

The Good Times, The Stress, and How I Was Dressed
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First day of Elementary School

My elementary school was PS. 243 and it was two blocks away from my house on the corner of Troy Ave and Bergen St. in Brooklyn. My brother was already attending the school and was in third grade while I was enrolling into the school as a first grader. I was nervous because I did not know what to expect and my mom had already went through a lot during my brother's first few years being there. I was hoping for the best and I know she was also.

My mom always made sure that at least for the first week of school me and my brother looked our best and had our uniform on. It was not mandatory in our school but she liked how coordinated and clean we looked when we did have it on. The same feeling grew on me as well and I began to love wearing my uniform, besides, it was easier to throw on than thinking of what to wear.

The day before the first day, my mom took my brother to the barber shop to get a haircut and took me to the salon to relax and straighten my hair. When we got home she pulled out our backpacks from a closet near the living room. My brother had a blue marvel backpack with his favorite superhero on it and I had a pink Barbie one, who at the time was my favorite superhero. In that same closet, my mom pulled out school supplies that she used to buy on sale months before school started so that she would not have to worry about it later on.

The next morning, I woke up early to get ready for school. I was always more punctual and organized than my brother, so it took him a little longer to finally get up. My mom woke up after us and double checked that our uniform looked good. I had my white cotton button up shirt, a navy blue necktie, navy blue pleated mini skirt, white nylon tights and black leather shoes. My brother had his white cotton button up shirt, navy blue pants, black leather belt, navy blue tie and black leather shoes. My mom pulled out a polaroid camera and took a picture of us. She then put on her slippers and walked us to our school.

I was so anxious and nervous that it made me nauseous. We walked to the school yard and found the line where my class was at. My mom hugged me goodbye and walked to the other side to find my brother's class. A girl behind me gave me a compliment on how she liked my backpack and uniform. We became friends by the end of the day. For the rest of the week I tried to recreate that same look, or something similar.

The Purple Girl

I received a lot of hand me downs when I was in Elementary school. My mom had a close friend that lived up the block from us on Troy Ave and Park Place. Her friend's daughter always had a lot of clothes that she would give away and almost all of them were given to me. It was like Christmas except the presents were in a huge black garbage bag.

My favorite piece was this dark violet corduroy jacket with a dark silver zipper and buttons and its matching pants. It went so well with these white, pink and purple sneakers that my mom had bought for me. I waited for the perfect day to wear the outfit, and so I kept it in my closet until then.

My uncle was hosting a family dinner at his new home in the Bronx later that month. I knew for sure that I wanted to wear that outfit especially since it had been hiding in my closet for almost a month now. When I put it on, my brother made fun of me and said that I looked like a grape, but that didn't bother me because I loved it so much. My parents joked about how I always gravitate towards the color purple. They called me '*la niña purple*' or the purple girl.

The Light Up Sneakers

Growing up my mom never really liked the thought of me wearing sneakers. She would always buy them for my brother because having the newest jordans was a trend for boys and not so much for girls. It did not really bother me, I was used to wearing boots, flats, and heels.

One day my mom came home with two pairs of light up sketchers. The sketchers were mostly white with pink and purple detailing around the laces and bottom of the shoe. I did not know who the second pair was for but I knew one of them was for me. She told me that I had to save them for our upcoming trip to Dominican Republic in December. We packed it in my luggage and I waited until our trip which was in a few more days..

When we got to Dominican Republic, we drove to Bani, which is where my step father's family is from. I could not wait to get there because I was ready to put on my sneakers. As soon as we arrived, I rushed into one of the rooms with my luggage but my mother stopped me and told me that I had to wait until I met someone.

A girl walked in the room with my step father and he introduced me to her, it was his daughter. She said her name was Karla and she had beautiful long silky black hair, tanned skin and a friendly smile. I smiled back and was happy because I now had a sister and one who was close to my age. My mom pulled out both light up sketchers and gave it to us. She said that now we can match like sisters.

We immediately threw them on and Karla asked if I wanted to play with the other kids in the neighborhood. I said yes and we ran outside to meet up with the others. It was 7pm and it was already dark outside. The kids suggested that we played hide and seek tag. It was so much easier to hide outside since it was so dark. Karla and I forgot that we had our light up sketchers on. We were tagged so many times, but it was fun because no one knew which one of us was running. All they saw was the pink light up shoes running around.

Brooklyn Jesuit Prep

Growing up, my mom never had to worry about my grades in school because she knew that I always tried to excel in all of my classes. When I got to the 4th grade, my teacher and my principal told my mom that there was a private school that opened and that they were enrolling students. It was a middle school that held 5th to 8th grade students and that this was the perfect opportunity for me to go since I was finishing up my 4th grade year.

My mom did not know what to think since my brother had graduated from this elementary school and went to a middle school not too far from home. The fact that I would be leaving my elementary school before graduating, go to a school that was farther away than she had wanted me to go and she had to pay for it was just too much for her to decide at the moment. My teacher told her that this was a great opportunity and that I was excelling further than the students in this school, going to a private school would be better. My mom took her advice and took the chance.

