



PERSONAS

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**MULTILINGUAL CREATIVE WRITING JOURNAL
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Cover: Memory – Jatziry W. Cantu Castillo

FORWARD

When given a writing assignment in class, no matter how extensive the brainstorming, drafting, and pre-writing sessions, students' efforts are limited by the classroom environment. They write primarily with their instructor as their imagined audience and a grade (or approval) as their purpose. And why not? This is how most other classroom assignments are done; why not limit writing to the realm of 'practice', too?

Writing is a communicative activity, and its communicative effort needn't be bound by the classroom. If writing is to be valuable—even in a classroom—it must seek a larger audience, and a more profound purpose.

Of course, students are developing their writing, but that doesn't mean they should write without interest, without passion, or involvement. Students—young and old—have had many valuable experiences their instructor, classmates, and community members have not. When invested in their writing, students can use these experiences to challenge popular opinions, or even to tell a story that is not often heard.

As a frequent reader of student essays, I have learned about the value of video games (about which I am totally ignorant); I have read excellent arguments for moving highways and building community centers which have made me reconsider other arguments I have heard or read. These essays have come from students with experiences different than mine. A childhood in Mexico, for example, or military experience lend themselves to different ways of understanding the issue addressed by the essay. Simply, the students challenge my way of understanding the issue by providing a new vantage on it.

At a time when issues such as immigration, culture, and language—the US is still one of a very few countries with no “official” language—are becoming nearly as divisive as abortion, gun control, and environmental protection, it is important that students who have experience in these things have a means of sharing this experience with a wider audience to provide expert opinions which, sadly, we do not often hear in the media. That is the reason for this journal.

Personas exists not only to share the experiences of linguistic,

cultural, and physical immigration, but also to provide students and community members with a means of sharing these experiences with a real audience: you! And to offer you a way to engage with expertise you may not readily find represented elsewhere.

Thank you for your willingness to be an audience for the writings that follow and endow them with purpose, and thank you—most of all—for your willingness to understand the experience of others and, potentially, challenge your vantage point. Through the consideration of what follows you will hopefully gain a new way of considering and discussing issues such as immigration, linguistic representation, and pluralism and a means of advancing our collective understanding of these issues toward a healthy and grateful acceptance.

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CONTENTS

Non fiction

FIRST PRIZE:

My Pride, Mi Cultura – Joanna Guerrero..... 9

RUNNER-UP TIE:

My Life So Far – Elisea Castillo 14

American Language and Me – Bao Yen Do..... 16

HONORABLE MENTIONS:

Breaking the Language Barrier – Sandra Mogollon..... 21

My Name Is – María del Pilar Guadalupe Garcia Ferreira 24

Let's Start Like This – Yonny Gonzalez 27

Unexpected Turn – Elena Vasileva 30

Essay – Yadira Zuniga 32

I Never Thought English Should Be Important

– Cruz Lizeth Moctezuma Sierra..... 35

I'm from Laos – Pa Yang 36

Nostalgia – Jatziry W. Cantu Castillo..... 37

When I Came to the US – Francisca Rodriguez..... 39

Going Back Home – Chong Geyer 40

When I Come to America – Lourdes Guillory..... 42

Finding My Voice – Rosa Angon-Gonzalez 46

I Came to the US Four Years Ago – Pakou Her 48

Visual Art

FIRST PRIZE:

Memory – Jatziry W. Cantu Castillo 50

RUNNER-UP:

Sense of Self – Bryanna Lopez-Tejeda 52

HONORABLE MENTION:

Reflections – Cevahir Özruh..... 54

Poetry

FIRST PRIZE TIE:

El Debate – Monik Vinueza 56

Scholar, Later – Daryl Chinn..... 58

RUNNER-UP TIE:

Modern day: I’m ok – Jennifer Be 62

Rarámuri Runner – R. Joseph Rodríguez..... 67

HONORABLE MENTIONS:

Guajira – Reinaldo de Fernandez..... 68

Cuando Pensamos...Que – Zoila Vazquez 71

The Dragonfly on My Finger – Anastasija Kovačević..... 73

My Life – Maria Taweerungchot..... 75

Eden – Lox 76

Llamame Es Mi – Patricio Galleguillos..... 77

My Walk/My Life – Eliene Santana..... 78

After My Father’s Burial – Jonathan Ukah..... 79

MY PRIDE, MI CULTURA

Joanna Guerrero

It was fall of 2016, I was 14 years young and newly a freshman in highschool. A brand new school and everything felt the same. I was the main target of bullying for a total of 3 years. My nightmare began during the 6th grade and followed me into my high-school years. I wasn’t new to the idea of separating my heritage from school and home life. During my upbringing I was accustomed to being bullied not only because of my appearance, I also didn’t wear any makeup or owned any designer clothes. I felt as if I didn’t fit within the “social standard” that others were expecting from me.

The racist bullying began during my freshman year, during my 3rd period english class. I was sitting in front of a girl who constantly had it out for me. After many years of her verbal and physical torment throughout middle school where she would constantly belittle me and tell me how “ugly” and “stupid” I was. She targeted the way I talked, how I walked with a giddy step and even down to the point where she mimicked how low my voice sounded. Any comment that I made, or action that took place, she just had to be there expressing a negative opinion. Overtime it would lead to physical abuse. Her harsh words didn’t seem to feel as if they phased me any longer. The physical violence made me feel as if I was trapped within my own skin. Kicking, slapping and even to the point that she cut my hair in my 8th grade math class were a few incidents that occurred. No matter how many attempts I made to file a complaint, reporting her to the main office in my middle school; I was distastefully dismissed and was told that I was, “being childish and petty.” I eventually grew accustomed to her belittling me on a daily occurrence.

My freshman year in our english class, she was seated directly behind me, giving her easy access to what she enjoyed the most which was bullying me. She would pull on my braids and ponytails and would tell me racist slurs like “wetback” or “beaner”. I fully real-

ized that the harassment got out of control when she made a report about me to ICE (uniform immigration and customs border control). Thankfully her ignorance was a blessing as I'm an American citizen, but that didn't stop her delight knowing that most of my friends were undocumented. After this incident, I started to create a border between my heritage and myself as being associated as Mexican. It brought my closest friends to almost be deported back to Mexico.

I had started alienating myself from my own *Cultura* from a young age, denying the music, the food and coming to the point of wanting to change my own appearance at school to "fit in". In other words, creating not just a mental but also a physical border. My parents started to notice the way I stopped speaking Spanish outside of being with my family. My grades were also dropping, I stopped listening to "musica regional" Mexican regional music and I stopped wanting to wear my *tejano* and *chicana* clothes that I loved so much. My family became concerned with my change in attitude towards my *cultura*. My dad would turn on my favorite album when we would drive which was the *Atrevete a Soñar* album by Danna Paola. I would quickly turn it off in anger telling him that I was not a child. I also started throwing away the beautiful blouses my mom would buy for me from El Rancho. I no longer needed another item of clothing to make me an easy target. My parents would try to talk to me and get me to admit why I would no longer have pride in our beautiful culture. They began to scold me in end result. How could I tell them that I was ungrateful for their sacrifices? That I wish we were in Mexico instead. I regrettably did not budge and told them the reason that I no longer associated myself with my *cultura* was because I was getting so badly bullied at school, for being born into a beautiful race.

As a young child my parents had always told me stories of how they crossed the border from Mexico into America. My dad was 12 and crossed the Tijuana border by himself and my mom was 3 when she crossed with her mother. My mom's mother ran away with my mom and her 6 siblings, running away from my grandmother's abusive husband. Their stories of growing up in America were so strong, my mom never let anybody bully her as she was a *chola* and would not hesitate to fight to protect her siblings. My father, a strong man never let anybody tell him anything and would always stand up for

others inside the factories. He worked as a young adult, and works very hard currently. With the stories that I was told made, in comparison, me feel weak. I'm a 5'10, 160 pound girl on the Eureka High wrestling team. I let someone who was 5'5 bully me so badly to the point that I decided to punish myself for being prideful of my own culture!

One warm Wednesday, I vividly remember being in that English class where I sat directly in front of my bully. I absolutely came to dread freshman English, but that day we were presenting poems. A week prior while looking for poems to present in class, my freshman English teacher Mr. Stiano came up to me and told me there were poems that included Spanish. He expressed that it would be an amazing idea to present a poem that included my heritage as he had heard me speak Spanish perfectly while reading aloud "The House on Mango Street" by Sandra Cisneros. I reluctantly agreed with Mr. Stiano. I decided on a poem about a father's truck it included both English and Spanish lines that I couldn't quite remember. I couldn't recall either the outline of the poem nor its name. What I do remember is that warm Wednesday morning as I stood before that classroom presenting the poem. I saw the delight and awe in my classmates' faces. As I effortlessly spoke the Spanish lines and smoothly twisted them with English. I was full of confidence and joy to see people so interested in my heritage when I was done with my poem. I stood at the front of that classroom with a huge smile. That was until my bully decided to rain on my parade. She decided she didn't like my happiness, thinking she would embarrass me, she said aloud in class "your people are the reason there are no jobs stupid wetback." I stood there as I held my head down. Unfortunately for her and thankfully for me, my teacher had heard her and berated her for her racist words. My teacher explained to my bully how horrible and inhumane she was acting. My teacher sent her off to the principals office. She was told not to go near me, or talk to me. I was relieved, finally some justice! Unfortunately that happiness came to quick end realizing that the years long torment had created internal wounds that had been so deeply engraved into my soul.

Two years had passed and I was 17 years old, now a junior in highschool. I had moved from Eureka highschool down to Zoe Bar-

num continuation school due to extensive bullying that I no longer could handle since it had gone from small physical bullying to getting hurt. At Zoe is where I met my bestfriend Kenya. She is a small and sweet Hawaiian-Mexican girl. She had seen me in my junior english class with Mr. Perata. One day as Mr.Perata was reading The first part last by Angela Johnson, she was sitting behind me and accidentally dropped her pencil towards me. As I picked my pencil up and handed it to her shyly. I had seen her smoking a cigarette outside of school and was slightly intimidated. I noticed her purple acrylic nails and complimented them. She invited me to hang out with her during lunch. I timidly took the offer, she was a chola so we hung out outside the cafeteria listening to music from a small speaker. She started to sing Como la Flor by Selena. I was surprised and asked her if she spoke Spanish? She shook her head and said “Girl, I can barely speak English, but I do love her singing.” This little comment changed my world and the way i perceived it. She was so happy and carefree about being hispanic, she didnt care what others thought about her. She proudly showed self confidence, even if she couldn’t speak the Spanish language. I slowly got pulled into her world, she would fawn over the way I spoke spanish. The way I would cook Mexican dishes in culinary arts amazed her even more so. I was instantly brought into a side of my culture I had never experienced before. Although it was intimidating at first. I had always learned to fit myself into a puzzle that I didn’t fit in, which was a culturally deaf society. I finally felt and found where I fit in the most.

The moment I felt myself finally open up about the way I had been bullied was during a sunny Friday. I invited Kenya over for our first sleepover at the time. I wasn’t interested in makeup, but she loved it while we were sitting in my pink room at 1 am. She’s applying makeup on me and she pops the question that I dreaded the most. “Do you not like being Mexican?” I looked down bashfully and replied “I do like being Mexican!” I then began to explain my struggle growing up, being alienated from everybody. Growing up and how that made me create an internal and external border. She held me in her arms and said she’d never let anybody bully me about my ethnicity or they’d have to deal with her. I was mesmerized at how a girl who was smaller than me in size, but was willing to protect me and my

heritage. She was not embarrassed of her own culture. From there on I began being less afraid of being proud of my heritage and slowly the border that I had built up, finally crumbled. I started being proud of being Mexican and I too adopted the chicana/chola culture. Kenya and I became an inseparable duo as far as her bringing me into her “friend group”. I started dressing in the chicana clothes I loved once again. I would wear more chola inspired makeup, and I also started speaking spanglish again with my natural accent coming out again. My family noticed that I was changing externally. They were very proud of me as they heard me listening and singing musica regional again. Kenya and I are still best friends to this very day. To the point that I am her daughter’s Godmother. And of course my style has since developed into one of my own. Even with all that I have now, I NEVER let go! I was finally at peace within myself, and my Cultura!!!

MY LIFE SO FAR

Elisea Castillo

I grew up in a small town in Oaxaca, Mexico, where I was one of 15 children. My early education was difficult and painful, as I often faced physical punishment from my teachers. I felt like I did not belong in school and had low self-confidence.

