

A vibrant bouquet of flowers, including red and white blossoms and variegated leaves, with a moss-covered branch.

*The Creative Introspection Of A
Little Brown Boy From New York
City*

By Manuel Barreras

Final Reflection

Going into the semester has been a challenge in itself, specifically pertaining to this class. To be more specific, my reason for registering for this class was to understand myself in terms of being a writer and how I can improve my writing. From a personal standpoint, My academic career has had somewhat of a focus on writing because it's what I have always been good at, especially during middle school and high school, many of my teachers have praised me because of my critical thinking and being able to properly format my ideas for a reader to read when I write a piece of work. Before joining this course, my expectations were somewhat high because this is a creative writing course which does mean that you have to brainstorm a lot in order to create and develop ideas that are different and unique to your writing style and can be seen as something special to the reader.

What I have learned from myself as a writer taking this course this semester would be that I am not the best storyteller, and my writing process could use some improvement, but overall, is creative in itself. To explain the storytelling part, we have had assignments that have to do with storytelling and creating your own story whether it be fictional or nonfictional, and I am not the best at having a creative writing process when it comes to "making up" something, it has always been a struggle of mine and I intend to work on it as much as I can to improve and expand my knowledge of writing. To explain my writing process in general, I have personally learned that I am not afraid to bring certain topics and issues to light, and speak on these

topics and issues in a factual manner that can back up my point of view to make it interesting for the reader.

From what I can personally see in my own opinion, what I have learned from being a reader this semester would have to be that it is very necessary to have an open mind to learning about different writing styles and opinions that you're not necessarily comfortable with in order to gain the knowledge that helps you comprehend not only the work of your peers, but your own work as well. A great example of this would have to be when we were given an assignment that had to be sent to our cohort, and then was critiqued for the writer to see, and upon receiving these critiques, incorporating it into our work for the revised version. I personally believe that this was a great writing exercise in order to further add depth to the writer's piece of work and also create a complex way of thinking for the writer in order to use this later on with other assignments that took on the same format, constructive criticism is key to making a writer more open-minded to the opinions that aren't their own.

Overall, this course in itself was definitely a challenge to my writing/thought process and definitely helped me expand my horizons. I feel like I will definitely be able to use what I've learned and be able to apply it to multiple situations going forward within my life, for example, if there is ever a situation where I am not given an opportunity to use a specific period of time to gain different opinions on my writing, I will most likely ask other people what are their thoughts and opinions on the specific topic I am writing about, and then try to understand their thought process when they read my work. This, personally, is something that I feel is really important

and should be taken seriously by other writers in this class because it really does strengthen your knowledge and essentially forces you to do your own research on things that might be foreign to you like different writing techniques done within a different country, or how to properly take critiques as constructive criticism rather than an insult to your writing, opinions people have to your work will always be subjective and with that, it should be respected that someone might not like or be interested in what you write, but their opinions can be the difference between a subpar piece of writing or a creatively unique literary work.

Memoir

Meet my album collection! I've always had a big interest in music. Growing up, life wasn't the easiest and the best escape I had from all the problems that came from my situation would be music, When it comes to the music itself, I don't need to be in a specific place or have a specific time to enjoy it, all I need is a pair of headphones and it feels like I'm transported into a world of my own. I'm not very comfortable with sharing those experiences but they do come from a place of childhood trauma and around 10-11 years old is when I started to realize that I had a really big interest in music and the way it makes me feel when I listen to it. I am very invested in listening to different genres/sub-genres and albums that artists put out in those genres to be able to better understand different song meanings/lyrics, genres that I'm interested in most of the time would be R&B, k-pop, hip hop, funk, soul, neo-soul (sub-genre of soul), These genres are ones that I listen to almost daily and there are a couple of other genres that I occasionally enjoy but the ones listed are ones that I have a vested interest in. It's honestly really fun to see how these artists would use their music and create music videos to not only create audio art but pair it with a great piece of visual art! Around high school, I decided to start collecting physical versions of these albums that I really enjoyed as memorabilia and to be able to enjoy the uncompressed files that are burned onto the cd discs themselves once I get older, it's a great memory of how it felt to enjoy music and how peaceful it could be when you're submerged in the different melodies, harmonies, etc. Many people wonder why I collect albums when everything nowadays is digital and there are streaming services, I am subscribed to a streaming service but my main focus on collecting albums is to have memorabilia, I also am really into collecting because streaming services can easily become obsolete one day (which I highly doubt will happen because of society depending on technology for everything), but I won't have that problem because I have all my favorite albums on CD 😊 . Some of the albums in this picture were very hard to come across since they were put out years ago and are not in print anymore (somewhere around 2007-2009) and cost thousands of dollars to get your hands on nowadays. I am very proud of my collection because it just reminds me of

the times when I would really enjoy the music on them and when something good happened around the time I was enjoying these albums. I don't plan on giving up my collection and see myself keeping them for as long as I can.

