even though I have always wanted to write, I have never had the guts to actually put my thoughts on paper much less publish them. Publishing one of my stories is something that I never thought I could do. I couldn't even write them down and now I'm going to be publishing one. Writing does not come easy to me. I always want whatever I write to be perfect. Before taking Chican@/Latin@ Lives class, that was what I always thought. But when we shared stories that might not have been the best writing, I felt better about my own incomplete thoughts.

I never thought that what I wrote was good enough for others to read. Yet I always found myself wanting to share one or two stories from the prompts that were assigned. Maybe it was because they were about things that we ourselves had gone through, and I have always prided myself in having some really crazy stories. Stories of my many brushes with death, or funny stories of the daily happenings in my family. Some are sad stories that bring back memories that re-open wounds, others are sweet remembrances of better times. All in all, they are events that, while they might seem like stories to others, they are very real to me.

After writing a couple of my thoughts down, there came the feeling of excitement over what the next prompt would be and what story I would have to accompany it. I hoped that I could find

the right words to describe what I had seen or thought. I wanted others to understand why this story or thought was important to me. Many of my anecdotes are not particularly about things that one would consider happy. Many of my stories stem from trauma. I find that humor helps trauma, so I find myself using humor in my freewrites to deal with the baggage that are the thoughts that end up in my notebook. Now that the door to writing has been opened to me, I doubt I will be closing it any time soon. There is this sense of relief of having my thoughts and experiences put to paper that I didn't have before. Overcoming my fears of my writing not being good enough was a lot less nerve-wrecking than I thought it would be.

I am grateful that this class activity gave me the opportunity to change the way I see my writing as a whole.

¿Cómo Te Llamas Tú?

Mondserrat Ortiz

“Moncerrat?” “Mandserratt?” “Wow, I’ve never heard that name before.” I never really thought my name had such importance. Just like Esperanza, from *House on Mango Street*, my name is just too long, too complicated for others to pronounce. It becomes tiresome to have to explain and take the time to say my name. Every first day of school was the same routine. The teachers began to take attendance, and I knew they had arrived to my name by their puzzled facial expressions. Then the attempt to pronounce my name commenced, “Ma-ant-se-rat?” I laugh now at how red it made my face turn, knowing that everyone was staring at me as I tried to correct them. It made me uncomfortable, actually. Disregarding all of that, I’m not ashamed of my name. In fact, I had the opportunity to change my full name. I went through the whole legal process of changing my last name to Garcia and when it came to the final moment to sign all the documents, the judge looked at me and said, “This will be your name from now on, you now have the chance to change your first name to anything you’d like.” I looked at him with such thrill, shocked that I had this chance.

A chance to have an “easier” name and not have a reason to be embarrassed because someone else can’t say my name right. But then I wouldn’t be Monchi or Mona or all the other funky nicknames my family has given me. I could have been Paola, Nancy, or María, any other name that is not mine. I then looked at my mother and she just smiled at me. She named me Mondserrat for a reason. It would be the weirdest thing if people called me Araceli or Sonia. It would be a whole new identity and it would have probably changed my relationship with my friends and family. I now take pride in my name. It’s beautiful. It’s unique, although in Mexico, there’s un chingo de Mondses. Moreover, I know who I am and who I will be with this name. Not everyone will pronounce it right, but everyone will damn remember it right.

Reflection

Reading short poems in class and reflecting back on them has made me realize how many similarities there are between these authors and myself. Latino poetry can be so powerful. They speak of struggle, family, religion, childhood, everything. One of my favorite poems was “I am Joaquin: An Epic Poem” by Rodolfo “Corky” Gonzales because it felt passionate. He analyzed each conquest of our Mexican roots, the battles of success and defeat. How being an American but also being Mexican can be so contradicting. And it is for myself. When it comes down to the real deal, who do I serve?

Do I stand for the land who has promised me freedom but doesn't really follow through or do I serve my other country that I only know through a few visits but is a part of who I am. But I feel Rodolfo's words in my heart. How he will fight and continue to fight until our land, our rights, our names are ours once again. “Barrios of the World” by Ricardo Sanchez was a similar read. He elaborated on how we created barriers amongst ourselves. And it's true wherever we go. Rich are with the rich and poor with the poor. Working as a community is the only way to go. Knowing that one person can bring so much change to our world is where we should start. Mending our relationships within our Raza, encouraging and appreciating each other for all we do.

Finally, “Leavings” by Sandra Castillo also touched me on a personal level. Living in poverty is a common challenge with all races. Having mouths to feed just makes it that more challenging—constantly thinking and hearing the children's stomachs cry for just a bite. The transition to America in search of the American Dream is something everyone chases. Is the American Dream really a myth? It goes both ways. It's the myth of meritocracy, if you work hard you'll succeed, and if you fail it's because you didn't work hard enough. As people of color we'll continue to face injustice. With the determination of Rodolfo, the sense of brotherhood like Ricardo mentioned and using Sandra's and our struggles as motivations will only be the start of a new movement, of a new world.

La Música Es Vida

Susana Padilla

When I think of music I think of my family. I think of a collection of classic artists—Ana Gabriel, Vicente “Chente” Fernandez, Pepe Aguilar, Antonio Aguilar, Los Temerarios, Los Bukis, Los Caminantes and many more. Mariachi music evokes in me many memories of waking-up to my mother’s spring cleaning, or to one of her mean breakfasts, made with a lot of love. I can picture the way she would always put her hair up and tie it with a bandana and would use the escoba como su micrófono para cantarse las canciones de “Chente.”