I remember my time at my elementary school from the 3rd grade to 6th grade. First of all, I didn't like to go to school because the teachers used to hit the kids. I didn't like that method of discipline because it was cruel.

I was hit by teachers because they said I was a slow learner. So, I was afraid to go to school. When I was in fourth grade, I was sent back to 3rd grade for a few days and my sister was switched to 4th grade.. I didn't know why and then later they sent me to 4th grade. It was all very confusing.

The teacher said that my sister was smarter than me. I was so sad and insecure. I felt that I didn't belong at school.

There was a tradition at the school to pick a girl to be the queen for that year. They picked my younger sister. The day that my sister became the queen, I heard the teachers say, "Those sisters are very different. One is beautiful and smart. The other is dumb and wild."

What was wrong with those teachers? I was a child.

My Dad used to take me to the fields to help him plant corn. I was exposed to the sun a lot and my skin became darker. I didn't do any homework or read books because I worked with my Dad all the time. He said that I was good at it. So, I didn't have good grades. That's why the teachers treated me differently.

Sixth grade was the worst. During the first week of school, the teacher told us to sit anywhere we wanted. I sat with my favorite cousin. The teacher looked at me and told me to move to a different seat. Why me? Why couldn't I sit with my cousin?

The teacher had his rules. He checked how clean we were. He

looked at our teeth and clothes. He checked how we smelled. If we weren't clean, he would hit us.

One day he hit me because he said my chest was dark. So, after school, I went to the river and I got a rock and scratched my chest so hard that my chest was red and the skin was cracked and it hurt.

When I went to school the next day, the teacher checked the entire class and when he saw me he started to laugh. But, he didn't hit me. That was good.

When the teachers hit me, it hurt so badly. This is why I didn't like to go to school. I wish that the teachers had been different. Even now, when I remember that time, I can't help crying about it. It had a deep effect on me.

I moved to the US in 1990 and enrolled in high school, even though I did not know any English. I managed to graduate in 1994, but I still struggled with the language.

I married in 2000 and had my first son a year later. I decided to start my own childcare business, which allowed me to work and care for my son at the same time. I realized that I had a passion and a talent for working with children, and I wanted to pursue it further.

I attended college and took some courses in Early Childhood Development to improve my skills. It was very challenging, as it required a lot of writing in English. I had an English tutor who helped me with my assignments, otherwise I would not have been able to do it.

Then, I had to close my business for personal reasons, which was a hard decision because I loved my job.

I moved to Arcata in 2011 and had my last child. I also wanted to learn yoga, but the course was in English. Yoga was like a foreign language to me, so I got another English tutor who helped me with the vocabulary.

In 2020, I started working at Pacific Union School as a teacher's aide. This motivated me to go back to college and study more about child development. I know that this is what I love to do and what makes me happy.

I plan to register for academic classes at College of the Redwoods. Although the beginning of my life was difficult, I now find lots of satisfaction in attaining some of my goals.

AMERICAN LANGUAGE AND ME

Bao Yen Do

The first time I experienced English was when I was in kindergarten. It was just a regular school day, but my great-grandpa went to Vietnam from the US to visit us, so I went to my uncle's house to meet with him. When I saw him, he picked me up and started talking to me in English. I have no idea what he was saying but he eventually switched to Vietnamese. He was having a normal Vietnamese conversation with me, and then he started to teach me English so I could talk to him in English. He asked me to repeat after him, so I did. After an hour of him teaching me, my brain was fried. I was first normal with English but after that one hour in hell, I began to hate English.

After that day, I didn't have any other interaction with English for a very long time. Time went by, and then I was in elementary school. I had English on my schedule. I'm not a good learner when it comes to something that I do not like. In class, we typically learned vocabulary and grammar. We also had time for practicing to listen and speak. Indeed, I don't like English but it doesn't mean I don't like to sing in English. I loved it when we had songs to help us memorize the vocabulary. Somehow I was able to pass the class with an A in my 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th grade. In fifth grade, I realized that I had no idea what was going on in the class. I realized that I was able to pass the class because I only memorized the material for the exam. Fifth grade was also the year that my family moved to the US.

I arrived in the US. I first lived in Castro Valley. A place that barely had any Vietnamese speakers at the time. I finished my 5th grade there. All the teachers treated me as special because they knew I didn't know English. Most of the time, they let me sit in a corner and colored. That was all I did for the first few weeks of school. After that they let me study like a normal student. I had no motivation to learn English, I felt like I was fine without it. It was the last three months of

school, then summer came, and my family moved to Oakland.

Oakland is a city with lots of Asian people. I was put in a new-comer class. It is really common in Oakland to see people who don't know English. I met my current Vietnamese friends there too. I did learn more English thanks to those classes. My English was getting better but it was only at an elementary level. I could understand somewhat of what was going on in the classes. But because there are Vietnamese people around and I found people who knew less English than me, it gave me reasons not to learn English. After finishing my 6th grade. My family moved again. This time we moved to Ukiah.

Ukiah is a city that is hard to find Asian people in. In my 7th, and 8th grades, I got special treatment from the teachers. For them, it was alright that I would struggle and couldn't catch up with everyone else. That's why as long as I was trying, they would give me good grades.

I had to learn how to survive in a school that only uses English. It was hard. It was confusing. It was scary. I survived it but I became a silent person. I was scared to talk because my English was not great. I got bullied too, for being Asian, and for being a teacher's pet. And it made me hate Americans. I first hated the language, and then the people made me hate it even more. I was first scared to talk because I was scared to make mistakes, and then these people gave me a mindset that all Americans are the same. They are a bunch of bad people. I don't want to have friends anymore, it is better to be alone. Another reason for me to have that mindset is because in Vietnam, I was counted as one of the popular people in the school. Everyone loved me and they respected me, but now in America all I get from people is hatred.

Everything changed when I was in high school. In my middle school graduation, I came in and sang so more people knew about me. In 9th grade, I finally made friends. We were in the same class and we were always together in our classes. They showed me that not all Americans are bad. They changed my perspective on America. They help me feel more confident when I use English. They showed me American culture. Because of them I was more open to making new friends, talking to people, and learning the official language in the US. I could understand everything I needed for school, or at least

I could manage to do my schoolwork. Although, I would still struggle a lot when it comes to English.

I have two big struggles with English: reading and writing. For reading, I can't feel the author. I can't feel the tone of the sentences. I can't feel the words. The reason for me not being able to feel the words is because of the difference in language. For example, while Vietnamese has lots of words that have the same meaning as the word "you," English only has one pronoun for you. I find no interest in reading when all the words are repeated and repeated and repeated.

I can only read one book every 3-4 months and it is hard for me to finish a book. Another struggle is writing. I only started to learn English when I got to the US, that's why I have a great struggle with writing. I've never really learned how to form sentences. I've been writing what my brain says is right. My English comprehension counts as good so the school put me into an intermediate-level ESL class so I also would have to learn intermediate-level grammar. I didn't even know elementary grammar so it doesn't matter how hard I would try, I still couldn't learn how to form sentences without error. I couldn't find any method for improving reading or writing either. Not until I went in the Middle College program.

In the tenth grade, I got into a program called Middle College. Students in the program got to finish high school while also completing college credits. All the teachers treat me the same. They don't favor me. I was having a really hard time when school started. In this program, the teacher focuses on the growth of their students. They make us read and take tests every time we finish a book. They also have goals for us. Everyone has to get specific points for their reading. It helped me a lot with my reading skills. I went from not being able to finish a book to finishing a book every month. Not only that, but each class also helped me with my English. For my English class, we had to read and write a lot. I can see how my writing improved by the end of the school year. In this class, we also have a thing called a Socratic seminar, where we have to discuss what we're reading and everyone has to talk. I've not talked to people for a few years and it's scary but my accent is getting better and better with time. In history class, we have something called book notes where we read around 5-10 pages in the textbook and summarize them in our words while

learning vocabulary and noting interesting ideas. While in the act of reading things full of hard comprehensible material, my reading skills also got better like crazy.

I also met my partner in this program. He's the biggest reason for my crazy improvement. While school helped me with academic English, my partner helped me with daily life English and the US culture. I got to experience holidays in the US like Easter, Halloween, and more in a way that I get to enjoy it. Vietnamese in the US celebrate American holidays differently than how Americans celebrate it; we celebrate it by drinking and doing karaoke which is only for adults. Teens and kids will just sit there and be on their phone and listen to adults gossiping and singing. When we first dated I didn't talk to him at all but he encouraged me to talk and he would help me correct my mistakes. My partner actually didn't understand more than half of what I texted during the first few months we dated. When he couldn't understand me, he would ask me to explain and help me fix the sentence and make it easier to understand. My accent is also better because he forced me to talk and would help me with words that I can't pronounce or would miss pronounce. With someone to practice English with, my English also improved. At the beginning of the school year, I had a lot of trouble with everything. But by the end of the school year, all the teachers were happy with my growth, especially my English teacher.

It took me 5 years of living in the US to learn to love English. I did want to give up every single day. Sometimes I wish that I was born in the US so I didn't have to be so miserable while learning English. But after everything, I'm glad I wasn't born in the US because I got to experience so many things. I am glad I got to experience something that not many people got to experience like celebrating Mid-Autumn and Lunar New Year. The Vietnamese community in the US do celebrate these special days but it has a different feeling when you celebrate it in Vietnam. I learned from my mistakes, I learned and grew, learned and grew. I also have the benefit of knowing two languages. When I already know the second language, it becomes easier to learn the third, the fourth, and so on. I am now proud to say my English is not great but I do my best every day to improve it.

If you want to learn a new language, don't be afraid to do so. And

don't forget to also learn about the language's culture because it could be the reason for you to fall so deep in love with that language. If you hate a language right now because of personal experience, or heard of or politics like "Asian were created Covid," you should try to forget about that and actually give the language a chance, along with the culture. Who knows what you limit yourself from. Maybe you will fall in love with that language and culture more than you thought you would or could.

BREAKING THE LANGUAGE

BARRIER. MY CULTURAL EXCHANGE

ADVENTURE IN AMERICA

Sandra Mogollon

I remember when I was in elementary school, fifth grade, I was enjoying my English classes. My teacher made games like guessing the animals, singing songs, or drawing. It was my favorite subject. Since then, I have developed a special love for this language.

Later in high school, it wasn't fun, but I liked it. I had a different teacher who taught me grammar, reading and all the skills for the language. She was also so sweet, patient and calm that I appreciated her, so I was her helper during the whole high school. After I finished high school, I decided that I wanted to study English and teach.

So, I went to college in Colombia for 4 and half years. It was hard especially because my English skills weren't good enough: My first teacher in college was awful, she was mean to people who weren't able to speak or understand English well, so I had to take some clinics classes to help me get better. But in that moment, I was feeling like I chose the wrong career. But during the rest of the years, I got better and I was able at least to speak and understand.

Through the time in my college, I knew a program that some of my classmates did to acquire the language more fluently . It was to be out of the country for a year or more. I wasn't ready to leave my family and my career, so I waited until a few of my classmates did it first, to see how it was.

Later, I applied to this program through an agency in my country. I had to complete some tests in English like reading, writing, listening and speaking. After I passed, I gave my information in a platform, where families can see my profile. Finally a few of the families contacted me. one of them was the family that I matched. I got nervous at the beginning. We had some interviews in skype, to talk about

each other, and I met the family and knew the kids, who were twins (boy and girl), The family wanted me to teach them Spanish.

I got my ticket for December 2nd When I arrived in America, I was scared. I had never been out of my country and alone. I had to admit that I cried the whole trip, because my phone was without a signal and my language wasn't very good; I was in a foreign country and I missed my family. I spent 14 hours of flying in like 2 or 3 planes. It was like a 2-day trip just to arrive. I soon was landing and imagining how everything would be, the food, the people, the culture and of course the language. Facing a new language is a new challenge, because your brain must translate every single word in your language first, and then you find the appropriate word for expressing yourself.

Arriving in an American family was a great experience: the host family was made up of the mom, the dad and 3 kids, twins (1 year and 1 month old) and 10 years old boy. at the beginning my body wasn't accepting the food, had stomachached a headache also because the trip. The routine was different, my day started at 7:30 and finished at 5:30 for 4 days a week, some weekends were half of the day. I had to play with the twins and cook for them, clean the toys, change them and teach Spanish.

It was a challenge to take care of kids when you aren't a mom! But it was easy for me, because I love kids, and it was so interesting to talk with them in both languages and they didn't notice. One time the baby boy asked me, "tu no hablas ingles (you didn't speak English?)" I said "no, I don't" in English.

