¡ESCRIBA! ¡WRITE!

A BI-LINGUAL JOURNAL OF STUDENT ART AND WRITING

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A CAT’S MEOW PRODUCTION


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We proudly present the 11th issue of ¡Escriba! Write! We always welcome submissions from all Hostos students for our next issue. At any time, you can submit writing or artwork via our Escriba webpages. We welcome any kind of writing, and encourage submissions in any language, to reflect the diversity and multilingualism of our Hostos student body.

This year the Hostos Library and ¡Escriba! Write! honored outstanding writing and artwork of six students at the Hostos Convocation in May. Their work appears in this issue. The awardees are: George Alvarenga, Arkady Grunin and Joseph Kosseh for their writing and Ebenezer Arthur, Guadalupe Galindo and Stephanie Pimentel for their art. In addition, Escriba’s editors partnered this spring with the Hostos Art Club, which organized a student art contest. Besides being on the judges’ panel, we proudly publish the winning artists: Bryan Chalas, Ashley Ferrera, Stephanie Pimentel and Couly Traere. We are proud to highlight even more winners who appear in this issue. Leonardo Garcia’s essay on backscatter airport scanners won the New York State Society of Radiological Technologists (NYSSRT) award for best essay! And Sabenny Madrigal’s essay about her work with the Trevor Project won the Hostos Women’ and Gender Studies 2013 Student Activist award. We’re also excited that we are able to publish the five winners of the Women’s History Month essay contest. This year, essays from students at every level of the English program were included. The winners are: Ellyd Gonzalez, Eddine Baret, Inez Gallon, Nare Kun and Sandra Joseph and we hope you enjoy their excellent writing, and their personal connections to the subjects of their essays.

We have so many other wonderful essays and poetry in this issue that you will read and enjoy. Check out Jenie Infante and Nadica Maitland’s poem “Exquisite Collaboration,” or Fausto Melo Morillo’s thoughtful reflection, “El Camino Del Alumno.” Mr. Morillo graduates this semester and we wish him all the best in the next phase of his life. We also publish Hector Feliz’ prose poem “La Soledad Acompañando una Isla” in Spanish and English, and Marco Sanchez’ personal narrative “Should I Go,” which describes his difficult decision to leave his family in the Dominican Republic to live in New York City. Adelyn Castro’s “Celebrating Earth Day, Because A Good Planet Is Hard To Find” is fun and educational to read, laid out as a newsletter, including photos of students participating in this year’s Earth Day.

Our students are no less impressive in their ability to communicate through a visual medium. Scenes from an urban lifestyle are a dominant theme this year. Jessica Emiliano utilizes a palette of dark colors to depict a bridge and a darkening city sky in her work “Final City” while Jordan Gonzalez’s “Train” pays tribute to the “1” subway train and MTA slogans. Award-winner
Ebenezer Arthur captures a young woman hurrying along a city sidewalk, her hand held up defensively as if she is too busy to stop, in “Street Scene.” The loneliness of travel can be felt in enigmatic photos such as “Isolation” by Margarito Balbuena. Here, our students express their idiosyncratic views of city life. They are no less talented when it comes to the natural world, from Coulley Traore’s “Native View” to the “Tranquil Landscape” of Raisa Ruiz’s imagination. This contrast is aptly captured by Stephanie Pimental’s award-winning “City vs. Nature” in which the city is seen as a modern-day “Oz”, radiating an unfathomable glow.

Also represented was the art of collage and an ironic juxtaposition of images, with German Santos’ Chorus of Birds paying ode to “magic realism.” The superimposed images of Ashley Ferrera’s “Self Portrait” also challenges the viewer to delve deeper into the nature of reality. A vibrant use of color characteristic of folk art imbue a timeless quality to Guadalupe Galindo’s “Have a Bloody Tea” and “Kary Mar.” Lastly, our immensely talented Lee Jacob Hilado continues to awe viewers with his depth of detail in “Different Eras” which is featured on our cover. All testify to the high caliber of work we have had the pleasure of publishing in Escriba!

We are grateful, as always, for the support of Hostos faculty in helping their students connect with Escriba! and submit their work. Thank you to professors Jerilyn Fisher, Flor Henderson, Charles Drago, Madeleine Stein, Leigh Phillips, Tere Justicia and Rod Jackman for their undying support of their students and our student journal. The impressive range of artists who appear in our pages would not be made possible without the support of Ian Scott, Rees Shad, Catherine Lewis, Lee Jacob Hilado and the Student Art Club.

And finally, a big thank you to our Chief Librarian, Madeline Ford, for all her help and support and to Prof. Catherine Lewis who prepares the manuscript for our printer. Prof. Lewis has been essential in the success of our publication. She will also be adding this issue to our online webpage after it has been completed. The URL is http://oit.hostos.cuny.edu/escriba/.
JOSEPH KOSSEH

THE COLOR OF MY SKIN

Let me tell you about my Skin
My Black Skin
My “what makes me ugly” skin
My “skin so dark, I need a flashlight in the sun to see it’s skin” skin
My “Damn! Not another movie in class ‘cause I’ll go missing” skin.

My flesh, protection,
My high keratin protein skin
My “Damn, Black isn’t just beautiful -
It also keeps me safe from skin cancer” skin

Are you ready for my story?
Or should I still introduce myself? See,
My Skin is the skin of the outside slave
My skin
Sings songs like “Wade in the water,”
Although mud is the only thing to hide us, cause water’s too clear.

My skin!
My skin is coffee black;
It keeps me up at night or during the day

My Skin is a sweet-tooth dark chocolate brown
My skin is a painter’s masterpiece, the mixture of all colors
My skin is not white or pale,
My Skin is not easily bruised, though it takes a lot of hits:
Verbal, Emotional, Physical, Spiritual
And Economically.
My Skin!
It runs frantically for glass-ceiling jobs.

The color of my Skin?
Well! It’s Dark Brown, not black.
It feels smooth because it’s self-lubricating
My Skin works hard but it’s gentle
My Skin doesn’t have too much hair
Because it’s already heir to the brown dirt
It’s heir to a natural life
No need to chase the sun for a tan

My Skin shouts to Black men and White men, Red men with Brown men and Yellow
My skin is layers of your skin because it has more Keratin
My skin is My Skin
Not ugly, not nasty
My skin is beautiful; it doesn’t need to turn red for you to see its smiling
My skin ages well: twenty three and I still look young like seventeen

My SKIN!
The color of my skin is this:
Simply dark brown,
I don’t mind black because black is
The power of the night the absence of the light
My skin is beautiful and strong
It looks royal with every other color
Black is Beautiful

But My SKIN!!!
The Color of My Skin is Brown still
And My Skin is me
So let me tell you who I am.
MY SKIN
Editor’s Note: We had to carefully create excerpts from Mr. Alvarenga’s journal entries due to space considerations. The writer is a cast member of “Rough Magic,” a play directed by Prof. Angel Morales which opened recently at Hostos Community College and has been chosen for performance this summer at the world-renowned Fringe Festival in Edinburgh, Scotland. We think these journal entries show that Mr. Alvarenga is going to be well up to the task of his role.

Journal Entry #1: First day of acting class. The following is a response to a few questions Professor Morales wrote on the chalkboard.

What little knowledge I had of theater was as a spectator, and my deep admiration for the performing arts. In my theater class I’m learning that one skill an actor needs is to be comfortable in his skin. Actors need to know who they are, because if they doubt themselves for a moment, the audience will see right through them. But by far the most valuable skill an actor needs is empathy because it allows the actors to clothe themselves in the character they are portraying.

I believe this theater class will help in my career and in life by allowing me to have the courage to be myself and to have empathy – to be a person that not only understands the suffering of others but feels the emotions of those who are bearing them.

“Life is like a play: it’s not the length, but the excellence of the acting that matters.” Our teacher gave us this quote by Seneca, the ancient Greek philosopher and dramatist. It inspires thoughtful reflection, on the matter of a person’s existence and the greatness of it. Life is a series of events; these events are scenes that comprise the play that is your life. Your life could end at forty years on this earth and if it was a life infused with inexhaustible bliss, then how long you live is irrelevant. Seneca's words have remained lodged in my mind; the reason is that the excellence of our living – or in his words, acting - is what gauges our performance on stage.

Journal Entry # 2: The professors made the students go through a series of activities testing our creativity, self-control and awareness of our surroundings.

At the beginning of class we were instructed to face the window, to focus on ourselves, close our eyes and release our inhibitions from the incessant thoughts of how we may be perceived. I enjoyed this exercise because when I honed in, the exterior bodies around me were an afterthought. I alone must first know my body; it is what others see, so it only makes sense to know precisely what others are seeing. In this moment of self-discovery I realized that I cannot control what others are thinking so why bother with thinking about it?
There are a few things I noticed about myself when I joined in the activities. For example, the professor gave us a scenario where we, the ensemble, were in a restaurant. When he gave us this first scene, some of us ran to grab chairs at tables and at one table there were too many people. On one side of this overcrowded table sat three other people with black totes in front of them. I told one of my classmates to be a bartender reaching for drinks behind the bar. There were also the hostess and a customer waiting to be seated. I was a waiter taking the order of the overcrowded table. The objective of this exercise was for the person that was waiting for a table to come into the room and figure out where the “frozen moment” in time took place.

The skills that I need to develop so that I can work well with others are that I must not be afraid of having to improvise in a scene. When I was given an idea to play off of with another person, I felt my heart racing. This must be the adrenaline rush actors talk about. My job is to control my adrenaline so that it may find its way into the sea of equilibrium. If every moment of our day consists of these jolts of palpitations, then the vanquished ones are the ones less listened to. To project and enunciate are also valuable skills that I must develop. People need to hear you and if your voice is inaudible than so are you.

Journal Entry# 4: We were instructed to stand in two lines facing one another. The professor then gave each student a situation they had to react to. The task was for the person standing across you to mirror your movements exactly the same.

My mirror image was to react to the death of someone close to me. It was not so difficult to recreate. I essentially just thought of the word “melancholy” – or, not so much the word, but the feeling people get after finding out someone they knew very well died. I thought of desolation and despair sinking in through my nostrils, my eyes, my head and let it take over me. In such a state of vulnerability, I felt impotent and I believe that when someone is in that particular condition it does not matter who you are; death will grasp you with a methodical ferocity so that you know how powerless you actually are.

In this mirroring exercise, the ideas best expressed without words were those that were universal. For instance, doubts about getting married. The groom looks at himself in the mirror and moves his head in an ominous fashion from left to right indicating he does not think he should go through with it. When someone is gleaming with delight as he opens a Christmas present. Or, my instruction to portray the melancholy one feels at the death of someone they knew. These are some of the ideas that link humanity by an invisible thread and that is why they can be expressed with minimal effort and the audience is connected by the act of performing it.

I was trembling and I could not control the shaking afterwards. In that moment when I looked into my partner’s eyes, I did not really see her, I saw myself. A person who has for this moment drowned in the despair of death’s ocean does not have the ability to rise to the surface for a gulp of air. When I was finally done with the mirror image, tears were rising and I suddenly had the urge to cry. You could say that for that moment in time, I lost someone
dear to me and any attempt for me to reconcile that reality was futile. I tried ferociously to keep my composure and allow the next group of people to take their turn. Imagine me in the middle of the classroom crying profusely and when someone asks; why are you crying? I would tell them, I don’t know why I’m crying!

**Journal Entry # 5:** The assignment was to make an in depth analysis of ourselves and how we perceive what we see. We had to answer a series of questions of how we might think others saw us and how we viewed our physical bodies.

I am a hermit. Others perceive an imprisoned soul and they might not be wrong. Physically, I am of average height, I suppose. My stature could be larger because I do notice that I hunch when I walk, so the impression that people have of me when they see me walking down the streets of the city or the vestibules of countless buildings is that of a person who is down on his luck. But at other times, when I have my music in my ears, I am elevated to a celestial realm and perhaps people see that as well. I know that I have an excess of skin around my abdominals but I am not that self-conscious when it comes to that. Yes, I do cover myself so I don’t expose my “love handles.” I am an active person but not a devoted ascetic to the altar of gymnasium. I frequent certain establishments when I feel I am not as firm as I would like to be. There are certain parts of the body that should be firm so that when a woman lays her hands upon them, she knows she’s holding onto a person of the opposite sex.

My flexibility far exceeds that of most men. The reason I am limber can be credited to the fact that I am double-jointed and can contort my body to seemingly unbelievable positions. The one quality of mine I do wish to improve on would have to be my gracefulness. A person with impeccable grace demands that anyone who gazes upon them take notice. Grace is the personification of the soul.

