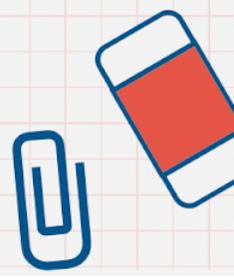
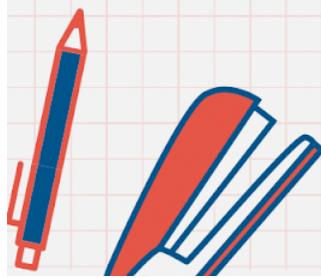


WRITING, A WAY SHE ESCAPED THE WORLD

Written By Diana Rivera



Reflection

From the moment I learned to write, I knew I enjoyed writing. But just like the rest of the world, I enjoyed doing it on my terms. Writing has always been a way to escape the anxiety and stress the world threw at me, especially during high school. When middle school started, I started to keep a special composition notebook where I'd write these elaborate stories filled with the people I knew in my life. And when I mean people in my life, I mean everything, their names, their personalities, and their physical being seen through my eyes. So, yea my stories weren't really popular growing up, but they meant the world to me, so that's all that matters. My stories were my therapy sessions. And this class gave me the same escape those stories gave me when I was a kid.

I went to a performing arts high school, so writing dialogues made me feel like I was back in high school, but I got a second chance to change the way I felt about writing them. I didn't have the best experience in high school so obviously, I associated my writing a dialogue with having to relive a couple of bad memories in high school, but this time I was in charge. I wasn't writing to them to meet a certain tone I needed to write them in, I wasn't trying to make some elaborate play hoping that my teacher would choose for the school play. Side note, he never chose my scripts or dialogues for any school production. Yay. But this class made me feel like it finally doesn't matter if I don't get picked or not. That my dialogues are my personal experiences, and they were. I got to fall in love with the idea of writing any dialogues in the future or just for fun. I got to get rid of the thought in my mind high school gave me, which is my writings, more specifically my dialogues will never be enough. I got to make my high school self-feel like I'm finally good enough. That's something I would have never learned on my own. And I can never thank this class enough, well not just this class rather Professor Penner as well.

When writing in this class I learned how I can maybe write poems. Maybe a part of me, the writer part of me, can write a poem in my way. That's what's so special about writing; that you can make a writing form into your own by changing the rhythm or the tone or the structure of the form but managing to stay within the guidelines of that form. Nothing is just one thing; they are all different in writing. In this class and reading everyone's work, I saw that everyone was able to write. We were all writing in the same form in similar techniques and using similar situations, but everyone was drastically different from one another. We all chose to write in ways that were told from different points of view or that were using different tones. And my favorite part of reading them was that each time I read them, I'd reread them once or twice more using a different tone to see if it changed the meaning of their words. And of course, it did, but it was fun to experiment with their writings, it made me feel more connected to my classmates during these times we are living now. It reminded me we all can use our writings to communicate with each other in a way we should cherish more than before.

Growing up I got diagnosed with depression a few months before high school, then my best friend passed away from cancer, then I got into an abusive relationship for three years, and then got diagnosed with PTSD and Bipolar Disorder; I am not the luckiest person in the world as you can see. But I pushed through with the help of my writing. This class helped me push through and expand what I enjoy the most. What's even crazier is that I thought that this class was going to be a walk in the park because it was me doing something, I thought I was already a genius, how silly does that sound? And that's what this class taught me, that even though that I thought I was already great at what this class taught me, I still learned something in every topic we had to write about and every technique we had to write in. I learned way more about myself

as a writer, and all that extra knowledge I didn't know I didn't have is what's going to help me grow as a writer.