Music is the one thing, other than food, that I feel brings the best of people together, it did in my family. La música y la comida were the best combination of it all. I remember the reunions thrown by family. We would have banda, tamborazo, y Mariachi music at full blast, while other family members would be singing, crying, drinking, and reminiscing about old times in the rancho. Talking about how good it felt to be with loved ones. My mother rarely played music loudly, but my siblings and I were always singing along to songs which we have no clue what the titles were.

Music was there for my siblings and me when we felt the powerful words of King Kendrick Lamar, knowing that there was a voice to the violent things we saw. Creating the poetic verses for the feelings that cannot be described. I am from the Los Angeles South Central area and it is difficult to not get mad when you live in an area full of violence, but it is possible. If it wasn’t for music like MADD City or Section 8 or Artists, like Tupac that put feeling and relatable meaning into their music, then I don’t know if my siblings and I would have been able to survive and “have hope”. Music helps heal the soul and keep a person going. Music helps bring people together and establishes a sense of hope and understanding. Music can help evoke the feelings that people

struggle to express, feelings that I believe that only music can put into words. *La Música es Vida*.

Reflection

The freewrites that I had the privilege to do in ES 107 Chican@ and Latin@ Lives class was one of the more reflecting experiences I have ever had. When we were given prompts in class I felt as if I could go back in time to recall a memory that made me really think about what was said. One of my two favorite prompts I did was the one where we talked about dreams. I had abstract thoughts about the prompt, and it made me realize that writing did not always mean staying within the lines and being so rigid when it came down to it. It helped me grow as a writer because I realized that writing isn't so hard and that I do not have to restrain my ideas so much.

It also helped me learn how to start writing a paper, making multiple drafts and not worrying about my side thoughts as long as I always go back to the prompt, and kept writing.

The entry that I am submitting for publication is the piece that came out after I realized what abstract writing is. When it came to talking about music, my heart poured out into the paper in front of me and it was as if my pen knew what my heart was pouring out and put it into writing. I love my music piece because I feel like it goes back all the way to my roots. Music is life to me and my siblings, my mom might have not played it so much but when she did it was always a great experience. I feel like almost everyone should be able to connect to music.

Music is truly, in my belief, that which can help you connect, feel, and express.

Music is life.

Saturday Morning

Cynthia Paredes

Mom is bumping Maná.
My brother and I hide in our rooms pretending to sleep in.
I can smell the Pinsol and posole.
She'll ask me to sweep and vacuum.
"It's your cat so it's your job to get rid of all these pelos!"

She'll make my brother mow the lawn and trim the hedges.
Then she'll make him go back and fix the spots he missed.
Yeah we'll whine about it, but she is a stern woman;
the sala will be cleaned and the yard will be neat again.

The stove will be cluttered with steaming pots and hot pans.
Mom doesn't eat until my brother and I are seated.

She's always the last to eat.

She'll be standing proud by the stove waiting
for us to applaud her culinary expertise.
I get out of bed and greet her with a kiss.

"Do you need help Ma?"

Reflection

I never wrote about my culture before and I never really valued Chican@ literature the way I do now. I wasn't even aware of the presence of Chican@ literature before this class. Writing about my experience as a Chicana and hearing the narratives of my peers made me feel like I belonged. By the end of almost every freewrite I would remember another story from my childhood and make a quick note to remember it. I felt a lot of nostalgia throughout this project; not all of what I wrote was happy, but I felt like everything I wrote is important. I discovered a lot about myself and realized that other people share my experiences.

For example, I realized that mostly everyone in the class has exceeded their parent's level of education. I'm the first of my family to go to a university, and I feel like that's fairly common among the Latin@ students in universities. It's kind of revolutionary to think about. Revolutionary in that being in this class and writing our stories strengthens the Latin@ community. I want other Latin@s to have better access to higher education and I feel like we need to be conscious of the importance of building community. In the process of writing I was reminded of how important it is for me to be in school. I don't think that school is for everyone and there's nothing wrong with dropping out, but I feel like me being in college is revolutionary for my family and I. I am incredibly grateful for the opportunity to share my experiences as a Chicana.

Revelations of Self

Jonah Platt (#11)

Let me tell you a story about my faith. When I look back, I don't know who I see. I focus on the present and I think this must be me. This body, it is me, right? I look in the mirror, I move, I see the body move. Well it looks like this is me. But what about what is within?

A spirit? My spirit. Before I didn't know, I wasn't brought up to believe in God, so I figured that also meant that I did not have a spirit.

Now though, now I can feel it. I can feel my aura, I can focus my chi. Or I'm imagining it. How is it that sometimes I am so sure, when other times I let my brain talk me out of it. Oh but then a pendulum is used to measure my chakras and let me tell you, that crystal swung!!

I know more than I give myself credit for. Sometimes I need to remind myself that "I know".

