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Welcome to our 10th issue of ¡Escriba! / Write!, our annual student literary and art journal. We want to remind all Hostos students that they can submit writing or art to our next issue at any time. This year we were able to honor two writers: Lennin Pena and Angelique I. Rodriguez, and two artists: Abica Paul-Noel and Jacob Hilado for their outstanding contributions. They received awards and thanks at the Honors Convocation this May; we will continue this new award tradition in the coming years. Our poetry, essays, stories and art prove how creative and articulate Hostos students are. This issue includes the winners of the Women’s and Gender Studies essay contest as well as the winners of the Women’s History Month essay contest. We had so many submissions, in fact, that we have to save some for our next issue. Please check out our past issues of ¡Escriba! and use our submission form at our beautiful website (http://oit.hostos.cuny.edu/escriba). A huge thank you to Prof. Catherine Lewis for the design and usability of the website, and for her help in laying out the issue for publication! More thanks are due to a great many of our faculty who helped our students submit their work: Professors Fisher, Hutchins, Zucker, Phillips, Fabrizio, Casey, Singh, Justicia, Roman, Henderson, Trachman, Scott, Sandman and others I may not be aware of. We hope you enjoy the great variety of writing (in English and Spanish) and let it inspire you to submit your work for next year’s issue.

Not only do Hostos students display a facility for words, but their visual imaginations are just as impressive. Whether it’s through the medium of painting, illustration or digital photography, our students have produced artwork that shows exemplary technical skill while appealing to the emotions. “City of Women” by Jacob Hilado, one of our art winners, is an intricate and detailed work that merits serious study, as does “Al-Shama, A Mark of Beauty” by Abica Paul-Noel. Song Chisik (“Peaceful Trees”) and Katrina Garcia (“Spring Bunnies”) pay homage to the beauty of Nature while Danny Mendoza evokes the desolation of street life in “A Lonely Street” and Nicoli Balcos celebrates a gritty urban landscape (“Concrete Jungle Where Dreams Are Made of”). Students also created irony by contrasting an image with its title - Manny Pena’s “Awful Waste of Space” addresses the question of whether God exists, while Jennifer Nieves’ “The World Has a Story of Its Own” challenges viewers to consider a perspective of life as seen through a rear view mirror. We are grateful to Professors Ian Scott, Rees Shad, Catherine Lewis, Sarah Sandman, Michelle Cheikin, Andy London and others who encouraged their students to explore their inner landscapes and share their visions with the world.
Unlike the river and sea, with obvious distinctions, one may find it difficult to distinguish where sidewalks and roads meet. The streets of Paris are decorated with pebbles of all shapes and sizes. One second you can be walking along the pedestrian sidewalk, and then end up on the road without taking notice of the change in masonry. They have their own way of purposely teasing you, substituting one surface for another at any time.

Each street has its very own mosaic that was independently created over the years by man. Over time, you can tell which streets are most often used; those most chaotic; the streets with more steps taken on them, while those untouched appear immaculate. I prefer the latter, personally. There is a special feeling about stepping on these pubescent pebbled pathways. You can carve out your name with your heel and it would still be there years later.

Even underground you cannot escape these haunting mosaics. However, they are not of stone, but of paper, with an interesting mix of whites, reds, and blues. On close inspection they are tickets used to take the metro. You get the satisfaction of tossing them to the ground after using them, and leaving your mark along these busy, underground corridors. Those who buy reusable passes however, the Carte Orange, or Passe Navigo, do not get to experience this wonderful feeling. Instead, they encounter horrible mechanical beasts that devour proof of their travels electronically. I would not pass up the opportunity of leaving a billet behind, hoping that they would join the others on the ground, forming a beautiful paper mosaic. Yet, no one can escape the process of varnishing these mosaics along the ground.

The trains appear primitive; they lack a peripheral nervous system, so to speak - unlike the trains in New York City that have an autonomic nervous system that carries out the basic visceral functions for its mechanical body. The trains in Paris only possess the one other part that makes up our PNS [Peripheral Nervous System], the Somatic Nervous System. It disturbs me, the amount of manual labor required to open and close doors within the train. On the outside are two handles that are required to use in order to enter the train. Not only do I have to twist the handles, but also push a button. Afterwards, to leave, I would have to push the button and pull the handle again – this time to signal the doors to open and to part them, much like Moses and the Red Sea.

I don’t recall exiting the underground station; my brain must have intuitively followed my peers outside. It isn’t until someone points out that I am staring at the ground that I take notice of the sky above. Never have I noticed how spacious the sky can appear. Buildings are not too tall in Paris so they allow for much exploration. Silhouettes form everywhere around you and each silhouette leads to the sky. Each of the twenty arrondissements of Paris pave
their own unique silhouette for the sky. My favorite arrondissement is the 1st Arrondissement, which houses The Louvre Palace and its wonderful crystal pyramid within the main courtyard. I only have the privilege to exit the pyramid from within, but I do not enter the museum through it.

The museum itself is a wonderful maze filled with ancient treasures. Many rush to see the Mona Lisa, but I do not. I make my way slowly around the palace, and sure enough, there it is. The heat distributed amongst the countless people in the room is a bit much. It would not surprise me if the glass in front of the picture serves as a barrier to repel this insufferable heat from damaging the oil painting. On my way to the painting I pass a statue of Nike, the Winged Goddess of Victory and instantly I turn back, without making the effort of meeting eye to eye with Mona Lisa. I turn my attention to the neglected headless statue, relieved that she is not flocked by people. I now have the opportunity to stand back and appreciate its beauty etched in stone. Despite its missing arms and head, she has wings to compensate. If you stare long enough, you can imagine that at any moment it will come to life and soar through the glass window above her.

Nevertheless, this leads me to think about the sky once more. I am anxious to get out of this wonderful maze. Making my way back to the entrance, I encounter the crystal pyramid again. I had not noticed that there is an interior, inverted pyramid. This pyramid marks the intersection of two main walkways and below it, a smaller stone pyramid. Again, my eyes wander to the ground and I notice perfectly aligned rainbows. There is a perfect view of the sky from beneath the main pyramid. As I walk up the spiral staircase that leads to the outside world, I take one last glance at the diamond in the rock and depart.
Dear Journal,

I’ve decided to start writing to you in celebration of my new learning to write! Me being a penguin & all, it was pretty hard to get a grip on a pencil. Let alone forming actual words from my “pre-literate scribbles!” (That’s what Flonne called them, she’s kinda like a mother to me.) It was a nightmare I tell ya! But Flonne kept advising me to practice despite how much I hated it. She said it would help me adapt to the formalities of other societies out there in the world. Which sounds awfully important. Considering the fact that we all might have to leave Umi within the week. “We all” consists of me, Flonne, Biggs, Wedge, the other human townsfolk, and my fellow prinnies - genetically altered penguins just like me! & the title “Prinny” is what Flonne decided to call us since we are new species of bird. The pack ice about 4 miles from our village has begun to separate & melt into the sea. And judging by the townsfolk, it’s also become unusually hot around here. It’s even begun to wear down my sparing doods a lot more as we train daily to be ready for any dangers that’ll threaten our home. The term “Dood” is often used by us prinnies as a form of universal recognition towards all people we encounter. It’s sorta engraved in our vocabulary. Yet, I’d shown no real sign of exhaustion at these times.

I had a hunch that it has something to do with this scarf Flonne gave me after my operation. She said it was merely for good luck, but I had to ask Biggs about it & he said that the technology used in my scarf is very similar to the heat generating technology that he & the other humans wear. Only that my scarf functions like a “reverse harmonizer.” (Biggs is really BIG on technology like this.) He then explained that Flonne’s father, Isaac Solotov, had been working on newly modeled harmonizers that would not only look fashionable, but also automatically climatize wearers regardless of how cold the surroundings would be! However Isaac suffered from a grave illness & passed away… leaving his daughter & technology in the hands of Fate. Biggs’ lecture left me with mixed feelings. I began to think… Why wouldn’t she tell anyone of the technology she possesses? Just as I made my way to home she simply stated, “I’ll tell you all about it when we depart for the U.S.”

-Jaz

Dear Journal,

It’s been quite a while since I last wrote to you. Mainly due to difficult seating arrangements for the lot of us amongst the shanty sea vessels we’ve
got & the fact that I’ve been busy aiding Flonne through her sea-sickly state. But she isn’t alone on that boat. (Oh, how I love puns!) Quite a few of the other humans have been struck ill as well…& we prinnies along with the other horse-healthy townsfolk have been stuck with the duty to bring the sick back into good health. This is fine with me, although I can’t say the same for my fellow doods & doodets…I overheard a group of ’em saying things like “Dood, I rather be drinking than caring for these chumps!” “Yeah, it’s not our fault they got weak stomachs!” “Indeed, why should WE have to tend to their needs when WE’VE been the ones suffering from this blasted heat long before they’ve been plagued!”

After hearing them rant & rave, I approached them with authority & scolded, “Do you doods hear yourselves!? These humans were kind enough to welcome us into their lives with open arms! They’ve given us food, shelter, love, & respect when we needed them the most! Nursing them to good health is the LEAST we could do for them!” They apologized afterward & I returned to Flonne’s side. After a few hours of nursing, she’s well enough to speak. “I overheard you & Biggs talking about my father’s work. It’s pretty amazing huh? I mean, just think if I could get the rest of you prinnies those refrigerating scarves & self-climatizing clothes for the others! It’ll certainly beat having to give them those bulky harmonizers to lug around their waists. But alas, I had to keep it a secret from you guys because…well it’s kind of embarrassing to say but…I simply don’t know how to create such things. I’m no mechanic, just a doctor. But hopefully if all goes well, Nevec will be willing to help us-no…everyone.” Nevec is the corporation Isaac had given his brilliant mind to & they are responsible for the creation of all the state of the art technology that aids mankind’s survival through these harsh times.

-Jaz

Dear Journal,

After that long grueling boat ride full of hurling & worry, we were all relieved to finally hit land. And I gotta tell ya, I never thought things would turn out THIS good for the lot of us! The townsfolk of Umi have gone back to college to pursue the lives they’ve longed to live. Biggs & Wedge have set out to deliver the new harmonizers to all who order them. Biggs & Wedge were offered the job after Nevec saw their resumes as we were discussing the new product. And as for me, my fellow doods, & Flonne, we managed to buy ourselves a fancy new mansion with the shared profit from Nevec’s sky-rocketing sales!

This ain’t just any ol’ mansion either. It’s hooked up with the latest power-saving technology which includes wall to wall insulation & these nifty solar panels on the roof that use the sun’s light to power the stuff we use at home. Yet as high-tech as these home improvements sound, they’re actually found in most buildings & houses here in South Carolina. (That goes for the rest of the world too.) It’s a really cool sight! Though not as cool as the Southern Lights. Although…a bit bitter-sweet in a sense. I mean, the sole purpose of all this
technology these humans developed is to adapt to global warming’s drastic changes. And according to Flonne, humans are responsible for it. This bugged me for quite a bit, but I know for a fact that they can be trusted. Because they’ve put the man hours into developing all these gadgets to aid both humans & animals in the endless struggle for survival! They’re just…so…….selfless! (The thought brings tears to my eyes.)

But anyway, I’ve gotta put the ol’ pen & paper down for a while. All us prinnies gotta do some shopping to last us the month. Even though most of the food would probly consist of fresh fish & trout-flavored yogurt, & Flonne doesn’t trust that new kind of produce goin’ around. Word is no one really knows if there really good for you or not…I think she called them “GMOs” or something like that. I’ve gotta go warn the others not to get suckered into buying them!

-Jaz
The media has an enormous impact on how we perceive ourselves. Beauty standards vary in different cultures, but almost everywhere the media plays a large role in what we find to be beautiful. One aspect of the media that is more important than ever before is the internet. Most people use it every day as much as possible without ever considering what influence it may have on our perception of reality. The internet is most people’s primary way of gaining access to information in today’s technology driven world. So whenever any person wants to find out what is preferred and what is not, one only has to Google it to find out; but what if the question was who is preferred and who is not? Does the internet have any bias in terms of what kind of people are considered to look better?

When I search for “beautiful women” or “attractive women” in Google Images, I usually see pictures of White, Asian or light skinned people. It is rare that I see someone of African descent that actually looks like a dark-skinned person from sub-Saharan Africa. Whereas, when I Google “unattractive women” I usually see the opposite. The lack of dark-skinned women of color and black women in particular, found during a Google Image search for “beautiful women” has to do with White privilege and Eurocentric standards of beauty being promoted; standards which have existed long before the internet age. Nevertheless the internet, as popular form of media, plays a part in molding our mind set. Thus the Internet helps to reinforce Eurocentric beauty standards for women.

When I searched Google Images for “beautiful women,” it wasn’t until the seventh page of results that I saw someone of African descent with dark skin. Before that point, every person was either Caucasian (the majority were Caucasian / White), Asian, Latina or a light skinned black—and therefore an ethnically ambiguous woman. The fact that I had to go to the seventh page to find someone to represent my ethnic group, while a white person can see their race represented immediately is a form of White privilege. White privilege can be seen “as an invisible package of unearned assets which …can [be] count[ed] on … which was “meant” to remain oblivious.” (McIntosh 78) It is an asset that White women have positive representation of themselves; however, people can easily remain oblivious to this asset. There are women of color still being represented in Google searches as “beautiful”, there are just not nearly as many as there are White women.