Before starting at the school, I had to take an exam in May with other students to see if I was smart enough to be in the school. A month later I received a letter that I was accepted. Brooklyn Jesuit Prep was located on the corner of Sterling place and Classon Ave in Brooklyn. The school was very small, it held 80 people which included the students, faculty and staff. Each grade was divided by gender: 5th grade boys class and 5th grade girls class and etc. Each class was between 10-12 children, so each grade was no more than 25 children.

The school had mandatory “summer camp” which is where the students go to the school for the month of July and we were taught math and English so that we would be more advanced by the time the school year starts. We would also have activities throughout the day to make going to school in the summer more fun.

During this time we had to wear uniform which we bought from the school. It was a forest green short sleeve polo shirt that says Brooklyn Jesuit Prep in script on the left side. The polo shirt was so thick and rough that without an undershirt it could scratch your body, so I always wore a tank top underneath. We were allowed to wear any black bottoms of our choice but I always went with pants. We also could wear any shoes as long as it was black so most of the time I wore boots or flats.

My mom took me to school on the B45 every day so that I could learn how to go to school on my own by the time school year started. Everyday I would complain about how ugly the uniform looked and how I looked like the Grinch. She would laugh and say “stop it, it looks nice.” I knew she was lying.

The Denim Overall Dress

Being in a school where I only wore uniform made me not care about how I was dressed outside of school. On the weekends I either wore a plain t shirt and jeans or my pajamas at home. However, summer vacation was around the corner and I had to go shopping because I had nothing to wear that was not uniform.

My birthday, June 12th, was near and since it was at the ending of the school year I wanted to take advantage and get clothes as my birthday gifts. I was turning 12 and my father, who at the time was with wife #2, told me that he had work but that he will send his wife to go shopping with me and to not be shy to ask for anything that I wanted. Wife #2 was not the prettiest women my father has been with but she sure was the sweetest. She was tall, had pale white skin and rocked a short black bob. She looked older than my father due to all the wrinkles on her face. She was nice nonetheless so I did not mind going shopping with her.

Wife #2 agreed to take me shopping and took me this boutique on Graham Ave in Brooklyn. We stopped at this boutique and hanging near the entrance was this beautiful dark denim overall dress. It had a little pocket in the front and a puffy bottom which made it stand out compared to the typical overall dress. I instantly fell in love with it and without hesitation told Wife #2 to buy it for me. When I got home I put the dress in my closet to save it and wear it for the perfect occasion.

The weekend after, my step sister Katrina came to visit and I showed her the gift that Wife #2 gave me. She agreed that it was very beautiful and unique. Two weeks later, I was scrolling through MySpace and I see that she took a picture with a jumper dress similar to mine. I thought that she had copied me and so I was flattered but also upset that she would go and buy the same dress as mine. I go in my closet to make sure that it was the same dress and I can't find it. I called my mom and step dad and told them that my step sister stole my dress. They told me to make sure before I start accusing people but I knew for sure that she did.

I messaged her through MySpace and she did not respond. I commented under her picture asking why she had stole my dress, she deleted the comment. I cried a lot that day. My step dad told me that it was wrong of her and he will talk to her and her mother about it. He said, however, that it wasn't a big deal and that him and my mom would buy me another one. It wasn't just about the dress but the fact that my dad had gave Wife #2 money to buy it for me as a birthday gift and the fact that now I had people stealing from my own closet. When we went to the store we found that the dress was sold out. I was hurt. A while later my step sister had apologized and had given the dress back. It was worn out, faded and lost its puffy bottom shape. I forgave her and as soon as she left I threw the dress out. It no longer had the same meaning from when I first received it.

The Red Hoodie

My mom went to the Dominican Republic often, especially after my grandfather's death in 2007. A year after, during my 8th grade year, she was going there the day after thanksgiving. She told my brother and I that we could not go because we would miss a lot of school days since she was going for a month. She went with my little sister Adriany and my step father Carlos and left us with my step father's niece, Stephanie. Stephanie was in her early twenties and had a bubbly personality and was fun to be around. My brother wanted to stay at my father's house but my mom refused since she knew that my father would let him do whatever he wanted to do. So instead my brother went during the weekends and on weekdays he stayed at our home.

One month turned into three as my brother and I waited for my mom to return back home. She said that there was a lot going on that she would be back the following month. I did not have a coat to wear since I had outgrew them and I thought my mom was going to buy me one when she got back but she never did. All I had was a leather jacket and the weather was getting too cold for the jacket to keep me warm. I would layer the clothes that I had but it still wasn't enough, I needed a coat.