You see, currently I'm looking around and seem to be in a third dimensional world. But, my soul is from a higher plane. I've been exercising my pineal gland (in the center of your brain) "aka third eye". I had to reawaken it. The damn fluoride in our water and toothpaste calcifies our pineal glands. It makes it harder for you to tap into your true self. We are in the middle of a war on consciousness. Dark vs. Light and those who don't want us to awaken do not mess around. To undo the damage of fluoride, I began to use the spice turmeric. This stuff is like magic; it'll transform your health and your senses. That spice and clean water (fluoride free) helped awaken me.

After seeing 11:11 everywhere, I realized I was awakening from my sleep. I now experience more. I can see more of what is real; I look through the illusions. 11:11 is known as an awakening code, but I knew I had a deeper connection with the number. It wasn't until months later that I discovered, my numerology, life

path number is the “karmic teacher” master number, eleven. This blew my mind and made me see destiny as it is, always present. This number was calculated from my birth date. It describes who I am and what I am becoming. Without the understanding of my number, I would not be able to believe as deeply as I do.

As I began to see the truth, I asked about the illusions. Einstein taught me that matter is energy. So what is real? Energy. What is illusory? All else. Anything that isn't alive. Thinking about it on a large level, there's one giant blob of energy that is all interconnected. It is ONE. This has given me a profound push to let go and believe. I know the truth; I can feel it. I stop struggling. I no longer say life is unfair. Instead I learn from the past, hold on to only what supports my higher purpose, and release all else. I have faith in myself. I am all.

I see the interconnectedness. Quantum physics, we are one. It's a mirror, what you see is a reflection of your internal. I'm you as you are me as that horse is us. It really changes how you treat others when you realize that indeed you would much rather receive a warm smile than a mouth full of b.s. I choose to love. I choose to forgive. Here's a story inside of a story. Once I was filled with painful emotions. My thoughts were clogged with other thoughts of the past and the possible future. It wasn't until I had a long walk and a talk with a wise teacher that I realized; holding on to this pain only harms myself. It harms my ability.

With this realization, I release all that does not serve me. As I like to say, “I selfishly forgive you”. I'm not doing it for you, I'm doing it for me. Yet at the same time, I am you. So don't you see, this is the best option for us, no matter who you think you are. I stand with you, brothers and sisters. I have faith in us and in our abilities. Even more so, I have faith that our destinies are out of our hands. I know that you know. You know that those coincidences you've been experiencing are not coincidences. There's no such thing. Take the word out of your vocabulary and ask yourself a simple question. “Why am I reading this?”

Reflection

“Revelation of Self” was revised right before I turned it in. The first time I wrote it I veered into a topic that was more specific to the moment’s struggle and emotion. When I revised it, I totally changed it. I knew that I could really reflect and maybe share some information along the way. This paper is for those who are parched for knowledge. You are worth it. Enjoy the adventure.

¿Dónde Está Shame?

Jacqueline Ramírez

the melting pot of frustrations
brown women surround me
masa here and there

mi abuela holds her hands close
together in prayer,
hope for a new way

her nerves are on strike
sick of conforming to
white man's needs

The immigrants cursed the ways
of their children;
traditions looked down upon,

the ground shakes with disapproval
Dónde está shame?

Yes, I don't know the language
of my ancestors; but
I am a Chicana,

I cook away all the shame
bring smiles to faces with full bellies
and when my tummy aches, bread and butter will not do
I need mi abuela's crisp, hot, buttered tortillas

Donde esta pride?

Shame

Jacqueline Ramírez

Wetback, Scrap, White Wash
the days I was told I wasn't really
Mexican
were the same days I was told I was too
Mexican

What is American?

my dad did not run here to feel the weight of ignorance
his life started at age eight
when he carried the hope
of his baby brother from a corrupt land
to a land of self-hate

"Mija you are American don't let them tell you different!"

silenced by the bloody noses and black eyes
my dad did not want to teach the language of his past
hate bleeds through his eyes for each
race that once pushed him down

Reflection

I took the Chican@/Latin@ Lives course to get in touch with my culture. In Humboldt County there is not a big Latin@ community and I felt I was missing out on something. I grew up in Fresno which has a huge Latin@ community. In this course we wrote freewrites. We were presented with a prompt and given a few minutes to write freely. Most of the time I would think over in my head what being Mexican American really meant to me now and what it has meant to me in the past. Over the years, I have had mixed emotions about being first-generation, about the color of my skin tone, and about the traditions that have been celebrated

in my family. All of my life I have felt too Mexican, or not Mexican enough. These emotions have caused me a lot of turmoil and guilt.

Both pieces that I present here are very dear to me and were written during these freewrite exercises in class that I never really planned on sharing. The more that I think back on my life and about feeling “too Mexican” or “not Mexican enough” I realize that I am not alone. That maybe, even if one person felt the way I did and/or do sometimes, that sharing my writing might bring others comfort.

Christopher

Cynthia Rojas

People ain't shit, little brother.
Don't let anybody tell you what you can and can't do.
You are your own man,
with a mind and heart that work perfectly fine.

Siempre, ten fé en ti mismo.
Nunca sientas la obligación de complacer a la gente que no valen la pena;
La gente que solo te habla cuando les pega la gana;
La gente que solo se mete contigo porque saben que eres simpático y no te gusta pelear.