When I looked up the phrase “attractive women”, yet again the first pictures I saw were of White women. I saw a few people of color within the first two pages; nevertheless an overwhelming majority of women being represented were White. When I Googled the phrase “unattractive women” at first the
majority were Caucasian. Next I saw several pictures of women of black dark-skinned women in particular. Thereafter, there was at least one picture of a black-dark skinned woman on every page, if not more than that. Sometimes there would be three or four pictures of Black women on one page. The Black women were not racially ambiguous. They were much easier to spot then when I had Googled “beautiful women” and “attractive women”. The problem with this imbalanced representation is that it sends the message to black women “that we genetically lack a fundamental element of desirability” (Nelson 137). This message promotes the Eurocentric ideal in terms of what physical features should be considered desirable to most people. Dia Sekayi explains the historical bias in the media against black women and Afrocentric beauty.

Historically, the media did not frequently include people of African descent among the ranks of the beautiful. When Black women were (and are) presented, they typically met (meet) Eurocentric ideals in terms of body type, skin color, and hair texture. (“Aesthetic Resistance”). So with the internet being a relatively new media resource which helps to promotes white beauty, it is difficult for women of color to establish and maintain confidence. Sekayi further explains how this bias has affected black women in a study done with black female college students:

The young women in this study are forced into a state of double-consciousness (DuBois, 1903). They are well aware of society’s expectations of them. They are reminded of these expectations by the media and by the adults in their lives, and they are uncomfortable with that. The overwhelming majority, 72.8%, expressed discomfort with the way the media defines beauty for Black women (Table 4). Even so, many of the respondents accept the Eurocentric standard as reality and understand that whether or not they embrace it as their own, they will be judged according to it (“Aesthetic Resistance”)

The realization that whether or not they accept the ideology of white beauty, they will be judged according to it is what has caused in Black Women this “double-consciousness”. The women in this study are being forced by society and the internet as well as other media outlets to assimilate to standards of beauty which is impossible for them to ever fully attain due to their genetic make-up.

Historically, in the United States Caucasian people have been able to “… turn on the television or open the front page of the paper and see people of [their] race widely represented, (McIntosh 79). Nowadays, with the internet being as racially biased in terms of promoting an Anglo standard of how women are supposed to look, there is yet another avenue in the media where that White women can look at in order to make themselves feel validated; people of color with dark skin cannot say the same thing.

Moreover, this Eurocentric standard of beauty that is promoted throughout the media has helped to push many women of color to use products such as hair relaxers (which have become the norm for a large majority of black women) and skin bleach (which is becoming more popular now). Skin bleach can be purchased at any beauty supply store in predominantly Black, Latino or Asian neighborhoods. The purpose for the using of skin bleach is different
for everyone. In “Skin Bleaching and Global White Supremacy By Way of Introduction” Yaba Amgborale Blay, the author, explains how skin bleaching is a complex issue: Skin bleaching represents a multifaceted phenomenon with a complexity of historical, culture, sociopolitical, and psychological forces motivating the practice (Blay, 2007; Charles, 2009) The large majority of scholars who examine skin bleaching at the very least acknowledge the institution of colonialism and enslavement historically, and global White supremacy contemporarily, as dominant and culpable instigators of the penchant for skin bleaching (Blay 2007; 2009a; 2009b Charles, 2003; 2009; de Souza, 2008; Glenn, 2008; Lewis et al, 2010; Thomas, 2008; Wallace 2009).

Thus, slavery and colonialism are important factors when trying to gain an understanding as to why skin bleach even exists. Still in the modern world, lighter skinned people are typically treated better than darker skinned people and this has been true since the days of legalized slavery and colonialism. Today, while it is well known that skin bleaching can cause physical harm to the skin, the “double – consciousness” that causes dark skinned women to use this product is much a stronger force than any damage that can be caused with skin bleach.

Women in particular are being told by electronic mass media what is beautiful and how to make themselves more beautiful all the time. The internet is a very powerful means of sending messages that promote culturally idealized racist beauty standards. With the dominance of White female beauty ideals in mind, and the fact that the internet is most people’s primary tool with which we to find out information, it is important to evaluate and question what kind of information we are receiving from the internet. Yet, the internet can be influenced by those who use it. If we as people begin to look at a variety of women in the “real world” and actively pronounce them to be just as visually appealing and valued in our society as the blond hair, blue eyed unattainable White standard, the result will be that the results from a Google search for “beautiful women” would change. And it should change. Beauty is an opinion and it is important that we do not become too set on having just one kind in our diverse world.

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“What Is College For?” by Ezra Bowen is an article that discusses the results of a study performed in the United States. This study showed that the majority of high school and college students, parents and some professors believe that the main point of college is to prepare for a career. The president of the study (Ernest Boyer) disagrees with this point of view. He thinks college should provide students with a lot of general information that will prepare them for life. The study also showed that most of the students are failing in the areas concentrated on liberal arts, focusing more on “profitable classes” according to their thoughts.

I think that the author makes an excellent point when he explains the point of view of Boyer. It says “Driven by careerism and professional education, the nation’s colleges… are more successful in credentialing [for future jobs] than providing a quality education” (Bowen 118). When I read this article, I was surprised because I had not imagined that colleges in the United States had this problem. A long time ago, colleges were recognized for producing professionals with excellent academic backgrounds, but with little cultural background which resulted in an unbalanced society. College should be considered a place to grow up in terms of ethics, personal development, and general knowledge as Boyer said. This might help professionals and students who would stand out in society.

The United States is considered a world power because of its good economy, progress and intellectual development. Therefore, it has to prepare efficient professionals to maintain its title. Instead of preparing professionals who know only their own field, colleges must prepare educated professionals of tomorrow. Students deserve a “quality education” because it will help them for life, and at the same time it is going to be a contribution for the society. In this world people should be prepared for everything. Probably an engineer has to study psychology to work with colleagues and make good relationships. Also, accountants who have a career based on numbers must write, speak, and read correctly to do reports and speak with clients; this may help them to get a profitable business. Students also need to be prepared in terms of general knowledge. For instance, in a social dinner people could be talking about interesting books; if the students know about literature (or whatever the theme is about) they can join in the conversation because they have already read some books that increased their knowledge in that particular topic. General information is very important as well as knowledge for career; one complements the other because they are necessities at certain points in the life.

Second of all, the United States needs to implement the educational system of other countries in order to help its future professionals. One example of
a good educational system is Dominican Republic which provides a quality education preparing students for society as well as getting a job. The Dominican Republic’s system has its advantages because it makes a combination between Liberal Arts and subjects connected to majors the same as in high school. To illustrate, in high school the teachers have given us certain subjects such as Math, Chemistry and very advanced Physics, also they have give us Spanish, French, English, Human Development and Psychology. I remember that my classmates were complaining about the “simple subjects;” they thought that these subjects would not help because they were not connected with their majors. In the end, some of them began studying to be lawyers, so French helped them because many criminal codes are written in that language; others have needed help in raising their children and what helped in the process were the concepts of psychology and human formation. It taught me that knowledge is not heavy; we will need it at some future time.

Boyer argues that college students need to write and read in order to improve their education. In the Dominican Republic writing and reading correctly is vital. Reading and writing takes place in the national test of Spanish before they go to college. In addition it helps because it is a way to train students to work efficiently and to make good relations in teamwork. For that reason, colleges and high schools require reading and analyzing some books to get quality professionals.

The Secret of Old Shoes by Dick Lyles is one of the books most recommended to college students and workers because through Albert (the main character) the author teaches how to work well with others. Also, Who Moved My Cheese? by Spencer Johnson give us examples (through imaginary characters) about changes which are challenging, but which teach us that we have to keep moving no matter the problem. Students are also required to write with good spelling and professional terms in order to increase their vocabulary. It would be helpful to the United States to take the Dominican Republic as an example of a quality education because college is not only to get a degree to make money, college is a place to grow up as a human being.

Finally, taking Liberal Arts has its importance. Something that classes concentrated on majors do not do is help us in terms of decisions about the future. When we do not know what career to choose, Liberal Arts can assist us because it allows us to take many classes to discover our preferences. Also it permits us change our major if we see that we are in the wrong place, but if we are only taking specific classes according to the chosen major, we will not get the opportunity to change. Another decision that Liberal Arts help us to make is advising a relative or applying advice. As we already know, Liberal Arts offers classes of psychology. It is a very helpful class because in this we can find answers about our daily problems, and the way our body works which could be beneficial for us. Sometimes we have problems and being in class we get the perfect advice and the reason of this problem. I have met people who say that they found the solution of their problems just sitting in classes. Finally, the most important thing that Liberal Arts does is to make us critical thinkers and thoughtful people. It is beneficial for our careers because we can analyze better
and make good decisions either at home or at work. These courses would help a lot in problem solving, and to analyze carefully what is better for us. It is clear that taking Liberal Arts is not wasting time. It prepares us to live in our society. In our lives most of the time there will be problems, risks and decisions. Something that might help us is taking Liberal Arts. We have to fight for a quality education, it is the time!

In conclusion, Humanities - better known as Liberal Arts - is important to develop us as a person and student. It is not wasting our time because this applies to us somewhere in life. The world is a competition, and for that reason the United States has to learn about other countries and change in order to prepare educated professionals. Also, we as students must demand a quality education.
SONNET 1

Shall you be the one to embrace me, Death?
   Oh, what you shall weave for me? Is it love?
   Come now and caress my neck with your Breath.
   Come ye forth, beast of the night, The Black Dove
   Glide around and swoop down; lay your death kiss!

Cry my Garland ensnared by urban blight.
   Porcelain digits shall prepare my bliss
   I must say, to wither is your sole right.

Tendering and coarse, I feel as you lift.
   Oh, how I await for you to consume
   the abyss in my eyes: the one true gift
   given to me. You have and shall resume.

   Oh, once more I feel your digits undress.  
   You are alone with nothing to caress.
High on the hill top the smell of the old man still trapped between the logs walls.

The family’s Bible resting in the coffee table receives all that come to visit with:

“Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill;

and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment.”

Painful cryings from the wood floor are heard as I pace around the place.

On a corner by a window, a web stores moths for a later meal;

the spider diligently works on another ploy in an opposite corner.

Books that once served as gates to other worlds, are now tightly closed,

the magic gone.

Sounds of white tails playing in the woods reach the cabin.

Downy woodpeckers own the empty room I once shared with my siblings.

The dark stain on the bathroom floor
stands as a witness of that day.

Roving winds bring in the aroma of evergreens
in a failed attempt to camouflage

the smell of the old man.
I saw the world move forward
As I stood still in my recliner
Feeling rough at my edges
Disoriented

With no interior energy
I would walk the streets
As if I had no soul
As if I had no goal

You came to me
On a day when
The clouds were gloomy
Causing a new sensation in me

Good thing you came
Because I have been waiting
For you to spark.
You go by the name
Inspiration

For you to spark.
You go by the name
Inspiration.
Standing upright, day and night
Whether freshly watered or almost withered
The fruit tree stands
Through the fierce, raging storms
And the winds that don't cease
The fruit tree stands.

Afore time, a seed was planted
It fell upon good ground
In due season, it brings forth fruit
The fruit remains
They are not spoiled, for they abide on the vine
The fruit tree stands
It stands upon a solid foundation
As feminist theorist Marilyn Frye writes in her 1983 essay, “Oppression,” “the experience of oppressed people is that the living of one’s life is confined and shaped by forces and barriers which are not accidental or occasional and hence avoidable... It is the experience of being caged in: all avenues, in every direction, are blocked or booby trapped” (3). Although Frye in this passage writes oppressed “people,” she specifically means women and more precisely, the oppression of women which is the subject of her essay. She goes on to explain that options for women are “reduced to a very few,” resulting in what Frye calls a “double-bind” that women are caught in, particularly when it comes to female sexuality (2). In other words, women face a double bind when it comes to the expression of female sexuality because of the restrictions placed upon them and their vaginas (the constant policing of women’s vaginas as the result of the male supremacist power structure). When female sexuality is limited and controlled, it becomes a commodity, a product for bargaining and selling. While Frye speaks about women in general in her essay, I am using her work as a tool for analyzing the policing of female sexuality in Latinidad, a topic that is near and dear to my heart as the only daughter in a NuYorican Catholic family. I know firsthand the ways that Latina sexuality is monitored, mostly through the lens of Roman Catholicism, the religion imposed upon Indigenous and African peoples as a result of human trafficking, enslavement, and invasion. In what follows, I will use my own story to show that through womynist analysis, Latinas can resist the commoditization of our vaginas and fight the restrictions placed on our sexuality.