The perception that others have of me is a fallacy cloaking the truth. When people see the flesh that dresses me they see a timid, reclusive and at times a vessel with a predestined voyage but who has not yet set sail. They see silence and assume desolation, they see a phlegmatic person and presume an abyss, but these suppositions without empirical evidence cannot be justified.

The occupation that I have miserably attempted to suppress is of being true to my nature. I have discovered that for a man to be whole, he must not be afraid of his feminine side, and yet still have the courage to be a man. Man in his most splendid and raw form is a paradox and when he strays from his nature, he strays from himself.

I am discovering that the fundamental qualities that actors must possess are moving with a purpose, and knowing themselves. Actors work from their center and in this center they derive all that is the actor in all his facets. The actor may be portraying a duke or a vagrant but he cannot clothe himself with these characters if he does not know what lies beneath the clothing. Actors must bare themselves so that they can dress themselves in their character.
Journal Entry # 11: We were asked to create a character biography related to the monologue we would be performing in class. The monologue is about a 22 year old named Michael who confronts his uncle Bob, who sexually molested him. We had to write from our character’s point of view. The following is the back-story I created for the monologue.

I am Michael. I am 22 years old and I am going to confront the man that has tormented me since childhood; the man who is responsible for the dysfunctional relationships I have had throughout my life. My “dear” uncle Bob. He was my father’s younger brother.

When I was 8 years old, my parents used to leave me with uncle Bob because they both worked late and I needed adult supervision. I used to love going to uncle Bob’s house. He would have the greatest toys to play with, in part because he bought his own children the finest toys around. There was even a pinball machine he kept in the basement. The basement was a children’s wonderland. I would spend hours running around the basement, putting my hands on every new treasure I came across. My uncle Bob invited all of the other boys from the neighborhood to come and play in his basement from time to time.

The reason I enjoyed staying at my uncle Bob’s is mostly due to the fact that in my house, my parents always argued with one another. The person that would get in the way of the tornado of rage in my household would unfortunately be me. If I left the toilet seat up, my mother would stab me with her verbal barrages. My father took it upon himself to properly instruct me in the ways of manhood. For instance, I once had a genuinely dire situation because my cat dies and I was bereaved. My father’s solution was to slap me across the head and tell me to man up. Men do not cry when a cat dies. I was only a child, I was not a man.

One day when I was playing in the street with the children from the neighborhood I mistakenly threw a baseball in Mr. Brinkley’s butcher shop. I ran immediately to the store and implored to him to forgive me and promised that I’d work all summer to pay for the broken window. But to my misfortune, my father saw me and furiously walked towards me with bloodshot eyes and the face of a raging bull. He grabbed my ears like he was igniting the engine of his car and dragged me all the way home.

When we got home, he put me on my knees and grabbed a sack of rice, which he then opened and poured on the floor. He told me to sit on top of it and to put my hands against the wall. He then proceeded to his room to retrieve his whipping belt and began to strike my back repeatedly as he uttered the following: “what have I told you about playing in the middle of the streets!” He eventually got tired and stomped off to his room and slammed the door shut. I fell to the floor with uncontrollable tears flowing down my cheeks and my back burning with the incandescent flames of tyranny my father had laid on me. The ridges on my back were branded like that of a cow. I crawled to my room, sobbing in the darkness. I finally went to sleep because my tears were exhausted and I could no longer produce anymore.

I believe that is why I enjoyed going to my uncle Bob’s house. He treated me kindly and was always attentive to my needs. But one day uncle Bob told
me that he wanted to show me a new game that he had bought and asked if I wanted to try it out. Of course I did!

We both walked down the stairs to his basement where his queen-size bed was adorned with teddy bears and the sweet aroma of lavender. The quilt was ostentatious, especially in contrast to the basement itself, which struck me as a peculiarity simmered in a cloud of deception. But my instincts did not take hold of my judgment, and so my uncle’s advances ensued. My uncle told me that he was the only person in this world who loved me and that no other could comprehend my tormented soul.

He gently laid me on the bed, whispering in my ear. My shirt and pants were the first to go […. Later,) he put on his clothes with an expression on his face that would lead someone to believe that nothing out of the ordinary had occurred. As uncle Bob put on his slippers to go up the stairs, I crawled lethargically to the top of the bed, and as he walked up the stairs I stared at him for a momentary glimpse and covered myself with the infinite abyss of my solitude.

[Editor's note: We omitted portions of this graphic and emotional depiction of sexual assault but we believe the reader can still understand.]

Concluding Journal Entry: The culmination of the leap into the unchartered waters of oblivion saw itself come to fruition when I was accepted as one of the students who would act in the school’s production of “Rough Magic” by Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa. Perhaps it was the rigorous wisdom imparted by my professor but the auditioning process was not nerve-wrecking whatsoever; it was more like an endeavor which I intuitively knew was within me. The ability to interpret the words of the artist and manifest them in a living breathing character wholly distinct from myself did seem in the slightest like an unnatural progression.

Keeping a journal during the semester afforded me the luxury to truly think about who I was as a person and allowed me to analyze all of my actions, thoughts and existential inquiries that had been suffocating my consciousness. To me, literature and theater have always been inextricably bound to one another but is not until recently that I realized that what I believed to be a passion confined to the darkest realms of my mind is actually a skill that most beings that roam this planet cannot fully grasp. The art of writing is one that requires a complete rendering of the senses. I feel the need to recreate the immense universe that I inhabit words, so that the essence of my world permeates the mind of whoever looks upon my creations.

There is a quote by Ralph Waldo Emerson that awoke in me the slumbering essence of man and it is this: “Art should exhilarate, and throw down the walls of circumstance on every side, awakening in the beholder the same sense of universal relation and power which the work evinced in the artist, and its highest effect is to make new artists.” Artists seek to inspire, for their brilliance is uncovered by another being who ignites a spark within them. In art we are linked to all of mankind by an invisible thread that allows us to find ourselves, a kin to our fellow man. That is why the correlation between the written word
and theater is that both are a propagation of the soul; the latter allows spectators to embark on an odyssey of which all will have lived an eternal illustration of what it means “to be.”
THE DYNAMIC CHANGES OF THE NEW YORK JEWISH IDENTITY: AN EXAMINATION OF PAST AND PRESENT

The New York Metropolitan Jewish population has long been a dynamic concept, in terms of constantly changing statistical measures of people, residential locations, new waves of immigration and a multitude of determined identities. Since the first-ever Jewish arrival to what was New Amsterdam in 1654, Jewish New Yorkers - how they were viewed and the way they identify themselves - have always been in a form of transition (New York Places Jewish Spaces). So many factors play into this multi-faceted history; they range from the cultural development of Jewish intellectuals who were different from the initial Lower East Side generation, housing booms in Queens during the 1950s, the allure of suburban life after World War II, Mikhail Gorbachev easing immigration laws from the Soviet Union in the 1980s, to the growing of the Orthodox population in recent years. Examining different waves of immigration, kinds of Jews, parts of New York and different eras, reveals that this particular region has long been regarded as home for this group of people. Even if there is no unified identity for New York Jews, the New York metro area has long been a place for all types of Jews to thrive.

New York City plays an important role as a Jewish world city, both in the past and in the present. Since the 1890s, New York has been considered the capital of American Jewry; and since the 1940s, it has been considered the capital of the Jewish Diaspora (Lederhendler, 10). Even if Jews reside in other parts of the United States, most of them can trace back to when their ancestors passed through and lived in New York at some point (25). The first Jews to arrive in New York, which was New Amsterdam at the time, were the legendary twenty-three Sephardic refugees that fled Recife, Brazil. After they arrived on Manhattan Island, they struggled to make a life for themselves in this Dutch colony that would barely accept them. Nevertheless, by 1700, they had already established a Jewish community and a designated house of worship set to provide education and kosher meat (New York Spaces Jewish Places).

On into the late 1700s, Jewish merchants grew to be vital actors in the New York business world. Successive waves of immigration followed, and by the early 20th Century, New York became the largest Jewish city in the world (New York Spaces Jewish Places). Yet, over this complex course of history, defining Jewish identity has been a problem, as it has never been one single concept (Shapiro, 3).

In New York, and America in general, being Jewish is a matter of choice. Back in Eastern Europe, which they left behind, Jews were strictly determined as Jewish at birth. They were designated members of a legally-constituted community that had official status, though that status also allowed for discrimina-
tion and violence against them. However, in the pluralistic, opportunistic and individual-minded United States, they were granted the freedom to decide for themselves whether or not they chose to be members of the Jewish community (Dawidowicz, 63). This freedom eased up many of the formerly rigid concepts of Jewish identity.

Apart from just identity and community, Jewish immigrants were overwhelmed with other new freedoms, where they could work, study and vote at their own will (Dawidowicz, 106). Because of such novel choices, these people developed lifestyles that were simultaneously American and Jewish (Shapiro, 5). Having come over with the intentions of never going back to Europe (6), New York Jews developed new ethnic and nationalistic elements along with their religious identity (5). Many were happy to call America their home finally, as it went against the age-old stereotype of being wandering and homeless (7).

In terms of immigration waves, there was a large influx of Jews from Eastern Europe who came to New York toward the end of the 19th century, through the early 20th century. These people often settled on the Lower East Side of Manhattan, which became known as a Jewish Quarter (New York Spaces Jewish Places). Many of the immigrants had lived in small, provincial towns in Eastern Europe, and then ended up in the fast-paced urban hustle and bustle of New York (Weingrad, 3). Working long hours and crowding into tenements with their families, they eventually learned to go along with the customs of New York City, even if they were at first intimidating (Weingrad, 7).

The Lower East Side was especially active as a Jewish area; in 1915, 60% of the 320,000 members of this densely-populated immigrant neighborhood were Jewish (Krauze). Although they built synagogues for community and religion, they also actively took part in financially advancing themselves in the marketplace. While these immigrants began to first experience the New World, some of the traditionally-minded Jews criticized this growing American Jewish culture, viewing it as cultural assimilation where people would focus on material goods and wealth rather than folklore and family (Weingrad, 3). Although the Jews of the Lower East Side did not have to face the wide-scale problem of anti-Semitism like in Eastern Europe, this threat was replaced by the fear of intermarriage and assimilation (Dawidowicz, 26).

As the years passed into the middle of the 20th Century, Jewish New Yorkers moved throughout the city, and their culture and identity changed simultaneously with their locale. Though some stayed in the Lower East Side, this neighborhood was often more of a stepping-stone. After the immigrants became rooted in New York City, they moved out to form Jewish neighborhoods in Upper Manhattan, the Bronx, and Brooklyn. Because there were so many Jews concentrated in these areas, it heightened their political, economic and cultural impact on the city. They would open kosher delis, meet in cafes and discuss politics (New York Spaces Jewish Places).

Up through the mid 20th century, a Jewish intellectual subculture grew in New York City. The Jewish intellectual identity exhibited a contrast between the traditions of Jewish culture and the cosmopolitanism of Western culture.
By this point, many Jews did not feel any forced common fate with other Jews (83). These young intellectuals and artists were eager to distance themselves from many aspects of their immigrant parents. It was perceived as a way to get out of the ghetto, and to leave binding traditions; their parents had left the traditions of their life in Eastern Europe, and the younger generation was now going beyond the Jewish identity of the Lower East Side (Lenderhendler, 15). A new idea arose where these intellectuals considered their Jewish identity to be a quality of their intellect, it being demanding, austere and moral, going against the waves of commercialism (18). The Lower East Side, at this point, stood as the world of parents and grandparents, a mark of nostalgia and sentimentality (Dawidowicz, 105). This young generation went on to think critically while advancing their education. Jewish students enrolled in incredibly high rates in institutions of higher learning such as City College, New York University and Columbia University (110). In Greenwich Village and Upper Manhattan, the Jewish intellectual movement was a far stretch from the tenements and push-cart merchants that were remembered on the Lower East Side (New York Spaces Jewish Places).

After Jews moved to new parts of Manhattan, Brooklyn and the Bronx, and the Jewish intellectuals made their stance, many other parts of Greater New York City continued to gain a Jewish presence, even if it was short-lived. For instance, the borough of Queens began to emerge as an important Jewish center after the 1950s. Following the Depression and the War Years, there was a large-scale building boom that took place from 1948-1951, attracting Jews to Queens. They fled their old Manhattan, Bronx and Brooklyn locations to look for more less-central, but still urban, neighborhoods (Dawidowicz, 68). From the years 1948-1973, the neighborhood of Jackson Heights turned very Jewish, in contrary to the traditional English, Irish and German immigrants (Dawidowicz, 67). By the 1970s, however, Jews began to go to even more suburban locations, like Forest Hills and then further out to Long Island, and the population of Jackson Heights grew to be more Latin-American (Dawidowicz, 67).

