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## A Foundation of Labor

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# A Foundation of Labor

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## 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.