

Cultural Daily

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Finish Line: My Journey to College

Marypaz Karen Miranda · Wednesday, August 3rd, 2016

(“Tomorrow’s Voices Today” is a new series curated by poet and educator Mike Sonksen.)

My life has always been like a race, like every runner I have gone through shin splints, headaches, weariness, blisters, and stomach cramps. These are all marks, and pain which I have endured that represent how much running means to me, they represent how much and how hard I trained to win a race or improve my time and how good it felt to cross that finish line after I thought I couldn’t go on anymore. These are all metaphors as to how my life, and no matter what pain I’m going through, like the saying goes, “There’s a light at the end of the tunnel.”

I am here sitting down with feet, legs and knees that have taken years of cement, dirt and grass pounding, a heart that went through heartbreak and betrayal, a brain that went through exhaustion, now talking about my journey to college and how I got to where I am.

Reality

For four years I would wake up at 6:00 A.M and leave my house at 7:50 A.M. I would not get home until 5:30 P.M because I had practice or other extra curricular activities. There were days where I would come home with heavy eyes from how exhausted I was. I would normally start my homework and studying at around 7:30 P.M. and would not go to sleep until midnight. I thank high school for teaching me how to function with 4 hours of sleep and how much of a best friend coffee is. Nobody told me how hard high school was, I was told that it was easy and fun but as soon as I got out of my mom’s car, kissed her goodbye and got that “First day of high school” picture to post on my instagram I entered the doorways, to my surprise the halls were nothing like *High School Musical* or the movies you see. Prom is not the best night of your life, going to that party will not make you popular and dating that boy who YOU know does not care about you will not make you happy. I had no idea my life was bound to change within four years.

Freshman to senior year was nothing but late night study cram sessions, and wanting to just give up. There were many times when I had the temptation to choose sleep over studying for that midterm. I had my mom remind me that it will all be worth it at the end, and that there will be times when I feel like quitting, whether it be on the race course or academically. Nonetheless, I knew that I should always finish what I started because pain is temporary and pride is forever. She was right, the fact that I was ambitious in my high school years allowed me to walk my graduation with chords, chevrons, and medals.

Let me share with you something that one of my favorite poets, Reyna Bidy, wrote: “You’re special, whether you think so or not, You shouldn’t have to beg to be treated with respect, loyalty, or love... believe me you’re entitled to it.” This quote is special to me because it was in

high school, when I joined my Campus Ministry team and found the sport of running when I found my potential and capability. It was where I learned to love myself, and how I was able to get through the toughest times in my life. It was through running when I would escape from the “real world” that consisted of boys, stressful days at school, family drama, and whatever a typical teenage girl goes through. I would simply just put on my earphones, blast my music and begin running, surrounded by trees, cars passing by, breathing in the smell of wet concrete, and wood. Running was my drug, my therapy and my happy hour. Anyone that knows me, knows how running became my therapy and how much I enjoy talking about it as much as I enjoy doing it. My campus minister would always express to us that we are “Beautiful and loved.” When you hear this twice a day it eventually makes you believe it.



I remember coming on my first day of high school with the mindset that I was not going to talk to anyone, be involved in anything, but that I was there to focus on my studies, do my homework, and mind my own business. Boy was I wrong. I attended San Gabriel Mission High School, a school that opened up many opportunities for me which enabled me to find myself and what I am capable of. I was a shy and reserved girl who was terrified of public speaking and just talking to people who I barely met. Now, walking out those doors at graduation, I am able to give presentations, read speeches in front of a crowd and interact with everyone I come across with. I was that honor roll student who tried to balance out having a fun high school experience while at the same time maintaining good grades. That “mindset” that I had planned was a total failure and I’m glad it was. I learned that life is all about being surrounded by people, it is our human instinct to not be alone, but to be in community. My school itself was a total of 260 girls, not your average high school population. It was its own little community. A community where I found who I really was.

Making the most of my high school years was something I tried very hard to do. Balancing out classes and extracurricular activities was manageable and I feel like that prepared me really well for college and whatever lies ahead for me. I was challenged every day in high school whether it be in sports, academics or personally. Nonetheless, I learned not to shy away from any situation whether it be a distressing situation, but to get through it no matter how rocky it is and I was grateful that I didn’t fall back or step away from challenges because they only made me stronger and able to endure the next obstacle that comes my way.

The Hurt

Trust, something we want from every relationship, whether it be from friends, family, boyfriend, or someone else. Trust means you believe that person will treat you well, and it is something that is not handed over but earned.

