



PERSONAS

Multilingual Literary Journal

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Cover: Pedro Cantu Moctezuma

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FORWARD

We all struggle with our first language. Sometimes we have to search for the right word, other times we encounter a new word and look it up, and then there are all the different pronunciations. Therefore, anyone who's tried earnestly to learn another language knows that having an accent is a mark of distinction. The accent confers upon the bearer the incredible ability to handle two or more of these complex systems at once and, as a result, to have different linguistic means of considering a question, or an issue. *Personas* is now in its third year of sharing the fruits of the ability to look at the world with multiple linguistic viewpoints. The following poems, essays, and work of fiction underscore not only the struggles that one must go through to attain another language, but also the unique point of view which results from these struggles.

We hope you will consider it an invitation from the featured writers to creatively explore the benefits of multilingualism and to enrich your understanding of the next accent you may hear.

Thank you for reading. Gracias por leer. Ua tsaug rau koj nyeem. Obrigado pela leitura. آپ کا شکریہ۔ پڑھنے کے لیے Cảm ơn các bạn đã đọc. 感谢您的阅读。

Statement on Mechanics:

At *Personas* we believe in the validity of expression. As a result, we select writing based on what it communicates, not on how well-edited it is. We publish writing in its original form, without correcting mechanical issues unless they interfere with comprehension.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you—the most important expression in any language.

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THE THINGS I KEEP / جو میں نے رکھا

Umiemah Farrukh

I keep my schedule, wake up at eight, go to lecture, come home to silence, and practice my Urdu in the dark;

کیا بتاؤں، یہ بتانا کافی نا ہے
افسوس ہے کہ مجھے آپ سے محبت لگپری ہے۔

I keep my schedule, shout warnings or philosophies at strangers on the subway who never look back, and write stories about sad girls with sad lives who don't listen to their parents.

محبت کے داغ نے میرے دل کو نہیں صرف زبان کو برباد کیا ہے۔

I keep my schedule, I write, I speak, and I breathe; a slow, sticky cycle I must willingly partake in, even if you aren't here to sweeten it.

ایکطرفی محبت کی مٹھاس گلاب کی زندگی جیسی ہے۔

I keep my schedule, because I never got to keep you, and I most certainly never write about this misery of loving someone who doesn't love me.

محبت کبھی کھویا ہوا مقصد نہیں ہے۔

I WANT TO TELL YOU OF THIS WORLD

Leslie Ortega

I am scared of being a motherto my elders in the wrong
ways in the excruciating pain ways of breaking through
wooden fences with no chains, the ways las tunas are
forgotten as fruits
the ways Oaxaca fills my mind with something beyond the word
“magic” No hay magia en el espíritu.
Como la naturaleza nosotros somos la magia
No necesitamos a crear otra vida, otro cuerpo, otra mente que nos ayudará
a no
sentir Pero quien sabe, yo no creo en dios, luego sigo al viento
y los caminos de mis ancestros (lo mas que puedo saber de ellos)
Al agua, a la tierra, y muchas veces nos olvidemos de la lluvia y el fuego.

La lluvia que nos refresca pero tantos años vivimos con la
fuerza para atrapar la lluvia en las nubes,
Mas bien que se queden ahí.
Mas bien que se nuble el cielo.
Mas bien que pensamos “hay que sufrir para merecer”
Estoy con manos llenas y chiquitas, ya no se como traducir que la vida es
duro como el fuego, persigue el dolor y el miedo.

Pedimos paciencia y esfuerzo con
palabras, como “échale ganas”, y “si, si te
quiero” Pero sin las palabras lo decimos
también Crecimos de raíces que enseñan.

Siempre pienso en el fin de mi vida, la que siente la tierra en los pies
Pienso de la muerte, y no puedo saber si me dolerá
pero siempre digo que no voy a tener miedo cuando llegue.

SOÑARTE

Pedro Cantu

Disperso en mi mente encontrarte
mis ojos creyeron soñar,
tu risa ansiosa e inocente
creyente de voces volar.

Miradas distraídas e impacientes
de hambre, de justa inmortal,
de voces soñararte siquiera
quisiera reír al final.

Distantes aquellos infames
de todas la más verdadera,
soñararte y amarte de veras
de nuevo te vuelvo a encontrar.