After school, my best friend Amanda would always invite me to her house which was around the corner from me on Troy Ave and Bergen street. One day after school, Amanda's mother had to take her shopping for the winter season and asked if I wanted to come along and since I had nothing else to do, I went. We went to Atlantic Mall in downtown Brooklyn and walked into a store called Daffy's. Amanda and her mom were going through the racks of clothes while I looked around and waited. I was shivering in my leather jacket and Amanda's mom noticed and picked out a red zip up hoodie from the rack and told me to try it on. It was a soft cotton hoodie with shearling inside and had a silver zipper which matched perfectly with the silver zippers on

my jacket. When I tried it on it fit perfectly to my body. She offered to buy it for me and although I refused, she did it anyways. I couldn't thank her enough.

As soon as we left the store, I put on the sweater underneath my jacket. I was finally warm. As we walked to the B45 bus stop across the street, we realized that it had started to snow. Thank God I had this sweater. I wore that hoodie everyday during that winter season and it became my favorite item in my closet.

The Orange Outfit

At Brooklyn Jesuit Prep, it was mandatory to wear uniform except for certain occasions and holidays which the school announced. However, the 8th graders were allowed to dress down the first Friday of every month. Although it does not seem like a lot, we were extremely happy to not wear uniform all the time like the other grades. I was happy about it at first, but as money became tight in my home since my mom went away, buying clothes to look nice on these days was not really an option for me.

It was springtime and the weather was getting warmer. All I had was winter clothing and nothing that was trending during this time. We were about to get another dress down day and so I went to my mother's room and searched in all of her closets and drawers to see if I could find something. My mom was a shopaholic and always had a lot of clothes. Although we were not exactly the same size, there were a few items of hers that did fit me.

As I searched through her things, I found a short orange plaid vest. During this time, putting a vest over a tshirt was very trendy and so I was happy to find that piece, but now I thought what do I wear with it? I put the vest over a white cotton short sleeve t shirt of mine paired with dark denim jeans. The outfit was almost complete but I did not have any shoes to match with it. I rumbled through my mom's closet again. There I found a pair of converse sneakers that were white with orange laces and orange rubber bottoms. I have found my outfit.

When I went to class on dress down day, I received so many compliments on my outfit. They mentioned how well coordinated it was and how I managed to wear the color orange so nicely. I thought of it as such a great accomplishment on such little time. However, I did not think about having to do it again a month later. Now instead of being happy for dress down day like my classmates, I was starting to dread it.

Middle School Graduation

It was late May and my mom still has not returned from Dominican Republic. She kept saying that she would be back next month but as the next month came, she had not return. At this point I thought she was never coming back. My grandmother had come from DR in February to stay with me and my brother and sent Stephanie back home. Apparently she was not being the best babysitter. I had begged my mom to come home to help me find a graduation dress because I needed a second opinion and I definitely did not want it from my grandma. She laughed and said she'll try her best to.

My grandma and I went to Graham Ave and found this boutique that sold wedding gowns and prom dresses and there we found this long beautiful turquoise dress. It was a halter neck with silver beadings around the chest and in a flowy chiffon material, it was perfect. We bought silver heels to go with the dress but the dress was too long to see them.

The day before graduation I went to the hair salon and did an updo with twists. It did not come out how I imagined, I hated it. I called my mom and she told me that she was going to try her best to make it for my graduation. My father told me that he was unable to make it because he

had work. My uncle told me he was going to try but that it wasn't guaranteed. I imagined having a lot of family members there to support me but all I had was my brother and grandmother.

On the day of graduation, I gave my brother and grandmother tickets to the graduation and told them the time that they had to be there. I went to my best friend's house to have her sister do my makeup. Once we were ready, her mom got us a cab so that we wouldn't get dirty on our way there since it had started to drizzle. We took pictures at the school and then rehearsed for graduation. When graduation started, I looked everywhere for my brother and grandmother and did not see them. My name was called and I went up and as soon as I came down I saw them walking into the ceremony, they had missed my name. I was upset. Once the ceremony ended, people came up to me to congratulate me but all I wanted to do was go home. There was a celebration after but I decided not to stay. I asked my grandmother if she had the money that was left over from the dress to get a cab. She said she forgot it home so we had to take the bus.

At this point I was so upset that I started to cry. Everyone on the bus asked if I was okay but I ignored it. Once I got home I called my mom but she did not pick up. I called my dad and he did not pick up either. I cried myself to sleep on my mother's bed with my graduation dress. The next day I woke up, still in my dress. I walked to the living room and asked my grandmother to take a picture of me because I forgot to do so yesterday. Once she did I took off the dress, showered and laid in bed in my pajamas. A few hours later, my mom had come home.

My Burgundy and Gray Uniform.

I went to St. Saviour High School: an all girls, private and catholic high school. It was a small school located on 6th street between 8th ave and prospect park west in Park Slope, Brooklyn.

I remember I wanted to go there because all of my friends from middle school were going as well and I had a half scholarship. I was already used to going to a private middle school and so I thought a private high school would be just the same. I regretted it after the first year.

