

Paper 1: Literacy Narrative

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Growing up as a hispanic woman, my identity was always revolving around men. Do this and men will want you, don't do that or you'll never be loved, etc.. stories like How to tame a wild tongue, have opened my eyes to the trauma that many generations have gone through. Centuries later and the expectations towards women still haven't changed. While fighting against these stereotypes and many other things, I've managed to find peace in writing. Writing is where I get my knowledge from and it is something I hope to continue to improve on and grow in over the years.

When I first started school in the United States, I dreaded the idea of having to write anything as simple as my name. I didn't know any English, so I knew I was going to struggle. With my poor reading and writing skills, I avoided getting picked on to read in class. I would either go to the restroom or pretend like I was writing notes. However, after my father passed away I didn't have a proper way to communicate the way that I was feeling. My science teacher, who I became close with, gave me a leather, green journal to write my thoughts in. I wasn't only writing about my feelings in that journal, I was writing poems, stories, short stories, creative writing, songs, etc... My science teacher has been one of the biggest influences on my writing career. After months of writing, I noticed that my English became stronger and that I could finally understand what I was reading. I started to raise my hand during class to answer questions, I stopped going to the restroom during reading time, and I started to voluntarily share my poems and my short stories. My science teacher, Emily, didn't only help me find a proper way to let my emotions out but also helped me find the strength within myself to educate my mind. Someone else who has influenced the way I talk is every Hispanic/Latino artist that I listened to growing up. When you listen to an artist who looks like you or sounds like you, it becomes almost impossible to look the other way. Artists like Daddy Yankee, Calle 13, Don Omar, etc... have all influenced the way I talk and have influenced me to embrace my accent, not hide it, and show the world that you have Latin blood. Because of artists like them, I never hide my accent when speaking English or Spanish. Our accents represent us just like our flags do.

Where I am from, my people all look quite different. Some of us are dark-skinned, others light skin, brown, etc. The color of our skin has affected the way we talk, how we talk, and our accents. It affects the kind of opportunities we get in life. Even in my country, a Latin country, the color of our skin always affected how we were treated by others. Our accent was determined by our income, as well as what kind of words we picked up and how we talked. Code-switching was something I had to do very often. For example, with my friends, en el Barrio, I would talk in Spanish with a heavy accent. I picked up on the words they would use and the way they acted as well. I didn't want them to think I was too "fresa" (which means to bougie) to be around them. With people like my sisters, we always speak Spanglish. As we were learning English, it was often difficult to say certain words so we just started to mix both English and Spanish in our conversations. Even now that we are both fluent in English, we still speak Spanglish. However, with my mom, the accent and language I picked up in my hometown is something I avoid using. My mother is very set on her expectations. Speaking the Spanish I grew up using in my neighborhood would be too "ghetto" or "inappropriate" to use, but if I speak Spanglish Tengo un nopal en la Frente (I am white-washed). Therefore, when I am with my mom, I speak just Spanish, but not any type of Spanish, formal Spanish.

As a Latina, I enjoy reading stories from Latin women/men. In my culture, there are many stereotypes about women. How women should act, how they should dress, how they should speak etc. "How to tame a wild tongue" is a beautiful meaningful story that touches on these subjects. The story gives a realistic point of view of what it is like to be a woman in a Hispanic/Latin community. Most of us are always told that our tongue is unprofessional yet if we don't speak like most of our people do, we are brought down by trying to be "American". Just like in the story, we are called traitors, whitewashed, or a no sabo kid. In my family, people have very sexist, unrealistic expectations toward women. Growing up, I would constantly get into trouble for eating before men at family events, as well as being told to be quiet because men don't like loud women. The biggest thing that seems to be a discussion in my family is a girl's

virginity. As a little girl, and even now, I am always told by people that once I start to become intimate, I will automatically lose my worth. This story connects to me and the unresolved trauma that these expectations have brought to me in life. While this story was released generations ago, it gives me a huge reality shake that these expectations are still alive today in many households. This story doesn't only connect to me as a Hispanic but also as a woman.

Ever since I started writing in that leather, green journal, I developed a connection with poems and short stories. My writing is something I will always have and it is something that nothing, not even my identity, can take away from me. While I haven't focused my studies on becoming a writer, becoming one has always been one of my dreams. Something I would like to get better at is creative writing and short stories. While I already know a lot about creative writing and short stories, I know there is a lot of space for improvement. I want writing to be a hobby for me. Something I can go home and do after work because I enjoy it so much. I want to publish short stories and poems and share the art of knowledge with the world. However, I know I am only going to be able to do this if I continue to expand my knowledge and learn more about creative writing and short stories.

While I had to surpass many obstacles in life, I am grateful that it took me to where I am today. Thanks to all the big influential people I've met in life, I've been able to love writing as well as the beauty behind it. With writing comes knowledge, and knowledge is power and women carry that power, especially when we are fighting all the stereotypes that our culture has given us throughout the years. With the power I have, I hope to develop better creative writing skills as well as get better at writing poetry so that one day I can deliver art that many people can relate to just like I can relate to artists like Gloria Anzaldua.