Ten fé en ti mismo,
a mandarlos a la chingada..
Ten fé, hermanito.
When you're down in the dirt like a defeated man,

Ten fé, that you will get up and brush it off.
When you give it your all but receive no output,

Ten fé, that the effort is being recognized.
When you are rejected and you feel like your heart is in pieces,

Ten fé, que el amor es real pero el momento no es el adecuado.
When you are looked down upon by snobs and ignorant gringos,

Ten fé en ti mismo,
And remind yourself that they ain't shit.
Be proud of who you are and who you aren't.
Disfruta la vida maravillosa que dios te ha dado.
Nunca le tengas miedo al amor.
Live life with compassion and curiosity,
With empathy and awareness.

Pero sobre todo, vive con la fé que siempre tendrás algo bueno en tu vida.

Ten fé en ti mismo, porque yo siempre tendré fé en ti.

Ten fé en tu inteligencia y capacidad.

Ten fé en el amor y en la felicidad.

Ten fé en tu familia, ten fé en mi,

But most importantly,

Siempre ten fé en ti mismo.

Love,
your sister.

Reflection

When we first started the writing prompts, I thought they were a cool and interactive way for the class to get to know each other by sharing some stories we usually don't talk about. Stories such as the significance of our names, our relationship to faith, and dreams we have. These prompts were inspired by what we were reading at the time like *The House on Mango Street*, *Bless me Ultima*, and *Under the Feet of Jesus*. I really enjoyed listening to my classmates' stories and knowing some of their experiences because, at times, I could relate to how they were feeling. It was especially comforting to know that some of their Latino/Hispanic traditions or ways of being strongly relate to mine.

My favorite prompts to write about were the relationship to faith and the importance of my name. The importance of my name made me reflect how it has shaped me to be the person I am today and on my life in general. On my relationship to faith, I chose to write a poem talking to my little brother who is a teenager at the moment. Although, I do not know what it is like to be a teenage boy in this day and age, I know that being a teenager sucks sometimes.

My brother is an important figure in my life and I try to be there for him as much as I can. Sometimes, I wanted to tell him everything I wish someone would have told me at his age and let him know that he must always have faith in himself. This poem is really personal and I wrote a lot of what I felt I needed to say in it. I wanted to talk to my brother in a language he would understand

me the most (Spanglish) so I played around with phrases and words in Spanish and in English.

To me, words in Spanish sound more sincere and loving and passionate so I wanted to make use of those words to send a message that sounds caring and that will be a life skill. I didn't hold back in using some words my mother would not approve me using but I kept it simple and to the point without getting away from the message I want to send across. Hopefully, when my brother reads this poem, he won't be embarrassed to hug me in public.

The Sauna on the Roof

Javier Rojas

I remember the summer my dad and I worked on our roof that had collapsed in our backyard. At the time the thought of spending my days fixing a roof was the last thing I wanted to do that summer. But when he added the incentive that he would buy me a new baseball glove, I just had to. Summer time as a kid reminded me of playing baseball and my dad promised for months about finally buying me a glove, so this was an opportunity that I couldn't miss out on.

I remember those hot, sweaty afternoons that felt like I was in a sauna and the harsh smell of black, melting tar and the sweat that stuck my shirt to my back. I felt that I was going to collapse from exhaustion, but for some reason my dad reminded me that this was building my character. I thought to myself, "What the hell does that even mean?" He gave me a look as if saying that if I quit now I'd be letting him down.

The work was tiring and exhausting and I felt emotional when he told me he used to do this work daily with his dad in Mexico. I couldn't fathom how tough it was when he told me he built the little pueblo house he grew up in. For years my father would tell me stories about long sunny days in the sun with his father, but I didn't think much of it at the time. The long hours in the blistering sun turned into cool afternoons where the fumes would evaporate. At the end of the day my dad pointed to our fridge and asked me to bring him a beer. I came back and he said "Mijo no vas agarrar una para ti?"

I remember that day was the first time I drank a beer with my dad, and in many ways I felt that I grew-up right in front of him. It was better than getting a baseball glove that summer because I got to enjoy a moment with my dad that I'll never forget.

Reflection

My time working on poems was more than just a reflection of my life and memories, but a nostalgic reminder of where I've come from. Coming into class every day I looked forward to sharing these stories in our notebooks and getting the chance to express these memories. I chose the following three poems because I felt that they connected me to my past and was passionate about sharing my perspective in this space. I talked about me and my father's relationship heavily in my poems mainly because of the distinct memories I have of growing-up with him. Never before have I gotten the chance to express myself about that subject and it felt great to reflect on this. During the draft process I felt the need to add more anecdotes into my poems and include more descriptions that would strengthen my pieces. Having the class edit them was also key in the writing process because I got the chance to read my peers' pieces and get some editing in.

Reading other poems helped me during the finalization of the pieces because I got the sense that as a class we were all telling a big story about our lives and how we have all grown from these individual experiences. I came home and thought about all the stories I read and the obstacles that many of us had to go through and how much our lives have changed since. The experience of writing these poems felt more than just an outlet to let my voice be heard but a form of expression that helped me learn more about myself. I feel at times in our busy lives we forget about the small things like family and values that are at times looked over. Having the chance to write about our struggles gave me the chance to reflect about the past and about where I'm going in the future.