Short Story

During the horrible COVID-19 pandemic, so many tragedies happened, many deaths caused by the COVID-19 virus itself, police brutality that caused an increase of support for the Black Lives Matter movement, increasing crime rates, and much more that made Manuel feel very hopeless. With so much political tension growing in the atmosphere when it comes to race, Manuel, who is mixed with white and black, tries his best to educate himself on the racial issues that go on in the country that sees him as the enemy. Just as Manuel is trying to do his best to educate himself on his own race and what he can do to support Black Lives Matter, he is brought down by his white family members making him feel like he's the enemy. Going through it day by day, hearing such ignorant comments towards Black Lives Matter but trying to understand what caused them to act this way when they have someone in their family that they care about who is a part of the movement itself because of his race. Why don't they support him? Why does he not matter to them? These questions are always going through Manuel's mind trying to understand how it's fair to them that they get to have privilege and he doesn't. Manuel's white aunt who is married to a BLACK police officer has always shown her support to movements that oppose BLM like "All Lives Matter" or "Blue Lives Matter", just some sick joke made up by white people because they always want to play victim, "my husband and his co-workers risk their lives doing their job, how is it fair ?? " says Manuel's aunt. these types of opinions do nothing but anger Manuel because, at the end of the day, your uniform is something you wear from 9-5, my race is what I wear for the rest of my life, Manuel tries his best to educate them on what they can't experience because of their race, but there's only so much you can do to help a person. Sometimes you have to leave people in their ignorance because they will never change, sometimes you can get through to people but they still have some opinions that they shouldn't, and sometimes you just have to leave people in the past altogether, this is what we call life.

Poem

Poem 2 – Dazzling

Sunny day out, cool breeze hitting the surface of our skin

Our experiences place us in seventh heaven.

Going around town trying to keep my exultant emotions at bay.

Being with you reminds me of those warm summer nights,

feeling an energy that's indescribably perfect.

A love grown from temptation and lust,

Constant pace that enlightened us to be as one.

Your glistening hazel eyes reflective off of the warm orange colored sunset,

your pearl white smile lighting up your face,

your chiseled jawline shaping the most beautiful creation in history

this was meant to be.

They all told me not to trust you,

The words and looks from everyone encumbered my love for you.

Constant doubt from every direction

“you can do better, why are you like this?”

thoughts clouding my judgment as if it were my own,

Yet here I am, reminiscing about you.

Two opposite worlds colliding,

creating a relationship that feels so euphoric,

Immense happiness illuminating my eyes,

Heightening the warmth on the surface of my skin.

Past, present and future all coming together as one moment with you.

Self doubt almost ending everything,

not feeling like we could last

hesitation, confusion, apprehension and uncertainty.

Meant to be with no regrets,

Blending into one,

living as one and going through life as one.

Dialogue

Fila: the most i spent on books was 10 dollars for this semester

DeeDee: Lucky ima have to spend 55 or 60 on a book for my psychology class

DeeDee: In all I have to spend over 100 for 3 books

Fila: These textbook prices really don't make any sense, and it doesn't help at the fact that the school knows our financial status, yet, they still charge us regular price for a book we're only going to use for ONE SEMESTER.

DeeDee: EXACTLY, I literally had a professor that told me it's doesn't matter that my family is considered low income, and then the audacity to kick me out of his class because of my family situation like how does that concern you ???

Fila expresses his emotions through a face of disgust

Fila: oh my god, that is so messed up... what triggered him to be so upset of a situation that had NOTHING to do with him??

DeeDee: Honestly, i'm not surprised that he did that because this is the same professor that thought it was ok to make a joke about brown skin being dirty to a literal BLACK PERSON, keep in mind this is a white man making this joke

Fila: Oh no DeeDee, at this point I think it's best that you report him to the dean of his apartment about this, who's to say he hasn't done this to other students too ?

DeeDee: Oh he has, i'm not the only one he's done this too, but you know how situations like this end up for people like you and me, we get blamed for being too "sensitive" and then have the angry black woman/man narrative pushed upon us

Fila: The fact that we still have to deal with this after 400+ years of oppression is fucking ridiculous, I don't understand how they can claim that this country is "progressive" when we walk down the street and get called slurs cause they know no one is going to defend us.

DeeDee: That's America for you *sigh*

Journals

One time I would describe that made me feel “anonymous” would be my first semester here at City Tech. Being in the main campus building felt like a maze, twisting and turning every corner and hallway trying to figure out where my first class would be held, just trying to find my way through a big crowd of students, staff, and other people. Going through this with no one that I knew in a completely different environment than what I’m used to (keep in mind my first semester at city tech was the very first time in my life going to Brooklyn) and seeing people coming from all over Brooklyn and different boroughs as well opened my eyes to seeing new things, but it also showed me how conditioned I was to being ok with my situation and made me feel invisible or “anonymous” to a crowd of people gathered at once in this one space from many different walks of life, there was no one there to guide or comfort me especially since people were very busy finding their own way, whether it be to class or finding their way in terms of life goals and what they need to accomplish in this school to get where they want to be

A moment in the past that I would say has changed me would have to be realizing my blackness. Growing up, I was only ever told that I was Puerto Rican and Dominican, and I only lived with the Puerto Rican side of my family which happens to be the white side of my family. Because of this, I was always repressed in expressing my racial identity and always brought down because of the white superiority complex that is very present within Hispanic households, there were many times that family on my Puerto Rican side would make derogatory racial comments towards Black people and clearly did not realize that they are related to someone who is half

black. The Dominican side of my family is what you would refer to as Afro Dominican (people from the Dominican republic coming from African ancestry) and because of the fact that I was not around my Dominican family, there was essentially this erasure of black/afro Caribbean culture altogether in my family that I never got to experience as a child growing up, dealing with racism within your own family while realizing that you are a part of the group that they are having racially motivated opinions towards does take a toll on your mental health, and going through high school and being able to experience on my own that part of my identity that I missed out on with friends and their families and how I was educated on the racially-based mistreatment I received growing up because of my mixed-race heritage, it really opened my eyes on how my family needs to decolonize their mindsets and it has given me an opportunity to explore and reevaluate my identity to understand who I am as someone who is half black.