I was also able to attend some classes in English, where I met some people from another countries, in my classes like Brazil, Saudi Arabia, Peru, Japan. Some of them were my friends. Being in a class with people from the whole world and able to communicate, it was one of the best experiences that I had. took trips with the family. We went to a safari, and we had the experience to see the animals around the car, like ostrich or a giraffe. Never was able to imagine things like that, not in my country.

My program was for one year at first; for me was a long year! But it went fast, after I had vacation, so I decided to visit my family, then went back to continue one more year. I felt that this experience helps me understand the culture and the language.

Some of the cultural values from America are before bedtime, they always read to the kids, the most important meal is the dinner, because is the time where the whole family are able to stay at home. No matter what mom is always right. People think that America is just fast food, (hamburgers, hot dogs, fries, etc.) but is also healthy food, many or tons different kinds of fruits, veggies, cereals, milk, snacks. you must spend time in the groceries reading or choosing the food. After the program was done, I went back home It felt like now I was the stranger at home. I wasn't fit in my culture anymore, sot, the food tasted different and the routines and everything. So, I found a job and stayed quiet like 2 or 3 years, then I decided to come back to America. I met a guy and I fell in love.

Now I have a kid, he is almost 2 years., and my host kids love him. Sometimes I visited them. My host mom helped me in the hospital when I gave birth. She's been in a great way of a second mom. grateful 'm grateful that my kid is able to learn the whole world in two languages. According to some scientists, developing 2 or more languages helps the brain delay Alzheimer's disease. Because it allows your brain to work two times and use both sides of the brain.

Why did I decide to go back.? Because I'm giving the opportunity to my son to have a better life and many ways to see the world. that in my country wasn't possible . We have good health care, education aids, and great support from the community.

MY NAME IS

María del Pilar Guadalupe Garcia Ferreira

My name is María del Pilar Guadalupe Garcia Ferreira. That's right, I have three names. I am originally from Santa Ana, Maya Michoacan, Mexico, and my story is about my name. Imagine how bad things were for me in kindergarten when I had to make plans for my name. It was like a punishment. When I was little, I always wondered why there were so many names when most of my classmates only had one, well, some two names, but now three! !! It was something inexplicable, and the reason for this was that my mother had a sister who died at an early age. Her name was Maria del Pilar, and in memory of her, I bear this name. Now, let's talk about the third name, Guadalupe. It is a little strange, but I want to share an anecdote! As you already know, I was born in Mexico, and in Mexico, it is customary that you can go and register your child whenever you want; it is not like here in the USA where your baby leaves the hospital with a name, in Mexico you can NOT give him a name there when you want.

I was born on December 2nd, and my mother went to the civil registry to officially name me on December 12th. In Mexico, this day is significant because those of us who are Catholic know that it is the day that the Virgin's Day is celebrated. . of Guadalupe, a historic day for us Mexicans. Well, getting back to the topic, they searched me that day, and the civil registry judge (Luz María, this lady is called) told my mother that in the many years that she had been a judge, she had never I had previously registered a baby on this day and what do you think???? Yes, she gave me that name, so thanks to the town judge, who was also a friend of my mother, I have a third name. I don't know what you think about this, but for me, it's partly something strange, and at the time, it was frustrating, but now I take it more lightly, and I find it somewhat funny and fun. Who can have three names? I wonder.

All people with more than one name by their first name. For example, I have a sister named María, but she is María Isabel, and at

home, we all call her María out of affection. Well, they call me Pilar; everyone knows me as Pilar. Only my closest friends call me Pili; well, it wasn't like that until I entered high school when I had an excellent friend of many years named Mizael, and he started calling me Pily. , that was when some classmates and some teachers did it. Since I was little, my name has become very strong and heavy. I always felt insecure when they asked me my name since my personality was that of a very tender and sensitive girl, and I felt that my name was inappropriate. Me. my personality at that time, I always felt that when my mother spoke to me very loudly or when she scolded me and called me Pilar, I thought that it was more than a reprimand sometimes when she was angry with me, and she just turned to look at me. Looking at me and saying my name, Pilar, already to stop me was more than a scolding.

It is worth mentioning that no one calls me Pili in my house. My brothers call me Pilo for bothering me (haha). My mom, I don't know why she calls me (tight) as affectionate, and some neighbors call me tight, and that doesn't bother me alcontario. I like it because They do it tenderly.

In 2014, I moved to the USA, and here, for all my procedures, they use my first name; all the people who don't know me call me Maria, and I ask the people I have the opportunity to meet to call me Pilar and some people who know me. They have taken a liking to me, and they call me Pili.

Sometimes, some people call me Pili without knowing me, and it's not that it bothers me, but I do feel a little strange because they usually don't do it unless not people who don't know me or who know me little.

Even if at some point my husband calls me Pili, I feel very uncomfortable because I am not used to him doing it, nor that my brothers, my mother, or my husband's family something that I do not like (I don't know the reason, even I can't find it) but I prefer not to do it.

Now that I am an adult, I love my name, and it matches my personality and the meaning of «Strong and Brave.» I consider myself a person who identifies with my name, and I love it because it is not so common, and I like that.

I want to share a small part of my life that is important to me. I

have a 5-year-old girl named Leah who has always said she wants to be called Pily. Even when you ask her what her name is, she answers, my name is Leah, but I love myself. Calling Pily is so cute; these moments make me appreciate my name even more.

Leah is a super tender, understanding, kind, sensible, and brave girl, and this is precisely what her name «Tender and Brave» means. Seeing her grow up and the girl she has become, I couldn't have chosen a better name for her.

I have always thought that your name has a lot to do with your personality; it is something extraordinary that I have perhaps, but at this moment, I am a very grateful person for having the name I have and with pride when they ask me what my name is «PILAR» it is my answer.

LET'S START LIKE THIS

Yonny Gonzalez

Around at the age of 5 i lived with my parents in Tapachula, Chiapas, Mexico my mom told me one day.i had to go at school, on my second grade i couldn't continue because my parents were getting divorced so my Mom,my sister and I. had to move a town called Tacana San Marcos Guatemala, where my mom is originally. At the beginning it was difficult for me arrive in a country which was not mine.I stared going to school again but it was no longer the same as i was in Mexico which i really liked,i played,it was fun i didn't have the first friends i had to.It was a culture clash. it was difficult for me to adapt to a new people,tradition,food,money and the language even though it was Spanish, they have their own accent and there are many words different and meanings like the slang.

For example if you say on. English(US) Hey dude.Guatemala: Mira bos.Mexico Oye Wey or Guey.

No longer had a television or had my own bed to sleep in. Because it was my grandma's house she was very poor and had a very angry character.I asked my Mom,when i was going back home because i didn't like that place,that's were my mom explained to me there were no turning back this was my new life i had to start from scratch.Because she couldn't go back to live with my dad therefore i had accept the reality and start getting used to Guatemala.i did understand but the time was passing i was growing more and i accept stay living there i did but after this period of time i meet my mom family some cousin unties and my great-great grandmother was still alive she went and picked a chicken from her farm she cut chayotes and ther vegetables to accompany a delicious chicken broth.I loved how they cooked and the way she was,because it reminded me of the farm my dad had at home. I felt happy when i ran to grab the chicken right out of the pasture.

i felt like i belonged there. i had 3 best friends Every august we went to the center of town to walk and play games at the fair or we eat pizza or fried chicken with potatoes with made jokes.We were all teenagers.

I returned to Mexico i was 12 graduating in sixth grade.I decided look for my dad in mexico, I stayed there for 2 years,when i got there all my neighbors no longer lived there.They had moved in different places in other states of mexico my dad was the only one who has stayed there to live there.Because a hurricane had passed since tapachula the weather is tropical creates a lot of rain with storms and strong rains i had to say goodbye to my dad.Since my sister lived in mexicali Mexico which is near to the USA my sister asked me if i wanted to continue my education because with my dad i couldn't go to school i went to high school in mexicali for 2 years but my classmate made fun of me because of my accent,they told me "Uuu you sound weird" what part of mexico are you coming from"? I ask them why! They respond: "your accent is more like a south america" i had to explain the reason why.i told myself im very lucky and proud to speak like and having this kind of accent i told them not all the states of mexico have same accent even the tradition or custom is different,they finally understand me. i move to the US. i turn 16,but i receive a call from my uncle if i wanted come and i live in Florida i said Nooo, i told him i don't want to face the same situation over again the same feeling it took me a few weeks to think about it.Finally i did i still remember the day and time when i arrive the fly to florida so a week later is where i got here.My uncle is my mother's brother he told me i had to go to school because it is require thats the law of the USA you have to go at school no matter what.

At the beginning of school in the US, my first day i felt nervous all my body was shaking,at the bus stop.I saw a few guys there im guessing talking about the first day of school cause i that time i couldn't understand English and i couldn't even have a conversation with nobody I felt sad,I arrived the bus I seat right behind the last sit of the bus,I looked at my phone and pretending like I'm okay. later on i get to the office I had to enter at the main office to ask my schedule.So i took a deep breath,I asked someone if they speak spanish and were like yaeh at that part i was like ok i had some help.Later on i get only 2 classes 5 of them were English, CNA class was the first one and my teacher was a old lady I would say she was africanamerican, She was a teacher, a woman who felt a lot of compassion for her student,she had good energy, she liked sing a song "We Are Family" we called her Ms Rushing she came to me and said:"Hello what's your name,how old

are you" ?I couldn't even respond to her i make signs with my hands like:Noo nothing but she could understand Spanish but she was the opposite to me she was like all right go get and get a seat.

After a few months in Ms.Rushing class she gave me some advice's, like if you speak loud infront of a mirror you would learn more quickly that's depend on you for you cannot translate on your phone instead translate in your phone just put your brain to work on.That was a key how i became more interested in English and i was pretending speak in English even though my brain still wastranslate to spanish. she recom-mend listening song in English so that way i could catch more words. and TV show movies with subtitles.I had 2 English clases level 1,2 and 3.I learn basic word, how to make a sentences with a few words like:My dog is very happy.My horse is beautiful,or My car is color blue and so on. i moved forward since i liked English,the sound for me was like a unique it's like a game of words that i have to decipher.That's how i became more entered in American songs like:(electronic,pop).like Davidguetta,Florida and that help me on my pronunciation.Every time i was correcting myself no longer i learned, not be afraid to raise my hand in class whenever i wanted ask some question about homework.

So i entered in junior high school it was my first year .but senior was my second year soi had all my classes on English during my last year. like Math,history of USA,PE and so on.That's how i passed my classes even though i didn't get my high school diploma cause did not earn a lot of credit which was 24 at that time, i only get 14 credits.

I feel proud of myself because i put all my effort in those 2 years. It has changed me since i was a child, in the way i see the life today from seeing and connecting with the language not being or knowing how be part of it.now i see advance during this seven years,lived here. it is enormous progress where i feel proud and grateful to see at least to defend myself when someone speaks to me. i have learned be a patient,supportive person,be understanding and be grateful more than anything. At the age of 18 i move to California because my sister lived here in Ukiah.i went to ukiah adul school I get my GED now im here chasing my dream of not staying with same level of English i want to keep going on more cause i want dominate it.

UNEXPECTED TURN

Elena Vasileva



Events developed in such a way that we were forced to leave Russia. We arrived in America in November 2022 and are trying to get comfortable here. It's always difficult to start over, but Americans are very friendly and opening people. They help us and try to solve our problems. Of course, a lot depends on ourselves, first of all learning English.

I have been studying English for a year and it is not easy for me. But I want to talk a little about my family and life in Russia.

My mom's name is Valentina. She is 77 years old and she is Ukrainian. Dad's name was Valentin and he is Russian. Two years ago he died and mom was left alone. My grandfather was from an Estonian family and my grandmother was Russian.

Now, my mother lives in Russia in the city of St.-Petersburg. In Ukraine she has three cousins.

When mom was little, she went on summer holidays to her grand-

mother in Ukraine. Grandmother had a large farm – geese, chickens and a vegetable garden.

In Russia we still have many friends and our parrot, who lives with my mother. We really miss the time when we lived in Russia. Now we don't see my mother, but we often call her on the phone and share news.

My husband had his own construction company. Before children I used to work at a newspaper, then in a printing house and at home as a design freelancer.

I met my husband, Konstantin, in 1997 on January 7th. We fell in love and got married on February 13, 2004. Nine months later our first son Vladimir was born; 4 years later our daughter Maria was born; 1/2 years later our son Alexander was born.

