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UGS 2001: Humanities I

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“Something, somewhere, knows what’s best for me and promises to keep sending me people and experiences to light my way as long as I live in gratitude and keep paying attention to the signs.” — Jennifer Elisabeth

I agree to the idea that education doesn’t so much as influence my life as my life has influenced my education. The influence my life has had on my education has been made in so many different ways and it's a blessing to be able to say that. I owe a lot of what I know to my family.

My family are Colombian immigrants so that culture was strong and “fresh” enough to carry on to me even here in the US. In regards to an academic setting Colombia has a cultural strive towards education and social status is very important in Colombian society. Being the only US born in my entire family, I had more opportunities and it made them verbally and nonverbally tell me they expected more out of me than any other family member.

My mother began to be the strongest presence behind my education since my time in preschool. She is always thinking ahead and after coming to the knowledge that the majority of the day I was in preschool was spent singing, she took matters into her own hands. She prepared me for kindergarten by having me practice my English with my brother, learn the alphabet, reading simple words and practicing my handwriting. I would fill pages and pages with repeating words to make my handwriting smooth and legible. If my mother didn't like the way it looked I would have to write the same letter or word until she did. I would hate it because my hand would get tired but at the same I wanted good handwriting, it looked pretty, so I appreciated it. She would tell me, "yo no quiero que crezcas y tengas dificultad con profesores por que no pueden leer tu letra o que no puedas defenderte en cualquier de los dos idiomas". My mother wanted me to have the minimum of difficulties life could throw at me. Throughout my childhood she kept saying that to me and later I came to the realization that a lot of struggles can be avoided with a little hard work.

My mother use to be a teacher in Colombia and during my childhood she would religiously try and have me read and write in Spanish whether that was writing out the grocery list in Spanish or checking out Spanish books from the library. Later on when I was a little older she'd have me practice translating. My mother wanted me to be able to switch from language to language with ease. I'd go everywhere with her and if there were misunderstandings with employees who could only speak English that would be a

way for me to practice. It was through these experiences that I came to truly appreciate languages. Not just Spanish and English but all the ones the world had to offer. It seemed like such a powerful tool and so beautiful to allow someone to communicate with others all around and carry on an entire culture whenever you spoke that certain language.

One of the books my mother would have me read with her since I was very young was the Bible. Here came in the beginning of my spiritual education, a strong and sweet memory I'll always have of my mother. Every night before I fell asleep she'd come in my bed with me, read a little bit from the Bible, and say a prayer with me. She'd usually stay next to me for most to all of the night even though I only had a twin sized bed. Sometimes I'd wake up and see she had made a bed for herself at some point on the floor, yet I never questioned why she stayed despite the uncomfortable circumstance. I loved the moments she and I had before going to bed; it was something fun and made it easier to fall asleep after having said a prayer and still feel her warmth next to me as I began to drift off into sleep. I never knew until I was older that the reason she'd stay the night and even choose to sleep on the floor could have been not wanting to be with my father because of their marital problems. They would argue but since it was never in a violent fashion to my eyes I had always just giggled the situation away when I was younger. My parents marriage later became the foundation to slowly be molded by my experiences towards my knowledge about romantic relationships. However, continuing my spiritual

education, as I said before I'd usually go everywhere with my mother and many times she would tell me that to her I was a sweet company like in a prayer she'd most often read to me. "Angel de mi guarda, dulce compañía, no me desampares ni de noche ni de día Las horas que pasan, las horas del día, si tú estás conmigo serán de alegría No me dejes solo, sé en todo mi guía; sin Ti soy chiquito y me perdería." Through this experience I had learned to be kind to everyone because you don't know what they are going through, to not exclude others, to support those who need support, empathy, and family values. To me, family always comes first. I used this education in many experiences and has set me apart from others who may have learned it but might have forgotten. In Colombia there are countless of things that make it beautiful, inviting, paradise, rich and home to the hearts of many; nonetheless like every other country in the world it has its characteristic downfalls. In my opinion there is something I had learned and not liked about Colombian societal culture. People spend too much time and energy concerning themselves about social status that at times it even turns them on each other.