I hated everything about the school. From the drama of the students to the drama with the teachers and nuns. It seemed as though the school was more concerned about money than the education of the students which was the opposite of what my middle school was like. We had to pay for everything: tuition, lunch, sports, trips, annual marathons to raise money for the school and more. The school was so expensive and yet they could not afford to get air conditioning for

the classrooms. The school was a scam from the beginning. I begged my mom to let me go to a public school or at least a charter school but she said no. She said I wanted to come to that school so now I have to stick with it until the end. I prayed that the end was near. Although I was stuck in this tragic school, I atleast had my friends to make the years go by quicker. I guess the only thing that was decent was the school uniform.

Our uniform was a burgundy short sleeve polo shirt that said SSHS in the corner. Freshmen and Sophomores wore a burgundy plaid mini skirt that was pleated all around. Juniors and Seniors wore and gray mini skirt with pleats however in the front there was a flap that went over the pleats. The girls would roll their skirts to make them shorter or get them hemmed. Although our skirts had to be no shorter than three inches above the knee, everyone made their skirts shorter no matter what our punishment was. I guess one could say that we fell into the stereotypical catholic school girl image.

We were all given gray slacks as well, although, we were only allowed to wear them from a certain date in November until a certain date March which they usually announce every year. Other than that we were forced to wear skirts most of the time. We also had to buy a specific pair of loafers that the school sold for our uniform. It was a hideous, grandma looking, black leather pair of loafers with a small heel that squeaked sometimes when you walked. I hated that school so much but I think I hated those loafers even more.

Floral Maxi Dress

During high school, my parents owned a *bodega* on the corner of Wyona Ave and Atlantic Ave in East NY. I had to work there after school to help pay off my tuition. Although it was very far, I enjoyed going there because I had made a lot friends in that area.

There was a group of guys that lived on Wyona Ave who had eventually became friends of mine. During the summer, we would pull out chairs from the store and hang out on the storefront. I had a crush on one of them and somehow I knew he had a crush on me as well. His name was Rafael and he was very sweet and charming. He was slightly shorter than me which bothered me a little but I tried my best to not let it get to me.

One hot Saturday afternoon, I walked passed my store in a long blue and green maxi dress with yellow flowers on it. It had teal beads that tied up like a halter around the neck. It gave a tropical vibe which is what I loved the most about it. Right before I had walked in, Rafael saw me from across the street and ran towards me. He told me that I looked beautiful and if he could take me on a date sometime. I blushed and said yes and ran inside the store. I did not want my mom to catch me flirting with him because I knew she would freak out. As soon as I got in the store, I got a message from him through Facebook and I told him that I would call him as soon as I got home. That night we spoke for hours until we fell asleep.

The Blue Bracelet

After three months of Rafael and I dating, we realized that it was getting harder and harder for us to see each other. My mother slowly started to figure out that we were dating and she started to become more strict with me. Rafael had started working at a hospital and so he would work longer hours than usual and by the time he got home, he would be too tired to even talk on the phone like how we used to.

One day, Rafael passed by the store after work to say hi to me since we have not seen each other in so long. He had a blue BB bracelet which were these jeweled balls wrapped around in a string to make a bracelet. These were very popular and expensive. I complimented on how nice it was and he took it off and said take it. I denied it at first but then he said that he wanted his girl to wear his bracelet, and so I did.

It did not take long for my mom to see the bracelet on my wrist. She immediately knew who it was from and told me to return it. I told her that it was a gift and she said men do not give gifts just because they want to, when they give its cause they want something in return. I disagreed with her but she did not care. She took the bracelet from me and told me to return it to him.

A week later I saw Rafael at the store and told him that I could not accept the bracelet because of my mother. He said maybe I can keep it but just not wear it, but what was the point of that. Later that month I had broken up with him. Being in a relationship with him was getting harder and harder because my mom was always on my back. I apologized and he understood. Two months later he had a new girlfriend. I did not care because we only dated for about 3 ½ months that summer.

Noel

On Thanksgiving in my Junior year, I did a morning shift at the *bodega* and it was raining very busy. In walks a very tall guy in a hoodie who goes to the deli and ask for a bacon egg and cheese sandwich and then walks out. A few minutes later he walks back in and grabs his

sandwich and goes to the counter to pay. There were so many people trying to pay that I could not keep up. He reaches out to give me his money and when I looked up I saw how he looked. He was handsome with bright hazel eyes and a gorgeous smile. I could've sworn that time froze for that very second that I saw him. Then out of nowhere he was gone. I was so mad that it was busy and that I could not at least flirt with him.

As the day went on, I was on the phone with my friend Jennifer, who lived across the street, and told her about the mystery guy at the store. Turns out she knew him and was slightly talking to him but she was interested in someone else. I asked her since she was not interested if I could try to talk to him instead. She said it was fine and somehow he added me on Facebook. He messaged me immediately and asked if I was the girl from the store and I laughed and replied yes. From then on we started to talk for months.