Vladimir played soccer and now enjoys motorcycles. Maria danced in the studio and went to art school. Alexander did acrobatics and now plays the guitar and basketball.

We spent the summer with our family in a country house. In the winter, on the weekends, we went sledding and snowmobiling.

The children had a lot of fun there because they spent time with their friends in nature.

I like to spend time in nature. In Russia, I grew cucumbers, tomatoes, zucchini, pumpkin, strawberries, peas and more herbs. In our garden there were apple and pear trees, currant bushes and many different flowers. In the summer, we went swimming in the lake, rode bicycles, picked berries and mushrooms.

I love my city, St.-Petersburg, where I was born. It has wide streets, cozy parks and winding river channels. It has museums, theaters and art galleries.

This city is beautiful at any time of the year.

ESSAY

Yadira Zuniga

I was 14, finishing my “Secundaria” Junior High School, and the summer was just starting. I am from a beautiful little town named Manzanillo, Colima Mexico. My house, just walking 15 minutes from the warm waters of the Pacific Ocean, is a little piece of tropical heaven around me.

My Dad is a biology professor, and my mom is a housewife (still to this day). Of course, education at home was very important. I grew up with a beautiful collection of Biology books and enjoyed them. Learning how to cook with my mom, and spending time with her too, was a treasure. I am the oldest of four siblings, we had such a great childhood, and spending so much time outdoors with family is something that I appreciate so much right now.

Remembering very well the last day of school, I was nervous, because I had to say a poem for the ceremony, and I was practicing under a delicious guayaba tree when I saw a taxi coming from the airport (those taxis used to have an airplane logo at the front doors). When I saw my favorite aunt Estela and his family, who lived in Diamond Bar, which is a suburb of Los Angeles, CA. visiting us at the beginning of summer.

Feeling very happy, I asked them to come to the graduation that evening, and they agreed to come with us.

After that, we all went to a very nice restaurant in front of the beach, I remember we could hear the waves and even felt the breeze with that beautiful smell of the ocean. It was such a nice night, jazz music, seafood, and all my family having such a great time. Memories!

With all the moments of the farewell afternoon of my classmates, my sister, and two little brothers, my parents were very happy with my school achievement and talked about a nice future waiting for me.

When we got home, my aunt took me for a walk to my dad’s house back yard. She started talking about how nice was for her, to be able to attend my ceremony. While we both were sitting together in a “Hamacca” hammock, we laughed when we heard as if a branch had broken.

Then, she got serious and mentioned that she had realized that I had graduated with very good grades. She told me that she was proud of me, and we hugged each other for a moment.

And suddenly without waiting for it, my aunt asked me: What do you think if you come to California with us and go to High School? Silence was the answer for a couple of minutes, and then she touched my chin and made me, very gently, look at her. I can’t forget that MOMENTO.

With the sounds of the crickets and the smell of mangos around us, we felt the weather of a summer night.

“Yady, did you understand what I am asking you?” I remember I took a very deep breath. I answer back with a question. Did my mom or Dad ask you to take me with you? “Of course not!” She answered.

She said when we were driving back from the restaurant, she began to think about it, and then she thought of asking me first, and depending on my answer she would think about what to do next. It was very hard, as a family we were very close, we had never been separated before.

That’s the beginning of my history here in the USA. We went in 1988 to a beautiful High School to sign me up for the school year. A counselor who knew very little Spanish was called to be able to do some math, biology, social science, geography, and some other tests, to figure out what year was appropriate for me. They said I was a little too young to be a sophomore, then I finished those tests, and the school accepted me.

I remember my beautiful Mexican descendant Spanish teacher Mrs. Dolores. Her parents were from Chihuahua, the biggest state of my country.

Her classroom was very Mexican culture style decorated and I loved it. I felt safe in her class, It felt a little close to what I knew back then. She helped me through the school year that I stayed in Diamond Bar High School.

Having good grades was very important, algebra and geometry classes were fine, but biology was a little hard because I needed to translate everything. I signed up for basketball, cross country, volleyball, hip-hop, drama, and music.

The English class was the hardest, I suffered a lot. The letter D in my English report was there month after month.

Everybody has their own way of learning. Maybe languages are not my forte. But quitting is not my thing, we need to go for more, knowledge is like a key to a door.

My sophomore school year ended, and I decided to return to my family and to my country.

Dad gave me a music CD, Richard Marx was the singer, and “Right Here Waiting for You” was a hit at the beginning of the '90s. The CD had all the lyrics, and that is how I keep up with my English. Since then, I have always tried to buy those books where you can learn the songs. Now we use Google for that same intention.

Sometimes it feels that you are not learning, then founding myself one day talking at the beach with a tourist, both were around 16 at the time, who was asking me for a nice ice cream place nearby. The young girl and I walked to the place, and we enjoyed a delicious banana split. That day I understood that I learned enough English to communicate.

Is important to study vocabulary, be able to learn the language, and is necessary to learn how to express and communicate what we really want to say. How to put the sentences together, the punctuation, and the meaning of every phrase. I'm having a great class now, learning so much, Bridge to English is giving me the opportunity to understand how to better build writing. Is the first time I have taken an English class as an adult.

Now, I feel very grateful for the opportunity that my Aunt Estela gave me. It was a nice experience to learn a different language and understand a little more about the culture. Is a better way to learn, when you have access to live in the language country that you are learning from.

Studying is very important, but it is also important not to be afraid to express yourself and be able to communicate, doesn't matter if anyone laughs or makes funny comments about the way you say your words or the accent you have.

I learned that usually most of those type of people only knows one language, and they have only lived in this country, their country and that's why they don't understand the big effort that an immigrant is making. Being an Outsider is just difficult, but not learning the language where you live, is way more than difficult.

I made peace with that.

I NEVER THOUGHT ENGLISH SHOULD BE IMPORTANT

Cruz Lizeth Moctezuma Sierra

My name is Lizeth. I have been in the United states for five years. When I was growing up in Mexico I never heard or thought that English should be important in my life.

When I was a child I watched cartoons like “Dora la Exploradora” and “Las Pistas de Blue”. From those cartoons I learned numbers and colors in English.

When I entered primary school my English classes were basic. They only taught the things that I already knew. Then I entered middle school and high school, but in that stage of stage of adolescence my friends and I never paid attention to English lessons because we didn't worry about tomorrow.

During those years something that helped me be able to pronounce English as my oldest sister. She listened to songs in English, and they stuck in my brain so much that I sang them without knowing what the lyrics meant.

When I moved here the United states at the age of 19, I thought it would be easy to learn English because at first my family helped me, but I had to put “chingona” which means to get ahead on your own and achieve your goals, because I knew that my family wouldn't always be able to help me. I started taking adult classes thanks to my aunt Irma, who I will always be grateful for. She has always been there for me. She's always motivating me to do things. Thanks to her I got my driver's license. I learned to have that character of “I can” no, and because I like to help people, when I see someone Hispanic who can't yet speak English, I gladly help them ask for what they want. I am not an expert, but I offered to help period now my sister is in the same situation that I was in at the beginning, but little by little I'm teaching her what I know.

I'M FROM LAOS

Pa Yang

My name is Pa. I'm from Laos. I was born on January 25th, 1994. I was born into a farming family. My family has four brothers and three sisters. I am the first child of my family. When I was a child I went to school until I was 10 years old period after that I stayed at home and helped my parents take care of my younger brothers and sisters, and i also washed all my families clothes by hand. When i was a child, i didn't have free choice for myself, but now i'm very happy because i have come to have a new life in the US.

One challenge for me in the US, though, is English. It is so difficult for me because it's very different from my native language, Hmong.

Also, there are so many words. However, I really like it, and I want to learn as much English as possible. There are many words in English. This language has a big vocabulary. And every day it seems like the words I hear are different and new. I hear them, but I can't say them clearly because I don't know how they're spelled or what they mean. Then I'll continue trying my best in hopes that one day I will understand English better.

English is very different from Hmong, and learning English makes me feel happy that I can understand and speak my first language well. Besides having a smaller vocabulary overall, I like Hmong Because there are no verb tenses. For example if I wanted to say among that I will eat pizza I simply say, "I eat pizza tonight." For tomorrow, it's the same verb, and for yesterday, it's the same verb it's so easy! Another difference between Hmong in English is that in Hmong, the subject comes before the adjective. So for example, I have a child good. This sounds great to my brain. This makes sense to me, and I love how easy it is to express myself using my native language. I'm happy that I get to speak Hmong every day with my daughter and husband. Although English is different from Hmong, the differences make me want to learn more! English is a new, exciting world for me.

English will help me in the future. I will be able to have a good job if I know English well. Because of this I have to learn all the English words.

NOSTALGIA, SOMETHING COMMON IN IMMIGRANTS

Jatziry W. Cantu Castillo

Nostalgia is an emotion that can be confusing period feeling nostalgia may seem nice, but it can also leave you sad and empty. There are countless reasons to feel nostalgic. A person, childhood memories, or some event... or your native country. This is very common in people who immigrate to another country leaving behind the one where they grew up. Some people remember with happiness, others with sadness, and it can also be a combination of both.

Feeling sadness when you feel nostalgic for your native country is very common, especially when you remember things you used to do and now don't do, for example, spending time with your family, your partner, children, parents; who now live very far away. Or the freedom you felt, when you walked through your city admiring the beautiful landscape there. You can also feel sad when remembering the people you knew in your native country, as friends with whom you spent fun afternoons, but now you don't see them anymore. All those things made you feel happy, but they have turned into nostalgia and melancholy, and many times you would like to return.

It is also common to feel happiness when you're in nostalgic. This is a nice feeling. Like when you remember funny anecdotes from your childhood or the place you used to live. The games you played with your friends, the trees and fruits that you could eat whenever you want it, the rivers or beaches where you used to go and where you had a lot of fun, the weather that you liked so much, etcetera. Those good memories make you feel happy. It's the kind of nostalgia that feels good and doesn't hurt.

These two feelings can also be combined on occasions, which is why nostalgia can feel strange. This happens when you start to remember precisely the things you used to do and can't do anymore, everything that you miss and that makes you feel like you want to

go back, but at the same time are intertwined with good memories that make you feel happy. That's why when you tell or remember anecdotes about your native country, you seem sad and happy at the same time.

In conclusion, I think that nostalgia is a combination of happiness and sadness. People may feel sad when they remember their native countries, but not everything has to be like that. Immigrants can also remember with happiness, and practice feeling gratitude for the good things in the new places they live.

WHEN I CAME TO THE US

Francisca Rodriguez

When I came to the United States it was difficult for me. Because I didn't speak English. I never went to school to learn English because I was focused on my daughter's education and English speaking classes were not offered 42 years ago. When I did go to school for three months, I had to pay for them myself but they were cancelled. Now that my daughters are all grown and independent, I want to dedicate myself to learn English. My daughters all have their careers and I can focus on learning English but it's difficult this English is not my first language. I'm very proud of myself for all the accomplishments my daughters have made and now I'm dedicated to learning English. I'm not ashamed that I came to the states as "mojada" as a lot of people say, because I did come over "wet" or undocumented. And I'm proud of the accomplishments that I have made because now I speak, write, and understand some English I'm happy that my daughters were born here. And I am happy they were able to get an education career. I'm proud of everything we were able to accomplish. I came "mojada" so they could cross the stage with pride as United States graduates with their diplomas from the university.

GOING BACK HOME

Chong Geyer

I was born in the rural countryside of South Korea. All I could see was mountains and farmland. There was no plumbing, no kitchen sink, or running water. We had to go to the well and bring back water in the bucket for all our cooking and cleaning. I did laundry on a rock at the river even in winter. We cooked over a wood fire. My town had no paved roads; when a bus would go by, all the dirt flew into the air.

Many years later, I married a man in the military, and we moved to the U.S. We first stayed with my in-laws. They were wonderful people. My mother-in-law, who I called Mom, treated me like a princess. She did everything for me. We arrived a week before Christmas, and I had never seen a Christmas tree before. Mom worked as a head housekeeper for a large hotel. Even though she worked so hard, she cooked every meal for me. She wanted me to feel at home, so she drove through the Washington rain to take me to an Asian supermarket where I could get the foods I was used to. She told the store manager to let me get whatever I wanted that money was no object. She did not know Korean, and I did not know English. We tried to communicate using Korean/English dictionaries. She even did all my laundry. Mom had my father-in-law drive me to English classes. It was 45 minutes each way. She tried to surprise my husband and did not let him know that I was learning English.