CHANGING MY MIND

Jonathan Chibuike Ukah

I wanted to go to work this morning by bus,
but remembered that Friday was a busy day,
I changed my mind at the last minute
and jumped on the next Elizabeth train.
At the door was a young man of about thirty,
suffering from the paroxysms of his body
after downing five cans of Red Bull.
Their empty cans surrounded him like a hill.
I changed my mind and went to the next door.
There was another man of about fifty,
who lowered his shiny head towards me
like a tree branch bent by a hurricane.
His head sparkled like a mirror in the sun,
or a pair of my grandmother's sunglasses.
Again, I changed my mind and went to another door.
A black lady dressed in black stood up
though I didn't know if it was her culture
but she wore rings on her nose and eyes,
rings in her lips, jaw, neck and ears;
there were rings in her hair and fingers
and perhaps in other places, I could not see.

I changed my mind and went to the next door.
There was a man with the biceps of a bodybuilder,
striding the front door like a Colossus,
arms swollen like a cloudy sky, eyes bloodshot,
chest bulging out, white shorts cracked,
with a mosquito waist painting him in eight.
That welcome was too scary for me.
I changed my mind and went to the next door.
Soon, I realized too late in my fluctuations
that this circus was the station of the cross.
I decided that this must be my last chance.
Even if a horde of wasps or a hailstorm of bullets
awaited me at the entrance into the coach,
I would take a bullet for rushing to work.
At the door of the coach, there was a woman
who crouched in front of me like a grasshopper,
or a gigantic cockroach made of steel and iron.
She covered the door in a whirlwind of smoke,
and I thought that it was a burning house or bush,
lashing out her long tongue like a viper.
I was torn between the devil and Beelzebub,
having vowed not to change my mind again.
Even at the point of victory, the devil shows up.
But I remembered the words of Winston Churchill,
that he who would not change his mind
would never achieve anything in their life,
but he did not say how many times.

UNLIKE THE TINY FIGURES IN THE GARDEN OF EARTHLY DELIGHTS

Daryl Chinn

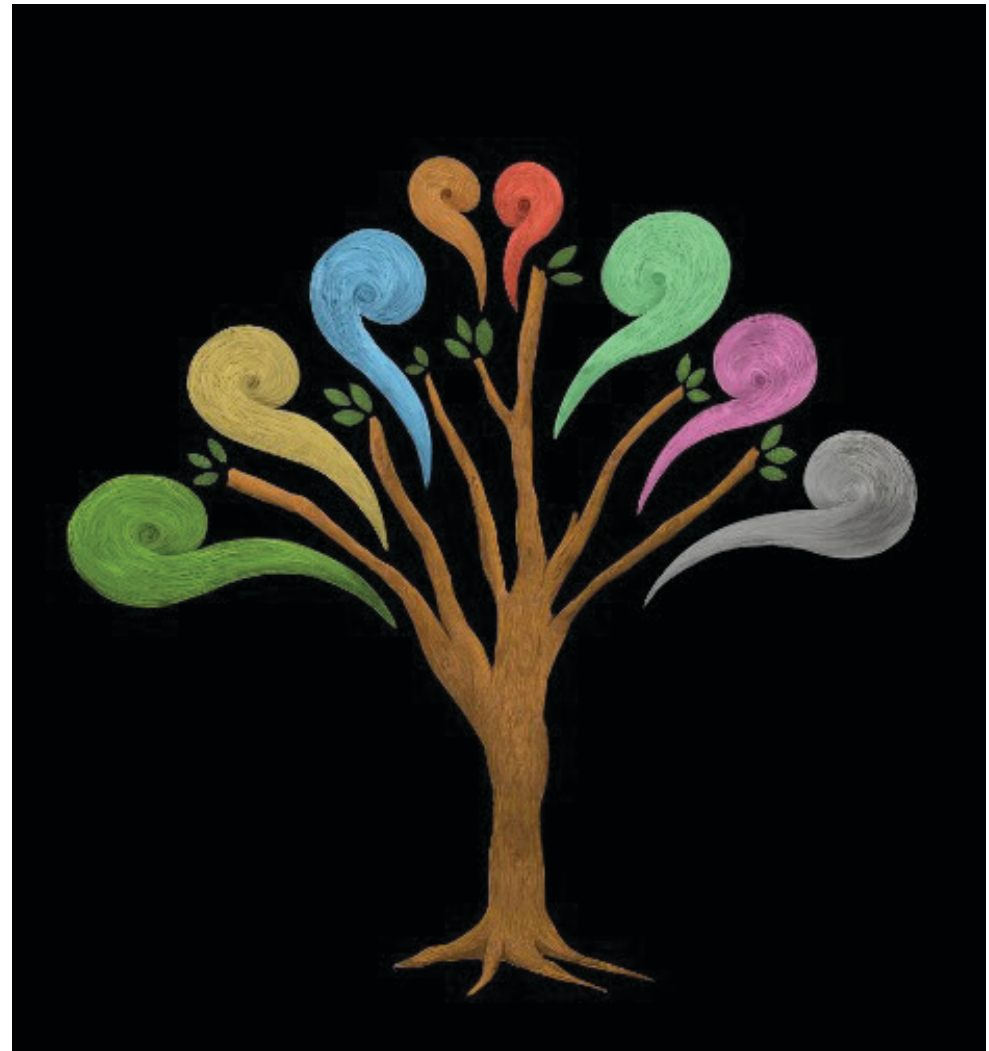
Here is the scene, the point of this happening.
It is three people, standing,
at a careful reserve, around a cardboard box.
A body lies inside, dressed
in a dark blue pinstriped suit coat,
black trousers, and light gray-blue running shoes.
There is a bowtie at his throat.

