

Final Reflection

Wow, where do I do begin? I was always one to enjoy creative writing and freely express myself through my words. I remember when I was attending a Catholic school in third grade, I had to write a fiction story about Christmas. I remember I put in so much detail, from the colors to the sounds you would hear, I was so proud of my hand written story. A week after I handed in my work, my teacher Ms. Dorthy, told me that she called the Principal and told me "You will be reading your story in front of her, it was the best in the class." I remember being filled with joy but also nervous! I mean I was going to read my story in front of the Principal! About ten minutes later, the Principal came in the room and sat in a chair in front of me and I began to read my story in front of her and the whole class. I remember the round of applause and the smile on everyone's faces. Ms. Dorthy then surprised me again and told me I would be the first to type my story on the new computer my school had received. This is one of my best memories from the school, a memory that told me to keep writing and reading.

After that I knew that writing was my strong suit, whether it was creative or research based. All throughout High School I wrote argumentative and thesis based essays, where I had the ability to stay concise and thorough. However, there was something missing because I felt like I was not pushing myself as much as I wanted to. I continued to read my mystery and drama fiction books to stay in touch with my creative side. Once I started college, I began more research based papers and this is what was missing. I enjoyed gaining information, writing about it in order to inform others. It was something new that I loved, that I handed in with so much satisfaction. With that being said, I forgot what it was like to write for fun, to read for fun during this time, until this class.

This class reminded me that writing creatively without restrictions, with the freedom to express yourself, can be so relieving. The memoir assignments allowed me to reflect on myself and my life even more and the short stories pushed me to tell a detail oriented story that had a hidden message. It challenged me to write a poem that I ended up rereading over and over again because I was so proud of it, even though it was not my strong suit. This semester has been a stressful one, from taking on six class fully online, this class gave me a fresh of breath air, tears, laughter and joy. I learned that through all the seriousness of school and life, we have to take time to smile and laugh. That I need to need to smile, laugh and breath. I remembered what it was like to be me with my writing and not who someone expects me to be. Towards the end of this semester, I realized that I am me and I should continue to be me, unapologetically.

Jozelyn Santos, Designed By An Invisible Hand

Feeling unknown can be overwhelming, leading someone to feeling unappreciated in certain situations. During my senior year at the High School of Fashion Industries, I had experienced the feelings of being anonymous despite my dedication to hard work. As a student who was part of the fashion design program, I had to mentally and creatively prepare for the upcoming fashion show, where seniors and some juniors showcase their talents devoted to fashion. By this year, I had realized that the designing aspect of the fashion industry may not be for me, yet I still gave everything I got towards the fashion show to challenge myself and use the skills I had obtained over the last three years. Each senior was required to design four outfits that fit the overall theme of "Minimalists" with asymmetrical structures, in the hopes of being chosen by the teachers in charge of the show.

Ms. Parisse: Hey Jozelyn, so I wanted to tell you personally that two of your designs were chosen to be in the Senior Fashion Show!

Jozelyn: What? OMGG YAYY!! Thank you so much!

Intrigued by the asymmetrical concept of the show, I wanted to focus on monotones which connected with the general theme and have the structure of the designs stand out more. Both grateful and shocked, I knew that the process of pattern making, draping, sewing, and constantly fitting the garment onto the model for two designs would be too intense for me to handle alone. I had the option to chose a person I trust to help one of my designs comes to life, allowing me to focus on one piece but still give input and lend a helping hand throughout the process for the second piece.

Jozelyn: Hey love, so since I have two designs, I am definitely going to need help. I was wondering if you can help me out because I trust you and I already know you work so hard.

Pamela: Yes! I was going to ask you if I can help because I love your designs! We are going to kill it!

The garment I was physically making was a white leather mid-dress that had a one shoulder piece made of black leather, with a zipper that allowed the sleeve to open and drape over the other side of the body. The garment that my classmate Pamela was doing was a black leather jumpsuit that also had a one shoulder sleeve, made of sheer white that transitions into black with black and white polk-a-dots throughout. Juggling six other classes with hours of work dedicated to making my designs, the hard work that Pamela and I did payed off, respectfully thanking and congratulating her as well.

During the fashion show, I had to patiently wait to see my designs walk the runway in the crowd just like everyone else. Although I was proud of myself and Pamela for showcasing clean and beautiful work, no names of the designers were shared which made me feel unrecognized. A few days after the fashion show, fashion teachers were asked to choose two students from their class that showed hard work for their designs throughout the year to receive an award in designing. My teacher, Ms.Parisse, announced the name of one student following with the name of another.

Ms. Parisse: The second student I chose because of her hard work is Pamela!

The Class: *round of applause*

Even though we were a team, my name was not mentioned for this reward, which made me feel like I was behind the scenes. I asked to speak to Ms. Parisse alone:

Jozelyn: I understand that Pamela did a great job, but I would think my name would be part of the reward because I developed the concept and design.