Shortly after that, my husband was deployed to Monterey. I stayed in Washington for only two months. When it was time for me to join my husband, Mom drove me down to Monterey. While I was there, he did all the laundry since he needed everything done to military standards. Again, I was treated like a princess. I tried to work and to learn English, but with limited success. Eventually, we separated, and for the first time since I was a child, I was responsible for my own laundry and bills. I had so much to learn! I asked for help, and I learned how.

Years later, I returned to Korea to care for my mother. I had

learned that she was not well, so I dropped everything and flew to care for her. I was shocked at how South Korea had changed since I left. Seoul was transformed by the Olympics and was a modern metropolis. There was a freeway system and high-rise buildings everywhere. There were fast-food chain restaurants and a two-story Costco. In my mom's neighborhood, restaurants had pictures of western food like omelets in their picture windows.

I took care of my mom for two months. I only left her for one day. My brother took me to visit the village where we grew up and to see some relatives. In the town where I spent my childhood, the streets were paved. We found our old house surrounded by tall brush and bushes. I peeked into the door and saw a room so small that I think my bathroom in the U.S. was bigger. We visited an old neighbor and some elderly relatives and returned.

I left Korea as a young woman, and eventually became accustomed to life in America with all our modern conveniences and ways of doing daily life. I returned to Korea 21 years later to find that Korea had become, in many ways, just like America. My life has become so much easier with modernization. I can focus on more than survival. It no longer takes me an entire day just to do the laundry. I can spend my time learning new things and helping people.

WHEN I COME TO AMERICA

Lourdes Guillory

My name is Lourdes Guillory, and my story began when I was 12 years old in Peru when my parents decided to move to the U.S.A. for a better life and opportunities for the family. My father was in the army as a special ops agent for eighteen years; back home, we lived on a military base for the first twelve years of my life and only associated with other military families. My siblings and I have never been off the military base, even to go to school, because everything we needed was supplied on base—everything from catholic schools, grocery stores, theater, and even a farm.

As you enter the army base, it has two towers, one on each side with a gunman on top of it and a tall iron gate. There is a booth on the left-hand side of the iron gate, with a few offices with rifles in charge of granting entrance to the families or visitors approved previously for visitation.

Every day, a bus takes all the children to school on the other side of the base, where the school is kindergarten through twelve. Every Saturday, parents play volleyball in the center of the courtyard in the middle of the military community suburb. All the children play around the courtyard as their parents play a game of volleyball. Families gather in each other's homes in the evening to celebrate birthdays, weddings, etc.

The summer in Peru starts in March; around that time, the military base rents a bus for all the children of different ages to go camping for two weeks, which is called summer camp. When we get to the beach, the soldiers build a huge tent that will hold a stage and an area for “chow,” which means an eating location; we develop our one-person tent.

- We wake up at 5:00 a.m. to prepare for a run around the beach and breakfast around 6:00 a.m.
- At 10:00 a.m., everyone gathers in military uniforms and rifles outside the big tent to exercise, march in formation, and

learn to shoot our guns; after that, we eat lunch.

- After lunch, the soldiers took us to the beach to swim for a couple of hours. Around 5:00 p.m., we had dinner, and afterward, there was a talent show.

Even though everything looked like we had a perfect life, my parents wanted better financial stability, which Peru did not offer then.

My family and I, father, Juan Urquiaga Sr., who was 32 years of age at the time; Mom, Teresa, 30, and three siblings, Juan Jose, 10, Maria Guadalupe, 8, and my little sister Cristina Del Pilar, seven years old, all came to the United States from the Country of Peru, South America. arrived in San Francisco in the summer of 1982. Being the oldest of four children, we were thrilled to start a new life with my family. Our experience was terrifying at times and also exciting! I felt butterflies and nervous; my family had never been on a plane.

It was like Coming to America. I could relate to the movie “Coming to America” with Eddie Murphy, when everything they saw was new, and they couldn't understand what people were saying or why they acted the way they did as we got on a plane at the international airport in the City of Lima, Peru.

I saw people of all backgrounds and cultures who spoke other languages, and it sounded like gibberish to me. The first time I heard the English language, we landed in Miami to connect to our next plane, which would arrive in California.

The airport looked like a big city with stores, restaurants, a bar, a children's area, and many people everywhere. Different types of smelled food came from the restaurants. This was the first time I was introduced to a fast-food restaurant called McDonald's. The fries were out of this world, hot and salty, and the burger melted in my mouth. This was my first experience in the US as we walked down the gate to travel from Miami to Northern California.

We lived in San Francisco with my father's aunt, Maria, on his father's side. She lived in a two-bedroom apartment on Guerrero Street.

Coming to the United States was a whole new world, from school and the food to how children interacted with parents, the language, and different cultures.

My aunt told us to watch TV only in English because it was helpful for us to listen to the words and write them in a notebook that she got for us to prepare before we went to school. At first, trying to listen to a new language we didn't understand was confusing, but after a few weeks or so, we stopped trying to understand and learned to listen to the sounds of the words spoken through TV shows.

We didn't watch TV in Spanish; we learned by using flashcards and attending school.

It wasn't that hurt for us not to watch TV in Spanish back in Peru. We were only a lot to watch TV on Saturday after our chores. So when we were told that we could watch TV in English, we were thrilled to be able to do so, too! It took about the whole summer to learn some words; we're able to say Hello, how are you? What is your name? My name is Lourdes, and goodbye.

My parents sent my siblings and me to school that winter. I started in the seventh grade, and in those days, schools didn't have English as a second language (ESL) classes like we do now.

In ESL, the way we learned, they would pull us out of class for a couple of hours to teach us the language by understanding the sound of the alphabet, the verbs, writing, and reading; otherwise, all my classes were only English-speaking.

My father worked at a fancy restaurant at the beach in San Francisco called the Clift House. He was one of the chefs, and he loved to cook. My mother was a housewife for a couple of years until she got a job cleaning other people's houses while my siblings and I went to school.

When we lived in San Francisco with my aunt for at least two years, she took my family and me to places like Golden Gate Park. I remember walking across the Golden Gate Bridge that day; it was amazing! It was fantastic to experience Chinatown, a culture so far from my homeland, but now, it is right in front of me in the US. We smile at the different types of food, like BBQ Duck, Sushi, Chinese food, clothing, language, and their Idols. We also visited Little Mexico, which the locals called the Mission district. I was intrigued by their culture and food, as well as their holidays and language, because when we lived in Peru, we didn't socialize with any civilian people, so we didn't enjoy what Peru had to offer!

In Peru, we don't celebrate Dias de Los Muertos, Halloween, St. Patrick's Day, Thanksgiving, Easter, and other holidays. We celebrated Christmas, Carnival in the summertime, and the Independence of Peru on July 27 in Peru.

It took my family and me a long time to adjust to a world far away from home, but we made it work.

My parents worked hard to provide for us and opened their own cleaning business, which they operated for years. They purchased two homes and showed us, their children, the value of hard work and dedication to achieving what we need, starting with education, commitment, integrity, honesty, and following the laws of God and the laws of the land.

After being in this beautiful Country for 42 years with an abundance of food, water, everything you may need, and choices to get an education no matter how old you are!

I have been married for over 20 years and have four beautiful children and six grandchildren.

I still feel like an outsider sometimes. In some situations, some people are not as welcoming as others, no matter how much you have accomplished in this Country for your family and yourself with no help from the "Government." There are times I feel like I'm an Insider when, in my career, I have the opportunity to be elevated because I can speak, write, and read this language called English!

FINDING MY VOICE

Rosa Angon-Gonzalez

My story is probably the story of many young immigrants arriving to the United States for the first time. I came to America at the age of seventeen years old. My father, sister, and I arrived with just the clothes we were wearing on that day, twenty dollars in our pockets, and zero knowledge of the English language. All three of us got jobs at local restaurants. My father was a dishwasher and my sister and I worked as cooks. One day, a server was yelling at me for something, but I did not understand what she was saying. All I remember was her angry face and sounds coming out her mouth made no sense. My co-worker let her know that I did not speak English. The sounds that made no sense at all were more like letters mashed together with no specific order and I had never heard in my life before. I stood there with my eyes wide open and a puzzled face. I was so embarrassed and frustrated that I could not answer her. I promised myself that I would find a way to find my voice by learning the language no matter what it takes. I signed up for beginners' English classes at my local adult school and went to class every day. Within a few months, my teacher transferred me to the next level class. I could not believe that I was able to start speaking and writing in a totally different language than my own. As I was walking down the hallway, I saw other students enter a different door next to my class. I asked my teacher if there were other classes being taught. She mentioned that there was an independent study room for students interested in getting their GED (General Education Development). In Mexico, I did not have that, and I had no idea what all of that meant, but she was patient with me and answered all my questions. I learned about the American school system, so, I signed up for it. I was taking English classes, preparatory classes for the GED, and working full time. As time went on, I passed my GED test and then I continued on taking high school classes as an independent student to get my high school diploma. Within a year, I was able to graduate. After that, I was brave enough to matriculate myself to take English classes at College of the Redwoods. I thought it would be attainable since it was the most basic English class

they offered. To my surprise, I did not understand my teacher. I was lost. The feeling from many years ago from that first encounter with the server returned. The embarrassment and the puzzled look on my face was back. I asked why I cannot understand her? So, I worked as hard as I could. I spent so much time. I even translated word by word the assignments, but it was not enough. I failed my first class in college. I was heartbroken and felt defeated. I cried numerous times about it, but then I wiped my tears off my face and signed up again to re-take the class with a different teacher. This time, I had the best teacher I could hope for. She was kind and patient. She knew English was not my first language. She guided me to get the proper help I needed and helped me practice my pronunciation and my writing. I got an A in that class and went on to signing up for the next level of English classes. At this point, I started to take English as a Second Language (ESL) classes. Every semester got easier and I felt better about learning the language. I was finally able to communicate with people. As for work, I was not working as a cook anymore. I was a server and later on, I was promoted to a manager. By learning English, it not only opened more job opportunities, but more importantly, I learned to find my voice. Many years later, I graduated with three associate degrees from college, and then I transferred to a four-year university to continue with my studies. This time, I was not only taking classes in English, but I was taking classes to enhance my writing in my native language, Spanish. As I navigated through the American university system, I faced barriers. Once again, I had to learn more about the American school system. For example, what a quarter system was versus a semester system. Also, I did not know that there were study techniques I could use to learn the material faster or more effectively. Apparently, you should get all of that information from your preparatory courses in middle school and high school. However, as an independent student, I was never privy to any of that. So, I did the best I could and I graduated with two bachelor degrees: Spanish and Neurobiology, Physiology, and Behavior. I kept learning and studying. I have not finished with my educational career yet. I would love to become a dentist one day to help people in need, especially those that do not speak English. I will be a lifelong learner, and I will keep trying to be the best person I can be. I hope my story will inspire others to find their own voice.

I CAME TO THE US FOUR YEARS AGO

Pakou Her

I came to the US four years ago. I live in Eureka with my family. My family has four people. My husband and I have two children, Yer and Kevin. I study English at CR now.

When I first moved to the United States, my husband and I went to shops, to see doctors, to pay bills, and everywhere we went, I saw many different nationalities. They were strange to me. And when I saw someone, I felt scared. I thought please don't speak to me, because I couldn't speak English. But I knew that if I could speak English, they would be friendly. I knew I had to learn English.

I remember one time I went to my friend's house. She was a Hmong, and she spoke Hmong, but her husband was American. Her family spoke English. I sneezed, and her husband said "Bless you" to me, but I didn't know what he said, so I didn't answer him. Then my friend asked me, "why didn't you answer him? You should have said thank you." And I asked in Hmong, "Why did he say that to me? What did he say?" Then she explained it to me.

When I didn't know English, I felt like my ears were deaf. I wanted to go to school, but it was during COVID-19 and every school was closed. I couldn't go to school. So I learned alone at home. I went on YouTube and on Facebook. At first I watched videos of Hmong people teaching English. They translated English to Hmong, and I can understand. I used my phone to translate words I didn't know. In those ways I learned a little bit of English.