Reflection

Elizabeth Rosales

The writing process for my journals was rather pleasing. In class I was able to complete all my writings, and when I would have the chance to look over it, I would edit all the areas that needed to be edited. Aside from the writing I really did like the rewriting because I was able to catch all my errors. I like editing my papers since it helps improve my grammar skills. When it came to being edited by the class I was kind of worried because my writing is hard to understand, especially when it came to the journals because they were freewrites, meaning all over the place. When I heard that the class would edit our work I went back, I tried to make it readable and easy to follow along. It did lose some parts but only parts that didn't make sense to anyone else but to me since I was the one who lived the story.

When the class edited my papers, I did get a paper that said it should be published, it was called "No Boundaries." This made me happy because it was one of the papers I put my heart and soul into, it was about my love and passion of music. As I read the comments and opinions of my peers, it help me through my editing phase before I submit it to the class for the class grade. Once I revised the new and old copies, I was excited to see two of my papers recommended for the publication. Although I was kind of sad to see one of my best freewrite was not one of them. It was good for the students, but once reedited it didn't make the cut. The two that did make the cut were "*What's expected?*" and "*Mightier than the Pen.*" Although both stories have a lot of comments, I did have trouble writing them and actually am still debating if I should publish them. The stories are very close to me since they kind of talk about things I don't really talk to others about. Over all the writing processes was rather entertaining and intriguing.

Con la Música, Te Recuerdo

Catherine Sánchez

As always, it comes back to my dad. On Friday nights, every Friday night in fact, I cannot recall any Friday night that my dad did not do this. It was like his ritual. Six-o'clock at night rolled-up and there he was. Getting off the couch, walking to the kitchen, grabbing his red cup (he always used the red cup), pouring his Seagrams 7 Whiskey, Pepsi, and ice (cubes, not crushed). He had a long skinny spoon that he used to mix the three ingredients together. He then headed off to enter his own space depending on where we lived at the time.

When we lived in Los Angeles, he would either head into the backyard into the wood-shacks he built himself, or simply go to the kitchen. When we lived in Fontana, he would simply go into the garage, open the doors, insert his favorite music into the radio -- Los Temerarios, Los Bukis, Marco Antonio Solis, and others like them. He would play the same music almost all the time so that even if I am not actually listening to it myself, I can sing to some of the songs.

I have subconsciously recorded the lyrics in my brain and I am so glad it occurred. It makes me somehow feel close to him, like I am singing to him or even singing with him. His music would often be so loud that in some (rare) cases the neighbors wouldn't know what else to do but to contact the police to come down and tell my dad to lower it down. While the music played, he would stand out in the dark, drinking and smoking his favorite kind of cigarettes -- Marlboro Lights (I'm sure these were his favorite...) -- enjoying the music that he so often played, enjoying the night, his night.

Sometimes I'd go out there with him, stand out there and also enjoy the dark night. I would go out because I wanted to be with him; it felt like we were just doing something together, though it happened so often.

Before he moved away to New Mexico, sometimes the Friday nights would be the only nights that I received some kind of father-daughter affection that I craved so badly. He would hug me, call me his mijita, his huesitos, and, even though he shouldn't have ever said this, he would tell me that I was his favorite and that he loved me so very much. There is so much more I wish I could write down, but it is difficult to sometimes think about him because his passing is still so very fresh, it has not been that long.

It is difficult to listen to his music, just hearing a little bit of it causes me to break-down. A couple of weeks ago I decided to download some of his music and listen to them because I wanted to feel that connection again, it felt good but I ended up breaking-down and just in so much pain. I closed my eyes and saw him there, standing with his red cup in one hand and a cigarette in the other. He's out there, enjoying his night.

Reflection

This prompt response discusses a descriptive memory with my dad. Choosing what to write about for this prompt came very easily to me. I knew that music was important to me, but I did not know that it had the power to impact my life in this way. When I listen to the music that I wrote about in my prompt response, I instantly feel a connection to my father who has passed away. I feel a lot of different things; sadness being the strongest one, at least at the moment. Music has the power to take you back to past events in your life and the power to feel what you felt that day. This prompt is incredibly important to me because it forced me to realize that even though the music would bring sadness, it would also take me back to the moments in my life that I never thought could bring such amazing memories shared with mi papá.

Música y mi Hermanito

Luna Uch

Music reminds me of my baby. Thinking of him and listening to music makes my heart smile. Going home is something I enjoy because I am reunited with my papa bear and we can dance and sing with one another. I have many nicknames for my brother such as papa bear, papi, little man, my baby, cutie pie and I can go on and on. When I am home and we are in the car we like to sing along to a variety songs, in Spanish or English, and when we sing we shout at the top of our lungs and sway to the rhythm of the song. Or when I am cleaning and a song I enjoy dancing to starts playing, I say, "Come Mikey, let's dance!" That's when I grab his tiny hands and dance. But most of the time I pick him up and place him on my hips and our hips move to the beat of the music. My mom says that my baby brother reminds her so much of me when I was his age.

My baby brother is 5-years-old. I call him my baby because I helped raise him and I took care of him when my mom had to work real late. Unfortunately I am no longer physically present in his life, but I know that by me being here in college, I am being a wonderful role model to my papa bear. Although I am not there physically, I am definitely present through phone calls and Facetime. Every time I Facetime my mom, he wants to talk to me and he will place me down and ask me if I want to play with him. Of course I say yes and he puts his Joker Lego close to the screen and he tells me "This is you, and you're the bad guy." I am always the bad guy and he is the good guy. Then we play and I do the best I can from the other side of the screen. Sometimes he even sings to a song he is really digging, currently he is really into Smooth Criminal by Michael Jackson and we then sing along.