Trusting others has never been easy for me. My journey to learning how to trust others has had its ups and downs, but it’s been a journey that’s taught me that sometimes it takes a wrong turn to get you to the right place. In my 18 years of living I’ve been let down a few times by the people I thought would be the ones to protect me. One starting off with my dad leaving my mom and I. I was seven years old. I held a grudge against my dad for leaving us. How could he just leave his daughter that needs reassurance, protection, and redirecting? As ten years passed, my dad decided to slowly make his way into my life again. I tried blocking him out of my personal life because he didn’t deserve to be a part of my achievements, to attend my school events, or races. Although I wished that I had that relationship every girl at my school had with their dad, I had a that grudge in my heart stopping me from allowing him back in my life. I still saw my dad, but it didn’t feel the same. I grew distant from him, I no longer wanted to talk to him or hang out with him because I was mad at him for breaking my trust. It was the second semester of my sophomore year when my mom would talk to me about moving in with my dad. I was against it, although I did see he wasn’t the man he was before, he had gotten better and changed for the best. I was scared of letting my

dad back in again so my answer to whenever my mom would ask me how I would feel about moving back in with him was that I wasn't ok with it. Later, she wasn't asking me anymore, she would simply tell me that my dad would be moving back in with us whether I liked it or not. I wasn't worried because I knew my mom wouldn't go behind my back and do something I wouldn't be okay with.

I was wrong, I felt betrayed when I saw my dad bringing his stuff in, and moving in with us. I didn't talk to my mom or dad for a whole month, they both betrayed my trust. How did my mom expect to trust my dad again after so long?

I came to find myself as someone that was always mad, or upset. I was tired of feeling like this and I knew I had to do something about this grudge I was holding against my dad because it wasn't an ache I wanted to have for the rest of my life. Little by little I started talking to him, spending time with him and as our relationship began to heal he became my protector, my supporter. If I had let this come in the way of me and my father I would've never won the relationship with my dad which I had been yearning to have for ten years. I finally started trusting my dad and my mom once again, and I'm glad that I didn't choose to be closed off from them because if I did, that would've been the biggest mistake of my life. Although I am not the typical "daddy's girl" I still am closer to my dad than I ever thought I'd be. I admire his change in attitude for the benefit of myself and my mom. Giving him a second chance to come back in my life was an obstacle, but this obstacle, this wrong turn, led me to the right place.

Letting Go

It was in middle school when we became good friends, he was in eighth grade and I was in seventh grade. We would text every day before and after school, even after we saw each other at school. We talked during break, lunch and after school as he waited with me in front of the school for my ride to get here. It was the typical middle school best friend relationship. Our friendship soon turned into a crush. Two years later with me being a freshman and him a sophomore, our friendship grew stronger and stronger, he soon asked me to be his girlfriend and of course I said yes. Everything seemed so perfect, my first boyfriend was my best friend, we talked about everything, saw each other several times a week, talked 24/7, it was just an average high school relationship. I trusted him, he would never hurt me, or so I thought. Two years into our relationship, he stopped talking to me and cut all communication with me. I had no idea why. Did I do something wrong? I was heartbroken—the first guy I ever liked and trusted betrayed me. How could I go on without someone I talked to all day, everyday, to not having any communication at all? I couldn't sleep because my mind was overflowing with thoughts. My best friend had left me, the one I would tell all my problems to at the end of each day, the one that comforted me when I was feeling down. Months were passing by and I knew it was time to move on and help myself out. I had to take my time and mind away from that person. How do you go from talking to someone everyday to not talking at all? It was hard for me to let go and move on. I became angry, and depressed and I was in denial, which is normal because it is all part of the grieving process we all go through once or twice in our lifetime. I was tired of letting people in who just wanted to take my heart and run.

I decided to finally let go when I graduated high school. I thought our friendship was something too great to let go of, but greater things can only happen when you let go of anything that disturbs your peace of mind, gives you anxiety and brings you regret. I promised myself I would start eating healthier, eating more, getting more sleep, and taking better care of myself. I knew I wanted to meet new people and leave the people who did not belong in my future to be left in the past. It was because of this heartbreak where I now know the type of people to surround myself with and I would have never gotten to experience the beauty of growth if I was not able to experience a bad relationship. I now know which friends and relationships to truly value and is something that I

hope to take with me to college.

It was all worth it.



The biggest challenge I still face is preparing for the future only because the future is so unpredictable. I do not know anything about what is bound to happen a week, or even five years from today, but something that gives me hope other than just fear is the fact that my future is still unwritten so no matter what circumstance I'm in, I can always go out and write it. Although I have not yet crossed that finish line, I know my life is going to continue to be a cross country course, rocky, muddy and maybe even a smooth course at times, but no matter my circumstance, I have the ability to lead and write my own plans for my future and try to run towards that goal.

These turmoils or "rocky courses" in my life are something that I am thankful for. I now have two parents who support me in my academics, and I know what people are worth worrying about. I am at a point in my life where I am happy and content after thinking I would never be happy again. I found light at the end of the tunnel.

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