Restricting female sexuality places it on the auction block, particularly the value of female virginity. Growing up, I recall my mother referring to my virginity—and more specifically my vagina—as “gold,” and being warned to be careful who I “gave it” to. The mere fact that my body was referred to as a prized commodity and that I was told it was something I was “giving away” reveals the ideal of women and their vaginas as commodities. This concept has been systematically engrained in our society for hundreds of years, going back to the Middle Ages, through “guidelines” of femininity, therefore normalizing the behavior and conditioning countless generations. For example, in Ruth Kelso’s “Doctrine for the Lady of the Renaissance” (1956), she describes the “training” of women during this time as “… nothing is more necessary to the repose of mortals than to teach virtue and chaste habits to women” (39). She describes that in order to keep women chaste, it was recommended to keep women restricted in every sense of the word, beginning with their behavior. Women were kept mostly in the home and were often denied books, therefore
keeping them ignorant. They were only taught household duties and religion which demanded that they remain obedient and humble towards the men in their lives, be it their father, their husbands, or their sons. Using female virginity as a bargaining tool for marriage is an example of how the vagina and consequently female sexuality became a commodity. As Kelso states: “There can be no question that in a world where daughters must be disposed of and where the first condition of acceptability to a husband (unless it may be the dowry, the cynic might say) is virginity, parents did well to spare no pains to enforce the lesson by every means in their power, and then to set strict guard upon the movements of their daughters, lest temptation overcome training and even natural inclination” (44). The “strict guard” placed on the daughter’s behavior was used as a tool to ensure that her virginity remained intact. Female virginity then becomes a product to be bought and sold as part of her dowry to a groom thus becoming a bargaining chip for status climbing between families.

If, as Kelso details, female sexuality was so extremely restricted during the Renaissance, we have to then analyze the religion that was so heavily imposed on females at the time. Christianity, and Roman Catholicism specifically, was the primary religion in many European countries during this time. Analyzing each biblical story using a feminist lens reveals the religion’s patriarchal undertones. The aspect of women’s obedience to men refers to the banishment of Eve and Adam from the Garden of Eden. God’s judgment to Eve in “Genesis” of the Bible states the following: “To the woman he said, ‘I will greatly multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children, yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you....If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; its desire is for you, but you must master it”’ (Genesis 3:16-20). This creates divine restriction on women’s desires and sets divine law for the obedience of women and are concepts that have transcended generations after the Bible was written.

In analyzing the society and religion of the Renaissance, it must also be noted that Latinidad is deeply rooted in the Catholicism of Spain during this time. The Spanish conquerors of Latin America during the late 1400s and 1500s forced the Catholic religion on the people that they conquered. Thus, many of the traditions within Latinidad maintain and reinforce the patriarchal religious system of its Spanish oppressor. Many texts explore the concept of religious influence on female oppression in Latin America. For example, as New Paltz professor of Gender Studies, Elisa Davila, writes in her essay, “On Being a “Good Girl”: Implications for Latinas in the United States” (2006), “Many of the prescriptions would help females keep appearances, thereby reinforcing the oppressive notions of Catholic morality, race, and class. Compulsory heterosexuality was emphasized, but sexual education was taboo, except for the absolute commandment of no premarital sex and virginity for unmarried women” (44). Here we can see the beginnings of the notion of the “good girl,” the virginal girl, the girl who protects her golden vagina in Latinidad growing roots. Davila goes on to write that “if one learned to behave according to these rules, one would be praised as a good and adorable girl who would be able to get married and have a family” (64). This idea of being a “good and adorable
girl” rooted in religious constructs reminds me of when my mother discovered that I, at the age of fifteen, was no longer a virgin. I thus became damaged good because I had tarnished my “gold,” damaged my value as a future wife whose husband’s masculinity will be dependent on my status as a virgin. Despite the fact that I wouldn’t further experiment sexually until a year later, the scandal that my lack of virginity caused through the grapevine of my family branded me. Years later, I was told that most of my failed relationships would have worked had I not indulged in premarital sexual behavior as a teenager. I was also told that men would respect me more and value me more as a “good” woman and not view me as una sinverguenza, or a shameless woman, had I kept my female sexuality under control.

For my teenage indiscretion, I was immediately told by my mother to ask God for forgiveness and was admonished for expressing my growing sexuality. Opinions on the age of appropriate sexual exploration aside, it was my questioning of these ideas that further defined me as una sinverguenza. By telling me to ask for divine forgiveness, my mother, a somewhat liberal Catholic, perpetuated the traditional patriarchal constructs that had been taught to her as a young girl. I was reprimanded for my sexuality and subsequently scolded for even questioning its suppression by being told that I should seek forgiveness from God. This example of female-imposed male supremacy is reflective of the Renaissance-era training of females which focused “upon the central demand of chastity, the great virtue of woman, so judged by women as well as men” (Davila, 42). Latin@ (and by extension Latin American) culture rooted in the Catholicism imposed by the Renaissance-era conquerors of Spain reinforces the silence of women by reiterating that “God has commanded silence and entire subjection from women” (44). In other words, if you question God and/or the male supremacy that is the hallmark of Judeo-Christians thinking, and if you continue to speak out and resist being subjecated, you are not a good woman, not a good daughter, not a good wife, not a good Catholic.

In connection, the idea of being shut out and outcast from religion, which remains a foundational part of many Latin@ families, instills a fear in Latinas that often keeps them submissive within the culture and denies her access to herself. As Davila states “to survive under goodgirlism, a woman undergoes a major displacement or disconnection inside her own self. Caught between the expectations of family and community and her individual needs and desires, a Latina is at war with herself” (64). More often than not, the expectations of la familia and the community at large take precedent over what the individual Latina wants and needs, wants and needs that are brushed aside as part of the self-sacrificing required of women and girls in order to be seen as “good” rather than “bad.” To put it another way, women and girls learn from a young age that it is better to be seen as the Angel than the Whore. Davila further argues that “the rewards given to [women and girls] by society for conforming – protection, security, relationships, alliances, and all the other status-related goods and benefits of a ‘good’ woman – do not serve to end the war. For in the long process of adjustment to the [patriarchal] imperatives…a woman suffers from emotional alienation from her own feelings, physical and aesthetic estrange-
ment from her body, social isolation, betrayal of her own gender, and silencing of her own voice” (64).

In order to maintain these status-related goods, a Latina must conform to the restrictions and guidelines of male supremacy. If the connections within the Latin@ family and Latinidad in general are threaded together by the Catholic religion, then women will submit to the patriarchal undertones of the religion as a way to maintain a cultural and familial identity within a United-Statesian society that often marginalizes her existence as a Latina.

Puerto Rican writer Judith Ortiz Cofer highlights the connection between female sexuality, the family, and consequently the culture in her essay “The Myth of the Latin Women” (2003) when she asserts that “virtue and modesty were, by cultural equation, the same as family honor” (110). By further analyzing my own experiences, I can see the unambiguous “goodgirlism” that is rife within Latinidad. In August 2010, an ex-lover sent semi-nude photos I had taken for him to a website called Smuts-R-Us, the word “smuts” being a colloquial term similar to the derogatory “whore”, “slut”, etc. Upon finding out, I was more devastated at what this could do to my family than what it would necessarily do to me. In the past, I had posed semi-nude for artist friends and was less embarrassed about my nudity than the connotations of the site, which labeled the expression of my sexuality as negative and further labeled me as una sinverguenza. My mother could not understand my indifference over my nudity in the photos and was appalled that I was not ashamed of sending semi-nude photos to a man that I had obviously been intimate with or was planning on being intimate with. I recall her telling me that it was God who would later judge me for my sins. My response to her that, at the adult age of twenty-six the expression of my sexuality was not necessarily the real damage, or “sin,” of the situation, only sparked more criticism. Even some of my peers criticized me, telling me that I “should’ve known better.” Additionally, I was told that I had lost respect for myself and for my family. I was frustrated with the fact that the focus of criticism was more on my posing for semi-nude photographs and less on the violation done to me by my former lover. Ultimately, the situation created a tension between myself and my family and my relationships with some of my peers became strained. The admonishment I received for not restraining my sexuality and sensuality was a reflection and perpetuation of male supremacy; moreover, my mother claiming I would be judged for my “sin” of sexual expression made me into the sinverguenza, the polar opposite of the good girl. In saying this, then, my conflict with goodgirlism and the Catholicism of Latinidad is that it suppresses natural human sexuality, denies women the right to desire sex, denies women the desire to feel sexually validated, and furthermore perpetuates the constructs of power that the oppressor maintains as a means for keeping not-white people on the margins.

I acknowledge the patriarchal undertones of the religion of the Spanish conquerors of Latin America and how this religion was reflected in the accepted behavior of Renaissance-era women, this including the Spanish women who accompanied the conquerors into Latin America and the Hispanophone Caribbean. Recognizing this and analyzing my own life experiences reveals the
systematic constructs created within Latinidad that have been generationally reinforced by the religion which remains a pillar of culture for many Latina families. The disregard for and consequently the commodification of female sexuality is something that is clear within Latinidad and something that I have personally always battled with. The dualistic view of female sexuality impounded by these constructs creates a cycle of shame and fear, maintaining Latina submission to these patriarchal confines by connecting them with the safe ideals of family and culture. If, in the future, I were to have a daughter, I would carefully explain that sexuality is a natural part of humanity and that whatever she chooses to do does not define her as una sinverguenza. As long as sex is practiced safely, sexuality and desire should be embraced as an innate part of life and not as the definition of her identity within her culture. And if anyone were to ask her what kind of woman her mother is, I’d encourage her to respond that her mami is una sinverguenza, shameless in her desire to break down the patriarchal confines of Latinidad that keep women in a double bind.

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In his story, “Monologue of Isabel Watching it Rain in Macondo,” García Márquez gives voice to a depressed woman who becomes emotionally transformed by the devastating and dominating force of the rain. Through her keen observations and somber emotions, the reader realizes that Isabel is part of an oppressive patriarchal society. Therefore, the title of the story evokes the unfortunate passiveness of the oppressed Isabel as male dominion stands firm before her very eyes.

In Gabriel García Márquez’s 1955 magical tale, “Monologue of Isabel Watching It Rain in Macondo,” the reader encounters a first person narrative voice who expresses her actions, thoughts, and feelings as they come to mind, thus making use of the stream of consciousness technique. This ambiguous and mysterious treatment of the narrative creates intentional perplexity in the reader, as it makes it hard to accept Isabel as a reliable narrator. The reader sees Macondo’s natural phenomenon through the eyes of a woman who very early on loses track of time and reality. The authorial reticence of Márquez also contributes to the confusion, leaving the reader alone to derive her own conclusions, which include deciding whether or not the monologue is a reality or a dream. Despite the intentional confusion that the narrative creates, one thing is certain, and it is Isabel’s condition as an oppressed woman. She is with child and living in her father’s house while the man she was forced to marry is away. As the reader traces the relationship between the timeline of events and Isabel’s mood changes, it becomes clear that she is an emotionally burdened woman who lives in a world of oppression. By imposing captivity, the authoritative rain becomes a metaphor for the unjust impositions and restraints that Isabel is subjected to as an oppressed woman in a patriarchal society.

Isabel’s emotions are transformed and aggravated by four days of consecutive rain. It all begins on Sunday after mass when the initial presence of the rain causes Isabel to be “shaken by a slimy feeling” in her stomach (Márquez 129). Nevertheless, she expresses being “happy that the rain would revive the thirsty rosemary and nard in the flowerpots” (129). Up to this moment, the rain seems incapable of posing a threat and, in fact, Isabel refers to its intensity as “peaceful” (130). Her mood changes, however, when she begins to feel the penetration of the rain in her senses, which by Monday become “over flowed” (130). A keen observer, Isabel notices that her stepmother is no longer smiling as she had been on the previous day and that her father’s sad eyes are “lost in the labyrinth of the rain” (131). Feeling dissatisfied, she tries to escape her situation by nostalgically remembering the warm days of August, but she then feels “overcome by an overwhelming sadness” (131). As an oppressed woman,
Isabel’s method of coping with her sad reality is to escape it by reminiscing rather than facing it.

The reader gets a clearer picture of Isabel’s oppression through her interaction with her husband, Martín. Since at this point she has become disoriented and only describes hearing Martín’s voice, it is difficult to believe that he is physically present. Nevertheless, she states that Martín “was speaking in the next chair with the same cold and awesome expression that hadn’t varied, not even after that gloomy December dawn when he started being my husband” (131). From this confession, one sees that Isabel does not feel love for Martín and refers to their wedding day, an occasion that is supposed to bring joy to a woman’s life, as a dark and depressing one. This further emphasizes Isabel’s portrait of an oppressed woman, because her marriage to a man she does not love obviously means that she had no say in that decision. It could also be possible that she was forced by her father to marry Martín, justifying that the union would benefit the families rather than the individuals. In that case, marriage is treated as a business lacking the sentiment of love.

By Tuesday morning, her condition of oppression becomes more apparent with the presence of a cow in the garden. With “its hooves still sunken in the mud and its huge head humiliated by the rain,” the cow’s “hard and rebellious immobility” symbolizes Isabel’s burdensome condition (131)—her inability to escape her aggravating state of emotional oppression.