Further out on the suburban frontier of the New York metropolitan region, many second-generation American Jews, along with Jewish refugees who had escaped from Nazi-dominated Europe moved to places like Great Neck, Long Island (Goldstein, 4). By the 1960s, Great Neck’s population was about half Jewish; these Jews identified as highly democratic in politics, along with being conspicuously wealthy, having established themselves a long way since the immigrant period of the Lower East Side (6). Although Great Neck was meant to be a homogenous community, where people could have more space than in the city and be free of urban issues like racial unrest (132), it went on for decades to serve as a suburban establishment that housed lingering strains of New York City Jewish culture that had originated in the Lower East Side, Brooklyn and Bronx (131).

By the 1970s, there was an influx of Sephardic Jews who changed the perception of the Jewish identity in Great Neck. A more conservative, Orthodox community formed, and they established their own day schools and syna-
gogues and closed their stores on Saturday (to go along with religious tradition) (7). Jewish population shifts in Queens and then Long Island prove that the New York Jewish identity has been fluid with a lack of a stationary location. Although a more uniform type of Jewish community can develop in a particular place, it could be changed up by different types of Jews settling within the same premises.

Even if many long-time New York Jews can exist in satellite places and trace their ancestry to Eastern Europe and the Lower East Side, new Jewish immigrants always change perceptions of Jewish identity. Over time, many Soviet Jews were pushed to the US to escape anti-Semitism and to take advantage of educational or economic opportunity (Gitelman, 55). One case that can be studied is how since 1971, over 300,000 Jews left the Soviet Union; until 1974, most of these Jewish immigrants went to Israel, but afterwards, increasing numbers have made their way to the US. (Gitelman, 55). The last major wave of Jewish immigration took place in the late 1980s after Mikhail Gorbachev, the former ruler of the Soviet Union, enacted a law that eased the process for Jews to emigrate out of the Soviet Union. Put into action in 1987, over a million Jews, who had long been eager to leave, finally departed from Soviet states; there were of 300,000 of these immigrants who came to the United States (Orleck, 5).

As many of the Soviet Jews immigrated to New York, the effects of this large-scale exodus from Eastern Europe greatly changed the concept of identity of New York Jews. Since the mid 1970s, more than half of the Jewish immigrants have chosen to stay in the New York metropolitan region (Orleck, 85). However, members of this new wave did not settle on the Lower East Side of Manhattan like in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. They flocked to established Jewish neighborhoods Brooklyn, the Bronx and Queens, where they completely transformed not only Jewish identity, but also the street life in these neighborhoods (85).

Arriving at these already-formed Jewish enclaves in the New York boroughs in the 1970s and 80s, the Soviet émigrés were met with elderly East European Jews who were once themselves immigrants from the Soviet Union. In areas like Brighton Beach, King’s Highway and Borough Park in Brooklyn, and Rego Park and Forest Hills in Queens, these Soviet immigrants came to these neighborhoods where older Jews lived who had started out at the Lower East Side, grown more successful and settled in less-central urban environments (Orleck, 86). With many noticeable cultural differences up front, these Jewish communities quickly formed strong opinions of one another (Orleck, 85). Although both the already-formed Jewish community and the immigrants harvested some historical or current notions of a need to free Soviet Jewry, the “old-timers” perceived their new neighbors as gruff and aggressive, and tended to be resentful of the welfare and other social aid that they received (86).

By the time these immigrants arrived, the neighborhoods in Brooklyn and Queens were changing already. Longtime residents would often die or move to Florida for retirement, causing the older New York Jewish culture to end or move elsewhere with it. With apartments now packed with Soviet Jewish im-
migrants, hallways that used to exhibit aromas of American-Jewish food like chicken soup or potato pancakes now tended to omit smells like Ukrainian borscht. Out on the street, Kosher delis were replaced with “international” markets selling Eastern-European products (Orleck, 86).

Brighton Beach in Brooklyn is a clear example of this post-Soviet Jewish settlement. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, many Jewish immigrants landed from Soviet republics like Ukraine and Belarus. Hebrew schools, Yiddish centers and Jewish synagogues were replaced by Russian schools of music, dance, art and gymnastics. However, by 1987, when the fourth major wave of Soviet Jewish immigration took place, many of the newcomers did not find an allure to settle there. Educated and coming from urban centers like Saint Petersburg or Moscow, they condescendingly looked down upon the “Odessan riffraff” that had washed up on the shores of Brooklyn, and took these attitudes to settle in different parts of the New York metropolitan region. These new Soviet Jewish immigrants thought of Brighton as a ghetto that exhibited Soviet attitudes that were retained from a past time. The existence of such a place formed as a type of nostalgia, like the Lower East Side had been for long-established New York Jews. It was an area that represented heritage, and could be visited for posterity and familiarity, but was not the chosen place to dwell (Orleck, 87).

There are nearly 1.1 million Jews in New York City today. Though the number of Jews in this region had been in decline for years, the Jewish population is starting to grow again. Looking into this rise of people, it again complicates the notion of Jewish identity. A large portion of this particular increase is due to the “explosive growth” of Hasidic and other Orthodox communities. This challenges a commonly-perceived stereotype that New York Jews tend to be liberal, affluent and well educated. Studies show that in the past ten years, the imagined latter type of Jew, who lives in areas like the Upper West Side of Manhattan, has lost in numbers to the Hasidic communities in Brooklyn, who are more conservative, and generally not highly educated or wealthy. Among non-Orthodox Jews, there has been a decrease in Jewish practice, such as participating in Passover Seders, or claiming that they follow a religion. Although New York’s Jewish population is still the largest in the world apart from Israel, there is a growing dichotomy between the deeply-engaged Jews and growingly un-engaged Jews (Berger). Furthermore, these two types of Jewish identity, well-educated and generally wealthy secular Jews with traditional Orthodox Jews do not go to account for everyone in the 1.1 million.

Certain parts of New York City work to house all types of overlapping Jewish identities. On Ocean Parkway in Brooklyn, one can encounter anything from former Jewish Soviet immigrants, a vibrant Jewish-Syrian community, modern Jewish Orthodox people and Azerbaijani synagogues. Over in the Park Slope neighborhood of Brooklyn, Jewish residents shop at the same stores and send their children to the same schools as their non-Jewish neighbors. Though they mainly live the same lifestyle as the others in this upper-middle class, Americanized neighborhood, many of the Jewish Park Slope residents retain their community and Jewish identity by laying claim to public spaces for Suk-
kot block parties and holding High Holiday services in the Prospect Park Pic-nic House (New York Spaces Jewish Places). Over in Manhattan, one can learn about Jewish history in the now-gentrified Lower East Side through the Lower East Side Jewish Conservancy, take a tour of the Lower East Side tenement museum, or even just watch the movie *Hester Street* and try to imagine the past.

Even though there are many complicated questions and explanations of a concrete definition of the New York Jew, only New York City can offer such simultaneous cosmopolitan and parochial elements that the Jews could have such a varied ethnic and religious presence (Lenderhendler, 13). A New York Jew can embody so many different aspects of a person, depending on what to consider. This type of person can predominately speak Yiddish, Hebrew, Russian, Georgian or English. He or she can devoutly practice the religion or not have ever read sacred texts. A New York Jew can be anything including a Bukharin in Kew Gardens, an Israeli immigrant in Manhattan, a secular law school student at Yeshiva University and a Hasidic real estate agent in Crown Heights. Though New York City and the surrounding metropolitan region have long been associated as being largely Jewish, there are so many different notions and explanations of what this means. It is likely that New York City will remain a major Jewish city for years to come, even while individual and group Jewish identities will constantly continue to change.

WORKS CITED


Earth Day 2013 fell in the middle of the week this year, and while April 22nd is the international day to celebrate our green planet, many organizations are hosting events throughout the month. In our local community, Hostos Community College hosted a series of talks, presentations and community outreach. Although many are unaware that April 22nd is Earth Day, there is an understanding that we must take care of our planet. Why do we celebrate Earth Day and why has it become an international phenomenon?

Earth Day has its origins in the 1970s. For many it is recognized as the birth of the Environmental Movement. Earth Day was started after Wisconsin Senator Gaylord Nelson became outraged as a result of the 1969 oil spill in Santa Barbara, California. The oil spill of '69 had dire consequences for the livelihood of the environment, most of which were not fully understood. Sen. Nelson was able to gather bipartisan support and created a cabinet what would gain national attention. On April 22nd, 1970, the first national Earth Day was celebrated when over 20 million people from across the nation marched in protest of the environmental atrocities that were being committed. This movement led the way to many federal institutions, which seek to protect and conserve our natural resources.

Hostos Community College has sought to continue this tradition of advocacy for our green planet. This year’s theme for Earth Day has been “Environmental Reality in the South Bronx”. The slogan for this year’s program at Hostos, Protect The Earth Today for Tomorrow’s Children, is part of the universal message of Earth Day. These celebrations spanned the entire week of April 22-29th, among the activities Hostos students and faculty participated in were, cleaning a local park, and repotting plants in the surrounding areas. The school hosted a series of seminars and student presentations that addressed various environmental concerns such as biodiversity, and water scarcity.

Among the presentations made there was one on photosynthetic sea slugs. Although all presentations were great this one stood out the most. The photosynthetic sea slug presentation was the most interesting and compelling as the students informed me in great detail about this creature and provided me with interesting facts. For instance it only needs to feed once and reproduces asexually. The students of Biology 120, Gladys Obenewa, Jaehyun Jun, Tanjia Islam, and Christina Torre were very well informed and provided answers to my many follow up questions. They stated that even though the topics were assigned to them they felt they had learned a lot about their topic. When asked why it would be important to study them they were able to explain the importance of studying the ecosystem.
Another student group that seemed to discuss a subject we are all too familiar with without understanding its implications, presented on Genetically Modified Foods and its impact on Biodiversity. This group presented me with a lot of information about the origins of crop modification and the necessary evil it has become in order to meet the high demands of subsistence that exist. Although, they seemed to understand the subject and its origins, they seemed less enthused to discuss such a common subject. This presentation caught my attention as a fellow student in another Biology class in which we are studying plants and their societal importance, I have learned that crop modification is indeed needed although perhaps not done to the extent in which it is being conducted. This group of students understood these implications and also voiced their fears as well as their support.

If I had to submit one of the many groups to be reviewed as a winner, I would pick them all. As all students put forth their best effort and expressed a genuine concern when discussing their topics. It is important to note the message the school community is trying to impart on those who frequent our
premises. We have to assume responsibility for the planet we live in; it is not sufficient to recycle and to attend these kinds of events. We must realize we are a part of a larger eco-system in which our actions no matter how small we may think they are have a substantial impact on our livelihood, and survival as a species. Nature is resilient and adapts to our needs but we should respect nature enough to accommodate ourselves within it.

The celebrations in honor of Earth Day were a great success, overall it did what it set out to do: inform, and bring consciousness to environmental issues, which often times we forget. It was well organized, and evenly spread out to allow the community time to visit. Among the highlights of the week were watching a video on fish and the coral reef, which was set up in the hallway of the A building. Students were welcomed to sit and watch this video. Many students who were walking by would sit for a few moments and then leave. There are few events or places where Hostos students are able to come together and share such a space. I do not have any recommendations for the organizers next year, other than we should perhaps have a series of seminars throughout the month of April to discuss related topics.
In light of September 11, 2001, and other global events, the cost of keeping the United States (U.S.) safe has come at a heavy price. By signing the USA PATRIOT Act (United and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism), the U.S. government has given law enforcement increased resources to fight terrorism. Agencies such as the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and Transportation Security Administration (TSA) were created to deploy multiple levels of protection. These newly appointed security agencies accelerated the reconstruction of airport screening technology with the launch of Passive Millimeter Wave Scanners and Backscatter X-ray Technologies (BSX). Currently, there are two types of full body scanners being used at airports according to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). One uses passive millimeter wave technology and the other uses X-ray backscatter (BSX). While the passive millimeter wave scanners pose no known adverse health effects according to the FDA, the BSX scanners use low energy X-ray—a form of ionizing radiation that may cause injury to normal biologic tissue as it passes through matter.