Later, when I was pregnant for the first time, I went to see a doctor twice a month, and they didn't let my husband go with me because of COVID-19, so my husband waited for me in the waiting room. Sometimes they had an interpreter on the phone to help me, but not usually because then the appointment took a long time. When I didn't have an interpreter, the doctor would say "Good morning, How are you?" I would say "Good, thank you" because I had

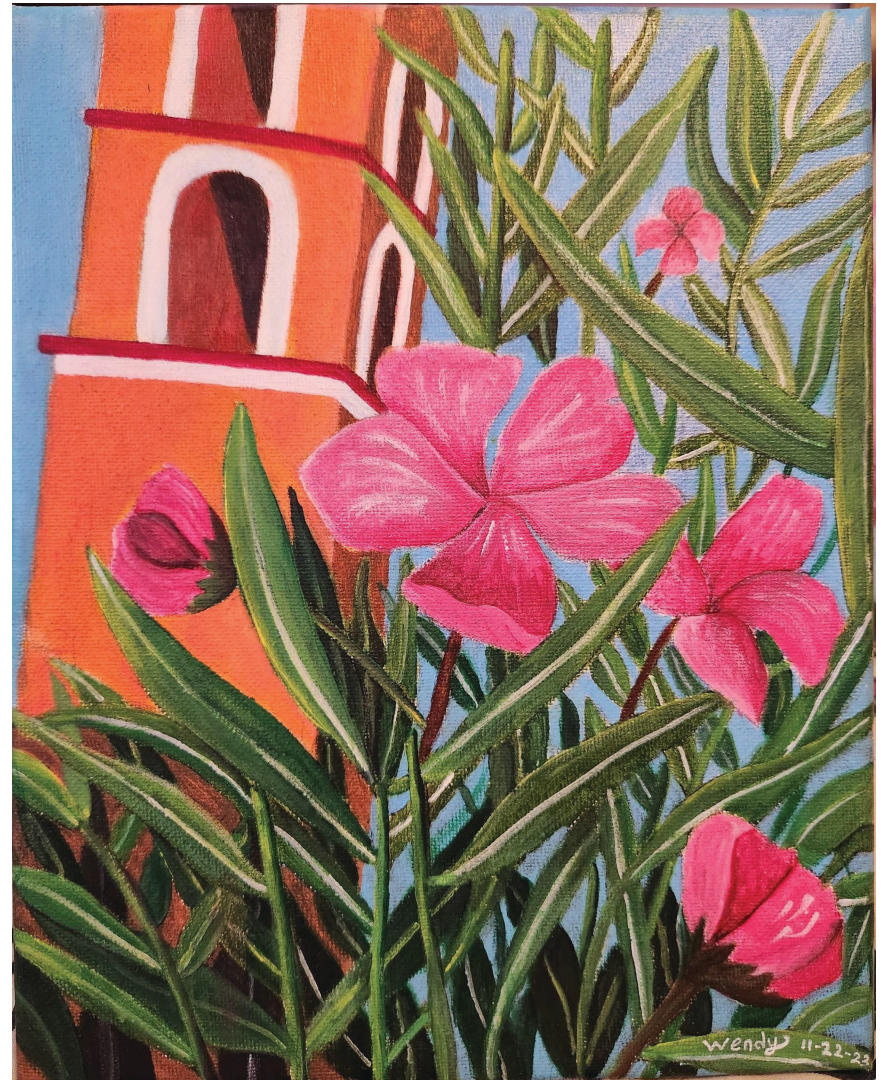
learned that, but if the doctor said "How are you doing today?" I didn't respond, because I understood wrong. I thought, How can I say all that? I did a lot of things today! I really wanted to answer, but I couldn't. I realized that nobody could help me all the time, I must learn more English. After a few months, I gave birth to my baby. I thought that maybe school was open, but I had just had a baby, and I was busy period I didn't go to school, but when I had free time, I studied at home. My baby was a toddler. I took him outside to play. My neighbor saw him and said he was adorable, but I didn't know what she meant. She knew I didn't understand. Then she said he was cute. I knew this word, and I said thank you. Every experience told me that if I knew English, my life would be easier. I could connect with many people because English is the most common language in the world.

After many experiences, I thought, I did not just visit this country. I might stay in the US all my life. I must really know English because in English many things are written, not like in my country where most communication is spoken. I have my husband to help me, but not forever. I must do it by myself. So I keep studying at home. I learned a little more English, but I still couldn't speak well. All of a sudden, my baby was bigger, and my husband could look after him. I decided to go to school. The first time I went, I felt afraid, that there were many students like me. They didn't know English either. And then teachers welcomed me. They were very kind and friendly. They taught and helped me when I made mistakes. They listen to my questions period and they explained everything and understand period now my English isn't good, but it's better than before. I'm happy to be in classes learning English. I'm thankful for the teachers who taught me. I'm thankful for every experience I have had with English speakers. I'll continue studying English to make my dream of fluency come true.

MEMORY

Jatziry W. Cantu Castillo

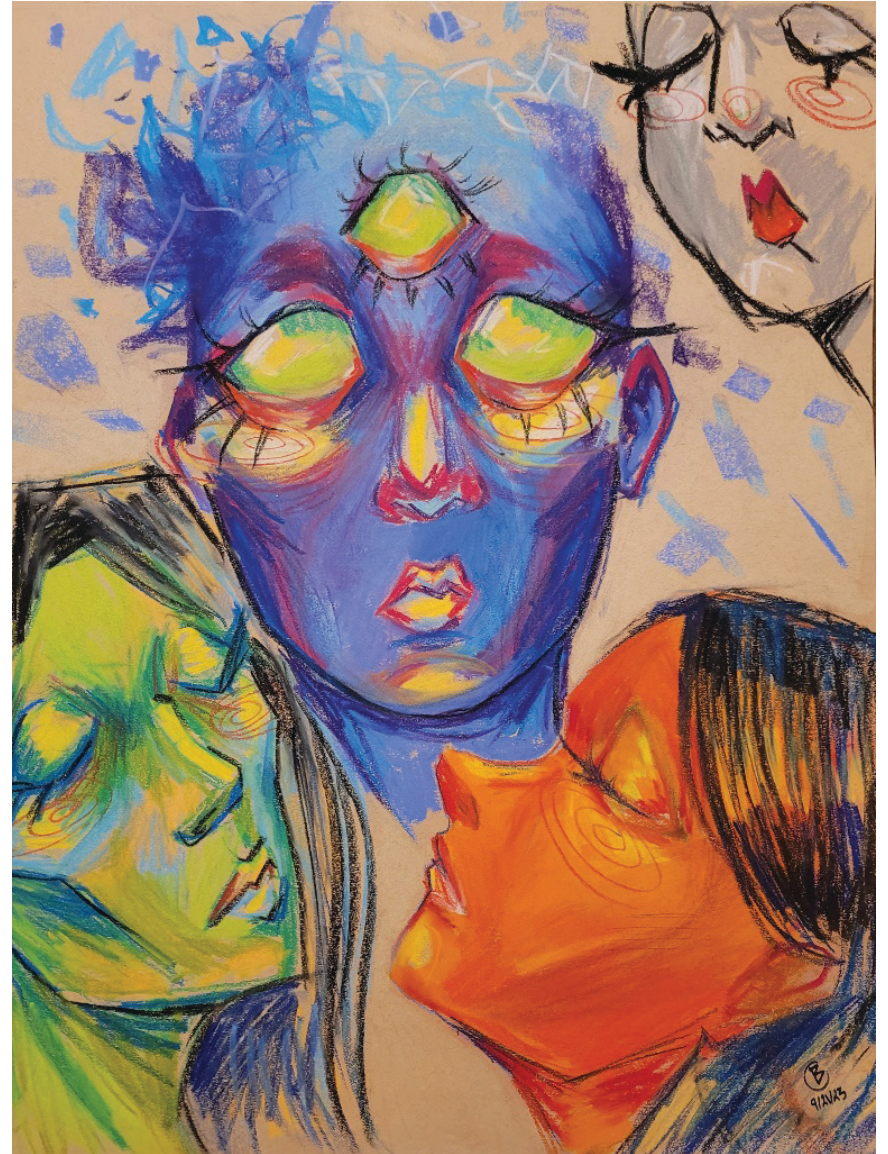
This painting represents memories of my native country, when I liked flowers and taking photos, one of them was this one, which I really liked, so I decided to paint it too, it gives me tranquility and good memories.



VISUAL ART, RUNNER-UP

SENSE OF SELF

Bryanna Lopez-Tejeda



REFLECTIONS

Cevahir Özruh

How beautifully the poet explained my feelings;
Be quiet, my heart!
I know I miss you too.
Don't let her know that you missed.

.....

I have never made myself the subject of my art, or even considered the idea. Maybe the reason for this is my longing for my hometown and the identity I miss. My looks express that longing, my hair tells the past, the smell of my mother is everywhere.



EL DEBATE

Monik Vinueza

Y me debato,
Entre la vida y la suerte,
Entre del ser y sentir,
Entre amar y soñar que lo hago.
Y me debato,
Entre letras y acordes,
Entre risas y heridas,
Entre que soy y quiero.
Y me debato
Y me desvelo
Y me arreglo.
Me arreglo las ansias,
Me arreglo la vida,
Me arreglo un café.
Para compartir estas líneas.

(English translation)

STRUGGLING

Monik Vinueza

I am struggling
between life and luck
between being and feeling,
between loving and dreaming that I am loving
And I am struggling,
between lyrics and chords,
between laughs and wounds
between being me and willing to be
And I am struggling with myself
and I uncover myself
and I take care of myself
I fix my cravings,
I fix my life,
I fix myself a coffee.
so we can share these lines

SCHOLAR, LATER

Daryl Chinn

At eleven could recite Confucius.
In America Quentin Tew Chinn
sent his wife and four children to college
with earnings from his laundry business.

Day after day I unlocked the store
Day after day I counted out the change and bills
turned on the hot water
rolled out the soap powder
turned on the lights

Day after day I changed the dry cleaning tags
red for Tuesdays
blue for Fridays
green, purple...and on and on

Day after day I filled the stapler
Seven days a week
Day after day

Every day Oay dressed them
Cooked and fed them breakfast
Usually eggs, boiled or scrambled
Usually toast, some milk, maybe oatmeal
Every day she made their lunches
or cooked for them at noon
Every day

For six years she drove them
Five days a week to Chinese school in Oakland
Chinese Community Center
Every day she waited two hours
for them to get out and drove home

She also she drove them
to piano lessons or Sunday school
whichever day and every time

Every day I drove home for lunch she had cooked
before she drove them to Chinese school

Every weekday I opened at 8 AM closed at 9 PM
6 pm on Saturdays Sundays at 1

How many times did I read the same weekly
Chinese newspaper *Gueem San See Bo*
or the other newspapers the FBI
asked me about The Daily Worker
me the daily worker day after day

How many years did I greet Sam Lee
from Coshell Laundry with his stringed blue bundles
and give him dirty sheets table cloths shirts

How many times did I staple tags
on trouser bands skirt hems neck ties pleated skirts
dresses sport coats suits for the dry cleaner
Every weekday No
It was every day of the week

Day after day I counted change and bills
Refilled the Coke machine
Turned off the lights the water heater
locked the back door checked the windows

I thought about ending all of that
I wanted to leave during the laundry years
and some other years

Why didn't I stop and leave
Four children a beautiful dutiful wife
Oay every time I said her name Oay
which means love
Every time I said Hello Oay
it meant Hello Love

Day after day even after she started college
graduated from Cal then Hayward then
subbed in Oakland then commuted to San Francisco
to teach English as a second language in junior high
even when she started losing
her purse credit cards even while sewing
zippers raising hems patching sleeves even

Day after day I went back
to those machines
four dryers two extractors
seventy washers big water heater
Day after day I bent over the floor
to sort dirty clothes
pulled wet laundry onto baskets
to stuff into the extractors
and then to throw all of it into the giant dryers
then fold and sort t-shirts socks jeans corduroys
on the big blue square Formica table
day after day again sort wash extract dry fold wrap
weigh tag fill add soap clip snap sort
fold wrap soap water add bleach
count change day after day
pay invoices order bags of soap
big bottles of bleach new tags
write checks for the bookkeeper water gas
greet the life insurance agent
say Hello Thanks and It will be ready Thursday
Federal tax Sales tax Income tax Property tax
Order new checks Bag and Deposit cash
Drive home for lunch Pay Florence
Lock up at 9 Count change against tickets
and hope it isn't off by more than a nickel

Day after day

MODERN DAY: I'M OK

Jennifer Be

A friend called to check in on me

"I'm okay."

Cortisol rushed through my legs.

Found myself questioning where exactly do I stand?

I'm functional but... I'm not okay.

I answer: "I'm okay" (minimize)

:::::follow with me through memories...

On a desert valley off ramp,

I reached the traffic light-

The weight of the vehicle dragging like my feet when things
ain't going right.