By Tuesday night, the raging rain begins to hurt Isabel “like a shroud over the heart” (131). Also, since time in Macondo is measured by events, the fact that these do not take place as a result of the rain, causes Isabel to lose her sense of time. The twins of Saint Jerome do not show up as they do every Tuesday, making it difficult for Isabel to keep track of time. The rain has such a profound effect on her wellbeing that she forgets to eat and even stops thinking. The rain becomes a further oppressive force as Isabel expresses, “We were paralyzed, drugged by the rain, given over to the collapse of nature with a peaceful and resigned attitude” (132). This observation could be interpreted as a metaphor for the submissive and passive attitude that an oppressed woman is forced to adopt in a male dominated society. Feeling incapable of making a future for herself without the presence of a male figure in her life, many times an oppressed woman ends up yielding to these circumstances and feeling impotent to fight back.

Tradition or established practice is hard to break and this is the case of the oppressed Isabel. Once again, her condition is reflected in the symbolism of the cow. By Tuesday night, the cow dies but “could not fall down because the habit of being alive prevented her, the habit of remaining in one position in the rain, until the habit grew weaker than her body” (132). Until its last moment, the cow dies oppressed and unable to break the habit of submissiveness. Similarly, there are women who grow accustomed to the patriarchal tradition of oppression, because their mothers and grandmothers also were subjected to the same condition and they do not know any better. Therefore, as female empowerment movements around the world have shown, it takes a strong group of women with leadership qualities to break the chains of oppression.
On Wednesday, Isabel sees the Guajiro Indians pushing the furniture inside and this produces in her “a terrible feeling of emptiness” (133). A social critique is made when she sees their “humiliating inferiority in the rain” and how “defeated and impotent against the disturbance of nature” they appear (133). Like women, the Indians constitute another group in a patriarchal society that is oppressed, thus occupying the bottom of the hierarchical pyramid.

Isabel’s state of disorientation aggravates as she suddenly realizes that the water is up to her ankles and that the house is flooded. The oppressive rain continues perpetrating damage, causing Isabel to feel “terrified, possessed by the fright and the deluge” (134). News arrives that the church is close to collapsing and that the water has caused the tombs to open, leaving the dead bodies floating along the streets. Then, Isabel hears Martín’s voice again accusing her of fabricating visions because “pregnant women are always imagining things” (134). Once again, through their interaction, the reader sees an evident picture of the oppressed Isabel—her own husband dismisses her ideas as being too emotional and unworthy of his time.

By the fourth day of rain, Isabel’s notion of time is lost completely and so is her sense of smell. She breaks the timeline of events by skipping Thursday and claiming that it is Friday instead. At this point, she sees her stepmother, father, and Indians transform into “adipose and improbable bodies” (135). Then, Isabel’s transformation back to consciousness begins to take place. The first sense she recovers is hearing, as she perceives the sound of the train whistle. The second sense she regains is smell as she inhales the aroma of the soup her stepmother serves her. Upon realizing that it is two-thirty on Thursday, Isabel questions, “I don’t know how long I was sunken in that somnambulism where the senses lose their value” (136). Although she regains her senses, her feeling of sadness and depression remains perpetual as she expresses feeling her “heart turned into a frozen stone” (136). Isabel’s monologue ends with a vague sentence alluding to her inability to separate dream from reality, “Good Lord, . . . it wouldn’t surprise me now if they were coming to call me to go to last Sunday’s Mass” (136). Confirming the story’s ambiguity is the fact that this sentence construction starts out in the present tense, then moves to the past tense of the subjunctive, and then goes back to the present to mention an event that has already taken place.

In his story, “Monologue of Isabel Watching it Rain in Macondo,” García Márquez gives voice to a depressed woman who becomes emotionally transformed by the devastating and dominating force of the rain. Through her keen observations and somber emotions, the reader realizes that Isabel is part of an oppressive patriarchal society. Therefore, the title of the story evokes the unfortunate passiveness of the oppressed Isabel as male dominion stands firm before her very eyes.

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When we talk about sex, most of us think about “the sexes,” in other words, female and male, XX and XY chromosomes, respectively. But on the spectrum of biological outcomes, male and female represent only part of the picture. Due to enzyme deficiencies, hormonal imbalances, and mutated or missing chromosomes, not all infants are born either male or female. When this happens, the result is known as an intersex condition.

In Swyer Syndrome (or gonadal dysgenesis), the sry region is damaged, resulting in genital ambiguity. The sry is a region on the Y chromosome that determines sex, involving a cascade of events that results in the production of testosterone. The fetus is chromosomally male but androgynous in appearance and there is no onset of puberty.

Another example of this is congenital adrenal hyperplasia, the most common type of intersexed condition. In CAH, XX chromosomes are present but adrenal glands produce too much virilizing hormone, so there are male hormones, but female anatomy. This is caused by a gene mutation for enzymes.

In androgen insensitivity syndrome, cells in utero don’t differentiate and become testes because the chemicals and receptors aren’t coming together. Although XY chromosomes are present, cells are insensitive to androgen which results in a partial set of female reproductive organs accompanied by testes, or ovotestes can be present - a combination of ovaries and testes. The external genitals are ambiguous, so it is not visually obvious whether infants who are born with AIS are male or female. On puberty, gynecomastia is common.

5-alpha reductase is an enzyme that takes part in converting testosterone for the production of male genitalia. In 5-alpha reductase deficiency, an individual with XY chromosomes is unable to produce the enzyme due to a gene mutation. The result is a mixture of male gonads and mostly female reproductive organs which can often produce functional sperm. In addition to these examples, there are also XXX, XXY, and XYY chromosomal configurations. As Professor Trachman notes, biological sex isn’t as black and white as most people think. “There are many shades of gray.”

To form sex in humans, three sets of processes come together in utero. Testes and ovaries both come from the undifferentiated gonad, a type of cell that is available to form the reproductive system, but is not yet specific. Hormones and receptors dictate whether the undifferentiated gonad turns into ovaries or testes. The internal ducts develop and then become specific, turning into either fallopian tubes or the vas deferens. Last, the external genitalia develop from an entirely different tissue. It’s easy to imagine that with all this happening, the result is not an either/ or situation.
So what does this mean in terms of social implications? In 2009, South African runner Caster Semenya made headlines when the International Association of Athletics Federations raised questions about her gender. She was subjected to gender testing, a practice that was instituted after officials during the 1960’s had suspicions that some Olympic athletes were actually men masquerading as women in order to compete unfairly.9 While this seems to make sense, the practice of gender testing has had poor results in many cases. For example, Polish runner Ewa Klobukowska was gender tested in 1967 and failed when she was found to have a genetic condition that placed her outside the phenotypically normal female range.10 While it was agreed that this condition gave her no advantage over other female athletes, she was still banned from participating in the Olympics.

But is there an accurate test of gender? Professor Trachman and Dr. Haynes argue that there is not, because there will always be exceptions in this kind of testing, and how do you deal with those exceptions? First, they point out that in karyotyping (creating a picture of the chromosomes inside a cell) mutated genes aren’t able to be detected, only missing or broken chromosomes. Also, lab tests can have false positives and false negatives. They observe that in gender testing of athletes, testers are mainly looking at two things: chromosomes and hormones. Since hormones don’t take effect if the receptors aren’t present or functioning properly, hormone levels in the blood aren’t a good indicator.

Dr. Haynes also suggests that gender and sex should be separated for scientific purposes. What does this mean? Gender is a social and cultural construct, whereas sex refers to biological makeup. In other words, whether someone appears male or female is not an accurate indicator of what’s happening on a genetic level. As Professor Trachman observes, there may be something different going on with an individual mentally than what’s there physically.

Anne Fausto-Sterling, author of *The Five Sexes* suggests that intersexed conditions are more common than most people think, making up 1.7% of births. She believes that due to the number of intersexed infants being born, awareness should be raised:

While male and female stand on the extreme ends of a biological continuum, there are many bodies [...] that evidently mix together anatomical components conventionally attributed to both males and females. The implications of my argument for a sexual continuum are profound. If nature really offers us more than two sexes, then it follows that our current notions of masculinity and femininity are cultural conceits.12

In 1974, Jullianne Imperato-McGinley estimated an incidence of 1:90 intersexed persons in the Dominican Republic.13

Awareness is especially needed in the healthcare setting. In cases of intersexed infants, a team of doctors is typically involved in trying to detect whether the child should have surgery to normalize the appearance and allow the child to fit into the binary gender system of male/female. Doctors often tell parents that gender tests will indicate what kind of normalizing surgery should be performed, but as Professor Trachman and Dr. Haynes point out, these kinds of
tests aren’t totally accurate. Parents often impose their wishes, which can cloud the decision further.

The Intersex Society of North America (whose slogan is “Building a world free of shame, secrecy, and unwanted sexual surgeries since 1993”) is at the forefront of raising awareness. Dr. Alice Dreger, who sits on the Board of Directors for the ISNA, says, “normalizing surgeries are not medically necessary for physical well being. A nurse told me recently of one baby girl who ended up in intensive care on a ventilator because of complications from an elective “normalizing” surgery.” These kinds of surgeries can also cause problems with incontinence and nerve function, and are not simple surgeries with definitive results. The American Society of Registered Nurses Journal of Nursing states that, “Many intersex people who had early surgery needed multiple follow-ups to deal with scarring and other problems.” Hilda Viloria, Chairperson for Organisation Intersex International, and an intersexed person, says:

People who promote “corrective” surgeries and hormone treatment for intersex children believe intersex children will grow up to be adults who fall short of social norms. However, these beliefs are purely speculation because they have never taken the time to speak with intersex adults like myself who did not undergo surgery, or to do follow-up studies on the children whose bodies they irrevocably changed. Doctors simply decided that these bodies, which nature created, are not desirable.

As adults, people with intersexed conditions require not only standard healthcare, but often have to undergo surgeries to correct the unsuccessful procedures they had as children. They may face difficulty in receiving adequate reproductive health care. Bhakti Ananda Goswami, an intersexed person, recalls that, “even as an adult I was required to have my female organs, including my androgen-producing gonads, removed to get a driver’s licence that said male to match my hairy face. So, both intersex infants and adults are forced, in America today, to have surgeries for legal and social reasons that have nothing to do with their health or desired life.” Emi Koyama, an intersexed person, says that, “After [age 16], insurance companies are also far less likely to cover the costs for intersex people who want genital surgery. This is particularly significant because the procedure for vaginoplasty has a 90 percent failure rate as it’s performed on intersex people.”

A research paper in The Journal of Clinical Nursing, “The Experiences of People With an Intersexed Condition” by Drew MacKenzie et al, states that “many nurses will be unaware of the condition of being intersex and have little knowledge of the challenges faced by this group, yet are likely to be involved in their care. People with intersex conditions require particularly sensitive care and nurses can provide appropriate, supportive and ‘safe’ care if they are aware of the condition and its challenges.”
END NOTES


2 Ibid.


5 Ibid.


7 Ibid.

8 Trachman, Julie, and Janet Haynes. “Gender and Biology.” Hostos Community College, Bronx, New York. 5 Mar. 2012. Lecture. All further references to Trachman or Hayes are from this lecture.


YOLANDA FERNANDEZ-SANTOS

AN ESSAY ON HALF THE SKY, BY NICHOLAS D. KRISTOFF AND SHERYL WUDUNN

Half the Sky by Nicholas D. Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn is an incredible book. It spreads awareness of the abusive situations women are suffering in the world—how they are considered and treated as second-class citizens in many places, without rights and voices. They are living under oppression, and it is manifested in distinct ways. In the book, there are different scenes with the same characters: women being the victims, and men being the oppressors. Some of these women live far from where we do, others live relatively close to us. When at first we read on the cover of the book the subtitle: “Turning oppression into opportunity for women worldwide”, these words could seem intriguing and contradictory. Our first question could be: How, from something bad and horrible, “oppression”, can surge something good for women, an “opportunity”? It looks impossible, but after finishing my reading I don’t think I have better words to describe what the book is about.

It is unbelievable what these women achieved, and are achieving in their lives; how they overcome the obstacles that society, and especially men, put in front of them to prevent females from enjoying the same rights and privileges that males do. Maybe the most surprising of all is that in the middle of their tragedies some hope appears, and that permits change. When I read how those women’s lives were, and then, how they turned out to be, a thought crosses my mind: If they could accomplish all those achievements even within their precarious situations, imagine what we can help achieve for them, and for ourselves as people with more opportunities and more ways to pursue our dreams than they have. Half the Sky is an energizing book. It encourages us to work for our goals, for what we believe in.

One fact that we can extract from its pages is that it is easier than we could think to help those persons, those oppressed women. One doesn’t need to be rich and donate a lot of money, we don’t need to go abroad to help them. We can do a lot with a small amount of money, and from our cities, our own houses, with our computers, for example. Microloans (funded by donations and given to poor women without resources to start roadside businesses of their own) have been a great tool to facilitate a new life to women in need: to fulfill their dreams to obtain the stability and opportunities that they and their children deserve.