The introduction of BSX technology in particular, has brought about concerns amongst experts. The DHS and TSA’s objective is security, and they are primarily concerned with stopping another catastrophic day on American soil; however, a panel of concerned experts—scientists, physicists, and professors—say that the use of this new equipment has not been thoroughly tested. BSX uses ionizing radiation and may increase the risk of harm to the 800 million travelers that use U.S. airports yearly. When dealing with ionizing radiation, people are primarily concerned with the increased risk of developing malignancies, such as leukemia or cancer—to name a few. Certain questions need to be asked and answered so that we may know if the BSX technology device is safe to use on people, especially since it is the first medium of security at most U.S. airports. By not detailing the health dangers and lack of awareness encompassing the use of this device; the balance between safety and health has shifted. BSX is the topic of concern in this essay which contends the controversial practice of using BSX scanners. The information and details within the context provided is interpreted by scientists, physicists, professors, and experts; all of whom are concerned with the possible increase of malignant diseases caused to the public because of unnecessary exposure to ionizing radiation. Based on this research, I ultimately conclude that BSX scanners are dangerous and should be subject to more testing and stricter safety regulations.

Ben Mutzabaugh, a journalist for USA Today, addressed this issue in his article, “Full-body scanners could pose cancer risk at airports, U.S. scientists
In the article, he cites that several international media outlets are currently reporting that there may be a possible cancer risk from exposing the public to BSX scanners due to airport security officials increased dependence on the full-body scanners to screen passengers. The article suggests that security officials insist the machines pose little risk to travelers, while Dr. David Brenner, chief of the center for radiological research at New York’s Columbia University states that an individual’s risk is very low; but the potentially large number of fliers going through BSX scanners could amplify that risk. The article quotes David Agard, a University of California biochemist as saying, “Ionizing radiation such as the X-rays used in these scanners have the potential to induce chromosome damage, and that can lead to cancer” (Mutzabaugh, 2010).

While respectable agencies such as the International Commission on Radiological Protection (ICRP) and the National Council on Radiation Protection (NCRP) employ experts and scientists who are well informed regarding the dangers of ionizing radiation, it is security officials from the FDA and TSA that consistently allay the health concerns of the people. This leads one to question the reasoning and politics behind the claims of ‘safe security.’ The FDA and TSA claim that it would take thousands of trips through the scanners to equal the dose from one X-ray scan in a hospital. A mere comparison does not remove the possible health risk associated with ionizing radiation from a BSX scanner—no matter how minimal the exposure may be. Furthermore, the beam concentrates the dose to the skin—one of the most radiosensitive organs of the human body: unlike an X-ray which is designed to pass through the whole body. David Agard—a biochemist from the University of California echoes this concern, “While the dose would be safe if it were distributed throughout the volume of the entire body, the dose to the skin may be 20 times higher and dangerously high” (Mutzabaugh, 2010). Thus, the voice of scientists is ignored by the DHS and TSA, as their priority is security.

However, safety is a difficult concept that is context-specific as the article “Are full-body airport scanners safe?” in the Harvard Health Letter implies. Dr. Rebecca Smith-Bindman, a professor of radiology, epidemiology, and biostatistics at the UC San Francisco, and Pratik Mehta, an undergraduate at UC Berkeley, established an interesting comparison between background radiation and that of the BSX Scanner. They stated that background (natural) radiation exposes us to 24,000 times more radiation than the estimate of 0.1 microsievert of radiation received from a BSX scanner. Working from this comparison, they argued that it would take more than 50 full-body BSX scans to equal the radiation exposure of a single dental X-ray; 1,000 full-body BSX scans to equal the radiation exposure from a chest X-ray; and 200,000 BSX scans to equal a CT scan of the abdomen or pelvis. Their estimates are based on the linear no-threshold model, which is the basis for radiological protection standards. Linear meaning: as radiation dose increases, so does the cancer risk; and no-threshold meaning: that any exposure, no matter how small is assumed to cause some added risk for developing cancer. Based on the aforementioned comparisons, it is evident that exposure to BSX scans represent no more than a
small added risk; but in all fairness, the linear no-threshold model implies that the use of ionizing radiation is not safe at all; and its use at airports is neither medicinal nor therapeutic to assume that “small added risk.” Even though most people will pretend that they have more important things to worry about (Harvard Medical School, 2011).

Aside from the traveler being exposed to ionizing radiation from the BSX scanner, the operator of the equipment may also be susceptible to exposure. This concern is voiced in an article by Frances Romero, “Did Airport Scanners Give Boston TSA Agents Cancer?” It is known that ionizing radiation can be used for therapeutic or diagnostic purposes, but the advent of its use at airports has been questionable and even may have been the reason for a cancer cluster amongst airport security workers at Boston airport. The attention to detail for potential damage to biologic matter may have been eclipsed by the security agencies goal of protection to the larger community without considering the production of unintended negative consequences. Its use may be manifesting itself as a problem to TSA security employees from Boston airport. In fact, some of the risks and security flaws are also highlighted in the Freedom of Information Act lawsuit against the DHS by the Electronic Privacy Information Center (EPIC). EPIC sued the DHS on November 1, 2011 and forced the disclosure of documents—agency emails, radiation studies, memoranda of agreement concerning radiation testing programs, and some test results which revealed that TSA failed to issue its employees dosimeters or radiation monitoring devices, even after identifying a cancer cluster amongst its employees. Romero tells how DHS mischaracterized some findings by the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), by saying that “NIST affirmed the safety of full body scanners,” although a document obtained by EPIC reveals that NIST did not test the devices. (Romero, 2011) Thus, the low-energy X-rays are harmful to both the person getting scanned and scanner alike.

The article, “Full-body scanners at airports,” in the *Journal of Medical Physics* states that many airports around the world have installed full-body scanners for screening airline passengers before they enter the security hold area. Even though the move has been criticized due to privacy concerns and fear of the possible health risks; the journal reiterates that the radiation from the BSX scanners is much less than what a person receives from natural background radiation. Accordingly, the BSX scanner was evaluated by the FDA, CDRH (Center for Devices and Radiological Health), NIST, and APL (The John Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory); and the results confirmed the doses were well below the acceptable dose limits. The evaluation was initiated by the FDA which launched a webpage to assuage public concern regarding the use of new technology. While there is no particular process in place to determine the risks associated with BSX scanners, the TSA indicates that the advanced imaging technology screening is safe for all passengers including pregnant women and children. (Journal of Medical Physics, 2011)

The political cartoon I chose to represent my argument takes place at a TSA hearing. The TSA representative appears to have mutated into a combination of several species. The skin has melted off of one hand and only the bones
are left. The other hand resembles a mutant lobster claw. The scary-looking mutated TSA representative has grown two sets of wings that resemble those of an insect—or Fly to be more exact. The appearance of the skin melting off of the face, and comment, “I’m a frequent flier and I’ve felt no ill effects of my multiple airport full-body scans whatsoever!” conveys my belief that ionizing radiation will eventually have unforeseen effects. This example perfectly demonstrates my belief because even though the TSA representative is a frequent flier and has not felt any ill effects from BSX full-body scans, he exhibits the lethal consequences to human cells after ionizing radiation exposure. Though he may not have felt any ill effects from the multiple BSX scans, his appearance implies differently.

The US obsession with the ill-defined war on terrorism is obscuring what this country represents. The governments’ quickness at identifying and introducing new technologies in response to terrorism threats is undermining the foundation of our nations’ forefathers—as Benjamin Franklin once said, “Those who would give up essential liberty, to purchase a little temporary safety, deserve neither liberty nor safety.” The effectiveness of BSX scanner technology is determined by the passengers consent and awareness of the risks associated with the scan; not by the governments’ objective of safety. People should be aware that BSX is not the first and only option available to them despite it being the primary security screening measure at most US airports. The DHS and TSA’s policies have the intended goal of protecting the commu-
nity from harm, but the unintended negative consequences are threatening the fundamental constitutional rights of people who have absolutely nothing to do with terrorism. No evidence exists of unfortunate effects from the exposure to BSX radiation even after missing data and calculating errors were reported by the TSA. As a result, safety concerns have not been properly addressed; except for the comparisons which were discussed earlier. There may be reasons why no organization for accurate or consistent measuring of BSX technology is in place; but many assumptions can be made if you consider that: Rapiscan—the company which manufactures the BSX scanners hired former DHS secretary, Michael Chertoff, as a consultant; DHS deployed the BSX scanners without any opportunity for public comment; the low energy X-ray emitted by the scanner concentrates the radiation to the skin—one of the most radio-sensitive organs of the human body; and if the passive millimeter wave scanner were used instead of BSX scanners, the exposure could be zero. The goals of protecting the people from terrorism may be producing negative consequences, alarming doctors and scientists alike.

REFERENCES


Dear Mr. Morris,

It has come to my understanding that you have deforested the Banados del Izozog region of Bolivia. Although I have never been to Bolivia, I have heard great things about it. I would assume a portion of its greatness has been eliminated due to your decision. Deforestation is causing a lot of damage to our environment. I have read in passing that it only took about a century for us humans to cause as much as we have to the planet. In contrast it will take a longer time to recover from the damages that has been incurred by the planet. The damage is visible through the onset of global warming, ice caps melting in the Arctic Circle, the coral reef eroding and different species becoming extinct more rapidly than ever seen before.

I understand that what you are doing is very common among big companies, and in order to make a living you are encouraged to underplay the effects your decision may have on our planet. It is always easier to go with the flow, but true men are revered for doing what is right, not for what appears to be right. Mr. Morris, I think that you have the capability to be a true man. You have the position to make a change; all you have to do is make the change. I am in my first semester of college, and I am learning a lot. My Biology class resonates with me the most. Before taking biology I did not understand the significance of plants. I have learned that plants are the main producers on the planet and without them, animals would have to get their source of energy from the sun directly. Plants provide oxygen to the environment by a process called photosynthesis. During photosynthesis plants intake carbon dioxide, water, and sunlight to produce chemical energy, which is stored inside the plant as starch. I think it is self-defeating to treat something that has given us sustenance with indifference and hostility.

For millions of years plants have been purifying the air through photosynthesis, making the earth a lot more pleasant than it probably was at one point. Due to the rise in carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere, the oceans have been getting more acidic and the environment is getting a lot warmer. Because oceans are getting more and more acidic, the coral reefs are being eroded. It has been widely accepted that the abundance of oxygen that is in the atmosphere has been created by land based plants, but due to recent discoveries it is now known that marine plants produce about 80 percent of the oxygen we breathe, according to Ecology.com. With the coral reefs slowly disintegrating because of the acidity in the water, it is increasingly difficult for marine plants to survive.

I was recently watching a video on YouTube of a young girl named Olivia Binfield. She was seven years old, and she was a poet. Olivia performed a piece
of poetry that was about the extinction of many different species of animals, and how humans are to blame. I found Olivia’s performance to be very inspiring. It is amazing how a seven year old girl could understand the effects of our decisions on our environment. When I was younger, I remember seeing butterflies all over my neighborhood. I saw butterflies so much that I was tired of seeing them, but now I find myself missing their presence. It makes sad to know that it is possible that my kids and my grandkids probably will not see a butterfly throughout their life. Mr. Morris, I encourage you to take a moment to consider the effects of that your decisions will have on our environment.
Busco llenar un vacío profundo
Mi corazón derrama lo oculto
Aguanté millones de insulto
Para reunirme con el futuro
Y llegar a ser adulto
Decidí matricularme en la Universidad
Con el deseo de conquistar lo seguro
Días donde la situación absorbe lo mejor de ti
En aquel preciso instante salí
Ofrecí lo mayor de mí
Repasando libros de Radiología
Aumento mi sabiduría
Escapo la Ciencia
Auriculares tocan mi predilecta melodía
El camino del alumno requiere sacrificio

Noches largas estudiando con tremendo sueño
Ojera en mi parpado inferior
Ignoro como se siente mi interior
Persigo un sueño
Mañana seré profesional
Alto nivel ejerciendo lo aprendido
Dos cosas me mantienen vivo:
“El Amor y Desafíos”
Enemistades creen soy individuo Apócrifo
Describo hasta desgastar tinta del bolígrafo
Mientras más aprendo
Más preguntas tengo
Más dudas llevo
Más me llevo de veteranos viejos
Mi epitafio dirá: “ese muchacho quiso llegar lejos
No tuvo tiempo para festejos”
¿Qué sabes de sostener tres hijos, cumplir con asignaturas
Constantemente hacer el esfuerzo
Cargar insuficiente para la semana del almuerzo?
¿Qué sabes de forjar alternativas, quebrar ataduras
Todavía entre las luces sentirte a oscuras?
¿Qué sabes de vivir en el mismo bloque
Donde balaceras ocurren a menudo?
Jovenes perdieron
Diario te toca caminar donde cayeron
¿Qué sabes de ignorar sin perder el enfoque?
¿Qué sabes de sentir el impacto después del choque?
¿Qué sabes de no haber respaldo de tu Padre
Cuando más necesitabas?