The sweat on my lip clinging, pooling;

The asphalt hot enough to fry skin.

There he was my first Asian houseless person run in.

Late in age, knees to ground *hands together* humble in receptivity;

You escaped the war and famine of your community

The genocide of your people, of your country-

To sit neglected on one of the most inaccessible streets;

in the dumpster fire of city- a direct result of gentrification.

That could have been:

My father. My Grandfather.

No- he never escaped.

Trapped-Captured -Labored to death in the killing fields of South-
East Asia.

My father as a boy, a refugee,

as a man at prison to the American dream,

one he'll wake from.

We're all Prisoners Of War

on the streets of Colonized California, Just:

*"Living it up at the Hotel California,
such a lovely place, such a lovely face..."*

Ahhhhhhh!

My skin burns from your kerosene.

"What's a nice Surprise, what's your alibi-"

I am not yours to throw away.

Pulling away the pain sunk in-

Quick like the hare,

Channel ancestral strengths,

+ WAVES of collective grief,

× FOCUS

÷ faithful surrender

= I sink.

I'm okay. (*shallow*)

Stings! It stings!
The hesitation marks of other's sins on my skin.
-Hold it steady---- THEN quick!
My memory floats around Images
:::my sister stumbling into the halls,
Shattered, crying, her spirit ripped.
I learned this from her,
they learned it from them,
We were all taught to be silent,
To keep it in.
BEST TO not even be seen, even less heard.
.....Deep Breath.....
Im okay. (steady)

::::Under the Pisces moon,
I sank into the contained abyss-
3 feet deep, the water is;
warming and grounding.
I am alive and blessed;
with the power to heal self---
I.AM.so.grateful.

Grateful
To be swimming in abundance,
to be strong,
to be loved.
AND TO love-
to think openly and honestly,
and to love
and to love
and to Love.
*****deep belly breath*****
I'm okay. (soft affirmation)

::::My phone won't stop auto correcting my Spanish words into English,
There's programing solution to multilingually fix this SO AHHH:
Backspace- backspace- backspace-
My whole damn existence!
Te quiero mucho mami.
deep breathe
I'm okay.

My eyes teary, welling up enough to quench the thirst of fears of my enemies-
BUT-
No-one's really out to "Get me" right?
BUT
they just couldn't see me when I cross the street! Right?
BUT
it okay for them to disrespect me because they did it smiling! Right?
BUT
I've been holding it down for years- can't I just get one In?! Come down with it! Release their sins.....
Right?!?

*****Holds Breath****
-List 5 things you cans see around you
-4 things you can touch or feel
-3 things you can hear
-2 things you can smell
-1 thing you can taste
Deep Breath

RARÁMURI RUNNER

R. Joseph Rodríguez

You know-
 I didn't know I held my breath while under stress
 untill a friend of mine shoved me and asked why wasn't I breathing;
 He would reminded me to breathe.
 I took long to realize that's a trauma response;
 Survival mode-category: freeze.
 I hate how trauma tempt you into forgetting your power-
 To overlook how much you've healed.
 Cause I'm in Thrivial mode.
 I'm okay. (Rushed/denial)

I'm okay,(cry/faking)
 IM OKAY (assertive proclamation/projection)
 I'm okay? (questioning)
 I'm okay (discovery) authentic

I'm okay..(steady/reality)

We'll be Okay.

Do you see María Lorena Ramírez Hernández running on this page?
 Lorena appears light-footed with long black hair and a colorful dress flowing,
 but she is not running from Athens to Sparta. No.
 She's running . . .
 into these mountains
 and canyons of the Tarahumara: her dress on the move and overflowing, swishing . . .
 and Lorena keeps going on . . .
 f
 e
 e
 t
 carrying her ever so lightly and gently as deer
 and as she touches earth, awakening earth's birdsong.
 The cheers get louder, but all she hears is earth singing, whispering . . .
en la sierra su canto hondo y familiar
 humming as she reaches
 valleys and keeps going forward as an ultramarathoner with might.
 Here's Lorena, and the sun's with her:
 without brand-name shoes, only her homemade
 and homespun sandals: matching
 light speeds: Lorena's secret is to keep going ...
 and no distance is too far away
 past the 26.2 miles | 42.2 kilometers—
 and Lorena's running . . .
 off this page—just look! . . .

(Language: Spanish)

GUAJIRA

Reinaldo de Fernandez

Llevo tu nombre palpado en los ojos
Ka'i me regalo una piel tostada
Para representarte a donde fuera.
El Río Limón corre por mis venas,
Me mantiene anclado a esta tierra.
<<Guajira de Encantos y Bellezas>>
Mejor no puedo describirte.
Senderos de paisajes magistrales
Sucumben en tu silueta.
Soy dichoso,
Por haber crecido en tu seno virginal
Por beber de las fuentes ancestrales de Juya.
Muchos versos he de escribirte
Reina indígena del trópico
Mujer amada del Caribe
Teje mis poemas con hilos dorados
¡Téjelos como a un susu!
Aunque me inspiro más
Si danzas conmigo el Yonna.

(Language: English)

GUAJIRA

Reinaldo de Fernandez

I carry your name, palpable through my eyes
Ka'i gave me tanned skin
To represent you anywhere
El Río Limón runs in my veins
Keeping me anchored to this land
<<Guajira of Charms and Beauty>>
It's best I can't describe you.
Paths through masterly landscapes
Succumb to your silhouette
I am fortunate,
For having grown in your virgin womb
For drinking from Juya's ancestral fountains.
Many verses I must write to you
Indigenous queen of the tropics
Beloved wife of the Caribbean
Knit my poems with golden threads
Knit them like a susu!
Although I am more inspired
If you dance with me, the Yonna.

(Language: Wayuunaiki, Wayuu Native Language)

WAJIIRA

Reinaldo de Fernandez

Talüjüin pünülia suluupana nouu
ka'i nüsülajüin tamüin kushemain tataa
süpüla teiyatüin epünaale tounüin.
Tü wüinka palaataka limuunamana alastüsü suluupana tasülü,
jimastüshi taya sutuuma yayaa toumaipaa.
Wajiira kapülainsü ja anaasümain, alanasü paali,
maima tü anaaka maana.
Tayakai talaatüshi,
sükaa miyoin taya pünaije, sünaaijee tasüin püpülain juya.
Maima tü pütchiika anaasütka müin Majayatchon Caribe
Pinaa tü pütchiika anaaka süka jilpai ishoona
¡Pinaa maaka wanee süsü!
Talastechi main taya pioyonnajaje tamara.

(Language: Spanish)

CUANDO PENSAMOS...QUE

Zoila Vazquez

Cuando pensamos que
Cuando el cielo está
azul y limpio, cuando
creo que la tormenta
no viene o está muy lejos

nuestros sueños están
en el futuro.

Nos reímos porque vale
la pena vivir la vida

Si el dolor y la tristeza
no llaman a nuestra puerta.

Cuando la primavera
comienza con todo su
nueva vida y los días
más largos del verano para disfrutar

hasta que llegue el otoño
y las hojas de los árboles
empiezan a caer.

Sus ramas lucen desnudos y
delgadas como nuestros cuerpos
debido a la edad y también
a las enfermedades!

Cuando la luz brillante
de nuestros ojos a través
de los años comienza
a disminuir

Cuando la noche es como
el invierno más frío
y muerdo mi almohada,
para que nadie escuche
mis llantos.

Cuando la comida deliciosa
se vuelve amarga en mi boca,
pero está bien, al final del
invierno todo es verde.

“El verde es esperanza
para una vida mejor.
Blanco es paz con la
gracia de Dios”

Nota:

En nuestro aniversario este mes, mi querido esposo y yo agradecemos a Dios por todas sus bendiciones que hemos recibido a través de estos 49 años de vida juntos como pareja, aunque estamos luchando contra el cáncer

(Language: English)

WHEN WE THINK...THAT

Zoila Vazquez

When the sky is
blue and clear,
When I think
the storm is not coming
or is very far away,

Our dreams are in
the future.
We laugh because
life is worth living

If the pain and sorrow
do not knock at our door.

When spring begins
with all its new life
and the longest days
of summer to enjoy

Until autumn arrives,
and the leaves of the
trees begin to fall.

The branches look
naked and thin like
our bodies due to age
and disease too!

When the bright light
of our eyes through the years
begins to diminish
when the night is like
the coldest winter, and
I bite my pillow, so that
no one hears my cries.

When delicious food
turns bitter in my
mouth, but that's OK
at the end of winter
everything is green.

“Green is hope for a better
life
white it is peace in the
grace of God”

Note:

On our anniversary this month, my dear husband and I thank God for all blessings that we have received through the forty-nine years of living together as a couple, even while we are fighting cancer.

THE DRAGONFLY **ON MY FINGER**

Anastasija Kovačević

I knew it was impossible
To see a dragonfly up close,
His beautiful gentle wings,
Reminding of the most beautiful springs.

He flew away, as fast as that childhood
From which I remember him,
He trusted me, and he shouldn't have
Because people are not meant to be trusted.

It was autumn when he flew on my finger
And now it is, but without him
To show his trust which means a lot to me
Because I knew that I was meant to be.

MY LIFE

Maria Taweerungchot

I see a stop light, a leaf, the sky, star lights, a scooter and cars.

I hear: an ambulance siren, a leaf blower and music.

I taste chocolate dipped short bread cookie: sweetness;

I taste fruit juice: sweet and sour. I taste cereal: sweet.

I touch my telephone, a glass, fruit, my clothes.

I feel cold every day.

I smell the coffee I make for my parents.

I remember my motorcycle because I rode it to school every day in Thailand.

EDEN

Lox

Eden,

Ich wandere jetzt

Du sagst Englisch fängt dich.

Sie fängt mich auch.

Vielleicht, wann Ich schreibe dich auf Deutsch,
können wir zusammen frei sein.

(English translation)

Eden,

I'm (walking/hiking/wandering) now

You say English (traps/cages) you.

She (traps/cages) me too.

Maybe, when I write to you in German,
we can be free together.

LLAMAME ES MI

Patricio Galleguillos

Eh, companeros, Aqui estamos,
Llama mi, por favor,
Me llamamos en las voces de gatos y tigres,
Llamame las voces de los vapors del Cielo,
Digame tu lengua,
Por lo que mi lengua vuela a quemar mi corazon,
Y los flujos de mi boca en la cima de la cascada mas alta,
Con la voz de nuestros Padres,
No soy diferente de ustedes con mi passion,
Yo soy el condor que sure a la Luz del sol.
Llamame
Soy tu Nino que aprende a ser parte
de nuestra raza,
Llamame Soy yo

(English translation)

IT'S ME

Patricio Galleguillos

Eh, companeros.aqui estamos!
But, I am standing among you
Without the voice of our fathers
I am no different than you with my passion
I feel without speech
I talk with my fervent words without your great legacy
I am a part of you
But, apart

MY WALK/MY LIFE

Eliene Santana

I see trees, the sky, cars and people.

I hear music and conversations.

I taste coffee with milk, bread, and fruit.

I touch the door, my key.

I feel scared, cold and then hot from walking.

I remember Brazil, music with guitar and singing, the sidewalk in Rio, going to the gym.

AFTER MY FATHER'S BURIAL

Jonathan Ukah

I stood in front of our house,
dreaming of what would have been,
if the earth had turned upside down
the day my father died;

I watched my father's grave like a painting beautiful because of its newness.

His body must be fighting to go deeper

away from the clutches of worms and ants, away from the dump of decayed leaves,

away from the cluster of dead branches waiting for a limb to hang on it.

There will be no ashes to spray on the sea because my father did not like cremation,

but the wind will bear his soul out;

perhaps I will see it escape the grave

and slowly or quickly ascend the sky,

where there will be no more darkness.

My father loved light for the things he saw, and the dark for the shimmering stars;

he was the worthy warlord of my town,

and the peacemaker when a crisis broke out. He fought against the coven of invaders attempting to cart away his family

but he must run away from my mother

when she arrived with her baggage of tantrums. A coward and a hero, a villain and a martyr, now, his soul is escaping the rotten earth

as his body sinks deeper into the filth.

CONTRIBUTER BIOS

Rosa Isabel Angon Gonzalez was born in Mexico. She came to Humboldt County as a teenager. She graduated from UC Davis with a Bachelor of Arts in Spanish and a Bachelor of Science in Neurobiology, Physiology, and Behavior. Currently she works as a surgical registered dental assistant, a tutor, and as a certified medical interpreter. She aspires to become a dentist and an educator in the future. She loves to help students succeed in their academics by being the person she wished she had to help her when she was learning English.