Then, when the call is over, I curl up on my bed hugging Gigi (my stuffed Giraffe), pour my heart out and bathe her in tears. I just want to go back home and be with my baby brother.

Ya No Está en mi Vida

Luna Uch

Plop! Plop! Plop! Went the water from the kitchen sink. I didn't want to get out of bed because that meant that I would no longer be warm, if I left her side. Whoosh! My hair strands hit the side of my ear as she uncovered my face so that her dark-brown, marble-eyes could kiss mine. I knew then as our eyes locked with one another that she loved me and at that moment nothing else mattered. Her eyelashes kissed my cheek as her plump, bottom lip made love to my lips. Saturday mornings were the best mornings because I got to wake up next to her love.

Now I see her around and a part of me longs for her body to touch mine and for her fingers to excite me as they did before. But I know that won't happen. I hear her voice and my body tingles, my heart races, and I just want to hold on to it. I no longer have her in my arms and she is no longer present in my life. I know we are better off not being together, and that it's for the better if we just stay friends. But it's hard to act like nothing happened. As if you never satisfied me in ways only a lover can. As if you were not there for me when my dad was being an asshole and when he was still in my life you were there as the process of separation happened. I look at you now and you are different. The blinds have been lifted from my soul and I see you for who you really are and what you believe in.

Turning Soil

Katrina Uribe

I set out on Spring break to see my family. I longed to see my father and to work in the garden. We dug up the earth that tightly held last year's fallen harvest and remnants like memories of an old soul. It was going to be a long day of work but a happy journey in which I would be able to bond with my father. My father, a man brown as milky coffee, grows with his tired hands and dirty nails. The morning was warm but the air was chilled. The drops of sweat on our foreheads glistened like morning dew. My father plowed and plowed with the oak wood mattock as strong as his backbone. My father, a strong, eager man, was ready to break through the old and make place for the new. My head pounded in the heat like the neighbor boy's drum boy hitting away at his drums. BOOM! BOOM!

I was hot and fatigued. My clothes got dirty and messy as happens when one embarks on an unpaved journey. I collapsed and watched my father, and for the first time ever saw him aged like an oak tree leaning from its tired years. I looked at myself. I am a young sprout full of life. My movements sway in the wind like a field of dandelions. My breath, untrained like that of a child, whizzing and short of air. But you, you are older and wiser with tree rings like well-preserved memories. You are the rock that gives me weight when the wind picks up my seeds. You replenish me each time I come home. You plow through my pain and tired eyes to give me space to grow again. You are the farmer who does not stop working in the fields of life for his family, and I am your seeds.

Reflection

The freewrite that I chose to submit for publishing is titled "Turning Soil." This piece is about my father. It reflects the way I see him and our relationship. This piece encompasses our relationship really well. My mother passed away when I was four, and my father has worked really hard in his life to provide for my three sisters and I. He is an important figure in my life, and it still amazes me how he keeps his heart intact despite all the pain he has endured. He is an inspiration and a constant reminder to never lose trust and always help others. I hope you enjoy this piece.

In My Dreams...

Mateo Ramírez Yelton

I flew. Across the desert, the sky an eternal sunset, light never quite fading on the horizon. You flew with me. Guiding me. Our spirits raced over the desert sands, across the sparse hills of manzanita bush. We followed the empty highway, white lines guiding us towards our destiny.

We began where we left off, we began where you died. Only this time we finished the journey home, but only I survived. Until this day I don't know why things turned out this way, but sometimes I remember that flight we took in my dreams, just you and I. You came back to me in my dreams, to remind me that I could still fly.

You are free, and I am chained. Shackled to life in a prison without bars, but one day we will meet again, you and I, and I will say: "hello, I've missed you my long lost friend." This is not a goodbye. Until we meet again.

For my friend and brother,
Timothy Richard Dewhurst
4-19-85 11-22-2008

Heart(h)

Monique Yzaguirre

I like to tell stories. Did you hear the one about the girl that was shy? Her dad kept her home, he didn't trust strangers. He was afraid of the way the world looked at his people and how their words might corrupt the mind of his daughter. He didn't want someone other than himself to tell the girl about the world; she needed to hear it the right way, at the right time. And the lessons about the world always had a moral. The moral was always to take care of yourself and never depend on anyone else. A man is not a financial plan. Save your money and pay your bills and get an education because that's how you take care of yourself. The girl's dad also taught her to be weary. Be careful. Sometimes there are bad people out to get you.

Sometimes the decisions you make have consequences. So the shy girl became a scared girl. She grew up with fear and responsibility, always seeking approval from her father. "How's this? Am I doing it right? Am I taking care of myself?" She never made decisions that might have consequences. But this girl kept a secret; she had dreams. Dreams to stretch her heart over the world and delve into her passions to listen, to learn, to love. She always wondered "what if?" What if she made decisions that could have consequences? Would that be so bad? What this girl's dad didn't know was he was fanning the growing embers of the fervor to fulfill her dreams. You can live here forever, he says. Get a government or office job, a safe job. His words were fuel to her fire. She didn't want to be safe anymore, and like a phoenix in the ashes, she spread her wings and flew away without fear of consequence.