Ms. Parisse: I understand but the garment was assigned to her by you so she is considered responsible for it.

Jozelyn: I see but I helped her, it was a team effort

Ms, Parisse: I'm sorry Jozelyn but that is just how this works.

Grateful for the help but bothered by the fact that I was anonymous without choosing to be, I decided to move and focus on my next path in life as this should not hold me back.

Jozelyn Santos, Short Story "Liberty"

On a island known by very few, men and woman roamed the lands, fulfilling their appropriate duties. As men hunted animals, women planted fruits and vegetables which will then be gathering by them. One afternoon, the sun glistened on all the fresh produce as She picked them one by one. She was a nameless seventeen year old girl, who loved her life on the island but often found herself giving in to the thought of having something more. Accompanied by her mother Ruby on the fields, they talked about the new role that She would have as wife, as She was set to marry Hades at the age of twenty-one.

Ruby: Today when we get back home you will prepare the meal yourself to practice your cooking skills.

She: Mom, shouldn't there be more to my life, to all women's lives, then to just cook and clean for their husband?

Ruby: Now, since you were a little girl, you knew this would be your life and I have prepared you for such to avoid consequences. Besides, you should feel lucky that Hades asked for your hand, you are a very beautiful girl.

She: But....

Ruby: That's enough. Instead of dwelling on your thoughts you should start thinking about more important things, such as your new name.

On this island, girls remain nameless until it is time for marriage, in which during their years of growing up, they learn the roles that will be expected of them. The girls are referred to as She, only having their features set them apart from each other. The girls' name was to be official chosen by the soon to be husband, which is spoken at a magical tree located in the middle of the island, that grows bigger each time a couple is married. This is were the two are eloped and the girl now has an identity. A purpose.

Typically, the parents choose the man for their daughter, but this wasn't the case for She. Hades, who was known for his deep blue eyes, charming smile and his ability to share his opinion so freely and proudly, choose She to be his wife:

Hades: As the parents of She, I would like to respectfully ask for her hand in marriage.

Father of She: Will you be so kind to tell us why we should grant your request?

Hades: I am mesmerized by her long, black curly hair and know in my heart that she will follow my ways.

She:.... Uhhhhh that's it? Just my looks? I mean you could at least...

Mother of She: *interrupting She?* Now, that is enough. Excuse my daughter she is bold. She will accept your request

In the beginning She was annoyed and frustrated that she will marry Hades without having a say, but as days passed she became stunned by those ocean eyes. She began to think that maybe this life would not be so bad. Days became months, and months became years of listening to Hades thoughts, unable to share her own because he would not allow it. He would sometimes speak of what is expected of her, as a wife. Telling her who she will become.

Three years pass and during those years, She had realized she was shaping herself to be someone she does not want to be. Confidently speaking to her parents, Ruby and Richard, about her wanting a different life for herself, they reminded her of the consequence of exile if she

chose not to marry. Not knowing who she was, her day to marry Hades was here, as it was her twenty-first birthday. Dressed in a white simple gown, She and her parents made their way to the trail that leads to the tree, where Hades and the entire village will be waiting

Everybody watched She and Hades take their steps as one, on the the glowing trail that started on land, onto the water surrounding the tree and finally the tree itself. Each step that She took felt heavier and heavier, weighing on her heart because she knew this is not who she wanted to be. Releasing Hades hand She said "Fuck this" with the biggest smile and leaped off the trail into the water that was cold to the touch but refreshing. In the house packing her things, She's parents met her there and each gave her a warm hug, followed by a kiss on her forehead. Meeting their eyes, she told them that everything will be fine and expressed her love to them. She made her way out the house and walked away from the village, each step feeling lighter and lighter in the most freeing way. She was not sure exactly who she was or wanted to be but She was willing to take this journey for She will make a life for herself, on her own terms. She, who has chosen the name "Liberty".

Jozelyn Santos, Poem

"Underneath the Beauty"

It's five in the morning, time to rise. Stares at herself in the mirror, then into the makeup she dives.

Two hours have passed, and she believes she no longer looks rough. She starts to hesitantly walk away, but decides to look back incase it isn't enough.

Satisfied with her makeup, she proudly begins to walk the streets. Men turn their heads with eyes filled of admiration, but this does not make her feel complete.

Receiving compliments left and right, all she can do is smile and say thank you. Each compliment made her feel like a fraud, but she can not show that she feels blue.

Finally home in her safe space, her eyes meet the mirror as she grabs the wet cloth. She begins to remove every layer on her skin, each wipe making her feel lost.

She wipes away the over-lined red lips, revealing the lips she believes to be to thin. She wipes again and she starts to feel lighter, as each wipe shows the true nature of her skin.

Dark circles are now being seen, created by the nights filled with cries.

She takes another wipe and removes the eyeshadow and mascara that hid the sadness in her eyes.

She made her way to the bed filled with pillows and sheets, that offered her some comfort from being alone. It's five in the morning and it's time to rise, to once again begin the process that is well known.