My mom went to DR during spring break so it was easier for me to see Noel especially since he always stopped by the store. On Easter Sunday, I wore a coral chiffon button up top with straight leg khaki pants and brown flats. My step father Carlos, who was watching over the store, thought me and my step siblings was home but instead we snuck over to Noel's house because he was having a movie night with his friends. There we had our first kiss. I was falling madly in love with him but little did I know I was being played.

Noel was still in love with his ex Crystal and although they had broken up, he remained in contact with her and constantly wrote to her under her Facebook posts. I confronted him about it and denied it. Noel and I were never in an official relationship but it always seemed like we were. There was a lot of drama between me, him Crystal, his best friend Gill and my friend Jennifer. After 3 years of constant on and off arguments, I had cut him off. He did the most damage to me out of all the guys I dated because he made it hard for me to trust. He also went back to Crystal which made me feel like I was always second to him.

Years later, he found my instagram and tried to catch up. He had moved to California and got engaged to Crystal who was in the Army and was sent to California as well. They eventually broke up and he tried to talk to me again but I quickly declined. I was on to better things.

Blonde Hair

My Senior year of High School was a mess. I was in and out of school because my mom could not keep up with the school tuition and I was stressing about which college I was going to. I was also very insecure because I was constantly picked at from everyone because of height and how skinny I was. Family, friends and even guys that I liked would mention these things to me and hearing them all the time lead to me falling into depression.

My mom noticed how down I was but did not think I was depressed. She was going to DR during spring break again and asked if I wanted to go with her and my step sister Katrina. At first I declined but after realizing how stressed I was, I decided to go ahead and take the chance.

Before going, I realized that I wanted to change my look. I told my mom that I wanted ombre hair, which was a trend at the time. At first she said no because I was going to damage my hair but then on the day that we were leaving, a few hours before our flight, she decided to do it for me. She grabbed the bleached and started to bleach my hair and then right after she straightened it with the blow dryer.

My hair was lighter than what I expected and definitely not ombre. However, it did not look that bad although my hair was damaged. Right after she did my hair, we rushed to the airport to catch our flight. I finally felt like a different person with my new hair color.

The Brown Purse

I was never the type of girl to be interested in bags, accessories or even shoes. I always wore the same jewelry and carried around the same bag. During my Senior year, crossbody bags had become a trend and I was happy that I had one already.

My bag was a chestnut brown color with weaving around the edges, giving it a bohemian vibe. It had what looked like a flower, carved into the bag on the flap. The bag was small but carried so much in side of it. I carried it everywhere and I took it with me on my trip to DR with my mom and Katrina.

When I got back from my trip, my bag no longer looked the same. I guess the sun from DR had damaged it but it was now a different color brown and did not look as nice as it used to. I was going to throw my bag away but my mom ended up giving it to my little cousin. She said just because I do not like it does not mean that she will not. She was right, my cousin loved as much as I did when I first got it.

Prom Night.

My family was never a wealthy family, which was the misconception people thought of when they would hear that I went to a private middle school and high school. I had the opportunity because of my academics, never because we could afford it, which we couldn't.

In high school my family was going through a financial crisis and my mother could no longer afford to pay the small payments that was left over from the scholarship. We sold our old *bodega* and bought a new one on Wilson Ave between Dekalb Ave and Hart Street in Brooklyn. I had to work there after school and on weekends to help pay for the school. Every single check went towards it.

Prom was approaching and I wanted this beautiful royal blue dress with an intricate gold beading around the neckline. It was almost Egyptian like, it was form fitting and had a short train in the back. It was definitely out of our budget and we were already behind in school payments. The school's priest offered students who couldn't afford prom a chance to buy a dress and tickets that he would pay for. I refused of course. Finishing school was more important and I rather the money go towards that than prom.

There was a terrible thunderstorm on prom day. I had to work at the *bodega* and it was a slow business day due to the storm. As I sat behind the counter in the empty store, I scrolled through Instagram and watched all my friend post their prom pictures. I sat there with my step sister Ashley as we imagined about the beautiful blue dress and how my prom pictures would've looked like if I was there.

City Tech

In my Senior year of High School, I did not take the CUNY applications seriously because I thought that I was going to a SUNY school. I made sure that I got a good score for my SATS and good grades in all my classes so that I could receive a scholarship. My mom and I were bumping heads a lot and she was tried to get stricter on me which only made me want to rebel.

When I received my acceptance letters, I realized that the scholarships were not enough for me to go to the schools because I would have to pay thousands of dollars in school loans which did not want to due to what I went through with my high school tuition. I had no other choice but to choose a CUNY school. I wanted to go to Baruch but I was on the waitlist. My only options after that was either York College in Queens or Lehman College in the Bronx. Both schools were too

far from me and I did not know what to do. My friend was going to City Tech, a school that my brother and other people in my family went to. My advisor suggested that I ask for a relocation application and just apply to that school instead and so I did.