The main adjective used by my classmates talking about Half the Sky was “depressing.” I totally agree. This book can make readers feel really depressed because of the hardness of the stories narrated. But I think that the book produces not only depression as a response: it communicates much more than that. Through the reading of the different stories, my feelings and mood...
changed constantly. Most of the time I felt upset about what was happening to these women; how is it possible that in the 21st century such atrocities exist in the world? Other times I felt hope and happiness, as when the protagonists of the book got something good in their lives, and they left behind their horrors and calamities. I also felt pity when the prostitutes, who were rescued from the brothels and returned with their families, decided to go back to the red light districts to continue being prostitutes because of their addiction to drugs, a problem created when they were captives by their captors. That need was more powerful than their wish for freedom. It was heartbreaking to read that after being free, and having a new and much better life, some women seem condemned as a result of their being hostages, to have such horrible destinies.

Each story has had an impact on me. It is difficult to say that one single story stands out since there are several that shocked me in a special way. I could point to the story of Meena in chapter 1, the mother who had to abandon her two children because that was the only chance for her family to attain freedom. She thought that if she continued being in the brothel, her children, also kept there, never would have a different future. I believe she was very brave trying to escape and leaving her children behind for their own sake, overall because it wasn’t sure she would have the possibility to go back to help her daughter and son to escape too. Any person who is a parent can understand what I am saying. I have two little daughters, and it is unthinkable for me to leave them because I cannot live without our being together. The pain that brave Meena must have felt leaving her children in the brothel without the certainty that she would see them again had to be horrible.

There are many crimes narrated in this book. All of them are horrendous, but something even more shocking than the crimes themselves is the impunity enjoyed by the perpetrators, the real criminals. In many of the cases the helpless women are treated as criminals, not as the victims they actually are. When something violent happens to them, they find help neither from the authorities, nor the government. In chapter 4, we have one example of that when Zebene, Woinshet’s father, says: “More weight is still given to the crime of stealing a thing than to the crime of stealing a person” (63). His daughter was kidnapped and raped, and his family couldn’t find help. The authorities took the rapist’s side and proclaimed that what had happened was a “tradition” (65), and they didn’t want to hear what a girl had to say. This story is but one example among the many about the existent, ingrained gender-based inequality suffered by women in the world.

Kristof and WuDunn explain well what “the girl effect” is (xiv), and why it is so important that people who want to help persons in need should focus their efforts on helping women and girls. The writers describe that to help the female population, a domino effect is produced, because when those women and girls get a better life it is not only good for them, but also for the economic situations of their families and of their communities, too. With this idea in mind, it is easy to understand that we can achieve more with the same amount of money if we make girls and women the primary target of our help. But as we can also read in the book that empowering women also means directly helping
boys and men (11-12; 233-34). With this in mind, I recommend the reading of this book to all human rights organizations, to all government agencies, and to people in general who want to help make a better world for everyone, women and men.

In *Half the Sky*, we can read about three starting points to help women in need. “These three steps -campaigns to fund girls’ education, to iodize salt to prevent mental retardation, and to eradicate fistula—would not solve the problems of the world’s women. But action on these three measures would raise the underlying issues higher on the international affairs agenda, and would illustrate proven solutions to the problems. Once people see that there are solutions, they will be more willing to help in myriad other ways” (247-8). The authors make clear in *Half the Sky* that those three guidelines are not the only ways of solving serious global problems, but they do repeat with supporting documentation that educating and providing safety to women may have the greatest impact in ending gender-based violence, women’s oppression and also global poverty. Indeed, the three actions identified above have proven a good beginning to achieve far-reaching change for women in the developing world and their families. We should abandon other strategies that do not work, and try new ones that focus on “the girl effect”.

But perhaps the most important way of all to help women is giving them an education and opportunities that empower them, which facilitates gender equality. According to the research exposed by the authors in this book, there are such measures that have shown a positive outcome in certain countries, and they can work in other places too. “Countries like Rwanda and China have shown that governments can nurture women and girls in ways that boost economic development. In such countries with good governance and equal opportunities, Western help is often particularly effective” (212). As the authors show, it is necessary to take into account the particular characteristics of the country where we aim to offer our help and to make cultural adjustments; the results could be as good, or even better as in the countries used as models of positive change for women.

The role of the media is also crucial to consider. A thought that came to my mind reading Mukhtar’s story is that many times the media pay a lot of attention to some aspects of the stories—for instance, how women feel suffering oppression and although that part of the story has importance, actually I don’t believe it is the most important part. The media look for the sensationalism because unfortunately that is what audience wants to see and hear. For example, it is sad to read that when Mukhtar Mai came to United States, the journalists mainly focused their interviews in how she was raped and she always answered that she wanted to talk exclusively about her school: that was her main thought. She didn’t want to remember how she was raped. Thanks God not all the media act like that, but much more could be achieved in this issue of helping women in the world if everyone was focused on the solutions, and not in selling sensationalism.

I believe, like many of the persons that have read *Half the Sky*, that once you read it you are going to talk about this book to others, and that is a good
thing because it is vital to create awareness about the oppression that affects millions of women in the world. Knowing about a problem gives us the opportunity to try to find its solutions and thus, little by little, equality between women and men can be a reality in the world, finally.

WORKS CITED

What does it truly mean to be a man? Is it the archaic epitome of what a man should be: virile, an exceptional physical specimen of what an Alpha male is and the constant protection of this coveted title? This is precisely how masculinity is portrayed and reflected in Mario Vargas Llosa’s story “The Challenge.” This story illustrates how in the 20th century men are still imprisoned in this barbaric state of mind where violence is the only solution and not acting in a violent manner is a forthright onslaught on a man’s honor and most importantly, his masculinity. Vargas Llosa speaks to the countless bygone generations of men who did not think twice to pull out the sword rather than to have constructive discourse to solve their disagreements. That repugnant truth of masculinity is divulged with striking honesty by Mario Vargas Llosa, who holds nothing back when he shows his gender as archaic while frankly demonstrating the idiocy of the characters’ actions.

In “The Challenge” masculinity is portrayed as barbaric and senseless. These men seem to be shackled to the rules of the past and adhere to these rules with the utmost respect. The unwritten rules of male conduct castrate these men, and prevent them from logical thinking. Justo feels obligated to fight The Gimp because if he does not fight him somehow his masculinity will be tarnished. These adversaries met at the River bar where their persistent barrage of ill-willed comments led to their subsequent duel. “Are you a man? The Gimp shouted. More than you, Justo shouted” (Vargas Llosa 393). This war of words is Justo’s attempt to save face in front of people and to not be emasculated by the enraged soaked words of The Gimp.

The duel between Justo and The Gimp illustrates that even in the 1950s men felt that the only way their manhood could be sustained was to fight till the death. The other peculiar fact about this story is that Leonidas, who is nicknamed the old man, is Justo’s father. Leonidas believes that his own child must fight to the death to protect his honor. Even as “… He was watching the scene with a horrified expression,” (398) that did not deter him from condoning this barbaric act of incredible stupidity. A fight to the death is exactly that, to the death. Death is something you cannot come back from and choosing to venture into that enigmatic destination willingly is outright foolishness. The fact that Leonidas complies with the social norms of his society and does nothing to save his son shows how embedded this disease is that distorts all perception of what is rational and irrational. A man watching his own son see his demise and simply being a spectator proves that this idea of what masculinity should be goes against all human instincts. Wild lions, rams and other combative animals show off their masculine prowess by dueling against one another. The reason why animals do this is to garner the affection of a hopeful female companion.
Is this the example men are looking at as the exemplary beacon of masculine behavior? Maybe in the world of “The Challenge” and our world men feel obliged and compelled to prove how masculine they really are. It might be the testosterone taking hold of these men in the story but it is more than that. It is human history orchestrated and formulated by men whose ambition drives them to the brink of self-destruction.

The themes of masculinity are portrayed in “The Challenge” by implicitly reflecting the actions and thought processes of men. The acceptance of this fatal duel by the combatant’s friends shows how in society the unwritten rule of male behavior is understood by all men. Justo and The Gimp’s friends accept that their respective friends will duel with knives to the death and are not fazed by this truth. The friends and father’s reluctance to intervene directly shows how men are enslaved to these archaic rules of male conduct. If a man challenges you to a duel, you accept. If you do not accept, you are not a man. How could a man keep on living if he refuses a duel? These are some the possible rationalizations of a man imprisoned in this state of thought process. A didactic discourse between two rational human beings to end with a mutually agreeable compromise in this world would be out of the question in this story. But that is exactly Mario Vargas Llosa’s point; the fact that these men act this way is a problem and it is detrimental to the evolution of Homosapiens. War, violence, genocide are all effects that come from the male ego’s attempt to compensate for its insecurities. Men are the perpetrators of this entire horrendous onslaught on humanity; the sad truth is that all of this is correlated with egotistical men trying to prove they are vastly superior to other men. It is quite frankly disheartening to know that human history has been subjected to centuries of nonsensical actions, simply because a man feels his manhood is being questioned. What a burden!
“Al-Shama, A Mark of Beauty” by Abica Paul-Noel
“Still Life in the D.R.” by Jacob Lee Hilado
“City of Women” by Jacob Lee Hilado
“Peaceful Trees” by Song Chisik
“Spring Bunnies” by Katrina Garcia
“Yellow Jacket” by Annie Gomez
“A Bright Thought” by Danny Mendoza
“Lonely Street” by Danny Mendoza
“Building a Dream” by Grace Robles
“Let’s Keep it Clean” by Caesar Acuria
“Politics” by Henry Olivas-Guido
"The World Has a Story of Its Own" by Jennifer Nieves
“Awful Waste of Space” by Manny Pena
“Stars Beneath the Sky” by Nicoli Blacos
“Concrete Jungle Where Dreams Are Made Of” by Nicoli Blacos
“Burning Resonance” by Waleska Martinez
FAUSTO MELO MORILLO

SIN TITULO

Poesías viajan a larga distancia
No obstruyas mi camino, escritor de infancia
Recursos escasos retan romper fracaso
Sigo en la atmósfera porque se cuidar cada paso
Sí fallan mi palpitos busca un marcapaso

Luego habré mi libreta
Estudia como la letra
Cursiva luce y se interpreta
He salido
Por la puerta estrecha, la vida rápida se vive
En la línea izquierda, la mía en la derecha

Me molesta que tú no aprecies mis intentos
Me presigno cuando estoy escribiendo, atento
Gracias creador por mi nacimiento

Mi lucha ha sido tremenda
Portavoz del sacrificio
Levantar mi voz para poder comer arroz
¿Sí no eres veloz de qué sirve tu juicio?
Antes de partir, recuerda el dolor de una leyenda
Padre, luz de mi vida
cielo eterno.
Tú sostenías mi caminar
por el mundo
tú eras mi fe
mi valor
mi esperanza
Por qué te fuiste?
Por qué te llevaron
de mi lado?
Si tan solo un alma pudiera reemplazar tu dulzura
tu voz
tus consejos
tu dulce mirar
tu aliento y tu fuerza…Mas no es posible.
Caído, desde pequeñita caía y ahi estabas tú.
siempre tu papa!
y así será
solo y siempre tú
porque vives y vivirás por siempre en mi, papa!
Madre, hoy la Tierra está triste
porque un angelito se ha ido.
Sus ojos eran dos zafiros
profundos como la noche,
su boquita era de fresa,
rosadita y aterciopelada,
y su pelito de niño mayor.
Desde antes de nacer
fue la alegría de sus padres
y el centro de sus vidas.
Fue la dicha de la familia,
la delicia de todos.
Tan deseado y tan querido,
tan esperado y tan amado
lo inundó todo de amor.

El sabía hacer reir,
el sabía hacerse notar,
pedía la atención de todos
con su carita angelical.
Miraba curioso a su alrededor
sin dejar de sorprender,
y pensaba: ¿Qué es esto? ¿Qué es aquello?,
un día lo aprenderé.
No paraba, no se detenía,
el mundo para él corría.
Su carita iluminada por una sonrisa
era el mejor regalo que darnos podía.

Uno se pregunta: ¿Y por qué se fue tan pronto?
nosotros queríamos tenerlo más.
Eso, únicamente Dios lo sabrá.
A veces no podemos buscar lógica,
porque la lógica se esconde
ante nuestros ojos
pero existe ante los del Señor.
Sólo nos queda aceptar
que él a nuestro lado ya no está,
pero sí es cierto
que en nuestros corazones
para siempre vivirá.

Madre, hoy el cielo está alegre
porque un angelito nuevo llegó.
Dicen que Dios lo llamó
porque andaba falto de angelitos
y quería lo mejor de lo mejor.
Ha llegado iluminándolo todo
como sólo él sabe hacerlo.
Jugando y riendo les ha dado vida allá
pues andaban un poquito tristes tras el invierno,
pero el pequeño Jan Carlo
la primavera y el sol llevó a ellos,
y todos en el cielo están muy
pero que muy contentos.