Reflection

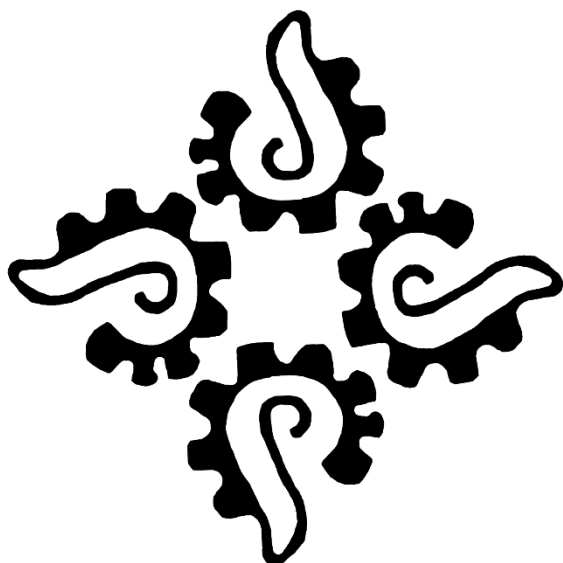
The freewrite exercise that was done throughout the semester was a very rewarding experience. It gave me the opportunity to share my stories and ideas in a safe space. The first freewrite taught me how to approach my writing. Nobody really knew what to expect, but sharing and hearing everyone else's stories helped me to start freewrites with enthusiasm. I wanted to tell a good story that simultaneously defined my personal Chicana experience. I realize that I never really reflected on my experiences as being unique to my cultural experience. I have always felt a degree of isolation and perhaps it is because I was never encouraged to express my roots. I have always embraced and cherished my personal culture, but it was more of a personal experience and mental identity and less of an outwardly expressed and flaunted identity.

There have been times in life where I have felt surprise at another person understanding exactly the types of issues I deal with, and it is humbling. I say this because I feel as if a majority of my conversation about my culture was to teach others about what makes my life and my American experience so unique. I love to teach those that don't know about the love and passion that is my cultural identity.

As I wrote my stories, discussing them either with my internal monologue or with the class, I am gaining a better understanding of the structure of my culture and my personal life. The traditional aspects of my upbringing are really a result of cultural/societal ideals that I never really understood up until now because of the cultural leap from one generation to the next. I am more consciously aware and appreciative of the sacrifices that my grandparents and parents have given in order to allow me the privilege of the life I am currently living. Many times my grandfather has told me about the hard work he has done and the physical and social sacrifices he has made in order to better the life of his children and grandchildren, but I never really knew what that meant--until now.

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Collective Poetry



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Pantoum One

José Manuel Hernández, Zitlaly Macías, José Manzo, and Catherine Sánchez

*Yo se que pasaremos toda la vida trabajando.
Through my sobs I tell her what I had witnessed.
The strum of the guitar tickled the core of my soul, I could hear my pain.
Reached down for the star shaped fruit.*

*Through my sobs she listens to what I had witnessed.
For some mysterious or unexplainable Reason, things happen to us.
Reached down for many other fruit.
Young women covered their faces with dirt, hiding in the cornfields.*

*For some mysterious or unexplainable reason, things happen to us.
Witnessed and experienced injustices, so many I've lost track.
Young women, sisters, mothers, and daughters battered in the cornfields.
My scars are a mere reflection of all you have sacrificed for me.*

*Witnessed and experienced injustices, so many I've lost track.
I just want to give up, but knowing me I won't.
The scars are a reflection of all the sacrifices for us.
Vale la pena ser pobre y feliz?*

*I can't just give up, I know I won't.
As the last strum of the guitar vibrated, my pain lifted and carried away.
Vale la pena ser feliz!
Seguiremos trabajando toda la vida.*

Pantoum Two

Briana Corona, Susana Padilla, and Dakota Porter

*They think Latin@s don't have pale skin and green eyes.
The girl in class says, but you're not really Mexican
But now I'm left with the "What ifs"
I had to take it into my own hands!*

*What is "not really Mexican?"
I have a history of many generations; warm blood in my veins.
I had to take this into my own hands!
Spanish was my first language. It is what makes me feel at home.*

The history of my family's generations, runs through me like warm blood.

*For some unexplainable, mysterious reason, things happen to us.
Spanish was my first language, it has taught me a lot of cultural lessons.*

But I have faith in our place in the universe. We are in it, and of it.

Mysteriously, unexplainably, things happen to us.

Sometimes I Dream and I wish I wouldn't.

But I have faith in our place in the universe.

I am a cultural cloud, my life is my present reality; I am a melting fog.

I have had dreams, and I wish I hadn't.

But now I am left with the "what ifs".

I am a cultural cloud, my life was a present reality, I am melting in a fog.

Latin@s don't just have pale skin and green eyes.