The head, which had been bald, is now covered
with a red and black knit cap with loose straps.
His son ties the straps under the chin
as a father would for a child going outside,
tenderly and carefully, covering the bald head
for which he had talked of getting a wig.

We touch his forehead, his face, his hand.
His eyes are closed, his head and hands cool,
much colder than this building, colder
than the concrete floor under the yellow metal
roof and Seattle's gray sky. It is February 5, 2025.

We touch his clothes, smooth out unseen wrinkles,
as if he is going out for the evening, we want to touch
and prolong this terribly long and short beauty and silence.

We are waiting. Then we nod and step back.
A man in dark blue coveralls steps forward.
He searches for the yellow box, pushes a button,
and the cardboard boxed body rises a little,
and then he pushes the body into the dark
rumbling chamber. Now the platform is empty,
it's like a table saw extension, twenty ball bearings
to make all this easier. And then,
because his son and daughter didn't want to,
I fumble forward to the black button, thumb
out, and push. A muffled roar begins,
I help him disappear, send him away,
and his handshake and embrace
are now burning, along with his voice
and the silence.



Language connections
- Jatziry Wendolee Cantu Castillo

This painting shows the union of different languages. It conveys the idea that language is a tool that represents each region and that unites people from different cultures and different places.

MY LIFE IN THE UNITED STATES

Irma Nonato

I was born in Mexico, Michoacán. I came to the United States to a town called Hopland in 1986 at the age of 18. Hopland was very different from my hometown because it was surrounded by rows of grapes and pear trees where I could hear the birds singing every morning. It was very lonely because it had very few houses around and a school. It had no stores and no hospitals nearby. People had to drive for 30 minutes to get to another town where you can find everything you need. The weather was very cold in winter, and the summer was very hot, the opposite of my town Zitácuaro where the weather was nice in winter, we never wear sweaters. It was a place where you could go anywhere walking because everything was close to my house. How I missed where I was born.

I remember that the first time that I took English classes it was in Mexico when I was in high school at the age of 14. I felt very strange when I heard my teacher speak English because I did not understand what she was saying, apart from that I was a terrible student. It was always hard for me to understand the language when the teacher began to teach us to make sentences. I felt very confused because I did not know where the subject and the predicate went, in the verbs I did not know which were regular and which were irregular. In this class I learned the basics like window, door, bed, spoon, plate, numbers and colors, I also learned very short sentences like my name is, I am Irma. My grades were low. I think that I never really cared to study English just like I was never going to go to the United States to learn a second language if I was never going to use it.

But it turns out that one day my mother named Maria immigrated to the United States to work, when I was 16 years old leaving my father named Avelino with 8 children. Since what the two of them earned was not enough to support us, my brothers, my father and I were very sad to see my mother leave. Since she was going to look

for a better future for herself, and her family. After two years my mother decided to return to Mexico, she divorced my father, and she decided to return to the United States, and brought me with her against my will. Because I did not want to leave my country, father and brothers.