Desde el cielo el angelito
un mensaje envió a sus papás:
“Perdonadme por irme sin avisar,
pero es que Dios me mandó llamar.
Sé que ahora estás tristes
es lo que cabe esperar,
pero os pido que cuando las fuerzas os falten
al cielo mireis buscando algo allá.
Veréis una estrella brillante, muy brillante,
quizás la que más,
en ella estoy yo saludando y diciéndoles
hola papá, hola mamá,
dejad de llorar,
pues este no es un adiós para siempre
es un hasta luego, no más,
y siempre a vuestro lado voy a estar”.
Si tu te vas
Ansiaré tus labios
Por la eternidad
y me preguntare
¿En donde estás?

Si te vas
Mi alma no tendrá
Consuelo y cada
Noche de desvelo
Me preguntare
¿Con quien estás?

Si tu te vas
Si tu te vas no sé
No lo sé que pasara
Conmigo

Si tu te vas
Sé que mis noches
Serán largas y mis días
Grisea

Pero si te vas!
El ultimo de lo claveles se marchito en tu espera
Las rosas dejaron caer sus petalos
Pregunestandole al vieinto. ¿Me quieres?
Los ruizseñores callaron para escuchar tu respuesta

Desde entonces
Mi jardín esta marchito
Y en silencio

Sé que el sol le da la espalda a las nuves
Para no ver sus lagrimas
La luna sé aleja de mi ventana cada noche
Para no escuchar el llanto de las esperanzas.

Desde entonces
Mis días son grises,
Mis noches solitarias.

Todos aguardan tu llegadas,
Solo yo sé que no volverás aquí.
Have you ever been in love with someone and could not figure out how you fell in love with them? Well I have. I fell in love with someone that did not reciprocate the love back to me. I loved this man with my heart and my soul. Although he told me that he is in love with me, I don’t feel that he is loving me the way that I want to be loved. I made this man a priority in my life but I was not a priority in his life. Allah allowed me to figure out that I did not fall in love with the person that I can see. This man’s face is just a façade, his outer being. The most significant idea is that I fell in love with his soul which is his true being. As you all know, the soul is not visible to the human eye. Only Allah knows the soul.

In addition I will give you a little background so you can see how I came about to fall in love with this man. I met this guy in 2003; he introduced himself to me as Jose. I knew that he was not Spanish so I knew that could not possibly be his name. Just as I had thought, I later found out that was not his biological name. That was his street name so I just went with it. But there was something peculiar about him so of course I went in search to find out. We got along very well and he was very kind to me. I was always at his house or he was at my house so I knew that he was not involved with anyone. He told me that he was Muslim and that he wanted me to become Muslim. This is after about a month of us seeing each other, I told him no because I did not want to cover my hair and my body. I started noticing that whenever we were in public he would say that he had to buy me a head covering because men did not respect me. And if I went to the store without him, he would have me wear his sweat pants and his t-shirt.

He started sending me cute little texts while I was at work and would pick me up from work all the time. We started telling each other about ourselves and he expressed to me that he was in love with me. This was about a year later. I soon found out that he was sneaking around behind my back so I would stop seeing him for months at a time. But he would always come back and promise that he won’t do it anymore.

Well, I started paying more attention to him because I wanted to know what was so special about him that I kept accepting him back. I found out that his biological name is S. and he is a loving father to his children. But he also went by another assumed name, Johnathan. I found this name out when he called my job and told my coworker to tell me Johnthan called, I figured out it was him. Johnathan is very intelligent and he is very ambitious. This man not only has all these names but he also seems to have different personalities that he acts out. And of course, there is Jihad, who is his true soul. Jihad loves Allah very much. He also speaks Arabic fluently. When I see him pray, when he is...
done it is like a new man is born. He has a peacefulness about him and that is something that I wanted in my life.

So in 2006, I finally told him that I was ready to become Muslim. He told me that he had to take me to buy the head covering. So we went to the Islamic store the next day. He told the sister that worked there to help me pick out the head coverings and the long hijab and to show me how to tie the scarf. But when we were through he told me to get a lot of outfits because I had to wear this kind of clothing all the time now. He also told me to keep the outfit on, even though the sister in the store told him that I did not have to wear the outfit because I was not Muslim yet. He told her that he wanted me to get used to wearing it. Then he spoke to her in Arabic and she just smiled at me. A few days later he took me to the Masjid so I could take the shahada, which is the oath you take when you become Muslim.

The Imam asked if we were married and we said no. Then S. spoke to the Imam in Arabic. The Imam had the same Kool Aid smile the sister had on her face as he looked at me. I still don't know what was said because he never told me when I asked him. Later that day, S. told me that we could not see each other anymore because we are not married. I did not understand why he was leaving me. I was very heart broken about this but there was nothing I could do to change it.

Many months went by and then he sent me a picture mail of a new born baby that was his son. I went off on him and he came to me and told me that it only happened one time. He always said the other woman means nothing to him. I would also tell him that he needed to respect women. I eventually forgave him but we are not physically involved because of the religion.

After another year passed, he started telling me how much he missed me and wanted to see me. When I told him no, he would get upset and then start telling me about other females and his wife. I knew he was lying about having a wife. He just wanted to upset me. I gave in and saw him but I would feel so disgusting afterwards and I told him that Allah is getting angry at us for having illegal relations. I told him that he needed to stay away from me until he was ready to marry me.

Furthermore, I started feeling like I had lost my identity because I no longer thought about myself anymore. My mind was always on S. I started telling him how I was feeling and that I wanted him to live his life as Jihad because it is Jihad who loves me, not S. But opening up and letting him know how I was truly feeling, I gave him leverage to play on my emotions even more. Throughout the years, if I found out he was with another female and I confronted him about it, he would tell me to stop worrying about what he was doing and that he did not marry anyone. He also told me that I should not even feel hurt because we are not physically involved anymore. I was shocked to hear this. It was like he felt I had not right to feel anything; that I am just a robot to him. I allowed him to take away my feelings. He thinks that I should just handle whatever he does to me. I put all my heart and soul into him and told him what I hoped for so I had freely given away my self-esteem and did not even
realize it. By me accepting everything that he had done gave him the power to continue to use me at his will.

In conclusion, it’s been over a year since I have seen him and almost a month since I have spoken to him. When I called him last month he told me that he had a female living with him and that she was seven months pregnant. I was hurt at first but I am okay now. I know that Allah comes first and foremost in my life and that if there is something or someone for me in this life I will have it or him at Allah’s will. I finally have my power back that I allowed him to steal away from me. Jihad is truly beyond hope. But I do not regret meeting him because I would have never found my true soul.

Those nine years I spent loving him were just another stepping stone in my life. I am happy that he finally respects a woman enough to marry her, if he could get her to become Muslim. This is what he told me. So I still want him to be a righteous man for Allah but I do not want to stay in touch with him anymore. I have no reason, no more. My hope is gone and it feels good. He has already had his big sister call me and tell me not to give up “deen,” no matter what happens in my life. In Islam, “deen” is to worship Allah and to live my life as sinless as I can and to continue to praise and glorify Allah. Everything happens for a reason and although I did not get Jihad I know that Allah allowed him to see sakinah before we even knew my name because he really stressed me a lot about becoming Muslim. So he is special to Allah, he is a angel in disguise that Allah sent for me to find my true soul. I forgot I left out a major part. One day I was in the hospital after having a nervous breakdown and Jihad visited me. We hugged when he was leaving. Time froze. I felt his heart jump out of his chest into mine. The only one that could have done that was Allah. After that happened, Jihad asked me did I feel that? The force was powerful how could I have not felt it. This happened in 2006. I believe that is why I stayed so attached to him because Allah had given us a sign; I paid attention but Jihad did not. I know that no human has the power to feel what we felt. All praises to Allah.
The world as a whole has placed dependency upon modern and mechanical technology. So much so that the masses no longer channel their own self-knowledge to obtain that which is needed in everyday life. We no longer possess the power, ability or will to think for ourselves. Although technology seems to have made things easier in modern day life, the down side of that is the fact that we as masses are now being dictated to. We also have become dependent upon these modern day changes.

These changes have altered our ability to become one with ourselves, nature, and life as a whole. Instead of picking up a book and exercising our minds, we turn to computers and allow them to think for us. We don't even attempt to have an original thought. In fact, why should we, when we can allow other things to do the work for us. But, there is a downside to that also. Now, we are no longer free thinkers. Instead of channeling the energy to obtain answers, we allow ourselves to be told what the answer is, without even a question of whether or not what we were told is true.

These same actions are taken with everyday living. We consume foods in which we have no clue as to what was placed in them to grow. Nor do we question the unnatural look of food. If a company is selling bananas all over the world, all year round, we have to raise the question of how that is possible. Instead, all we know is that we want banana pudding. Everything else is irrelevant. We never take into consideration that these bananas are pumped with hormones to cause them to grow. Hormones that we in-turn eat, and although they may taste good to us, they are definitely not good for us.

Rachel Carson stated in *Silent Spring*, “Only within the moment of time represented by the present century has one species - man- acquired significant power to alter the nature of his world.” This alone shows that man is a unique species. So unique in fact, that man is the only species with the ability to wipe itself out. We need to rethink our strategies, and stop being consumed with thoughts of controlling the world and its habitat. Nature and the things in it are here for us to consume in its rarest form. It’s not up to man to alter it, out of greed or gluttony. In the passage “where I lived and what I lived for” from *Walden*, Thoreau shows that when one is at peace with nature, then one can be at peace with oneself. He sees the environment as our mother (Mother Earth) and we are her children. Nature needs to be cared for just as our bodies do.

When we start taking Mother Nature for granted, we must pay a price just as a bad child would. The only exception is that our punishment will be a thousand times greater. Hence, we suffer earthquakes, tsunamis, etc., and these are modern times. Why do you think we have sixty degree weather in January? It’s nature telling us that something is not right. Although this weather may seem
like a wonderful thing, one has to question, what is really happening? Nature is dissatisfied with our behavior and she is attempting to show us in many forms.
Why do we break our own rules? We may tell ourselves “Oh me, I will never do that.” Yet we find ourselves just doing that. Is there a reason for our action? I am guessing: maybe the older we get, the more we fear to be alone. Or is it that as we age, we accept whatever that comes our way. YES! I have said this statement in the past. “Oh me, I will never do that.” Yet today I am doing exactly that. How can we stick to our own rules no matter the desperation, aggravation, complication, or implication? We should try to accept ourselves for who, what and how we are and do what’s right, what’s best and stick to our rules and not do the impossible. Because the impossible may be possible only for a moment. At the end of it all there is always a price to pay.
Many people in this society don’t make enough time to go to a local gym to exercise in order to motivate their system. On the contrary, when it comes to a companion, they will realize the difference between exercising and providing a better living.

Dogs are becoming great motivators just to help people keep moving so that they’ll be well motivated to get involved into physical activities. Elderly people also take regular walks in order to continue to maintain themselves in living healthy and socially. Researchers have shown that dog walking is ranked among higher overall for modern exercises to take part in their leisure time.

Dog walkers would spend quality time with their pet to do their workout routine on a daily basis. Researchers also stated that 60 percent of dog owners have known their criteria of regular exercise. However, some people do not know when or how to start their exercise routine.

There are some adults who do not make the time to walk their dogs outside to exercise due to the fact of their behavior. Accordingly, dogs want their attention from their owners because they have needs and want to become productive in living life healthier.

Dog walking is ranked the highest among young people between the ages of 18 to 24. This is two times more than the elderly from 65 and over. Even college graduates who walk with their dog more than others who are less educated. For example, in the state of California there are 60% of dog owners who are likely to dedicate their time to walk their dogs for leisure time more than people who don’t have the time to walk their pet outdoors. And besides, dogs are much more friendly than humans and are very easier to work with.

People who are dog walkers are improving their own health as well as their pet’s health. Studies have shown that dogs are great walking companions than normal people and it’s one of the most important ways for dog owners to stay in good shape in a level of fitness. In conclusion, dogs have improved a lot in their physical activity and I believe that many individuals out there who own their pets should continue to make time to go outdoors and take advantage by walking their dogs daily.
In a world that we live in today, many people who drive on highways or crossroads listen to music. I find myself walking outside in the neighborhood listening to the sounds of music and allowing those sounds to go through my head for memorization. I grew up in a neighborhood where I envisioned seeing musicians performing a gig at a local grocery store playing smooth jazz to excite a small crowd. I also had a vision of seeing myself performing on stage or on the streets sharing my talent with people and letting them know who I am.

Music is an activity through which many people learn how to develop their creativity. Music is also something that people use to write lyrics to express their thoughts, feelings, emotions, or confrontation. It also involves sharing a story to reveal our dream of opening a foundation to help others. It is also used to send a message to let people know what it is about. It helps me gain confidence to overcome my obstacles so that I continue to reach my dream of learning to write music lyrics and improve my skills in other areas.

Music is an art; it is a word that has many things to say, to listen, to hear, to coordinate, to contribute, to teach, to record, to direct, to create, and more importantly, to inspire.

Music is an art that cannot be taken away from anyone, especially when someone demonstrates their talent or skill that can be built on so that the doors can be open for a new foundation just like any other curriculum in the arts.

