

Lessons from Redirections
By MISHIE SERRANO

Life
Truly is teaching me
That although our original plans
May have come undone
The experiences that have come to take their place
Have more beauty
That one would have imagined.

When I began my first semester back at HCC
After a 3 year hiatus
I battled with imposter syndrome.

Not new to this feeling
I would fidget in my seat
And lose myself to music beats in my headphones.
A habit I dragged from surviving high school.

I am grateful to be here today
Because I'd like to celebrate
The unconventional Beauty and
All that that comes with
Redirection.

Speaking of which
Upon my return
I've learned
Not every loss is a loss.
These setbacks
Have become rebirths.
Clear proof that
Redirections sent from the unexpected
Contains lessons
Just as worthy of learning from
When committed to the path of growth.

Your timing will come.

So celebrate every success along the way
No matter how little
Embrace the magic
Even if just for a moment.

I spent a lot of time

Writing this piece
Spent too many moments
Scrapping
And crafting
Sentences
To tell stories
All in hopes
Of possibly
reminiscing with you.

I wanted it to be magnificent
And Inspirational
Just like your journeys here today
But most importantly

I wanted to watch as my words
Came alive to their own beat.
Right before
All of you.

This is exactly how I landed on my truth
And became okay with sharing it with you.

See
They often call me a soft spoken poet
Forever dancing
To the beat of their soul
Type poet
But today I am a witness.

We are the generation
Wedged between vcr movies and DVD's
A lot of us peaked in high school
As jersey shore peaked on our screens.
And walked 30 minutes to school every morning
And still stopped at the bodega for an extra 5 minutes
Quenched our hunger with dollar cakes
And penny candies
Used to simply minding our own business.

For many
Growing up our home cooked meals
tasted like survival
And love
De las manos de mami y papi

Who spoke to us in Spanish
But never taught us the logistics of our language
Because they were too worried
Of us following in their footsteps
Afraid we would become
Victims of their variations of operation bootstrap
And their teachers wooden paddles

So rather than pass down our native language
They taught us to survive
America.
Force fed us assimilation in hopes of strengthening our chances
To survive in
America.

We watched as they navigated their displacement
Bowed their heads and averted their eyes
When others spoke English
Just to insult them
Yet never to instruct them.

So inspite of the worlds misjudgments
we became interpreters
Disrupters of language barriers
Observers of the flaws in justice
Believers in our parents dreams.

We became chameleons
Code switchers not only in
our classes
But in
Our hoods
And
el padres church

Lovingly
we too began to day dream
A list of our own
Aspirational firsts
So we developed our own means of survival
Like scrapbooking
Our experiences and our parents humble words
We crafted our safety nets of possibility

Adult me now uses
Mine as a hamaca

On days in which I need to deeply self reflect

Never forgetful of the time
I watched with young eyes
As mami switched away her Jibara pride
And boricua tongue
For broken English
Determined to prove she was not incompetent
But a willing participant.

All thanks to you Tio Sammy
Master of the white picket fence
Created to keep moving the finish line
I wish they taught you how to lovingly tear down barriers. -

But don't worry,
Mami taught me how to tear down walls.
Maybe one day I will
share with you the spark notes
I've collected
From her lessons.

But today I am simply here to remind you
Why we remain rooted.

A generation of
Beautiful children
Birthed from
Brilliant beings
Who deserve to be called more than just resilient.

Humble
Because we got it how we could.
Mami spent too many long hours
Slaving away in the name of
Upholding some else's potential.
So instead
Of finding excuses
They found work
Determined to find a way out.
Too bad all decisions are capable of being consequential.

The media lied
When they said
"Latino children have no interest in education"

Our teachers knew nothing of our realities
But never forgot how
To correct our sentences.

Much to their disapproval
I believe Assimilated minds
Break resilient bodies.

I seen proof of this
Papa y mama
No me enseñaron español suficiente
Masque para entender los.
Because of this.

So

To be a Latina poet,

Is to still be mislabeled.
My tongue resembles more of a sword
Than their romanticized fables
And my grace
Will forever exceed
The fiery person they swear I must only be able
Of being.

I am more than their assumptions
More than the idea and thoughts they believe me to be
For to live my life through their lenses
Is to envision a reality of mental slavery
A never ending battle
For an ending greater
Than their applause.

Little do they know
I come from fiercely loving people,
Home cooked meals,
And triple washed bodies.
No te olvides de poner tu perfume
Afraid of pasando bochorno
Land
See I know mami just wanted me to be accepted

Little do she know all we ever wanted
Was a little taste
Of what they recall

As home.
So I wear my cultura even more loudly for them.

Porque
Mami puede ser mas de humilde
Y
En mi cultura
me enseñaron
That the one thing I will
forever be
Is loved.