Dialogue

Isabel: *Sends cousin a five year old video from Thanksgiving of the family*

Francheska: Omg! Send me more!

Isabel: That's all I have from that day. Snapchat did that memory thing (*sad face emoji*)

Francheska: Made me sad low-key. Time and Life has me really emotionally these days.

Isabel: What's going on cuz? U can talk to me u know, whenever and about whatever

Francheska: I'm just getting older! You'll get there something happens when you like turn 26 at least for me like I started feeling it when I was 23 but like you just start going through real life stuff like I have friends who are passing away nobody close but you know people from hs like my future isn't this far away place I'm aware of how much little time I have.

Isabel: Well right now I'm in the stage where I'm still figuring shit out for myself and close to entering the real world fully u know. But for you its different and I wish I had insight to share with u but just know that thru it all the ugly life brings, there is beauty

Francheska: Yes, exactly! You can listen to me! And ur smart and will understand but you wont fully know what I'm talking about until u get to that age and I can't wait because you'll have a cousin with ALOT of wisdom to help you......

Francheska: Btw, Im talking about me... I'm the cousin with wisdom! LMAO

Isabel: Lmaoo yup! I picked up on that *laughing face and pink hearts*

Jozelyn Santos, Journal #4

On Sunday, I attended my cousin's softball game at Moriches Sports Complex. I decided to wear a navy blue sweater, that she had lent me, with the name "Rebels" on it written in red and white. Once we arrived at the complex, my cousin Briana got out the car first with all of her gear so she can practice with the team before the game. I had noticed that many parents, along with their kids were walking towards the entrance with their own outdoor folding chairs. Some had the rebels sweater like me, or the Long Island Heats which was the team she was playing against. However, if the people were not wearing a sweater or shirt with a specific team name, the colors that the wore usually represented the team they are rooting for. Once my godmother found parking and made our way to the entrance, I can hear screaming from the basketball court and chanting from the occupied fields were games were being held. It was as if you were surrounded by mini stadiums. The only thing that was missing was the small of hot dogs and popcorn. The complex was made up of four baseball fields that can be used for softball games as well. Making my way to field two, my godmother and I set up our chairs away from the rest of parents, for the purpose os social distancing. Before the game started, I saw my cousin warming up and catching all the fly balls that came her way. Seeing that she was killing it during the warm up, I heard her teammates root for her by saying "Good Job Bri!

The game was about to start and I remember feeling cold to the point where I was craving hot chocolate. I made my way to the small concession stand and loo at the chalkboard menu with the prices available. I could not believe I was going to pay \$4 for a small hot chocolate, but I needed warmth as soon as possible. Each sip I took warmed my body from head to toe, allowing me to focus on my cousin's game rather than my body temperature. As time passed parents cheered, clapped and stood up, showing support for the teams. The air being filled up love, support and passion after my cousin's team won made the cold crispy night a bit more warmer.

Jozelyn Santos, Journal 5

Seventeen and in love. The classic "I met him through Instagram and he picked me up from school on day" scenario. My first serious relationship during my senior year of High School was one that taught me so many lessons and truly showed me who I am. In the beginning, it was just him and I, going on mini dates in Manhattan because it was right in the middle of where both of us lived. Him living in the Bronx and me in Queens, we kept in touch anyway we could by face timing, texting, phone calls, picking me up from school and seeing each other on weekends. A sly smile and blue eyes that turned grey in winter gave me butterflies just by the sight and thought of him. Never a dull moment, each second filled with laughter and smiles. I had never showed this much vulnerability towards a guy before. We had each others backs and supported each other through thick and thin. Blinded by all the love and smiles, I did not see that who I was becoming was not being shaped by me, it was by him and who he wanted.

You see, I adjusted who I was for his liking, to avoid arguments that we constantly happening. Doing and saying things that made him happy, rather than what made me happy. That itself changes you. You start to think you know who you are but in reality, your just becoming someone else for the better of the other person. Throughout by first two years of college I started to notice this more and more but I felt like I no longer had a voice. Of what appeared to be two years going strong, I received a phone call months after our anniversary from him. A confession that broke me into pieces, leaving me to wonder what it was that I did that caused him to do such a thing. Not realizing that his actions speak louder than his words, I stayed. Stayed because I knew no other relationship, stayed because he had become part of my daily life, stayed because I no longer knew myself.

Four months later, I was fed up! I could not take the fights or the blame any more. It was over. Close to three years and the ending of the relationship was so messy that you would think it came out of those overdramatic Lifetime movies. Two weeks, sucked in by my bed, thinking over every good and bad moment that we had. Thats when I realized that each good moment had a bad moment. No one should live like that. One day I got myself up and told myself "I deserve more." From that day forward I started to get back to the person I was but even better, discovering more and more about myself. This is journey that I am still on, a journey that is changing me again for the better. Who is this "him?" That name no longer matters in my life, don't you agree?