When I arrived in the United States in Hopland Cal where most of the people spoke Spanish. And it was easier for me to communicate with them. The second time I heard someone speak English was at a friend of my mom's house where I worked as a babysitter taking care of their two children. The oldest name was Daniel, and he was five years old, the youngest was David, he was four years old. They spoke English and Spanish very well. When I heard them speak, my vocabulary slowly increased although it was hard for me because I couldn't pronounce it correctly and my accent was very bad, and they didn't understand what I wanted to say. I felt sad because they didn't understand me. However, I tried over and over again because the children I babysat would tell me to try again, try and try. When I went to the store, the hospital and tried to speak English. They would tell me, "What are you saying? I don't understand you." It completely discouraged me, and I didn't want to practice anymore.

In 1988 I got married to my husband Javier, and he made my life easier. I don't know if it was good or bad because he spoke Spanish and English, both languages and I didn't feel the need to learn to speak them. He accompanied me everywhere, you could say that he was my interpreter, so if I didn't want to learn it, it was okay, I didn't have to speak it, but I remember very well the words of a friend who asked me if I had learned to speak English. I answered her no, why if my husband speaks English, and she answered angrily yes, but remember that you are in the United States and you have to learn it and adapt to your community. If you want to be here. I remember that day I arrived home and told my husband what my friend had told me. However he answered me, your friend is right. The next day I went to school to enroll in English classes.

I attended my first English class here in the United States when I was 35 years old. I think the best way to learn a second language is by reading, writing and speaking, but it's very important to know the concept of what you're doing. I remember when I took English

classes how interesting, and important they were to me because the teacher always made us go to the front of the class, and we had to read and write long sentences on the board. We also had to practice every day and do a lot of homework and all those things helped me improve my English. That's why it's very important to know the concept of what you're reading and writing.

These classes helped me to develop better in my community because I started working at Kentucky Fried Chicken customer service where I took orders in English, so I talked to the customers even though many times my coworkers made fun of my accent, I didn't care I kept speaking it no matter what without being afraid of the mockery. I stayed there working for two years.

My second job was in a store. Thanks to the fact that I already knew how to speak and write more English, they gave me the position of produce manager, where it was a challenge for me because of that job. I had to make my orders in English and speak with the salesperson there. I had to learn the names of all the vegetables and fruits. I remember that every night I practiced until very late because I wanted to learn their names.

This was a big challenge for me. Since there were workers who spoke English very well and none of them were given the position, I had never worked as a manager and thank God. I was able to do my job very well. Although, I know that little by little and with effort you learn and every day you learn something new. It is not easy because the rules of drama and pronunciation are very different from those of Spanish.

I think I still have a lot to learn, but I am not going to give up. I hope one day to be bilingual without being afraid to speak it or feeling the mockery of people. When they tell me that I say "I don't understand you", and I have to repeat it again since it happened to me and it still happens to me. That is how I learned to speak and understand English.

A BRAZILIAN'S JOURNEY TO FLUENCY IN ENGLISH

Nathalia Loiola

I'm one of the lucky ones. My journey learning English started much earlier than most of the people from my home country. To be fluent in English having been born in Brazil is very rare. The percentage of Brazilians who speak English it's a whopping 5% and it drops to 1% when it comes to fluency in the language. It's even harder when you're not from big cities like São Paulo or Rio de Janeiro, which always have lots of tourists and people all over the world. Speaking English it was a dream that my father always had and couldn't achieve himself. He got a child (me) too early in life and was always too busy trying to make more money to put some food (and some books) in our table. Even though he had always worked hard to make his dream come true through my brother and me, that wouldn't be enough if I didn't put my own efforts in the game. And as a game, my journey learning English had many stages, starting in my childhood, going through the big changes and dreams of high school, to finally taking bold steps towards my goals in college and adult life.

I was lucky because my parents were the first to expose me to English before I even went to pre-school. The first word I learned was probably dog, when I was about 3 years old (at least that's what they say). I do remember that they bought me some kind of cards game with English words and pictures, like animals, colors and numbers. At this point, you might think my parents were good English speakers as well, but I have to tell you they were definitely not. My mother struggle even nowadays to pronounce simple words like "beautiful" when I try to teach her and although my father has a better pronunciation, when it comes to speaking, his Duolingo classes can't do much and he literally freezes and can only say "yaya, yaya". Even so, they made an effort to teach me the basics of English before I even

started to have English classes at school. My aunt, who is a English school teacher, was also always trying to make me enjoy English, introducing me to English songs, subtitled movies (instead of dubbed) and speaking random phrases with me whenever she could. Unfortunately, until fifth grade all that I'd actually care about languages was Spanish, thanks to a Mexican show I was a huge fan of. I know, kids are silly sometimes.