La fe solo amparaba
Antes de cerrar tu mente cada noche
Orabas por la madrugada
¿Qué sabes de perder un cercano mientras tomas un examen?
¿Qué sabes?
Continuo estudiando…
YANELY BATISTA FRIAS
¡SERÁ POSIBLE!

Un día no muy lejano, te llegaré a querer,
Un día no muy lejano se que seré tu mujer.
No sé si será posible que pueda besar tus labios,
Llegar a tocar tu cuerpo y saborearte en mi boca,
Creo que será posible que por ti me vuelva loca.

Que tan pronto ha de llegar,
Creo que ya te deseo,
No sé si será amor,
No sé si será pasión,
Pero guardo la esperanza de robar tu corazón.

No hieras mis sentimientos,
No Marchites mi alegría,
Mira que me he dado cuenta que eres tú la vida mía.

Amor ya no me tortures,
Ya no me hagas sufrir,
Mira que yo por tu amor puedo llegar a morir.
MANUEL PENA

CORAZÓN FRAGMENTADO

Se edificaron paredes
Para proteger aquello mas preciado,
Pero cuando llego la falsedad disfrazada de Amistad
Se crearon puertas.

Hoy solo quedan ruinas de lo que un día
Fueron grandiosas arquitecturas,
Y en el centro, un corazón fragmentado.

“Face” by Ebenezer Arthur
No tenía ni la pequeñita idea de donde estaba. Todo lo que podía recordar es mi viaje desde los Estados Unidos hasta Australia. Mientras estuve dormida en el avión, no se me vino a la mente que yo iba a sobrevivir este accidente y ser abandonada en una isla- sola con mis memorias sujetadas a mi nombre.

Hubo un silencio en la isla tan profundo lo cual hizo que esta joven actúe contra sus inquietudes.

En el accidente del avión, una voz interna me despertó y dijo: ¡Soledad, levántate y vive! Todavía esta voz continúa alimentando mi ansiedad de vivir y dejar saber a este mundo de que todavía sigo viva. A pesar de que esto fue una experiencia horrible que me tocó vivir en carne y hueso, yo tenía el valor de superarlo ¿Cómo puedo dejar este mundo sin ver una vez más a todo lo que amo?

La playa estaba serena y solitaria. Los pájaros volaban por el cielo dejando la isla, así como los rayos radiantes del sol dejaron a la muchacha sin notificar. La noche cayó en la isla creciente con las estrellas brillando, en un atardecer crepuscular.

Necesito construir un bote que me cargue hasta el horizonte.

Hubo una mañana donde el sol brilló sobre el océano y también en la isla creciente azul. Sus rayitos ardientes dieron un toque de alegría a todo lo que alumbró y despertó a las gaviotas para comenzar sus jornadas en el cielo. Mientras que ellas anunciaban el comienzo de un nuevo día, bajo sus alas estaba Soledad intentando de navegar con su bote nuevo construido de troncos de palma y raíces.

Necesito ir a donde pertenezco. Necesito viajar al otro lado de este mar exhausto, para encontrar a personas que me puedan ayudar a superar esta experiencia triste.
HECTOR FELIZ
THE SOLITUDE ACCOMPANYING AN ISLAND (A PROSE POEM)

I didn’t have the slightest idea of where I was. All I could remember was my travel from America to Australia. While I was asleep in the plane, it didn’t come to my mind that I would survive this accident and be abandoned on an island—abandoned with memories attached to my name in the middle of nowhere.

There was a silence on the island that was so profound, that it made this young lady act against her restlessness.

In that plane crash, a voice within awakened my slumber and told me: “Soledad, wake up and live!” And yet this voice continues to feed my anxiety to live and let this world know that I am still alive. Even though this was a horrible experience that I had to live in flesh and bones, I had the courage to overcome that. How could I leave this world without seeing one more time everything that I hold dear?

The beach was serene and solitary. Birds flew in the sky, leaving the island, just as the radiant sunlight left the girl without notice. The night fell on the crescent blue island with the stars shining, even in this twilight afternoon.

I must build a boat that can carry me across the sea and reach the horizon.

There was a morning where the sun shone on the ocean and also on the crescent blue island so radiantly, that it touched everything with shine and cheer. Its light awakened the seagulls to begin their journey in the sky. As the birds announced the beginning of the new day, below their wings there was Soledad trying to overcome the huge waves with her newly constructed sailing boat, made of trunks of palm trees and vines.

I must go where I belong. I must travel across this exhausting ocean to find people who will help me overcome this sad experience.
Giving to the community is something that is part of who I am, and I deeply enjoy standing up and fighting for myself and those that do not have the resources to fight. I am a proud volunteer for The Trevor Project and a proud feminist fighting the sexist society that we live in.

The Trevor Project is the leading national organization providing crisis intervention and suicide prevention services to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) youth. This project has many programs and I am a proud volunteer of the Lifeguard workshop. The Trevor Project’s Lifeguard Workshop Program uses a structured, age-appropriate curriculum with trained facilitators to address gender issues and the impact of language, actions and words used to describe or address the LGBTQ community; recognizing the warning signs of depression and suicide among young people and their peers; responding to those warning signs in a way that keeps all young people safe. Youths that belong to the LGBTQ community are more likely to attempt suicide than their straight peers; furthermore, they are often abandoned by their family and friends all because of the misunderstanding and confusion there is about sexual orientation.

As Lifeguards, we go to educational facilities and talk about gender related issues and how words we use to describe others can affect their lives and mental health. Sexual orientation is something that is kept in the dark; therefore, when facts about someone who isn’t “out” yet come to light, that person is rejected or very negatively received. The rejection brings up a barrier that blocks any kind of understanding and this is what we are trying to break: educate to eliminate the misconceptions and the fear of the unknown. I myself feel proud that as a result of the exposure to the Trevor Project and to general education about gender, I can now question my own sexuality and I am in the process of understanding better that instead of being heterosexual I might be bisexual.

Education has given me the opportunity to help others and myself. The only way to fight the inequality that roots in the structure of society is getting involved in the community, to have my voice heard. Furthermore, education has provided me with the tools to make my voice stronger, by understanding who I really am and challenging a sexist structure that is obsessed with fitting humans into boxes and which constantly objectifies women. My concern grows larger every day as I acknowledge how the media is turning women smaller and smaller. If there is no awareness of a problem, then there is no awareness of the consequences of that problem. I am fighting to expose the unhealthy images of women used by the media to represent “beautiful or healthy” women which are
actually photo-shopped images to create an unreal image of a “perfect woman” that no real woman can attain.

How am I am exposing and bringing awareness of sexist advertising? By sharing my knowledge, and by hanging “not buying it “ signs (Missrepresentation.org) on items and commercials that focus on objectifying women’s bodies, thereby encouraging violence against women and eating disorders, social problems that are made worse by representing women in advertisements look as if they were only bones. With this in my mind, I have taken upon myself the task to post signs everywhere that I see a harmful advertisement of such kind, for example, on the train platforms. (Although this is something that could bring legal consequences, it is worth doing it carefully, and I continue to do it, again carefully!) I have submitted a photograph of a couple of the signs I’ve made, following the example from the website Missrepresentation.org.

I love dedicating my time to saving lives. As Trevor Project volunteer and pure heart feminist activist I save lives. I feel that it is my duty to question everything and challenge the path that everyone and each one of us are encouraged to follow since birth. It is a hard battle ahead with a really rocky road but the more the cultural environment tries to repress my voice, the louder it will get and I will not stop until my voice is heard across the world and the silent ones are able to scream.
Every society has its own set of rules and values that everyone needs to follow in order to be socially accepted. People who are different, however, have difficulty adjusting to those rules and values. Homosexuals, for example, face discrimination at school, rejection at home and are prone to depression and social anxiety.

My friend Bob, who is a homosexual, started to realize that he is different when he became a high school student. Since his early age, Bob knew that he was more attracted to boys than girls, but he never thought that there was a problem with that. Before high school, he was never bullied or rejected, but when he became a high school student, his classmates began to bully him and to exclude from all activities. The boys and girls in his class made fun of his high-pitched voice and his girlish behavior. Boys never wanted to play soccer or basketball with him, saying that those games are for boys only, while girls did not accept him in their company because they thought boys should not play with girls because it is not normal. As a result, Bob felt that he did not fit in society, and started to suffer in his isolation.

Isolated and unhappy, Bob decided to tell his parents what was going on at school, and to explain to them his sexual orientation. He did not know how to start; he was afraid how his parents would react. There were many situations when he started to speak, but he did not have courage to continue. One night, he came back from school and his mother and his father were watching TV. They were watching a documentary movie about homosexual people and Bob felt that that was the perfect time to tell them. Bob began by asking, “How would you react if I told you that I am a homosexual?” Both of his parents were shocked. His mother could not believe that her son was a homosexual. She did not want to accept the fact that he would never get married and have kids with a woman. His father was also very disappointed and told Bob that he would never accept a homosexual son, because everyone would think that he failed to be a good father to him. Instead of helping him to deal with his feelings and isolation, Bob’s parents took him to see a counselor, hoping that he will become “normal”. The counseling sessions did not help Bob at all, and even made him believe that something was seriously wrong with him.

Pressed between discrimination, social isolation and searching for his sexual identity, Bob tried to be “normal”. There was a girl in his neighborhood and he knew that she liked him. He asked her out, hoping that she could help him become attracted to girls, and forget his feelings for the same sex. He tried very

Continued on p.57
“Street Scene” by Ebenezer Arthur
“Kary Mar” by Guadalupe Galindo
“Have Some Bloody Tea” by Guadalupe Galindo
“Demi Lovato” by Bryan Chalas
“Wild Palms” by Alma Cintron
“Ben Franklin, Albert Einstein, & Stephen Hawking Hang Out”
by Amara Dioubate
"Altered States" by Pablo Martinez
“Final City” by Jessica Emiliano
“Self-Portrait” by Jordan Gonzalez
“The Two Travelers” by Jordan Gonzalez
“Tranquil Landscape” by Raisa Ruiz
“Chorus of Birds” by German Santos
“Self-Portrait” by Ashley Ferrara
“Isolation” by Margarito Balbuena
“Native View” by Couly Traore
“El Toro” by Maldrin Torres
hard to keep the relationship going, but after a short time together, they broke up, which helped Bob to finally accept his true sexual identity.

Understanding his sexuality, however, did not help him to deal with the rejection he felt from society and his family. Throughout the years he was a victim of many homophobic attacks, and he started to blame himself. One of the worst homophobic attacks he experienced occurred in the schoolyard, while he played basketball alone. At that moment, one of his classmates, who had bullied him before, took the ball from him and repeatedly hit him with the ball on his head, while the rest of the boys watched and laughed. After this incident, Bob spent most of his time alone or with his girlfriends, with whom he was identifying. Instead of dealing with his social rejection, Bob thought it would be better if he disappeared.

Bob’s depression did not last for a long time. After struggling with societal acceptance and trying to be like every other boy, he found support by getting in touch with a homosexual community, which gave him the support to realize that he was not the only one with this kind of sexual orientation. After many conversations with people with similar feelings, he gained self-esteem and he was no longer ashamed of his sexual orientation.

As Bob now looks back on his experience, he has realized that he wasted too much time with trying to be normal and socially acceptable, and he did not spent enough time on dealing with his feelings. Social rejection can be very destructive for people that don’t look for support outside of the rigid social norms. As soon as they realize that life does exist beyond these social norms, they can start living according to their own norms and rules.
“We’ve begun to raise daughters more like sons…but few have the courage to raise our sons more like our daughters.” Before reading this quote by Gloria Steinem, I had never heard of her. That’s an indictment of the lack of knowledge I possess in women’s history. By writing this essay I hope to start on a new learning path for myself, to further educate myself on the trials and tribulations that so many powerful women have undergone for the betterment of the world. Gloria Steinem and this quote really struck a chord in me. This essay is the beginning of a new way of thinking for me.

Six months ago my life changed completely. Ellyd Gonzalez Jr. was born, my beautiful first son. I know exactly what you’re thinking, and yes I’m still freaking out. Becoming a father has been the biggest blessing I have ever received. Ever since I’ve become a parent, my vision of life has changed dramatically. Now, every action I do, every risk I take, I’m thinking about my son. Slowly but surely, feeling petrified is turning into pure excitement. Every new day as a parent a different challenge arises. Instead of confronting the challenge with fear, now I’m filled with unbridled joy. With Ellyd Jr. always on my mind, this quote by Gloria Steinem stood out among the rest.