Pantoum Three

Jonah Platt, Elizabeth Rosales, and Monique Yzaguirre

*[Who] am I?
I've experienced hundreds of injustices
Attitudes decide destinies
and he was ripped away from me*

*lifetimes of injustices
Young women with faces covered in dirt hide in cornfields
and they were ripped away from me
she began to cry, endless tears as if her eyes held oceans*

*dirt covered faces hide in cornfields
and sometimes, I dream of you
she began to cry, endless tears created oceans
please hold and tame my heart*

*Sometimes, I dream of you
the guitar strings seep into my skin
they hold and tame my heart
Con la música, te recuerdo*

*the guitar strings sing our song
our attitudes decide our destinies
Con la música, nos recuerdan
[Who] are we?*

Pantoum Four

Jacqueline Barrera-Pacheco, Magdalena
Cortez, Lei Hou, and Amy Nuñez

[Who] am I?

What does being a female really mean?

Beauty should not be a harm or danger for a girl.

*All people should be protected regardless of their differences to
one another.*

It means having courage to represent our title.

But yet he still has power over me.

Injustice!

Which I have not yet confronted HIM about.

Is it love?

I began to cry endless tears as if my eyes held oceans.

Should I confront him?

I just want to run away from it.

I want to learn how to stop crossing oceans for him.

But knowing me I won't.

Should I run away from it?

Porque solamente quiero vivir una vida segura

But knowing my luck, it won't happen to me.

My beauty has marked my destiny for the worse

Cuándo sabré cuándo realmente estaremos libres?

[Who] am I?

Pantoum Five

Idette López, Tyree Love, Luna Uch, and Katrina Uribe

*Attitudes decide destinies.
Who am I?
Con la música, lo recuerdo.
It feels like bliss.*

*Who am I?
I just want to give up, but knowing me, I won't.
It feels like bliss.
Hard to raise me every other weekend.*

*I just want to give up, but I won't.
Vive con la fé que siempre tendrás algo bueno en la vida.
Hard to raise me, pa salir 'alante.
"Do you need help, Ma?*

*Vive con la fé.
Quiero vivir una vida segura.
"I'll help you Ma."
I dream.*

*Quiero vivir.
In music I remember who I am.
I live my dream.
My attitude is to decide my destiny.*

Pantoum Six

Karla Amaya, Arturo Arce, Mondserrat Ortiz, and Cynthia Rojas

*Vive con la fé que siempre tendrás algo bueno en tu vida.
For some mysterious or unexplainable reason, things happen to
us.*

*Quiero vivir una vida segura sabiendo que siempre estaremos
libres.*

An unspoken thing that only she knows best how to grieve.

*For some mysterious or unexplainable reason, things happen to
us.*

*She sat down and began to cry, endless tears as if her eyes held
oceans.*

An unspoken thing that only she knows best how to grieve.

*Absence fills my imagination of what could have been and what
should have been.*

*She sat down and began to cry, endless tears as if her eyes held
oceans.*

*I want to run away from it, but the things you live are what makes
up the person you are today.*

*Their absence fills my imagination of what could have been and
what should have been.*

Con la música, te recuerdo.

*I want to run away from it, but the things you live are what makes
up the person you are today.*

*With small but curious eyes the color of dark chocolate, only to
melt in the sunlight.*

Con la música, te recuerdo.

*I feel like I'll keep learning from faith, it has so much to teach and I
am willing to listen.*

With small but curious eyes the color of dark chocolate, only to melt in the sunlight.

Quiero vivir una vida segura sabiendo que siempre estaremos libres.

I feel like I'll keep learning from faith, it has so much to teach and I am willing to listen.

Vive con la fé que siempre tendrás algo bueno en tu vida.

Found Poem Uno

Patricia Cortés, Mireya Ortega, Cynthia

Paredes, Javier Rojas

*Do you need help, Ma?
I hear her voice.
My body tingles, my heart races.
I just want to hold on to it.*

*Yes, mother was very strict when it came to our education,
But I am very happy she was.
A small child,
with small but curious eyes.
The color of dark chocolate,
Only to melt in the sunlight.*

*I am in a Dream.
And if my life is my present reality, then it is just a dream.
She sat down and began to cry,
Endless tears,
As if her eyes held oceans.
We have to understand
that when somebody knows your bad habits, it is hard for them to
disappear,
even after you've changed...*

*It was hard to raise me every other weekend.
Where do I go when I dream?
Vive con la fe,
Siempre tendrás algo bueno en tu vida.
Con la música, te recuerdo.*

*Amor.
It feels like bliss.
You don't realize what you have until it is gone.
Do you need help, Ma?*

Found Poem Dos

Mitchell McGowan and Mateo Ramírez Yelton

A dream is only a dream after all.

You come back to me in my dreams, to remind me that I could still fly.

*At times rest is not so restful,
like light never quite fading on the horizon.
Home is where you make it,
not where memories are held, but where your family is.
We followed the empty highway, white lines guiding us towards
our destiny.*

You come back to me in my dreams, to remind me that I could still fly.

*The moving boxes were heavy,
laden with the memories of a place we called home.
And this time we finished the journey.
Then I knew that guys and girls were
separate, different, opposite, segregated, others.*

*You are free, and I am chained.
Shackled to life in a prison without bars.
Sadness doesn't exist and "real men don't cry."
Someday, we will meet again.*

A dream is only a dream after all.

*This poem, like the previous pantoums, draws its inspiration from the collective classroom freewrites. However, it does not adhere to the structure of the pantoum. It is, however, a beautiful found poem.

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Department of Critical Race, Gender & Sexuality Studies
Humboldt State University
1 Harpst Street
Arcata, CA 95521.8299

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