Jennifer Elizabeth Be First generation IndoChinese, Khmer, Pipil, indigenously endowed brown bodied, 2 spirit/queer, gender fluid settler on Wiyot Land. As a multicultural bearer, it's important to challenge stereotypes and beliefs. Language and beliefs can be just as limiting as they can be liberating; In a society where we are conditioned to be limited, Jennifer finds it liberating to explore the edges and intersection of modern and historical human practices; like language, habits, and storytelling. Jennifer's spoken and written words are vehicles to exemplify liberation through challenging collective and individual limitations.

Jatziry W. Cantu Castillo Born in Mexico in July 2002, Jatziry lived in Mexico, her entire life until a year and a half ago when she moved to the United States. She really likes music, playing the piano and drawing. She loves plants and has a knack for gardening.

Elisea Castillo was born in Oaxaca, Mexico in 1972. She came to the US in 1990. She has been living in Arcata since 2011. She currently works as a teacher's aide at Pacific Union School She enjoys hiking, being in nature, and spending time with my sisters.

Daryl Ngee Chinn lives in Arcata where he taught his children to speak Chinese and his wife to understand it. He taught poetry writing to students for many years in several states. He cooks Chinese-style food and is helping to create a monument to Chinese and Asians in Humboldt County.

Reinaldo de Fernández was born in Sinamaica, Municipio Guajira, Edo Zulia, Venezuela on December 16, 2000. He is the first Venezuelan poet born in the new millenium to publish a literary work, with his verse collection *Crepúsculo Guajiro* [Guajiro twilight]. He has published "Una Princesa llamada Zulia", and "Un Verso tuyo en mis Labios". He began his career at age fourteen as a presenter on important radio stations. Reinaldo has won several literary prizes and engages in activism in support of indigenous peoples. He currently lives in California, USA, and studies ESL at Mt. San Jacinto College.

Patricio Galleguillos is a 76-year-old retired teacher who taught 6th and 7th grades. In his 6th grade he was privileged to have the poet, John Oliver Simon, teach poetry in his classroom. John influenced Patricio more than John would ever know. Patricio found my Latino voice because of John Oliver and found who he is. John made Patricio's classes come alive and he is indebted to John forever.

Chong Geyer, was born in rural South Korea. Her home village did not have electricity or paved roads. She moved to the US and became a US citizen. Chong has continued to study many subjects and improve her English. She is an avid learner who loves to help others.

Joanna Guerrero is a current CR student majoring in Business. She loves her family, reading, and her culture. She believes storytelling is an important act that can impact society through the representation of Hispanic people's lives.

Lourdes Guillory came to the United States with her parents and three (3) siblings in 1982. from Lima, Peru. She has been living in California for 42 years. Her parents and two siblings and their family live in CA; her younger sister lives with her family in Virginia. She is married and has four (4) children and five (5) grandchildren. Lourdes has made this country her home, and it has been good for her and her family; Lourdes' dad's dream came true for us to come here for a better life! Lourdes is a business owner as well as a homeowner. She was able to achieve all this with hard work and derivation for the dream her father had of coming to America.

Pakou Her is from Laos. She is the mother of two children. She has seven siblings and has lived in the US for four years. Pakou really likes the US because she finds the nature beautiful, especially spring time which is astonishing with its new life.

Anastasija Kovačević is a 21-year-old student from Šipovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina. She is currently pursuing her studies in English language and literature at the Faculty of Philology at the University of Banja Luka.

Bryanna Lopez-Tejeda is a first-generation Chicana studying at Academy of the Redwoods and is set to graduate in Spring 2024. They speak English, Spanish, and they want to become fluent in ASL. They see multilingualism as essential when it comes to connecting with more communities and including them in the conversation. As someone who frequently translates for their parents, they have seen the struggle to connect first-hand. In her free time Bryanna likes listening to her favorite music artists which include Will Wood, Mon Laferte, and Nasa Histoires while drawing and enjoying the excellent snack that is Rainbow Goldfish Crackers

Lox is a queer, trans creator from Sacramento. He is European and Chicano.

Cruz Lizeth Moctezuma Sierra Mi nombre es Lizeth Moctezuma Sierra, naci el 27 de mayo en la ciudad de México, mis padres son provenientes de un pueblo llamado " San Jerónimo Nuchita " en el estado de Oaxaca, a la edad de 5 años me llevaron a Oaxaca donde me criaron mis abuelos por 2 años, de niña no me gustaba la escuela y prefería ir al campo en compañía con mi abuelito; recuerdo cuando mi abuelita me iba a dejar a la escuela esperaba a que se fuera para escaparme e irme al campo, porque ya me sabia el camino. A la edad de 7 años regrese a la ciudad de México donde curse mis estudios hasta terminar la Secundaria, cuando cumpli 16 años decidí regresar a Oaxaca porque extrañaba a mis abuelitos y también para poder estudiar la preparatoria, a los 3 años de haber terminado mis estudios volví a regresar a la ciudad donde estudié para ser paramédico de la Cruz Roja Mexicana.

Llegué a Estados Unidos en el año 2018 el lugar donde estoy realizando mis futuros proyectos y actualmente soy voluntaria de la Cruz Roja Americana.

My name is **Lizeth Moctezuma Sierra**, I was born on May 27 in Mexico City, my parents come from a town called "San Jerónimo Nuchita" in the state of Oaxaca, at the age of 5 they took me to Oaxaca where My grandparents raised me for 2 years, as a child I didn't like school and preferred to go to the countryside with my grandfather; I remember when my grandmother was going to drop me off at school, I waited for her to leave so I could escape and go to the countryside, because I already knew the way. At the age of 7 I returned to Mexico City where I studied until I finished high school. When I turned 16 I decided to return to Oaxaca because I missed my grandparents and also to be able to study high school, 3 years after having finished my studies, I returned to the city where I studied to be a paramedic for the Mexican Red Cross. I arrived in the United States in 2018, the place where I am carrying out my future projects and I am currently a volunteer for the American Red Cross.

Sandra Mogollon was born and raised in Bucaramanga, Colombia, where she lived with her family, dad, mom and younger sister. She has studied child development in her country. Sandra loves kids, she was a teacher in her country. She lives now in Humboldt and has one kid.

Cevahir Ozruh was born in January 1983 in Izmir, Turkey. She graduated from the University of Fine Arts in Turkey in 2005. She has been living in America with her husband Mali since 2019. In 2023, she enrolled in the 'Studio Art' field at College of the Redwoods. Her goal is to complete this program and transfer to Cal POLY Bachelor of Fine Arts.

R. Joseph Rodríguez writes poetry and prose in English and Spanish. He is a reader of diverse, multilingual, and borderlands literatures, including banned and challenged books. Joseph enjoys advancing the art of literacies in the lives of youth. He lives and teaches in Austin, Texas. Follow him on social media @escribescrbe.

Eliene Santana enjoys living in Humboldt because she finds the people education. She also enjoys the beach and meeting new people and learning about new cultures.

Maria Taweerungchot is 19 years old. Her birthday is September 7 2004. Her favorite color is pink. Her favorite sport is volleyball. Maria's hobby is listening to music. She has two brothers and one sister. Originally from Thailand, Maria can speak three languages: Thai, Hmong, and English.

Jonathan Chibuiké Ukah is a Pushcart Prize-nominated poet living in the United Kingdom. His poems have been featured in Atticus Review, Unleash Lit, Impostor, Shift Literary Magazine, The Pierian, Propel Magazine and elsewhere. He won the Voices of Lincoln Poetry Contest in 2022 and the Alexander Pope Poetry Award in 2023. He won the Editor's Choice Prize at Unleash Lit in 2024 and was shortlisted for the Minds Shine Bright Prize in 2024. He was the Grand Winner of the Wingless Dreamer Poetry Prize in 2024 and was longlisted for The Black Fox Poetry Prize in The Rhapsody of Regret in 2024.

Elena Vasileva is from Russia, born in St. Petersburg. She came to America with her husband and three children in 2022. In February 2023, she started taking English classes. I was glad to meet wonderful teachers and new friends. Now I'm learning English on my own, listening to native speakers and trying to understand them. In Russia, I worked as a layout designer in a printing house. Here I am trying to realize myself in creativity. I paint landscapes of the beautiful countryside of Humboldt and the surrounding area.

Monik Vinueza Es ecuatoriana. Le gusta describir lo cotidiano en prosa o poesía. Le gusta interpretar el mundo desde una perspectiva juguetona y creativa. Habla inglés y español. Trabaja como maestra de inglés. Trabaja con jóvenes universitarios.

Pa Yang was born in Laos and came to the US about seven years ago. She is a wife and mother living in Eureka. Pa speaks Hmong and is learning English at CR. Her dream is to become a US citizen.

Yadira Zuniga has been living in California for the last 20 years. She raised her children in the Bay Area, and moved to Mendocino County a couple of years ago. She is working as a preschool teacher in a small private school. She enjoyed so much walking barefoot at the beach, even in these cold waters. This spring is her second semester learning the English language.

SUBMIT TO TOYON

Toyon Multilingual Literary Magazine publishes distinguished literary and art work, with particular interest in promoting environmental and social justice. We seek diverse voices from around the world and welcome submissions in all languages.

Toyon welcomes work in Spanish and English, and in translation from any other language. All writers and artists are welcome. We ask that writers and artists submit in only one genre each annual cycle, ending on September 30.

We publish:

- Fiction
- Creative nonfiction
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- Critical analysis
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- Original translations
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Toyon Plurilingüe Revista Literaria publica obras literarias y artísticas distinguidas, con interés especial en promover la justicia ambiental y social. Buscamos voces diversas globalmente y aceptamos presentaciones en todos los idiomas.

Toyon acepta escritura en español e inglés, y traducciones en cualquier otro idioma. Todos los escritores(as) y artistas son bienvenidos. Les pedimos a los escritores(as) y artistas que envíen obras de un solo género cada ciclo anual, termina el 30 de septiembre.

Publicamos:

- Ficción
- No ficción creativa
- Poesía
- Análisis crítico
- Arte visual
- Traducciones originales
- Palabra hablada / Multimedia
- Escritura y arte de justicia Ambiental

Toyon's requisitos de envío se pueden encontrar en línea en:

<https://www.toyonliterarymagazine.org/submit>

PERSONAS SUBMISSION **INFORMATION**

Personas is published each May. Submissions are open annually from October 1 to March 15. We accept writings and art in any medium which consider or embody multilingualism. Please label submissions “Personas Submission” in the subject line and include a brief bio (of less than 50 words) in the body of the email. Include the submission as an attachment with no name. Email to jonathan-maiullo@redwoods.edu or hand or postal delivery to 333 6th St., Eureka, CA 95501. And, of course, thank you!

Personas se publica cada mes de mayo. Las presentaciones están abiertas anualmente del 1 de octubre al 15 de marzo. Aceptamos escritos y arte en cualquier medio que considere o incorpore el multilingüismo. Etiquete los envíos como “Envío de personas” en la línea de asunto e incluya una breve biografía (de menos de 50 palabras) en el cuerpo del correo electrónico. Incluya el envío como un archivo adjunto sin nombre. Envíe un correo electrónico a jonathan-maiullo@redwoods.edu o envíelo personalmente o por correo a 333 6th St., Eureka, CA 95501. Y, por supuesto, ¡gracias!

Personas tau luam tawm txhua lub Tsib Hlis. Kev xa tawm yog qhib txhua xyoo txij lub Kaum Hli 1 txog Lub Peb Hlis 15. Peb lees txais cov ntawv sau thiab kos duab hauv ib qho nruab nrab uas xav txog lossis muaj ntau hom lus. Thov sau cov ntawv xa tawm “Personas Submission” hauv kab ntawv thiab suav nrog cov ntaub ntawv luv luv (tsawg dua 50 lo lus) hauv lub cev ntawm email. Sau cov ntawv xa mus ua ib daim ntawv txuas nrog tsis muaj npe. Email rau jonathan-maiullo@redwoods.edu lossis xa ntawv xa mus rau 333 6th St., Eureka, CA 95501. Thiab, tau kawg, ua tsaug!

Back Cover: Trust the Process – Jatziry W. Cantu Castillo

This painting represented a great challenge for me, since it was the first time I tried to do something like this. detailed, complicated and time-consuming, but in the end the result was satisfactory, it represents patience and trust in me, that’s why I called it “trust the process”.



Cover art by Jatziry Wendolee Cantu-Castillo

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