“We’ve begun to raise daughters more like sons…but few have the courage to raise our sons more like our daughters.” As I mentioned, I’d never heard a statement like that before. The conviction that Gloria Steinem displays through her words is both powerful and incredible. First, when I was reading the quote I just glossed over it because raising a son like a daughter is ludicrous. Or is it? We’ve come a long way from the old days of women automatically being labeled as inferior or inadequate. But still, subliminally, some of those ways of thinking linger to this day.

For example, if you were to ask an average man to have the courage to raise his son like his daughter, he would be furious that you would even ask a question like that. Men, I believe, have one trait that’s a detriment to us all: machismo. Naturally, we want our sons to be “a man’s man.” We raise them to be dominant and superior. But that’s counterproductive because in turn our sons grow up to be stubborn, ignorant, and disrespectful.

On the other hand, we are making huge strides as a global society in recognizing the strengths of women. Some ignorant groups of people still refuse to acknowledge that we, as men, can learn just as much from women as they can learn from us. In fact, around the world there are plenty of young men that desperately need to learn how to be more like a woman. Some people look at women’s display of emotion and passion as a weakness, or a disadvantage. What I’ve learned is that men’s lack of expressed emotion and passion is a bigger weakness than we could ever imagine. For example, I know that both of my
parents love me unconditionally. But I can’t remember the last time me and my father shared an emotional embrace. Not that we don’t love each other; it’s just that that’s the way our relationship is. Sometimes it’s hard for men to show any emotion towards one another. Alternately, I can see that women who use emotion and passion to their advantage are the ones who have a long lasting impact on the world. By becoming doulas [midwives] or helping young women face emotional problems, or by running foster homes with sensitivity and compassion, women make immeasurable contributions to bettering society. Gloria Steinem’s assertion about raising sons with some qualities we usually assign to daughters carries within it the possibility of making a huge impact on society, without a doubt.

I don’t know much about Gloria Steinem except the short biography that’s under her quote that has caught my attention. The biography outlines all of her main accomplishments and awards: 20th century writer, activist, leading spokesperson for the modern feminist movement, the accolades keep coming. As a parent I learn something new every day. Reading this quote and participating in this contest I’ve again learned something new. Raising my son to be passionate and emotional is not going to make him weak. It’ll make him strong, much stronger than his father ever was, stronger than my father was too. What more could I ask for?
Margaret Sanger, a firm believer that every woman should have the option to choose if and when to have children, opened a legal birth control clinic in 1923 despite having an earlier birth control clinic shut down. Finally, in 1965, due to her dedication of providing women with contraception, birth control was legalized for married couples.

“No woman can call herself free who does not control her own body” Margaret Sanger declared. This sentiment translates into my experience that although you are a woman who believes herself to be free because you can help your husband contribute to the family finances, you are not truly free if you are expected to be an incubator in which new life is brought into the world and you comply with that expectation. Bringing children into your life should be the decision of the woman and no one else because it is her body and emotions that are on the line. Her health is also at stake so that her family can grow. A woman is only completely and unconditionally free if she can choose to raise a child right - as opposed to having children and no intention to guide them through life. She must first enrich her own experiences in order to provide a child with the right stimuli to make an empowered and intellectual being.

At age nineteen I became pregnant. I have a mother who was squeamish about having “the talk” with me so I never truly understood the importance of protected sex. Although I was safe from STD’s because I was in a devoted relationship with my partner, I didn’t foresee the situation that would transpire out of my ignorance. Scared and confused, I found myself at what I thought was a Planned Parenthood clinic but it turned out to be a clinic that was run by a religious group. After I was tested and in fact was pregnant, they cornered me and exposed me to a ton of graphic pamphlets explaining how a zygote is “murdered” during an abortion. They also showed me magazines with testimonials of damaged girls who became so because of abortion. In the end, I was bullied into keeping a child that I knew I was not ready for. Therefore, I am not a free woman. I am shackled and chained as a result of my experience with those who were supposed to help me. I am scarred and broken, knowing that my choice was taken from me.

I love my son and at some point after completing my education, I would have loved to have a child who I can spoil and shower with gifts. What I did instead was bring a child into the world of the sufferers; he sees me break down and cry and that makes him suffer. I brought another human being into the world of the poor, the limited, and the suffering.

In conclusion, Margaret Sanger was a visionary who saw a world in which no woman had to watch her child go hungry, and no woman had to “please” her husband. She envisioned a world in which no woman was forced to have
children in a marriage that was broken; no woman was forced to submit to the misery of bringing a child into the world of the sufferers. Even today, although contraception is legal as well as abortion, women are not educated enough about their rights; therefore, taking advantage of them is too easy. Women everywhere need to empower their daughters and fill them with knowledge if the vision of Margaret Sanger is ever to see the light. It is up to us to save the next generation from the silence that many women have had to submerge themselves into just to survive. We must rise.
After reading a selection of quotes provided by the essay contest panel, it was difficult to choose one that spoke to me the most. But then I read the quote by Zadie Smith, “On Beauty,” and that one stuck. Having a young daughter, I understand too well the challenges many young girls and women may face in the world. It does not matter what part of the world we live in, there exists on some level an image of beauty women are judged by. I believe the images of beauty are changing in this country, but the message is still the same. Try as best you can to look like the images presented to us in magazines, and on television, and if you cannot, at least try to stay young forever.

Men are not necessarily confined to the same standards. I’m not saying men do not want to look good. But many men are judged by a global standard to be the strong bread winners, providers, protectors, the head of the family, and to make the right decisions. Women however, throughout history have been judged by their physical appearance, and there’s a perfectly good reason for this. Women are beautiful! Beauty is very important. It is essential in some cases. Have you ever seen any religious figure what was unattractive? Have you ever seen a religious figure with acne? Look at the beautiful images of Buddha, for example. Beauty does matter. If looks did not matter we wouldn’t bother combing our hair before leaving the house.

My father once gave me a scenario to prove this very point. Let’s say a man has a wife whom he loves dearly and who professes his wife’s physical appearance is of little importance. All that matters to him is what’s on the inside. He loves her soul, her spirit, her personality. Okay, that’s wonderful. Sadly, his wife passes away. Hypothetically, there are two women who look exactly like his late wife. They both have the same figure, same face, same hair, height, voice, measurements and personality; they are even the same on an intimate level. Everything is the same, except for one thing. One of the women has only one eye. If this man had to choose between the two of them, which one do you think it would be? Will he choose the woman with one eye or the woman with both eyes? If looks do not matter then he should choose the woman with one eye, but we know what his choice will be. Looks matter.

I do not believe that beauty is the criteria for everything. One problem is that different cultures can come up different standards of physical beauty for women, and we are supposed to conform to it; no matter how physically impossible it may be! For example, take the foot binding practiced in ancient China. Little girls’ feet were bound and tied to prevent their feet from growing because it was considered beautiful to have very small feet. Their feet were bound so tightly that it crushed their feet into deformity, and as a result these beautiful, young girls were not able to walk. Women in Burma have several heavy metal...
rings placed on their shoulders over a period of time. These rings compress the shoulders and stretch the neck several inches, giving the neck an unnaturally long, yet graceful appearance. It is an amazing sight. The disadvantage of this is that the rings cannot be removed. If the rings were removed, these women would be unable to hold up their own heads because their neck muscles would not be strong enough. All of this in the name of beauty? Throughout history and up to the present day, women are still subjected to unrealistic images of beauty. Yet there are thousands of women who say, “to hell with these standards. We are happy with our bodies, standards be damned!” Many men also share that affirmation. I applaud you. Yet there are still many young girls today who try to emulate the faces and bodies that appear in fashion magazines without realizing the pictures have been edited and air brushed.

Some mothers who have daughters take on this unnecessary burden of fighting the physical standard of what society believes women should be. Zadie smith states, “It seeped in with every draught in the house. People brought it home on their shoes, they breathed it off their newspapers. There was no way around it.” This particular quote refers to a mother who saw her daughter falling into the path of self-loathing towards her body, despite her strongest efforts against it. This self-loathing was so strong that her mother resented giving birth to girls.

I want people to see that there is beauty in every aspect of a woman, not just the physical. There is beauty in strength and health. There is beauty in intelligence and wisdom. There is beauty in goodness. There is beauty in tenderness and compassion. There is beauty in fierceness. There is beauty in talent and skill. There are many different forms of beauty besides a pretty face. These are the lessons we must instill in our daughters to help them become strong, confident individuals, who can make a positive contribution to the world. We are fighting a system of power and money that dictates what is beautiful and what is not. We must continue to fight these unrealistic images through awareness and self expression.
The life of a woman entails numerous acting roles in which she is forced to achieve for the betterment of her survival along with her children. These roles range from simultaneously being a chef having to provide hot meals every day, to a maid who has to maintain the upkeep of her family home, to a protector of her loved ones no matter the storm or situation—all the while providing emotional and financial support 24/7 hours a day. Let’s not forget she is also a teacher and counselor that needs to properly guide her children and provide the tools to be successful in life.

Watching my close friend and next-door neighbor, whose name was Kat, grow up in an abusive, dysfunctional home, she was taught how much women do at a very early age. When her father walked out on her family, I saw how they processed the change. Instead of bike riding along with our friends, she had to help with the daily upkeep for her now single parent home. I watched as she pushed a laundry cart bag piled so high she wasn’t tall enough to see over it yet. Her older brother, like any high school kid, was hardly home to help.

Back then I looked at her situation as being torturous and never understood why she couldn’t just play with us kids. Her mother worked the night shift, which was the only time I was able to spend time with Kat because she was almost always preoccupied with helping with something. I would run downstairs and play with her while her older sister prepared dinner for them. As I got older I learned that her mother, whom I did not like or understand, is a strong woman.

I now can understand her situation and see the many challenges her mother and siblings faced then. Supporting three young children alone was no easy task, not for anyone. English being her second language was another hurdle she had to work through. She made sure each child was provided the necessities and given the tender love and care needed for them to heal and develop. While being the sole provider of all the bills when she worked as a porter at a hotel, affected by the several years of physical and mental abuse she had suffered from her ex, she still kept her family intact while working out her own emotional turmoil. Kat’s mom tried to help her children through their pain by being the mother they needed and the father they lost. She guided and helped ease their minds from being angry, confused and hurt. The attempt to regain normalcy in their lives was an uphill battle.

Now an adult, Kat has such a happy go lucky outlook on life, you would never think she lived in such anguish in her earlier years. She has seen more than one should in her childhood stage; instead of this trauma crippling her mindset, it gave her the ability to empathize and sympathize with others on a high level.
“A woman does not stop being a woman because she engages in politics or expresses her opinion, or because she becomes a legislator or detective. A woman will always be a woman, whether she has a husband or a lover. She is a woman, and being a woman is not only being powdered and covered in ribbons and lace. Just as he who belongs to the male sex does not stop being a man upon learning to cook, mend, sweep, and sew. Many men do that!” In reading this quote by Luisa Capetillo, I immediately understand the concept of “a woman does not stop being a woman . . . .” In fact, it is this concept that I apply to my life on a daily basis. As a woman I have come to know that we are always being placed either high on a pedestal or in some kind of invisible isolation box all because of our emotional reactions, or for emotional qualities that some people associate with our biological capacity to give birth. Yet I contradict this notion because I am a lesbian; and because I love women, it doesn’t mean that I don’t have the same emotions as many other women have – nor does my being a lesbian mean that I don’t have love for men or worse, that I hate them. Some people believe that a woman stops being a woman because she loves another woman, or these people assume that I want to be a man and do as men do. On the contrary, I love being a woman and doing all the things women do, PLUS doing the hammering, the drilling, the fixing, the taking care of the car, and making decisions as the “the man” of the family.

I agree with what Luisa Capetillo said because being a woman is not limited to just what is expected by society; knowing my place or assuming my place according to patriarchal norms. No, we women can do just about everything a man can do, and in being a woman I can say “please help me, this is a bit hard for me” and welcome the help of a man when needed. Latin woman that I am too, are often viewed as the ones that should stay home and care for their kids and husband, because that is expected. I highly disagree with that because at home, I encourage everyone to find their place in world. That means that you can aspire to become whatever you want because as they say “the world is your oyster”: find your pearl and make your fortune.

I have three kids, two girls and a boy. I have raised them all with equality and fairness. My children never have had their fathers in their lives so I was able to bring them up the way I believe has given them strength, wisdom and understanding with the knowledge that everything is possible if you work hard enough and are not sidetracked easily by the unexpected. I have taught them all how to cook, clean, and care for themselves. My son knows how to wash clothes, cook when he is hungry, and not have to wait for his sisters or me to do it for him. The same goes for my girls. I have taught my daughters how to drill and change door locks and put together wall units that are complicated.
In teaching this, I give my son an understanding that women are capable of working just as hard as a man with proper guidance; therefore, he shouldn’t exploit them. The same is said to my daughters’ regarding men and the role they too can play at home.