Memoir

High school is described as the best 4 years of anyone's life; it was the worst for me. Right off the bat a week before high school started my best friend passed away. I didn't know how to cope with it cause at 14 anyone being sad you end up being bullied because you were different than them. At least that's how it was for me; no one knew that I was just diagnosed with depression 4 months before she passed away. And I still didn't understand what it meant to be depressed but her passing didn't help and to be very honest, it still affects me to this day. When I got into this high school, I wanted I was excited, I'd be working my way to my dream. Broadway. Yes, I wanted to be the next Barbara Streisand. But then I started to get bullied for mistakes I had made in middle school; the worst part is that it started by one of the few people I considered to be my second family. I dealt with it for 3 years without help or any way to cope with it. It was something that took the biggest toll on my mental health and I still deal with the mental trauma today. At the start of my senior year, I started to find myself writing away from my emotions. My mom noticed that I hadn't been myself at home, I started to lock myself up in the room for hours on end when I got home from school. I'd only leave my room whenever it was time to eat. Any chance that I was given to stay home I'd take it. One day my mom came home from work and she gave me a journal. "You don't talk to anyone anymore so maybe you'd like to talk to yourself." Those words have stood with me since.

Maybe that was the problem while kicking everyone else out of my world, I ended up kicking myself out with them. When I got my first journal I wrote 'Dear World'. I don't know why but I think that I ended up wanting to tell the world how I felt about it. Then it started, the anonymous 'Dear World' took off and she wasn't slowing down. I wrote down my 'Dear World' and printed it, my school had a bulletin board that had all the latest things going on for the week or even the month, so I put it on the board.

“Dear world, why is it that I have to be super skinny, do 100 splits a day, and be able to wear all the trendy clothing? Why does a guy have to wear designer brands and walk with his pants all the way down to his ankles?” I basically just wrote about the stereotypes we are all forced to follow even when we think we’re being different. As soon as someone who is different is seen as popular and interesting, others follow like a moth to a light. Everyone started writing on the paper saying “Exactly!” or “Thank you for saying it, someone had to.” It felt like I was finally apart of the crowd, but I needed to see if it wasn’t just a one-time thing, I kept going at it for about 5 months. It became a hit, so much of a hit that the school started a magazine and their own ‘Dear World’ column. I wanted to come out as ‘Dear World’, so I kept my words to myself. But I knew if I did my reputation would tarnish the good ‘Dear World’ brought me, so I stood quiet. My last ‘Dear World’ was released in June 2019, the day before my graduation.

The last thing I said was “Thank you for 5 months of joy, I graduate with my words and relatable ideas. I’m sorry I took too long to share my thoughts, ‘Dear World’ leaves with me. You can try to copy but you’ll never top the original.” That alone made me realize the truth behind ‘Dear World’ it was more than a column to update weekly, it was my voice being told to the world. It gave me a sense of *‘I’m free. I’m finally free.’*

The ‘Dear World’ column got taken off the magazine in November of 2019 after a lot of kids found the relatable content, I’d make became a cliché that the school tried to write. You can’t kill the queen that easily.

Short Story

She sighed and went to chipotle by herself. Got her usual, bowl with brown rice, no meat, tomato, lettuce, sour cream, with a tortilla on the side. Nothing too crazy. She walked into Hunter, got her visitor pass, and went straight to the cafe. It was a February afternoon; she knew the cafe would be packed. She turned her head and in the sea of people walking around with food, speaking aloud, and stressing, she saw two of her other sisters sitting at a table for 3, how convenient.

“Hey, girly how ya been?” She laughed at her crazy gesture.

“Good, how ya been? How’s school been treating ya?” They both did a loud and heavy sigh.

“Never mind let’s talk about other things.” All 3 laughed, she sat down and put her phone down.

Duchess, one of her sisters, grabbed it and took a picture of her.

“You know I was thinking the other day about you talking to a boy, you know since you’re single and new to Greek Life.” Greek Life, a group of frat boys and sorority girls was something that she was still getting used to. Diana sighed and took a bite of her chipotle.

“Speaking of boys, I got a follow request back from baby face.” Both of her sisters choked as they tried to mentally prepare themselves for what to say next.

“So, are we going to text him or are we waiting for him to text first?” Diana laughed.

“Nobody is texting anyone, nothing is coming from this.” Duchess grabbed her phone and shoved it in her face.

“Girl, it’s 2020, it’s time for you to step out there and take a risk.” Diana tried to hide her face but to no luck, it unlocked anyway.

“So, what’s the Instagram name. You know what never mind I’ll look at notifications.” She checked and sighed.

“What’s his brother name? Cause I know it can’t be baby face.” All three laughed as they took another bite of their food. “Well, his name is Ivan so that’s a good sign.”

Diana choked a little. “What does that mean?” “It means he has a homeboy name and not a street boy name which means he is a proper gentleman.”