Music is about developing rhythm, listening to the sounds of the beat and figuring out which notes can be played. Music is also being played in churches while people in the congregation sing along for joy, for prayer, and happiness to reveal their faith. Music! My passion, my hobby, my anti-drug, my life.
On Friday the 10th of December in 2011, a field trip to the CSI laboratory was organized by Professor Flor Henderson. The goal of the field trip was to enable science students to familiarize with the practical processes of Forensic Sciences. We were separated into two different groups and were assigned two different forensic cases. I was part of the team led by Professor Henderson. We were assigned to work on crime scene number three. We started our work at the crime site. There, we collected evidence for further our study at the forensic botany, forensic anthropology and biology laboratories consecutively. Finally, we requested a report on medical examination and were able to retrace key aspects of the scene and conclude the case. All the steps we executed, starting at the crime site, the laboratories and the medical examination labs are described in the following report.

**Crime Scene # 3**

**Crime scene site:** Our team at the crime site – we began to look for clues. The first evidence we found was a fragmented human skeleton and partially wrapped in what appeared to be a burlap bag. After the momentary feeling of apprehension and sorrow for the victim, we began to take a close look to the surrounding environment, searching for all possible evidence. The forehead of the victim showed a hole indicating he/she received a gun shot in the head. The victim was also wearing a ring still attached to the middle finger of his left hand. We also noted some animal footprints and hair puffs which appeared to belong to an animal. In addition, some plant seeds were scattered around the victim. We took careful notes and traced the crime scene on a clipboard. The collected pieces were taken to several laboratories for further analysis.

**Laboratory work:** The first analysis we performed enabled us to determine the type of bullet used to kill the victim. The bullet was a .45mm. Further investigation revealed that the gun used to shot the bullet was registered in the victim’s name, Mark Walton.

The animal hair samples were analyzed. The results showed that the hair belonged to a dog. Therefore, we conducted a comparison of the DNA of the hair found at the site to DNA of dogs belonging to the suspects. As a result, the DNA of the hair of the dog found at the crime site matched the DNA of the dog of the victim’s ex-wife.

At the Forensic Botany Laboratory we analyzed the seeds collected at the site to determine the type of plant it could possibly have come from. Some comparisons were done between apples and orange seeds, saltbush and burro bush seeds, as well as pot marigold seeds. The results of the analysis showed that the seeds were of the oregano plant – a plant grown by the victim’s ex-wife.
At the Forensic Anthropology Laboratory, we searched for dental records of Mark Walton to match the dental evidence of the victim. This process was performed to confirm again that the victim was surely Mark Walton.

Finally, the Medical Examination determined that the victim was a white male, about 45 years old, dead for more than 2 years. The analysis also indicated that the cause of death was homicide.

The evidence and the laboratory analyses provided strong evidence to hold the victim’s ex-wife as prime suspect on a homicide case and arrange further investigation.

In conclusion, the field trip conducted by Professor Henderson, and sponsored by the Biological Sciences Club was a great experience for all of us, teachers and students. We have learned the applied process of forensic science; the procedure of obtaining sources of evidence, and the logic process of determining the criminal among multiple suspects.
This weekend I went to the Bodies exhibit and I was very excited to see all the things that I have been studying, and learning about. I was looking forward to seeing the different parts of the bodies, actual muscle tissues, bones and complete bodies as I had heard about.

During my visit to the Bodies exhibit I learned how important it is to have a healthy body and a healthy lifestyle. I learned how our organs adapt to our way of living and how they can be affected as well.

The cardiovascular system is a very complicated network but at the same time is it very simple. Made up of the heart, blood and blood vessels, the circulatory system is your body’s delivery system. The heart is responsible for pumping blood throughout the blood vessels by repeated, rhythmic contractions. The heart is composed of cardiac muscle, which is an involuntary striated muscle tissue and connective tissue. The heart size is about of your fist. The blood moves from the heart, delivers oxygen and nutrients to every part of the body. On the return trip, the blood picks up waste products so that your body can get rid of them. The heart pump blood and the blood vessels channel and deliver it throughout the body. Arteries carry blood filled with nutrients away from the heart to all parts of the body. Eventually arteries divide into smaller arterioles and then into even smaller capillaries, the smallest of all blood vessels. Capillaries join together to form small veins, which flow into larger main veins, and these deliver deoxygenated blood back to the heart. Veins, unlike arteries, have thin, slack walls, because the blood has lost the pressure which forced it out of the heart, so the dark, reddish-blue blood which flows through the veins on its way to the lungs oozes along very slowly on its way to be deoxygenated.

Back at the heart, the veins enter a special vessel, called the pulmonary arteries, into the wall at right side of the heart. It flows along the pulmonary arteries to the lungs to collect oxygen, and then back to the heart’s left side to begin its journey around the body again.

Learning all of this information and keeping it in mind while I was at the exhibit, it really helped me to visualize how it all works. It is really an amazing network and it was nice to actually see it and how it connects to the rest of the body, very different than trying to visualize it in the book. What amazed me was that they actually had the entire network separated from the body as a whole and placed together for us to see.

There was a young medical students answering questions and I was curious to see how they managed to separate such an intricate and small system from the rest of the body. She told me that it was a long process in which they removed the skin and started to separate even the smallest capillaries, then they using a resin mixture to harden the entire system as one piece. Once that was
done, they poured some sort of acid to melt away everything that was not in the resin, muscle, tissues, bones until all that was left was the circulatory system in one piece. It is really amazing. She also had a heart, lungs, brain and pelvic bones for us to touch and feel. It was a nice experience to actually touch a real heart, to see the ventricles and the aorta, and hold it in my hand.

There was a video that talked about heart rate and how it is different for everyone depending on your lifestyle. It mentioned that athletes have a stronger heart, for example Lance Armstrong has a heart rate of about 30 bpm at rest which is about half of what a normal heart beat is. This is because his heart of strong and has to do half the work when he is at rest. She explained to us that the heart is a muscle and depending on how much you exercise it, it gets stronger. We talked about an enlarged heart, and even though it is larger than normal, that is not always good. It mean that the heart has had to work extra hard to pump the blood, for example because of clogged arteries, and the heart get bigger with time. We talked about how Bill Clinton went through a triple bypass surgery because of clogging like this and how it helps to keep a healthier heart. It is sometime hard to know if your arteries are getting clogged with fat, but that is why it is important to exercise and keep a healthy lifestyle.

Going to the Bodies exhibit was really an amazing experience, I really got to see and experience everything that I am learning in class and our of the text book. I am really glad we went to see the show and I look forward to keep on learning.
You and I, we were born with internal bridges of self love
Extending over rivers of respect.
We were born with highways of determination
That encourage limitless imagination
All to help us discover truth and strength
Within ourselves, unrelenting.
Inconsequential to the places we experience
And the circumstances we’ve endured,
We were born greeting life through
A woman’s protective bodily embrace and
Courageous vaginal release.

During my childhood in America
I was terrified to question distorted renditions of history and truth
I’d been Bureaucratically Educated.
Because I was assured God is a European American man in the sky
That hates brown skinned people and women.
With the deep Belief of a child,
I looked into mirrors and identified myself
“Nigger, Nigga, Bitch, Worthless”

You and I, we essences of emotion, have been brutalized
By government manufactured syringes.
We’ve been injected with discrimination, racism, homophobia,
Infected with hatreds that murder
The Remarkably Wondrous potential within our lives.
I no longer believe God is a man in the sky
Who hates women and same gendered loving people
As religious based gender persecution teaches
I no longer believe a woman’s pregnancy and menstrual pains
Are a symbol of God's distain and retribution.

You and I, we were born gifted with the essence of equality;
I no longer believe in gender discriminations that advocate
The physical strength of males designates males to be the superior gender
Because the oppression of any gender is a disrespect and an assault on life itself.
I no longer believe God is a European American man in the sky
Who hates brown skinned people and women.
I don’t laugh when a man admits he was sexually assaulted by a woman or a man.
There are no third world countries,
Only one world of Earth united, extending beneath our feet
A world in suffering from corrupt governments determination
To kill, thieve, kidnap, rape, uneducate, starve, isolate,
Me from you
And you from us, Worldwide
You and I, We were born with internal bridges of self love
Extending over rivers of respect.
We were born with highways of determination
That encourage limitless imagination,
Inconsequential to the places we experience
And the circumstances we’ve endured.
You and I, were born embraced by the essences of emotion
We were Born Free.
Believe in the strength of your inner beauty,
Equivalent to the Wisdom of a Child
Born never self doubting
Boldly inquiring.
Explore truth deep within
The wondrous capability of your intelligence.
The historical knowledge you feel dread locking
Like the roots of an ancient tree
Will lead you to the cultural holiday of Kwanzaa.

Established in 1966 by Professor of Africana studies, Dr. Maulana Karenga. Kwanzaa was born from the ceremonial “First Fruits Harvests”
Ancient African Nations celebrated as “Matunda Ya Kwanzaa.”
Cultivated and embraced amongst the 1966 Black Freedom movements, Kwanzaa nurtures the importance of history, family, education and community.
Kwanzaa is celebrated worldwide by millions
Of politically diverse African Americans,
Socioeconomically diverse Pan Africans,
Culturally diverse Africans living on the ancestral continent
And other African descendants within numerous religions.

Every year, from December 26th - January 1st
Kwanzaa embraces our global family
Within its Kikombe Cha Umoja (it’s ceremonial unity cup).
Nurturing our souls with the intellectual riches of Ancient African cultures
That birthed and guided the beginning foundations of human knowledge.
We continue to experience and share these gifts of wisdom
As we observe The Nguzo Saba, The Seven Principles of Kwanzaa.

On the first day of Kwanzaa
I light the flame of the ceremonial black candle of Umoja (Unity).
The flaming ceremonial black candle illustrates
The brilliance and beauty within every shade of brown and black skin.
Honoring the endurance of Unity demonstrated by our people
Who learn of their internal selves
And inspire our domestic and international families
To do the same.

I will inquire the Earth for remarkable African paintings, sculptures and photographs
And consult with the colorful Earth sky
To receive the African Fabrics we will decorate
Our bodies and homes with during this Kwanzaa celebration.
On the second, third and fourth days of Kwanzaa
We will ignite the flames of three roaring, raging red ceremonial candles.
In acknowledgement of our people’s agony inflicted history
And struggle immersed current day lives.

Within the resilient magnificence of Kwanzaa, candles symbolic of pain
Become candles of powerful healing.
In recognition of the second principle Kujichagulia (self determination),
The third principle Ujima (collective work and responsibility)
And the fourth principle Ujamaa (cooperative economics).
Within the resilient magnificence of Kwanzaa
On the fifth, sixth and seventh days of Kwanzaa
I will ignite three green, majestic candles of prolific wisdom
Reflecting the fifth principle of Nia (purpose),
The sixth principle of Kuumba (creativity)
And the seventh principle of Imani (faith).

In celebration of Kwanzaa
We light these momentous seven candles
Of dignified black, prolific greens and rejoicing reds.
In preservation of our families, communities and nations
We light these momentous seven candles in preservation
Of the Beautiful Wisdom of Kwanzaa.
COLD

Just enough coins for a bowl of soup
And a ride to Brooklyn,
To nurse the long cold and broke nights
Of winter
Huddled together with you.

Huddled together,
Poor bodies
That can’t afford much but each other’s skin
In this
The Season of White Death.

Both beautiful and so hard to bear
If I didn’t divide her and digest her in little moments:
Warm bread and butter, a stick of incense,
A red blanket to cherish,
A cuddling cat.

Little moments and objects that
Make each 24 hours
A little easier, survivable,
Huddled together with you.
Hibernating souls
Until the hammer-fisted chill opens
And falls away,
Leaving behind only the sun
And air that does not hurt.
We the people love history.
We read what we believe to be facts.
Why history?
To appreciate the freedoms that we have today?
To remember what they fought for?
To be proud of “who” we are?
But why?

Why are we repeating history?
Haven’t we learned from our past?
Was, is not history what we learned as a sign of prevention?
Why?
Why is it that I have to stand and recite quotes from people
That are dead
That made change to our country?
Why is it that we have people outside saying
We need change,
When there are people that we put in power
Watching us and telling us to wait.

What is there to wait?
Time was given and action has not taken place.
Why?
Because we live in a country where history loves repeating itself

I can tell you today
That “I Had A Dream”
I can tell you today
“Ballots or Bullets”
I can tell you today
“Four score and seven years ago.”
But I will not.
Why?
Because we all know our history.
If there is no change in our history
I would be next amongst the dead
Because that is how History repeats itself.
If I had magic hands
I’d reach down to the depths of your soul and release
Every ounce of evil imbedded by this cruel cruel world.
I’d pull out every hurt,
Pull out every pain you endured, any resentment you may have …
If I had magic hands…
I’d build mountains you can climb,
So you’d feel accomplished, and proud.
Oh, I imagine you smiling from ear to ear that perfect smile of yours.
If I had magic hands.

If I had magic hands
I’d lay my thumbs over your eyes
And then your eyes would only see the beauty in this world,
And you won’t have to experience all the hatred, prejudice, or wrongful bias.

