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## Tribute to Fifteen

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## Tribute to Fifteen

By Steffi Puerto

I'd like to think of fifteen as a golden year of growing up, yet being fifteen and Chicana holds a whole different meaning. At the age of fifteen, the world seems unstoppable, similar to a novela. Life is moving at a drastic pace and with any possible outcome emotions and friendships begin to flourish, taking a significant role in adolescence. Altogether this creates spaces where memories not only become defined, but also a piece of you. Aurora Guerrero the director of the film *Mosquita Y Mari* (2012) is able to capture these feelings, and give a sense to what it feels like to be at the age of discovery and friendship. The movie resonated a lot with me as I found myself being able to connect the main characters, in a time when I was discovering myself. The age of fifteen is also the age of defiance in a young Chicana's life, connecting to my idea of fifteen as the age of womanhood, and self-discovery. At the end of the day, fifteen is a tricky year because you are phased with personal conflict and growth, yet it shapes you into the person you identify with today.

The best memories are formed with unexpected plans and unforgettable friendships that create a moment that could possibly never be replaced. The giant hill on 82nd holds many memories of adolescence and reckless behavior. This hill sits perfectly tall and majestic, with a narrow road that leads to an amazing view of East Oakland. You can see it all from this hill, from the Castlemont football players putting in that work, to people heading home after a long day of work. Beyond the coliseum you can see the start of the suburbs that turn into the rough "ghetto" city I called home, to the gentrification that had eaten part of the beauty of the "ghetto" and transformed into a billionaire hotspot. That transformation has succeeded in turning the beautiful town that I know into something I no longer recognize. The memory of the 82nd hill has not only been able to capture the beauty I see within my community but also the amazing conversations I have shared with my best friend Sabrina, as we discovered the lonely hill during the summer of being fifteen. Fifteen with the first taste to freedom, skipping out on cross country practice to climb up this hill and talk about the boys who hurt us, and the things we never told anyone. I still keep in my heart the secrets that have been buried within time on that hill. Through watching the film *Mosquita Y Mari* I found myself going through a deep set of memories. *Mosquita* and *Maris'* dynamic was unbreakable and so raw to an age where it feels like you are the only fighter in a battle of

emotions, and uncertain twists and turns. Like Mosquita, I was very shy and timid at the age of fifteen, and like Mari, Sabrina was hurt by the world we found ourselves in. Our friendship dynamic was strengthened through conversation, many inside jokes, and a lot of food tasting and making. Fifteen was shared not only on top of an amazing hill, but it was shared with my best friend Sabrina. Although now older, we still share the same dynamic we built together at the age of fifteen.

Now the age of sixteen became a whole different story to be frankly honest. Fifteen was sweet but living in a low-income community makes you realize a lot of things. For instance, you can no longer depend on your parents for money, they work hard enough. Second, you get this urge to want to grow up so fast that you look for a job, and soon start slaving away for corporate America. Only to realize that although you know you have a good significant amount of money it is useless because you do not really have anyone to spend it with. I unfortunately fell into this trap like many of my friends. I remember hanging out with Sabrina and talking about how cool it was going to be that we're both going to have our own jobs and would not have to worry about how much we spent, or not having enough money to hang out. That dream was a fat lie, the transformation took it's form in the days, weeks, and even months till I saw her, and our time that was spent on that hill became a distant memory. We created time during the summer to go visit the hill that stayed perfectly still on 82<sup>nd</sup>, but to our surprise found high school couples making out, and even a blue kiddie pool laying by the narrow road where kids now come and slide from the top of the hill during the summer. We found it pleasant that others found the place like us and created their own memories.

Yet at the peak of it all my senior year arose and I began to ponder a lot about the person I was at fifteen. The person I am now and the person I wanted to become. As cheesy as this sounds I sought my best friend as a form of resistance to revisit the memories that shaped us. Reaching out was easy, we made time for each other and revisited the hill that rightfully belonged to us. I recall laying outside her car as we sparked a joint and began reminiscing about the age of fifteen. The age of innocence and where we were now. For me smoking that joint on top of the hill was not only a form of resistance to reliving a memory I once knew, but it was also about closing a chapter and securing my adolescence at that very moment. We were no longer fifteen, we were eighteen and although sixteen

was not perfect it has created a ripple effect to the lives we live now. At fifteen life is sweet, because the world is your oyster of discovery yet when sixteen comes around you soon realize you have to grow up and being reckless is no longer an option. Then at the tip of it all you turn eighteen and you are considered an adult and have transcended based on these memories and life lessons to the person you are today. I can understand that same feeling of being a kid and identifying with an image and then turning fifteen and feeling like you can finally represent yourself and identify the way you really feel. Presenting yourself like the person you are beyond age.

At the end of the day, memory, transformation, and resistance are a big part of what it means to grow up. We can hold onto the memories we have created. We can cherish and love them yet with time transformation takes its course and shakes up your reality, it's the most important part of growing up. In the end, we create resistance in order to feel in control of what we used to know and feel. That leads you to understand and grow even more and appreciate not only what you had at fifteen, but work to enjoy what is left to come and continue the cycle in new spaces, building new friendships and together creating unforgettable moments.