By middle school I finally began to find some reasons to learn and even enjoy English. Having a reason it's one of the most important things in someone's journey becoming an insider in a language, and it has to be a strong one if you want to succeed. Around middle school I eventually started to listen songs in English, and search for the translation, but that wasn't a reason strong enough for me. We do have English and Spanish classes in middle and high school in Brazil, and I wasn't a bad student or anything. But the truth is that the school classes mostly only teach about grammar and rules. And we have to agree that there's nothing more boring than grammar. It's important, of course, but it doesn't make you feel you are really learning something you'll use in a conversation someday. At the same time, my father kept telling me how important it was to dedicate myself more to learn English and even bought me an online English course (which I probably did an impressive amount of 3 hours class in one whole year).

The game finally started to change when I read a book called "Shooting My Life's Script" written by Paula Pimenta. The book was about a high schooler girl (like I was) that loved movies and finally got a chance to make her life looks a bit like the movies she loved so much: doing an exchange program in United States. Reading that book and seeing all the experiences she had and how her life was turned upside down after that decision was a game changer for myself. I realized I couldn't live the fullest and have all the experiences I wanted for my life if I wouldn't be able to communicate to the world. And the world speaks English. So I'd have to *give my jumps* (Brazilian expression that means to find a way to solve your problems) and do the same. From that moment, I started researching and found out that the best way would be to do an exchange. But all the high school exchange programs I saw were way too expensive and I didn't

have a clue about how could I afford that. So I decided to do my best with what I had. I started a local English course in my city and I did the first 3 levels of 6 during high school.

When my adult life started I lost sight of my dream for a while. Right after finishing high school I started college to get a bachelors degree in Law (law school works different in Brazil) and I had a hard time managing my studies routine with a full time job. For this reason I couldn't complete the English course and got a bit distracted about my exchange dream. I used to have a boyfriend at the time and that was probably another reason to put my plans on a drawer. After we broke up, I realized I was in my twenties, but living a 30 year old life, and my dream got back. One day I saw a girl from my city posting on her instagram page about this exchange program she was doing. I searched about it and I was happy with what I found. It was an Aupair exchange and coincidentally (or not) I already had all the requirements. One of them was a intermediate English, which I was supposed to have, since I stopped on the intermediate level on that course. The reason why this is a requirement is that I would have to be able to communicate in English, since I would be living and working with people that only speaks English. Although at first I wasn't really sure if my English would be good enough for that, something inside of me was saying I shouldn't be afraid. I made a decision, and when we do it, there's no other options besides doing everything we can to get that.

However, I wasn't a high schooler anymore and I didn't have time to take classes, so I had to figure out a new way to conciliate my busy routine and keep working on my dream. Being a senior at law school, studying for the Brazilian BAR exam, working full time in my own business and improving a second language. As you're probably wondering, yes, I almost went mad that year. But I survived. To keep improving my English between all the craziness I started to do 10 minutes of Duolingo everyday, I would also only listen to music in English and only watch movies and shows in English (with Portuguese or even English subtitles too). Even on social media, I deleted all the Portuguese speakers influencers I used to follow, and gave place to the English speakers. Another useful practice I used to have was trying to speak to myself (when I was alone, to make sure

nobody would think I was crazy), explaining what I was doing, and even trying to simulate conversations responses. This made me feel so immersed in the language that I was soon having almost no hard time understanding complex dialogues in English.

One of the brightest moments in my journey becoming an insider in English happened when I was with my aunts and cousins celebrating my 22 years old birthday in a random bar in São Paulo. That night a guy came to me and said he wanted to introduce his friend, but the problem was the friend couldn't speak Portuguese, and he was wondering if I could speak in English with him. I already knew I wanted to do the Aupair exchange at the time, but I was far from it and I didn't have much practice speaking. The fact is that I was afraid and I didn't think I could have a entire conversation with someone in English yet. But the couple of drinks I've had by that time helped me to take the courage to say yes, "yes I can speak English". Surprisingly, we ended up talking all night long. He was from Germany and didn't have a perfect English either, but we were definitely understanding each other. Talking to someone that doesn't have English as a first language can be hard. The accent and even the way we tell a joke or try to express ourselves sometimes messes up with the translation. Even so, that was the exact moment I realized I was an insider in English, and how far I could go if I didn't let feelings like fear and shame stop me. After hours, when I was coming back to the hotel with my family, I just kept talking in English. I refused myself to stop and at some point I started to literally cry about it. I was so excited. Only one of my aunts (the English teacher) was understanding what I was saying and my cousins were roasting me, saying that they wanted to be so drunk to the point to start speaking English too. But I didn't care. I was finally communicating in another language and I was so freaking happy about it. So I came back to the hotel room, and then I came home. I finished Law School and I passed the Brazilian BAR exam. I also passed the agency and the host family interviews (all in English). I put some clothes, pictures, memories and dreams in one large suitcase and I flew to the "land of the free and home of the brave".