If I had magic hands
Oh, I would put them over your heart and shield it
From those boys who know not what I’ve created,
Shield your heart from those who only see
What’s on your surface and not the incredible
Little girl inside who turned into this brave young woman!
Who once thought as a little girl,
“Oh ONE DAY I’m GONNA MAKE IT!”
And then MADE IT!
If I had magic hands …

If I had magic hands
I’d build the world around you, so this way
There’ll be no cracks you can trip on,
No mother you’d miss, no father on drugs,
No one to abuse you,
No friends who envy you,
No brothers to annoy you...
::chuckles::
Well… perhaps we’ll keep your brothers
Because one day you’ll see –
Maybe I had magic hands …
I’ll always know you’re safe,
If I had magic hands.
Love you Baby Girl!!!
This spring, the participants in Hostos’ Women’s History Month essay contest wrote about Shirley Chisholm on the 30th anniversary of her historic run for President of the United States. Below are the winning essays. Enjoy!

KAISHA SCHWEGLER – FIRST PLACE

Women must stand up and unite for equal rights, together to end the discrimination of women, particular in the work force. In Shirley Chisholm’s “Women and their Liberation,” she speaks of this exact discrimination. Ms. Chisholm says women must wake up and unite to free themselves of this stigma and fight for equal rights. American women could have a great positive impact in politics for example. To educate women to realize there is no difference between men and women, we are all equally human. In this piece “Women and their Liberation” she speaks of equal rights for women and men. I would like to discuss this idea further and here is why.

“The law cannot do the major part of the job of winning equality for women,” says Chisholm. Women as a whole group must unite and challenge the inequality of women and men. This is a form of discrimination and stereotype. Women have believed that they are inferior to men because of the way women think, speak and act. Women think emotionally, speak soft or tender, and act subordinate. With inspirational women like Shirley Chisholm, this belief is proven inaccurate. In another piece by Chisholm titled “Unbossed and Unbought,” she describes how she was an inspiration to women. She was the first African-American woman to be elected into Congress. Ms. Chisholm spoke of obstacles she had to endure and overcome being a women in her position in Congress, where it was ninety percent male. In the piece “Women and their Liberation,” Chisholm encourages women to use their natural abilities, the same abilities that a man may have. She speaks about politics in particular. She says it could be what the nation needs. Women see issues differently than men; women see issues in a more moral way. There are many feminist activist groups fighting for women’s rights. With so few women in Congress, it is a challenge to try to equalize and rid the stereotypes in society.

Shirley Chisholm quotes activist Robin Morgan: “Women are not inherently passive or peaceful. We’re not inherently anything but human. And like every other oppressed people rising up today, we’re out for our freedom by any means necessary.” By this quote Ms. Chisholm is speaking about this stereotype against women. As humans we were all born equal. In my experience of riding the NYC subways, I have seen numerous pictures in advertisements regarding equality in employment for men and women. For example, one advertisement was opportunities in construction work and in the picture was a man and woman with construction gear on. Another was an auto mechanic school and a picture of a man and woman working under a hood of a car. In my mind,
viewing these two advertisements my thought on both was why would those women want to get dirty and lift heavy things? This is the exact stigma that Ms. Chisholm and women’s activists are describing. I felt at that moment that a women could not work in those environments, for many reasons. Some of those reasons are dirt, sweating, heavy lifting and being masculine.

If American women do not diminish this stereotype, especially against ourselves, there will never be full liberation. Women have to work at their freedom with a focus on political stance. Ms. Chisholm is a great example of a woman who overcame stigmas and obstacles throughout her career. More women must extend themselves to prove we are not inferior, too emotional or unstable. There are many qualities of a woman that are overseen, for example leadership, independence, logical thinking and morals. In American society, there should be a balance. Maybe this has been the issue for many years, especially in politics. As Shirley Chisholm would say, “It could be the salvation of our nation.”
In “Women and their Liberation,” by Shirley Chisholm, it is stated that women should step forward and show that they are not inferior to anyone, regardless of their race or gender. Chisholm believed that women should showcase their emotional stability, leadership qualities and intellect in order to free themselves from the harsh stereotypes of her time. She furthermore stated that women had the ability to fight the odds and become more involved in politics. This she thought, could in turn bring forth a more dramatic change for gender equality, and also the recognition of women’s work in our country.

In the article Chisholm stated that, “if a woman has ability, stamina, organizational skills and a knowledge of the issues, she can win public office.” I believe that these qualities can indeed bring forth success as a woman. I have seen this while I attended college, back in my homeland, Jamaica. While in my first year of college there, I decided to run for a position on the students’ union council. I was constantly told that I could not win the position as I was a female and that traditionally, students usually voted for males because they were less emotional. They claimed that males produced better results for students, because they did not let their emotions affect their work. I was also told that as a first year student, I did not know the issues that affected the students. With hard work, determination and stamina, as Chisholm said is needed, I did my research about common academic problems which students faced. I also found time to visit the different faculties within the school and spoke one on one with students, hearing their concerns. In the end, I earned the trust of my fellow students and was elected the winner for the position. By doing so, I also showed many that it was indeed possible for a woman to excel in any role she desires.

Chisholm further went on to state that, “women are not inherently passive or peaceful,” and “were out for our freedom by any means necessary.” Again I have seen this back in my home country where women have had to use their voice, education and leadership qualities to earn respect and equality, primarily in the political field. One example of this is the fact that Jamaica now has its first female Prime Minister. There are also now in Jamaica, more women than ever who hold seats as members of parliament. Though many women do not even know her, Chisholm has paved the way for them. She did this by being one of the first women to ever run for the most power political office in the world, especially at the time where racism and gender discrimination was at an all time high.

In conclusion, I believe that all women are as equal as men, and that we have the ability to accomplish whatever we want to. Many women such as Chisholm have made significant marks on the American society and also internationally. These are just a few of the many proofs, that we are not inferior to anyone.
In the passage “women and their liberation” by Shirley Chisholm, she discusses her views on women’s liberation. Shirley Chisholm makes some very strong points in this passage. She express that more women should be in politics.

Shirley Chisholm feels, that women believe n the male fiction, and the believe they are too emotional. Shirley Chisholm, feels, if women begin to be more positive then they can become stronger. Chisholm states “we must reject not only the stereotypes that others have of us, but also those we have of ourselves and others”. If women begin to believe in themselves, and not the stereotypes of men and other people they will be better women. Chisholm also states, “Working toward our own freedom, we can help others work free from the traps of their own stereotypes.” She feels if woman become free, and do things for themselves, then they can help someone who wants to be free.

Shirley Chisholm also feel more women should be in politics. Things would be different, and perhaps better if woman were involved. They can take more of a sensitive approach toward things. Shirley Chisholm states “if there were more women in politics, it would be possible to start cleaning up”, Chisholm thinks women would be a good benefit to the government. Women can help the principle and moral purposes of the government.

In many ways I agree with Shirley Chisholm and her ideas of rejecting stereotypes and becoming part of politics. “We must reject not only the stereotypes that others have of us, but also those we have of ourselves and others. If women start to believe in themselves, they can be more successful. By believing in themselves, they can achieve many goals. Shirley Chisholm didn’t listen to the stereotypes; she was able to be very successful in life.

I personally never thought I would finish high school. Being an African-American female, growing up in the lower parts of society you are face with many obstacles and stereotypes. Being able to finish high school and move on to college made me feel very good about myself. Where I’m from not many kids my age are in college, some haven’t even finished high school.
People shouldn’t let the stereotypes that are put up against them, stop them from achieving their goals. Shirley Chisholm believe in herself and others and was very successful. With a positive attitude and believing in yourself, you can be very successful in life.
Welcome to my world,
A world where everybody is accepted,
Everybody has a place,
A world where you can be,
A world where you’ll feel free.
Welcome to my world,
Welcome to the happiness,
To the joy,
To the life,
To the hope.
Welcome to my world
Where it doesn’t matter the color of your skin,
Where your thoughts have value,
And many languages can be spoken;
Where love and respect exist,
Where hate is not welcomed.

People may say that I am a dreamer,
But that doesn’t bother me
Because dreamers believe in change,
Dreamers think everything is possible,
Dreamers don’t give up
And following their dreams
They believe in a new start.

I invite you to be part of my world,
This dreamed world that may be so real,
But I need the help of many friends,
Friends like you,
Friends who believe in dreams as I do.
You and me can do it together.

If you want, I want too.
Ask others to join us,
Ask others to work with us.
Together my friend we can do it,
Together my friend we can achieve it,
Together my friend we can have a better world
Where murder, bullying, discrimination, war...
Will be eradicated forever my friend.
Together we can make real this dream,
Only I need some help,
Because I cannot do it alone.

Thank you my friend
For being a dreamer as I am.
I love you, I love you.
I get no reply,
How long can you ignore me?
Can you see what a smile hides?

Each day that passes,
I wonder why
If time is up, why do I continue to live a lie?

Are you that blind, this is all a ruse?
There’s a difference between truth
And what a smile hides.
It’s been ten years,
I’ve put time in.
If I go astray is that a sin?
Still young and learning, trying my best,
But hormones are yearning, and
You seem to make living life a test.

How difficult can it be for you to give
As much as I have, and continue to lie?
Your time is up honey.
Make no excuses.
I’m due for an upgrade, so I wish you good luck and deuces.

Feelings may suck, and the bitterness long lingers,
But I can’t keep turning down possible winners.
Life is lived only once I told you,
So hit the road running and don’t let the heat scold you.
It’s time for me to move on and be a new bride,
Instead of leading a bullshit life and acting astride.
I can no longer deal with the after thoughts of what a smile hides!
Her stature vast in grandeur, she stands out,
She is a distant universe all her own
Like a precious sculpture made of bronze,
Tanned skin yet radiant as the October sun

Close to me, yet far away, the Star I admire
Never reticent, always full of jovial gladness
And her Caribbean sensual aroma she perspires
Intoxicates all my senses with madness

Yet for all my sorrows and misfortunes
My feelings for her unreciprocated remain
I will to adore her beyond our mortal selves
Even if she never feels the same.
Have you ever met a man who raised his children alone?
Who worked his fingers to the bone?
Who cooked dinner each and every night?
Who made sure his children never went without lights?
Who provided his children with a good home?
Who never let them feel lost and alone?
Who never forgot Valentine's Day, Christmas, and Birthdays?

Who held his child's hand at school on those first days?
Who packed school snacks and lunches?
Who never let up on discipline or pulled any punches?
Who went to school for every open house?
Who ironed every shirt and wrinkled blouse?
Who did the laundry and wiped runny noses?
Who taught his kids that life wasn't all roses?
Who played basketball and washed the car?
Who never let his children go off too far?
Who went to work each and every day?
Who struggled and never cared what others had to say?
Who checked homework each and every night?
Whose presence was felt even when out of sight?

Who supported his kids through thick and thin?
Even when their lives were full of turmoil and sin?
Who gives his kids advice and never stops to judge?
Who offers them support when they're too stubborn to budge?
Who continues to help his kids up to this very day?
And never expects a cent from them in pay?
Who keeps his granddaughter during summer vacation?
Who continues to spark her wild imagination?
Who sends her vitamins, dolls, cookies, and all kinds of treats?
And performs all sorts of breathtaking feats?
This list could go on and on and on.
If I could sing I would describe him in song!
In any case, if you ever met this man,
You too would become a lifelong fan,
You would now be proud and able to say,
“I never met a real father until that glorious day!”
Forced down a road with no hands to walk with
Fist tight like the hand of a locksmith
But the clock’s out for me, no time for me
Like a candle in the wind, no light for it
I see a light of memories, or is it deja-vu

It’s a little dim, visions a bit vague
But I’m trying to get a clue
Of where I am
And why these people cry

Flooding running out their eyes, afraid.
Like cats do dogs, untamed.
Blouses, and slacks shimmer
The floor glistens and eye water falls
Drown my feet
Why do they cry?

I’m in a church now, and I know that lady preaching!
I remember this place!
Look at mom and dad!
My little brother!
He’s crying too?
What’s going on, is it me again?

An open casket by the side of the alter
No, it can’t be!!!
It’s not me, I’m not gone!

I should peer in but I fear to see what’s within
And my fist opens
I’m on my knees trying to make a final plea
“Even Cancer couldn’t take away his beautiful soul”
I hear a voice say...
Then I hear another come and many more kept coming
“He always made me smile”
“He never had a frown, even though he should”

It made my soul smile that I had such files in the hearts of many
The coldness I had felt from the presence of the tears
Were now warm, washing off my fears
As they covered my casket, and shimmered as Gold
My open hands then grasped by angels
And my casket hands, said goodbye
As departing souls embraced them
And then my spirit faded
To the Golden streets of heaven
And voices from behind collapsed into my rest
Like the shadow hidden under the sun
Never forgotten.

*In Loving Memory of my friend and brother Fritz Angel Kersaint, The legendary Super Sayan. Taken from us by Cancer 10-15-2011 But he took our hearts with him.*