Don’t think because I wear the pants, I can’t be sensitive. I dress the part of both male and female and in front of both women and men. I do cry and display my emotions. Women are passionate and overwhelmed because we have a great belief in many things. For example, we passionately believe in the ability of humanity to get along. It does not make me weak or incapable of making wise decisions; if anything, my belief in humanity gives me clarity for what to do next. I get angry for the unjust and so I want change. I can share experiences to offer you emotional enlightenment of what I know of love and war in the situations I’ve been through.

Women have gone through a variety of emotional roller-coasters so much, that we are experts at identifying these emotions in our men, and yet we women don’t fault men for having all kinds of feelings when they are affected by life’s situations. We don’t think you are weak for it, but rather, you are a better person for being able to display what it is you are feeling. As women, we don’t like having to do guess work about you; and you are in your right to not have to do guess work about us. So in expressing fairness, don’t look at me as though I have lost my mind.

Don’t treat me like a man because I can do everything you can do. My brain has no sex to its ability. I am a person with one different internal organ from you. I can be loving and tender as well as your gardener, mechanic, the one that hands you the hammer or helps drill in that screw. Don’t judge me by my cheap clothes and/or the title I hold, but rather by my actions and ability which you can judge for yourself. I can be the crown on your head or the thorn in your side. I will not go ahead or lag behind. Hold my hand and let me be by your side.
ALL IT TOOK WAS A SMILE

You stole my breath away
And all it took was a smile.
A nod of your head, a dip of your brow,
You took your sunglasses off
And I knew I’d have you somehow –
And all it took was a smile.

At first it was a dream.
How can this be?
Something so forbidden.
How do I escape this marriage in order to be free?
The smell of your skin
And the taste of your lips,
The strength of your embrace –
Oh God! free me from this sin.

We may part ways for some time,
Even though the distance between us is but a mile.
I’ll wait for you with hope of having your love
Because
You stole my breath away
And all it took was a smile!
I can get lost in your eyes.
The touch of your fingertips
Makes me shudder.

I am in another world when I’m with you
And it takes me by surprise.
Your skin so smooth,
Without a single blemish,
Your embrace so fierce,
It’s only right to cherish.
You whisper in my ears
All the right words
And I have so many replies

It’s only right to be heard.
Your strength lifts me
Two feet off the ground
And I feel light as a feather.
Then I wake up
And remember that I am a mother,
So this dream all comes to an end
One way or another.
I have scoliosis
But scoliosis doesn't have me.
My pain intrigues me,
I cannot move without discomfort,
It is a constant reminder that you are there.
I am confined to the basics of life,
No activity,
I may only walk or drive to flee from this captivity.

My pain runs up and down my spine
That's in the shape of a snake
That has bitten and left me poisoned with its venom.
You are always with me,
I cannot be rid of you.
I have scoliosis,
But scoliosis will not stop me.
Whooshing past my skin,  
Chills in my pores, ice  
In my eyes, drops in my hair  
My hair is beautiful or so I have been told  
By my mom and fiancé.  
I, for one, love the glow  
It shows in the sunlight  

As the living organ burns,  
Thump, Thump -  
What is that? a beat in my heart?  
Has my brain drained, swirled, whirled?  
Geez, it’s twisted.  
Blink  
Swallow  
Breathe  
Chill  
Subside with me.  

I give my all to my family, friends and most of all myself.  
I know it’s weird to say it, but I adore me.  
I, for once, finally see myself for what others see me as:  
Still, hard,  
Withered, soft.  
STOP  
It’s time to give me life.  

I don’t need a heart.  
Give me breath.  
I need a beat.  
Screw it, I need a thought.  

BEEP BEEP BEEP, Backup
It's done
I am gone
Dark
Heavy
Tic tock
Goodbye
I’ve crossed many rivers in my life
And this is certainly my last.
But I will never forget
The waves that I’ve passed.

From memories of a child
To my adulthood,
There is one thing
That I have always misunderstood:
Why can’t we live forever?
I simply do not know.

But now I have realized
That it is my time to go.
As I look down upon you,
My presence is still there.
I am the breeze that you feel,
Flying through the air.
You may not be able to see me,
But that is all right.
Just remember, I’m that path
Guiding you safely at night.

You may not be able to hear me
But I’m listening to you.
I’ll send you a sign
To help with what you’re going through.
You may think that you’re paralyzed
Because you cannot feel me,
But I’m that liquid in your veins
Flowing through so swiftly.

You might feel incomplete
Because my scent seems bare.
But if you remember my scent,
It is simply still there.

I’ve crossed many rivers in my life
And this is certainly my last.
But I will never forget
The waves that I’ve passed.
From memories of a child
To my adulthood of a man,
There is one thing that you need
To absolutely understand.

No matter how old you get
And how tall you shall stand,
I will always be your father,
I will always hold your hand.
Rain falling down as I’m sitting at my dresser
I wonder why the clouds are holding so much pressure
They were once white as snow and now they’re dull
As if they’re letting out their anger drops
Onto someone’s skull.

I confide in the rain
Because I know we feel the same.
Watch the lightning from my eyes brighten your gray day
Every 30 seconds hear my thunder roar a rampage
Just the type of weather I need to keep me sane.

Yet I wonder
How is it possible that I have rain on me?
When I’m inside with a roof above me
No cracks, no leaks, and no holes around me.
But when I taste it
The water’s slightly warm and salty.

Could it be?
My biggest fear is starting to appear?
That our relationship of eight months is fading to the rear.
Is it true?
That what seemed as clear as a mirror
Of our promise
Is going in and out of your ears?

Don’t want to think about losing you
Because my feelings
They are true
And only God knows
All the ups and downs
We have been through.
We can fix them all
There is no excuse.
Our love is not a cycle
There's no way we can reuse.

So I spend my time with the rain
Giving it some company
Because the feeling of bliss
As we feel the same is so lovely.
Her hair blowing in the wind is my summer breeze.
Her love has me floating high like there’s no gravity.
I’m diving for her love that is eight feet deep.
Her beauty makes me weak; I’m falling to my knees.

Her words made my face change just like autumn leaves
Because I can’t deny, she makes me blush every time she speaks.
I close my eyes and smile as she had me at ease
While the aroma of her body passed by so gently.

We were walking in the snow and I knew something was missing
So we held our hands together and we both created friction.
Our bodies got warm and then we started kissing
She’s the reason why my life is always worth living

Tears from my eyes like showers in spring time
Represent joy because she knows she’s always on my mind.
She has me hypnotized by her light brown eyes.
Love is fine as wine. We bloomed just on time.
Yo le he dado la vuelta a la última página al libro. Luego lo puse en algún lugar de mi habitación. No pienso volver a tocarlo en mi vida.

Ahora estoy más relajada y tengo el deseo de emprender una nueva lectura. Este nuevo libro me llena de entusiasmo, alegría y esperanzas. Pero las emociones y experiencias que me dejo el libro anterior las llevo conmigo en mi subconsciente y se reflejan en mis acciones diarias; haciéndome reaccionar algunas veces de manera que el mundo considera correcta, y otras veces mis reacciones son controladas por mis sentimientos, confundiendo mis decisiones, manejando mis estados de ánimos, mis sueños y llenando mi cuerpo de esa sensación de miedo que me hace dudar de lectura nueva que deseo emprender.

Pero nuevamente estoy aquí sentada en mi sillón favorito cerca de la ventana más grande de mi apartamento, recibiendo la luz natural y la brisa refrescante del otoño, mi estación del año favorita. Yo leí y le di vuelta a la primera página. El principio de este nuevo libro me envuelve en su lectura, haciéndome imaginar y sentir todo lo que leo y me lleva a una nueva aventura, llenándome de esperanzas y fuerzas. Además me proyecta en una nueva manera de ver las cosas y me llena de optimismo para continuar.

Pero por un momento paro, de nuevo esas emociones adquiridas en mi anterior lectura volvieron aparecer, ese miedito de emprender algo nuevo está ahí en mi subconsciente, haciendo estremecer mi cuerpo, haciéndome sentir insegura de mi misma. Pero al mismo tiempo, tengo la energía, la voluntad, el carácter, y las experiencias adquiridas en el libro leído anteriormente. Ese conflicto en mi interior me ayuda a seguir adelante, me da la valentía y la precaución necesaria para poder terminar mi nueva lectura, me deja esa sensación de satisfacción de realizar algo que deseo, sin saber que me espera en él, sin saber si tendré un resultado positivo y gratificando, o solo una experiencia negativa más que hará más fuertes a mis miedos.

Con mi perseverancia de llegar hasta la última página, la curiosidad y la intriga juegan un papel importante en mi interior. Ellas luchan con ese miedo que nadie invito pero que se creó el dueño y señor. El patrón que puede ordenar y mandar a su antojo. Finalmente estoy en la última página y una alegría inmensa me envuelve y me hace pensar que ese miedo nunca existió, que solo fue una fuerza interna que me motivaba a seguir y al no conocerla solo la identificaba como miedo.

Y de nuevo estoy aquí dejando aún lado este libro, después de haberlo torcido, rayado y doblado. Ahora estoy pensando en buscar un tercero, para seguir y seguir adelante en una nueva aventura.
And there I was, trying to keep my balance while that uncomfortable public bus was in motion. My angry face was notable, because, not only was I dealing with the bus moving back and forth, I was also dealing with a decision I made, and the overwhelming questions that were blowing my mind up: why am I doing this? Why now? Will it be worth it? How will it be? Should I go? Can I deal with this situation? And many more. In that moment, my mind felt like a boxing ring, and those questions were all fighting at the same time against me. Eventually I got a seat, I leaned my head on the window looking at the road we were leaving behind and started thinking, giving signs of a worried boy.

Those questions were still pushing my mind and I did not have the answers yet, I was not prepared to answer those questions to myself. It was almost the date of leaving, and for some strange reason I doubted something. Those questions were giving me signs that I was afraid of something, which I thought was normal when you made a decision like that. The questions looked like they were easy, but actually, those questions were a big headache and I lived with them for at least three months. Finally the bus arrived to my stop. As I waited to get off the bus, I suddenly saw a sticker with a Biblical quote from Joshua 1:9 which says: “Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.” I quickly got off from the bus, surprised by this quotation, which in essence, was answering all my questions and more than that.

As soon as I got home I took a bath, and immediately went to sleep. I cannot describe with words how I was feeling that night. I felt as if I was talking with God, as if God was hearing all my questions, doubts, and worries and came down from the sky only to speak to me. I rejoiced, because I felt it, I felt the presence of God talking to me. For me, it was not just a sticker that I could barely read, since that day this quotation is my motto.

I had made the decision to come to New York. This idea was surrounding my mind a couple of years ago, but finally I made my final decision. It was not easy, because I was leaving behind all the things that I had for something that I was expecting to happen, something unpredictable. Moving apart from my home, my family and my friends was the worst feeling I ever had in my entire life. Leaving material things that were literally complementing my life like my car, a good job, the social life, was a little bit frustrating, because, even though I knew I should not be dependent on these material things, it made my life easier and more interesting, because I had all the things that a guy of my age could desire.
The decision was taken; I completely decided to get my body out of its comfort zone, my faith and my hope were stronger than my questions. I left behind my worries and fears, to embark on a journey full of dreams and hopes, where happiness and prosperity were, are, and will remain, the main goals. I already knew that NYC would not be easy. Fortunately, I had visited it several times on my vacations before definitively settling here. I knew that the NYC lifestyle is totally different compare to the Dominican Republic lifestyle. I knew that my life would take a 360 degrees turn.

I was definitely following my heart, and this was the most important thing at that moment. My trip was scheduled. My family and I were at the airport and the feelings were floating in the air, but I was trying to keep calm and make of this farewell a good moment. I took that plane with a baggage full of dreams, which will be developed in my new life, in the big city.

It was necessary for me to understand that not only my dreams were packed in my baggage; the dreams of my family and the people that surrounded me were in there too, those people who have placed their trust in me, something that makes me work harder because I feel that I cannot disappoint them. And this is how I related to the Biblical passage I saw in the bus; my interpretation of this quote does not only see God as the person who is behind you; for me, God makes his presence felt in all those people who trust me, the persons who will be there when I feel that I cannot go on, the persons who will tell me “yes, you can” or “keep going, I know you can”, those people who are holding me when I fall down, are the ones who, as God does, want my dreams to come true.