A month later classes had started and I was happy that I was finally a college student. I was wearing a boat neck burgundy 3/4 shirt, black jeans and black flats. After the damage that I had done to my hair due to the bleach, I decided to cut my hair into a short bob. Since my roots had grown out and the ends of my hair were still blonde, it looked like I finally had the ombre hair that I wanted.

First day of school went great as I had met so many people and got to see a few of my friends who also went there. I thought that I would be in the school temporarily as I would try to apply for Baruch the following semester.

Uniqlo

During my first year of college, my family had sold their store, which meant that I needed a new job. Because I did not have any retail experience, other than working at a *bodega* for about five years, it was hard for me to get a job.

At first I started a supermarket but I hated it and knew that I wanted to work with clothes, not with food and definitely not at minimum wage. I applied everywhere and eventually I had gotten a call back from Uniqlo and I was super excited. After two interviews, I got the job and started at the Uniqlo at Atlantic Mall, which was perfect since it was right next to the school and not too far from home.

At Uniqlo we did not have uniform but whatever we wore had to be black. Since I was so used to wearing anything at the *bodega*, I had to get used to this policy and had to stock up on black clothing. I usually wore a black long sleeve t shirt from H&M, black jeans and black flats or sneakers. Because I only wore black, I made sure that my lips were the pop of color. I used to come to work with all different color lipsticks just to make my boring black outfit look somewhat better.

Ever since then I had gotten so used to wearing lipsticks everyday that it became a habit and now I do not leave my house without something on my lips. During my time at Uniqlo, I had discovered my favorite lipstick shade which is this purplish pink color. It eventually became my signature lip color.

Andre

My friend Jennifer worked at the Kids Footlocker on Fulton street in Brooklyn during my Sophomore year in college. Because City Tech was a few blocks away, I would often visit her during my breaks or after class.

One day after class, I went to her job to wait for her because she was going on her lunch break. As I stood by the entrance looking at the sneakers, a guy walked in and immediately approached me. He introduced himself, said that I was cute and wanted to know if he could get my Instagram. I thought to myself how do I look cute when my outfit was so basic. I had on a black turtleneck, black leather motorcycle jacket, blue jeans and black chelsea boots.

He gave me his phone so that I could type in my Instagram. All I remember seeing was his gray sweatsuit. When I gave him his phone, I looked up to get a glimpse of him. He was tall, dark and handsome. We said goodbye and he walked out of the store to his friend who was waiting outside for him. Jennifer had clocked out and asked who was that, I said that we just met.

We would text each other every now and then, but did not take things serious. My friends from school would always warn me about him and say that he was always with a different girl. When I would confront him about it he would say that those are his friends, but I was not falling for that. We would always keep in contact and would occasionally hang out but I could not give him a chance because of the rumors that went around about him. We dated other people, but in the back of my mind I would always wonder what if we were a couple.

Zara

After being in Uniqlo for about eight months, I realized that my job was horrible and I wanted to get paid more. A lot of my friends from their had quit and found a better job. I was still stuck in there. I was trying to find a job that was in the city but not too far from my home or school because I like how convenient it was. I had tried to apply to all retail stores in Soho, but I had no luck. I had to find something fast or I was going to be stuck in Uniqlo for a while.

One day, I was scrolling through Instagram and I saw that my friend who used to work at Topshop, had applied to Zara and was getting ready for an interview. I would always hear about the store but never really shopped there. I thought that this was my chance to try and so I had

applied online. There was a new store opening up by the Fulton Center in Financial District. This was perfect for me as it was not too far from Brooklyn.

It did not take long for me to get an interview and a week later I received an email saying that I got the job. I was so happy and had quit Uniqlo as soon as I got my schedule. I was excited that I was going to meet new people and work at a brand new store.

My favorite part about Zara was that we received uniform. I was getting annoyed at how my closet was filled with only black clothing because of my previous job, but now I was able to receive two uniform sets and a pair of shoes. This was perfect for me because now I did not have to think about my outfit every day.

The Zara uniform usually changes every season. When I had started, we had a blue 3/4 sleeve A line shirt, blue ankle length jeggings and a pair of white sneakers. Our uniform changed many times after working there for two years, but my first uniform was always my favorite one.

21st Birthday

I was never really big on celebrating my birthday because it was always annoying trying to find something to do and trying to invite people who usually aren't able to come last minute.

However, I wanted to go big for my 21st birthday. I did not have a Sweet Sixteen and I was not able to go to prom so I wanted to make sure that this celebration would make up for all of that. Also being that my birthday was June 12th, people had no excuse that they had school because classes had already finished and it was the beginning of the summer so the weather was not a problem as well. I knew all those that I was going to invite was going to come.

The theme for my party was white and silver and everyone invited had to wear all white because I was going to have black lights on to give that glowing effect. I had saved up for six months for this party because I knew that I was going to spend a lot. I had rented out a huge venue, paid for a DJ, had open bar all night, provided a buffet of food and paid for a photographer and a stripper. I had invited all of my friends from school, work, and my entire family.