When I was 15 I had spent months in Colombia traveling by myself visiting family. Some I had never even met before. There was one afternoon, I went to a ranch at the top of a long hill which I was invited to. There worked an old man who worked in labor for the ranch, about 60 - 70 years old and it was evident he was in poor health. He had an eye condition and walked hunched over with a limp, yet the owner of the ranch had ordered him to carry a heavy load down the hill. The old man told him he couldn't

because his body would not be able to respond well to such a task. The owner simply replied with “Y a mi que me importa?” I couldn’t believe someone could be so inconsiderate and be serious about it so I giggled because I had thought the owner was kidding. To my surprise both the old man and the owner turned after I giggled and the old man began to attempt the job. Because he was an old, poor, and ill looking man no one was helping them most likely because of the class difference and because of prejudice. Somewhat like the prejudice homeless go through about them all being rapists, drug addicts and pedophiles. Some of them, sure, but certainly not every single one. Regardless of the societal culture I had already been informed about but had never witnessed until then, I stood up and and tried to reach the old man halfway down the hill. Wearing a nice dress and shoes I asked the old man to allow me to help him carry a few things and at least wait with him for the truck that was supposed to come by to pick up the load. He began to cry and tell me his life story. His wife had treated him badly and left him and his kids sided with their mom and don’t speak to him anymore. He couldn’t afford to go to the doctor for the pain and difficulty he has in his legs and he has no one else to go to otherwise he would quit his job at the ranch. I started to cry with him because to hear someone, especially an elder, tell their story of loneliness is heartbreaking and I nor anyone else would ever know and instead would continue to mistreat each other. He hugged me apologized for hugging me and blessed me, told me a blessing from an elder is strong. He wouldn’t stop talking about me and my gesture to

everyone for several days. He was so use to the way people treated him he felt he needed to apologize for hugging me and furthermore I was questioned by the people of the ranch. It was then that I saw how precious my mothers teachings are and how I would never let them slip from being part of who I am. It made someone happy.

My high school offers tutoring after school for math and I had always been terrible at math yet I never went into tutoring. My freshman year I only went once. That one time my tutor had to leave early due to personal reasons so his friend stepped in for him. His friend had been my crush for months now and we had never talked, mostly because he was a senior so I barely saw him to begin with. Later on we started a relationship, dated the whole year and at the end of the school year I had to come to the decision of whether to wait for him while he left on an LDS mission or simply end the relationship. I decided to wait. I decided to wait despite our difference in beliefs and the fact that his family did not like me or even had talked to me once and chose to treat me in rude demeanors and he did nothing of it except an occasional defense. He was a strong member of the LDS church while I choose to have no denomination. He would try to get me interested but I would refuse, I could not imagine myself part of something I disagreed with over half of what it was. Yet, decided we wanted to get married. We had told both of our families to make it more official and had started to plan things for the wedding ceremony and how it would be made since I was not a member and did not want to be even after receiving teachings and visits from missionaries in Utah while he was on his mission. Almost two

years have passed, just a few months from him coming back home and I could not stop myself from breaking up with him; I had to. Nothing was right for us to get married. The relationship between his family and I wasn't progressing despite all my efforts, I would have nightmares about my life in the next 5 years, I felt too young and trapped, I felt incompatible and irritated whenever we spoke and guilty for these negative thoughts and feelings, our relationship was rocky itself and we were losing connection and my attraction towards him was gone. I couldn't be something I wasn't. I had learned to be true to myself, not bow to the whims of others just for their acceptance of me, to not be identified by someone else, to have a stronger connection with God between just him and I not hierarchy of other human beings and to not live in false hope but to live in faith of letting go. I believe faith has a big part in the meaning of life and I don't just mean that in a spiritual sense. If you have faith in letting go, faith that there's something better, faith in humanity, faith in yourself, faith in beliefs, faith in someone's word, faith in your capabilities, faith in your curiosity life becomes a lot more meaningful. I feel without faith in anything in your life you're at the risk of depression and a stand still in your life. Where would world wide society be if it weren't for the faith inventors had in their curiosity. They would have given up but instead they had faith to keep going and discover something revolutionary. The world wouldn't have as great of athletes or even renaissance men if it weren't for the faith they had in the large extent of their capabilities. We could possibly have less war in the world if we were to have more faith in each others

word, humanity and its power of empathy and support on one another and natural resources than only greed.

I plan to remember and live by all the teachings I've accumulated from my life so far for the rest of high school, college, and my later life. These are only a few and I know I will have more as the years go by. Each and every one mean a great deal to me and I cherish those who came to my life to be a part of my education. I'd be honored to be participate in the education of someone else if I haven't already. If never forgotten and applied daily, may they take me to great heights.