Her other sister Dolce rolled her eyes. “Just text him and give her back her phone. Wait how does he look?” Diana chuckled.

“About 5’10, curly hair, glasses, skinny.” “So, your type?” All three of them laughed. “This is very important information to know.” They all laughed again, as Duchess sent ‘Heyy’ and put Diana’s phone down. “Now we wait.”

A few hours passed. Diana waited till after the rush to see her phone. She couldn’t stop overthinking, what if he left her on read? What if he had a girlfriend already? What if he didn’t like big girls? What if he was gay? She was scared, to say the least. She had remembered that it’d been 3 hours since she texted him. Then as she turned on her phone. She saw something that lit up her whole heart.

2 hours ago. “Hi”.

Poem

Black Nails

By Diana Rivera

Chip, Chip, Chip

Why do my nails if they're gonna chip away?

The black reveals to the pink of my nail bed,

Revealing the real me.

Black nail polish intoxicates me,

One more layer.

I should stop I'm getting lightheaded.

Better lightheaded than grounded,

What if I get too lightheaded?

High, I'm too high.

Too high to care.

Caring is the pink in my nail bed.

The real me, the me that cares too much.

What if they see me?

Will they like what they see?

Another black coat.

Hide it all away.

Hide the pain, the fear, the anxiety, the truth.

You can't show them. The world won't like your pink nail beds.

Dialogue

Jerrica: Did you get to see the snap I sent you?

Ethan: No, not yet I've been working remember? Are you coming tonight?

Jerrica: I can't, I have class tomorrow at 10 am.

Ethan: But it starts at 7 babe, you can't just swing by for a little then go back home?

Jerrica: Baby it's an hour and a half to get over there so I'll get there by 8 if I'm lucky. Then I'd have to leave by 9-10 and I'd be home hopefully by 11.

Ethan: Since when did you ever care about sleep?

Jerrica: It's not that babe, you know my mom doesn't sleep until I'm home and I don't want her to be staying up because I'm not home yet. That's not fair to her.

Ethan: Yea, okay babe.

Journals
Journal 2

During high school, I ended up being very unliked because of rumors to be put into my name. It didn't make sense to me at the time, and sometimes it still doesn't, but growing in that environment I found my ways to keep myself busy and happy. One way I found was my monthly 'Dear World' rantings. However, I felt during the past month, I'd write in a discrete manner to keep myself anonymous; partly because I wasn't liked but it was mainly due to the fact that I didn't feel comfortable with anyone in the school to open up to any of the people there, not even the teachers.

As time went on, I continued to write, and my writings became a hit. I began to see the way that others connected to my feelings. It felt liberating to write my feelings away and feel wanted again. But as time went on the more, I wrote the more the school took credit. Around the 5th month of me writing 'Dear World,' the school started to write a school newspaper and started a 'Dear World' column. But that didn't stop me from writing my own; can't kill the queen that easily. In my last month of high school, I decided I was going to reveal who 'Dear World' actually was. But that day never came, I decided that if I wrote who I actually was I was going to be painted as a liar that everyone already called me. The thing that made me happy would have been ruined. So 'Dear World' left when I left, but the happiness stood with me.

Journal 5

Up until this moment in my life, I have been a victim of a series of unfortunate events. A major moment being the day my first real best friend passing away from cancer. It was the day I had just got home from a family visit to Florida and a week before I entered the jungle that is known as high school. Even though she had moved to Long Island our 8th grade and was held back a

year because she couldn't make it to school due to medical reasons, I never thought that she would be gone when we were young. She was one of the purest people I have ever met in my life even today.

She was one of my favorite escape routes, in my generation I always felt like I was forced to grow up faster than I wanted to. She let me be the kid I wanted to be with the rest of the world, she also let me rant about anything and everything without feeling judged. Even when our little trio fell apart, I still had her by my side when the other part of us left, she never chose sides and she let us know about it. It was hard. It changed how I acted towards people and who I let into my life. Even still to this day, it makes me scared to let people in or who I let see me. And it honestly affected how I see myself. It has its negative and it has its positive. Ying Yang, right? But as many friends, as I get in my life, none will ever match the standard she created. She will forever be my best friend.