I had a beautiful long white dress with a train. It had mesh detailing around the front and back which gave an illusion of an open back. In the front there was a corset with pearls and gold and silver beads all around. I had bought extensions to make my hair longer and did loose waves on them. I felt like a princess and I was so happy that the party was a success. People were having so much fun that they did not want to go home even after the party was done. We had to kick everyone out so that we could finally go home.

The next morning, I looked over the photos and laughed at how crazy people were at the party. I looked over to my dress that was laying on my couch. The dress was no longer white but almost gray. There were cake stains on it and the tail of the dress was extremely dirty. I laughed because the dress was proof of how much fun I had that night.

Henry

Sometime between my Sophomore and Junior year of college I had met Henry. We had mutual friends and somehow found each other through social media. We were obviously attracted to each other and tried to date, but it did not work out as I was not ready to be in a relationship and he understood so we became friends. Hanging out with Henry was always fun. We would joke around and talk about almost anything. We would also talk on the phone for hours until 3am and talk about nonsense. We had built a friendship that lasted about 3 years and although we were still attracted to each other, I was afraid to take the next step because I did not want to lose him.

Henry eventually got into a relationship and I was happy for him but also jealous. Every guy that I had dated has treated me wrong and Henry was the only guy that I knew that would not do so if we had dated. After a year had almost passed, Henry and his girlfriend had broken up and so I thought that this was my chance.

We had a mutual friend that was throwing a party and we both went to it. After we had danced with each other the entire night, he got the idea that I was ready to take the next step with him and so we did. We started to hang out more but did not get really serious until after my 21st Birthday party.

Dating Henry was different from being his friend. He got upset at me often for the little things that I did and although we both agreed that communication was key to a successful relationship, it often was not there. I did not want him to feel like he was not important to me and so when his birthday came along in August, I decided to take him out to dinner and spend the day with him. I wore burgundy spaghetti strap chiffon blouse, black wide leg trousers with a belt, black strappy sandals and a black choker. Since it was hot outside, I had my hair in a ponytail with my bangs out. We had fun and Henry had asked if I wanted to go to the club with his friends that weekend but I told him that I could not because my friends had made plans already. He understood because he had told me last minute and then we went home.

Classes had started a week later and Henry asked if I wanted to hang out with him but I told him that I had class all day and was not able to. The next day I texted him and he did not reply. He went on social media and I messaged him and he did not reply. After three days of ignoring me, he sent me a long message saying how he was breaking up with me. A week later he posted a picture with his ex. I was hurt because I thought he was different, but he wasn't. Andre had met up with me and I told him what had happened. He was upset with me because he said I never gave him a chance and that I did with Henry and he broke my heart. He was right and so I decided to finally try it out with him.

Sneakers

After my break up with Henry, I was miserable but did not want to show it. I was barely going to work which led to me getting write ups. I was not focusing much on my school work. I constantly went out to try to forget him but it did not work. Andre and I tried, but then he told me

that he was not ready for a relationship at the time so I backed off. I needed something to occupy myself and so I turned to fashion and streetwear.

I started to shop a lot and come up with nice outfits and whenever I would post them I would get a lot of compliments. I started to expand my knowledge of streetwear and sneakers and wanted to get into the industry. Andre was always into sneakers so hanging out with him also helped me to understand the sneaker culture as well.

On one cold November day, two sneakers were dropping, the Jordan 1s Black Toe and the Nike SFAF 1, and I wanted both pairs. My friend who works at Kith in Soho told me that he was going to hold a pair of the SFAF 1 for me so I had to get the Jordan 1s myself. The Jordan 1s are my favorite sneakers because of the high tops and the leather. The Black Toes are red white and black and they're called black toes because of the black rim around the toe area.

When the day of the release came, I woke up early and went to the Kids Footlocker on Fulton Street in Brooklyn and got my pair. It was so easy because my feet are small enough to wear kids shoes but still big enough that it will not sell out as fast. Andre had called me and said he got his pair too and so we met up with each other and went to Kith to get our second pair. Everyone was jealous that we got both pairs.

From then on, I started to collect more and more sneakers. Andre and I had gotten closer because we had that in common and we were both very into fashion as well.

Signed

Growing up, I was always told that I should be a model but I was too shy and nervous to take the step. However, as I got older, I realized that I wanted to pursue this career and so I started to put myself out there by doing test shoots and working with different brands and photographers.

When I was dating Henry, I was very distracted from this dream. When we broke up, was motivated to try to achieve the dream I had set aside. Andre and I did not hang out as much as

Henry and I once did so I had a lot of free time and took advantage to use that time to do photoshoots.

As time went on, I realized that it was hard being a freelance model and I wanted to sign to an agency so that they can find and secure these jobs for me. I began to send my portfolio to all agencies in NYC. I even sent it to an agent who scouted me once while I was at Uniqlo but I did not take modeling serious enough to get signed. However, now, I wanted it more than ever and I told myself that if I was not signed by the end of the year that I would stop trying to pursue this dream.

