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Heart(h)

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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.