My story is recent; I have been living in this country for only four months. I am still living this transition. My story in this country is what I am living today. I could not say that I have learned a lesson about this change because even now, four months after making this decision, I am still doubting my decision to be here when something wrong happens to me or when I am just in a sentimental mood.

Because of my short vacations in New York City, I learned a couple of things that definitely changed my mind. One of these is the one that is related to my comfort zone. Most people prefer to stay at a place they already know, doing things they are used to do, and following the same pattern that they are used to. People do not recognize the importance of moving the body from the status quo. Being stuck in the same place because “you are just chilling;” "you do not want to deal with new things;" or “I’m good where I am,” is for people who do not have a clear vision of what they want in life. People need to understand that we have to move, to discover and get new things through the journey. The attitude of being conformist about what you have at the moment does not make you different from others, it just makes you another one from the bunch. I am not saying that you have to move to another country, or make a radical change in your life, but you always have to see beyond what our eyes can see, imagine above what the crowd can imagine. People have to apply this either in the personal or labor environment.
For instance, I had never been so separated from my family; I always was surrounded by a lot of people in my house, and the college. I was literally a king in my house; my mom and my dad gave me almost everything I wanted, provided that I deserved it and also if they could. But now, things are totally different, now I have to do things by myself. There is nobody doing things for me anymore. Now I have to do domestic chores that I was not used to doing in my home. Since I have been here I realized that “keeping a home” is not a concept structured only for women. There are many things; especially things that you are not used to, that make you feel that if you had stayed at home in your native country you would not be doing that.

But, those are the sacrifices you have to struggle with if you want to achieve your goals. Those kinds of things are insignificant compared with what you will get. Now being alone in this apartment is not good at all. Having a TV, a couch and my phone as partners, is totally unusual. Having the strange feeling of being trapped by four walls and thinking that those walls are literally coming at you, is a piercing in the soul. Passing several hours sitting on the couch thinking about my country over and over again, makes me nostalgic.

One day I sat at one of the windows of this tenth floor apartment and stared at the landscape outside. A stunning view. I was looking for consolation because I was in one of those days where the location of your heart is undefined. Probably I would not find consolation looking through the window, but sometimes it helps. This city is beautiful, and I do not know why but the lights of this city give you energy. I am not really sure what kind of mood I was in that day but it was between nostalgia and sadness. Gazing at the city through my window, I realized that these mood changes will remain with me forever, because no matter where you, how far or close you are from your homeland, or how often you communicate with your family, you are always going to miss them. And this is a fight that all immigrants have to live with.

Another thing I truly believe is that trusting in yourself is one of the most important values that a person can have. It is not enough having people supporting you, when you have no confidence in yourself. When you are trying to reach something, you are the first one who has to believe in you; if you do not, nobody will do it for you. Once you have confidence in yourself, others will also, and this is when you are prepared to explore the world and start doing things for you and yours.
“Trains” by Jordan Gonzalez
Dear Education,

We have been through so much throughout the years. I can remember for that first program called Head Start were we first met. You taught me how to tie my shoes, count, learn numbers and even eat with utensils. As time went on we grew together and got closer. In elementary school you gave me my foundation. There you taught me basic reading, writing, math, science and occasional specialty things like art and gym. I loved those days when things were easy and there wasn’t a worry in the world.

As I matured so did you. In middle school you combined reading and writing together to create language arts. Math and science were still there and they got interesting as well. You did not tell me about history though. History through me for a loop and it challenged me to know where things come from including me and I loved it. There is one thing I think you should know. Even though you were always in my life I really loved sports and I did not mean to put you to the back burner. Being an inner city kid we feel sports are our only way out. I’m glad we linked up again in order for me to graduate middle school.

In High School things took a turn for the worst with you and I. I focused on all the subjects you taught me before, but there were so many sub divisions to them all and I got frustrated. I’m sorry I cut school and didn’t show up when you expected me to be there. I knew you showed up everyday and never took a break except for vacation and holidays because you had no choice. Thanks to your best friend my Mom and enemy ‘sports’ I was able to finish our four-year commitment and get through it safe with a lot of choices ahead of me.

Now here we are to the present. We have been together for about 21 years. And we enter college together bright eyed and bushy tailed. Now I have to choose a major because you now are going to lead me into my career path. But, you are weird you require pre-requisites and a bunch of other things that just confuse me. I almost lost you due to a presidential election but that’s all over now, it will all pay off graduation day when I see you in physical form and get a chance to hold you and say thank you. It’s going to be bitter sweet. I can say thank you for never giving up on me and sticking with me to the very end and I can honestly say I will cherish you forever. I have to say goodbye to you in a formal setting because school is over. I will always use you and keep you close and occasionally ask you for advice to help me move forth in everyday life. One
more thing your job is not done. You will be visited by a reincarnation of me, my children. Please lead them down the right path and I will help so they can gain what you gave me.

   Sincerely,
   Roy
Being a leader is about knowing what your role is. It is about knowing the importance of developing your character and remembering your values to lead yourself to the right path for leadership development. There are people out there who represent themselves as leaders to serve their community, whether they are college students, clerical workers, teachers, construction workers, business owners, interns, nurses, or even restaurant owners. Having the sense of leadership means to engage in certain activities to enjoy and to continue learning how to grow and have fun each day.

Knowing your leadership role is about understanding your limitations. You must work on improving your skills and building your self-esteem; you must remain in the good hands of people who support each other. Leadership is also about finishing up a task and learning to start from the bottom and striving on make it to the top. The important lesson is knowing who you are, as a person, as a human being. I contribute my time to help my family and volunteer at a community center on the weekends to help kids with their work and to play the game of basketball. I consider myself a hard worker and I try to set the example of being a caring individual and making a difference in the lives of people in need. Leadership is about knowing what your strengths and weaknesses are, based on the things that you can do to get better in life. Knowing your role as a leader is what counts.
Remind me to forget, the love I have for you.
Remind me to forget, every time I look at you,
In those beautiful brown eyes of yours,
That shine so bright,
Even more so in the sunlight.

Remind me to forget, all the memories so sweet.
Remind me to forget,
All the sparks that fly when our eyes meet.
The touch of your hands on my body that makes me shiver
From limb to limb.

Remind me to forget, the future we talk about.
Of the house with the white picket fence,
Like we see in the movies,
Of the half a dozen kids we will produce,
Who have your eyes and my smile.

Remind me to forget, how my family hovered over you,
When they met you for the first time,
How they said we look great together, and how we look alike.
Not to mention, how beautiful our kids are going to be.

Remind me to forget, the late night cravings I get,
And you’d get dressed and go to the store.
Remind me to forget, the nights I waited up for you, and scared you at the
door.
That priceless look on your face,
The feel of your hands around my waist,
When you draw me close to you for a kiss,
How night after night I wish,
That those precious moments will never end.
Who am I kidding, there is nothing worth forgetting.
I changed my mind,
I take it all back.
Remind me,
Please remind me, never to forget.
I was walking down the street one sunny morning,
With a lot on my mind,
When something caught my attention,
It was the most beautiful bird I had ever seen.
It had yellow stripes all over its body, reddish coloring at the tip of its wings,
Its beak a golden brown and its feet with black spots all over them.

I took out my phone and took a picture,
Then I was on my way.

A few seconds down the street, I heard a sound, so I turned around.
It was that same bird lying on the ground.
I went to it as fast as I could;
Thank heavens, it was still alive.
It was just a broken wing; to me it was anyway,
But to that beautiful bird, it was its life.

I picked it up slowly, and brought it home with me,
I placed it in a shoebox, like I see them do on TV.
I quickly went on my computer to find out what to do,
It says to tie a flat stick to the wing, with a string, to help it be brand new.

This bird made an unusual sound, unusual as its color.
It was between a chirp and the sound of a pigeon, whatever that is called.

Now, it was time to find out what this bird can eat,
I have seen pigeons eat all sorts of things, in the park and in the subway stations,
Which for certain this bird isn’t,
I decided to search some more, to find out its species,
Of all the birds I saw, only two came close.

One had yellow stripes all over its body, with a golden beak.
The other had reddish coloring at the tip of its wings,
With black spots all over its feet.
These birds were two different species,
Apparently brought together to make this one little bird

My mind started to roam, wondering how they did it.
I have seen dogs, cats and all sorts of animals, not to mention humans. But
never birds.
Then I remembered, I needed to get some bird food.

I grabbed my keys and ran to the car, knowing the bird would be safe.
I had no dogs, no cats, and no kids around that would provoke this injured fellow.
So I continued on my journey.
I went to the pet store, got what I needed.
And went home as fast as I could.
The bird was lying exactly where I left it.

I gave it some bird food to eat, and it ate it all up,
The way only a bird can.

But wait! What is happening?
Why am I laying in bed?
It was all a dream? Sigh.
I can not believe it, it felt so real.

I should have known it was not real,
Because I can not drive for nothing,
It really hurts, knowing.

My heart is aching; knowing that poor injured bird is left alone,
With me not there to help it back to health.

I am going back to sleep,
Hopefully, I can go back to where I was last.
I hope it is still alive and on its way to recovery.
Hold on little guy, I am on way.

Back to my dream I go.
The world I live in is not like any other.
The world I live in, all kind of things happen every single day.
People getting killed,
Babies being born,
First black President being sworn in,
Relationships being broken.

The world I live in, lives are being destroyed.
Hearts are being torn to threads.
But how you deal with it is the big catch.

I live in a world where anything is possible,
You try things you never thought possible,
Then there are things that you are more than capable of.
Like lying, cheating, drinking, smoking, and not being honest with yourself.
You tell yourself, you'll do this
But instead you do the next.
That is normally the wrong choice.
We are all addicts in our own way,
We promise to do something, anything -
As long as we get what we want.
Even if it hurts the next person,
The one you made that promise to.
You know you will hurt that person eventually,
Because you had only agreed in order to get what you want.

I see that every day in the world I live in.
I get those promises all the time,
And of course I believe them.
That’s the whole point of being naïve.
You always turn a blind eye to the truth.

At times I wonder,
Why is it that the world we live in so confusing?
Why can’t we just ask for what we really want?
Why can’t we just say what we mean?
Why can’t we just be who we really are?
Instead of pretending all the time.
Knowing the truth always comes out and it normally hurts.
Why is the world we live in so frustrating?
Why can’t this world be a place you actually want to be a part of?
A place you are comfortable in, a place where you feel safe -
Safe enough to want to produce a next generation.
And not having to wonder about the outcome.
That’s the world I want to live in,
In my next lifetime, that’s the world I’ll be praying to be a part of.
Even if it’s just a fairy tale world.
TRAVELING IN MY BODY

Having you near me and feeling your body makes me nervous,
But I like it.
You are the only one I want.
To feel your breath when you are traveling in my body
Makes me fly to another place.

You want to travel to each country in my body and I let you do it.
Because when you do it, you not only know
Those countries,
You also know my soul.

Every time you touch me,
You are drawing a border line
That divides each part of my body
Where you really focus.
I see those lines in places where they’re
Really significant for you,
One of them is in my eyes and
I realize that you drew that line there
Because through my eyes, you can see my soul.

The second one is near my neck because
You can express all the things I want to hear:
“ I love you”
“You are the one I want”
“I want to be the rest of life my with you”
Just making me feel involved in your feelings.

And the last line is my belly because
It is where I have a little part of you
That belongs to both of us –
That combination of DNA -
That combination of blood and love.
At the end of the day
That little part of us is growing
As my body grows,
As our love grows.
And as our time together extends.
And remember that, feeling your body
And feeling your hands traveling on my body
Is the only thing that I want.
She looks sad.
This is not the life that she expected.

I know that, even though she doesn’t tell me.
All is expressed in her pearls, and I just look at her
And think about what our purpose in this world is.

I don’t know and that make me feel sad,
As pensive as her.
I love her, and those sad pearls
Make me feel helplessly unable to do anything.

Those two pearls were surrounded by the ocean,
And at the same time, they looked
Like those birds when they cannot find their nest.
Maybe she feels like those birds because
She is afraid of being in this world –
Completely different from the one she knows.
Or, just afraid of those dreams that she couldn’t catch.

But it’s not only her who has her pearls
Surrounded by the ocean.
He also has pearls like that.
His pearls are falling like autumn leaves
And they look like those streets when it rains.

But I will make those pearls look like those deserts
Where water is so difficult to find.
I will make those pearls look like the sunrise
On a spring morning.
I want to see in them a wide smile, like the ocean.
I want to see them bright and resplendent
Like stars, and
Shining like those important pieces of the universe.