On a cold April morning, I woke up stressed because I had to take two midterms back to back that day. I had to take my midterm for Textiles and for Product Development who was both taught by Prof. Brathwaite. I was texting my step sister Ashley about how stressed out I was. I was home getting ready while trying to repeat the information back to myself. As I was doing this, I kept getting this feeling to check my email, but I kept ignoring it. The feeling was getting stronger as I no longer study and so I decide to check.

When I opened the email, there was a message from Meredith from MSA Agency. The first thing I read was “Hello Diosmary, nice hearing from you again , sorry for the delay in response,” which I thought it was a rejection email since I had tried to sign with them before when they scouted me at Uniqlo and they rejected me then. I continue to read the message and there it was, “congratulations, the team and I are so excited to sign you.” I could not believe it.

I sent the email to Ashley and she was so happy for me. I was jumping and crying tears of joy. Nothing could make this day go wrong because I received the best news ever. I was no longer stressed about my midterms and walked to City Tech with the biggest smile on my face. I had finally achieved this huge goal of mine.

22nd Birthday

Although I had fun on my 21st Birthday, there were a couple of things that went wrong that I wish I could change; one being that I was so stressed out that I did not even drink liquor. So I wanted to do a redo and make my 22nd birthday everything that my 21st was not.

This time around I charged \$10 per person so that I could get the money that I spent back. I also made it a BYOB (bring your own bottle) so that I did not have to pay so much money on alcohol. The venue, which was on the corner of Atlantic Ave and Van Siclen Ave in East NY, included a

DJ and the owner of the place was friends with my step father Carlos so the price was less expensive. I was spending way less than what I paid for the year before so I was very happy for that.

Because so many people had fun at my last party, it was not hard to try to get people to come to this one even though it was completely different due to the fact that they had to pay and bring their own liquor. This time around, I decided to go very sexy with my outfit and wore a sparkly gold two piece dress. It was a sparkly bralette and matching midi skirt. I wore strappy sparkly gold pair of heels and a gold choker with a chain that dangled down my chest. I wore hair extensions and had my hair in waves. So many people were shocked to see me dressed like that and they loved it.

I was stressed out again so I did not have time to eat any of the food that my mom had made for the party. I was with Andre most of the time because we had started to date. After many people gave me birthday shots, I realized that I was no longer tipsy but drunk. I go to the bathroom with my step sister Ashley and I thought that maybe if I made myself throw up I would feel better. That did not happen. Instead I had continued to throw up. I had sweated out my hair and makeup and my family took me to the backyard of the venue to get some air. I realized that I was too drunk and wanted to go home before I continue to embarrass myself in front of all of my friends.

My brother Abi snuck me out and took me to his car. My step sister Ashley decided to leave with me to make sure I was okay. It was only 2am and I was already being escorted out of my party because I was too drunk. The party ended at 5am without me. Before my brother drove off, I hear a recognizable voice outside the car. My brother was talking to him and they were joking around. I looked up and there he was, Henry. I thought that this was not the time or place for him to do this. He said that he wanted to talk and apologize, but I was too drunk. My brother had said bye to him and took me home. I could not believe that Henry tried to do that, the nerve of him.

Fashion Student Today

After five years of being in college, due to the fact that I had switched from Marketing to the Fashion Bachelors program, I am finally close to graduation. I still attend City Tech and I still work at Zara part time. I have been signed to my agency, who recently changed their name to State Management, for about a year and a half now. I am still dating Andre, although we've had our ups and downs, we have been together for a year now.

Being a fashion major student has changed my perspective on fashion and *dress* itself. I once thought that *dress* was just clothes one wore but it more than that. *Dress* is the body modifications and supplements done from the original state. Meaning that it is not just the noun of the article of clothing but also the verb of the process of getting dressed. This process includes tasks such as brushing your teeth, taking a shower, getting tattoos and piercings and more. *Dress* is part of our everyday routine and is connected to our most memorable times.

The student that I am today is not the student that I was when I first started college. I have learned so many things about myself and have learned to overcome so many challenges whether its from heart breaks or financial issue or even fighting a battle with myself and my insecurities. I have learned to put my pride aside in tough situations and learn to admit when I am wrong and also learn to put my foot down when I believe that someone is taking advantage. As I evolved into the person I am today, so did my *dress* and it reflects the stories that was told.

My style has grown with me. I wear edgier clothing such as my favorite army green cargo pants, black Nike turtleneck, and my favorite Jordan 1s Court Purple sneakers. I often keep my hair in a low bun because I am too lazy to constantly straighten my hair.

I have learned to balance my social life, modeling, education and sanity over the past year to the point that now the only thing I lack is sleep and resting time to myself. However, it will all be worth it as I only see myself getting wiser and more stylish with age. I am proud of the person I am today, but I will be more proud of the person I am in the future.