Now I've been living in California for more than a year and I understand why all the songs say that life is brighter under its sun. Liv-

ing here sometimes really does feel like a movie and I'm pretty sure the exchange program was just the beginning of my own life script. When I look back and see how far I've come and how far I still want to go makes me wonder how unhappy I would be if I didn't have the courage to risk and get out of my comfort zone. Now I'm not just able to communicate and express myself in English, but to think in English, in a deeper level. Being in a College Writing class means so much for me, because I can see that I am everyday improving myself towards bigger dreams and achievements. I feel that being bilingual is like a superpower and my brain got bigger and more complex. I even find myself forgetting a few words in my mother tongue now. It's funny and even awkward sometimes, but I certainly don't regret it and I recommend it to everyone. To be continued, all the history we will still write.

THE UNFINISHED BOOK OF MY LIFE

Tấn Dũng

This is the story of hardship, survival, and hope. From the moment I was born, life tested me. My mother, unaware she was pregnant in the early months, couldn't provide the nutrition I needed. As a result, I was born frail, underweight, and often sick, with death lurking closely. High fevers, excruciating stomach pains, and comas haunted the early years of my life, yet somehow, I survived all of it. But I didn't think of it as a miracle because my family was always there, taking care of me, encouraging me to keep going.

A particularly frightening moment occurred during an outbreak of Japanese encephalitis in Vietnam. My family feared I might contract this deadly disease since there was no cure at the time. Thus, my family had to agree to a spinal tap, which permanently weakened my body. But, as fate would have it, a doctor passing by made the correct diagnosis of a urinary tract infection—a condition that the hospital team had overlooked. This accidental diagnosis saved my life, but the health damage remained.

Illness was not the only challenge. When I was three, my parents divorced due to my father's gambling addiction. My mother left the house in the middle of the night, empty-handed, and I followed her into a darker phase in my life, fraught with harsh punishment and torture.

As a picky eater, I endured merciless consequences—forced to eat leftovers, vomited food, beaten by many for eating too slowly, starved and given only water, burned with a hot iron on my thighs, and even had part of my ear cut off, just enough to cause bleeding. The scars have faded, but on my ears, every time the weather turns cold, the pain reminds me of those horrific moments. But I don't hate my mother. On the contrary, I love her deeply, because I think she

endured a lot of pressure having to raise me alone while trying to “survive” in the adult world. We now have a deep love for each other.

It seemed like it was only family, but middle school brought a different kind of pain: loneliness and rejection. My elementary school friends turned their backs on me, manipulated by someone who spread false rumors. The feeling of being isolated made me feel like an invisible shadow. Like a grain of sand abandoned in the desert, like a fish struggling in stagnant water, like a lamp fighting against a storm. I thought that my maternal and paternal grandparents would be my safe haven to hold on to. And that's when I turned to my maternal grandfather and paternal grandmother, believing they'd be a place of security where I could hang on. But, like a bolt of lightning striking my ears, my grandfather died from lung cancer. My grandma died shortly after, because of diabetes and other underlying medical issues. When the hope of immigrating to the U.S. was shattered by my application being canceled, the future seemed even darker.

The world in front of me became engulfed in darkness, depression swallowed me, and I was no longer the carefree, smiling boy I once was. Instead, I saw the world through a lens of frustration and anger. I gradually withdrew from the world and found solace in video games—not as an escape, but as a survival mechanism to block suicidal thoughts.

A new chapter began when my mother got married, and I naively believed that life would change. But no, it didn't get better, it got worse. My stepfather was a selfish and indifferent man who never gave me anything good. What he ‘bestowed’ upon me were merely old, unwanted leftovers—things no one cared for. Worse still, he hid me from his own family to the point where I didn't even know they existed until my mother told me later.

Before getting married, my mother and he had agreed not to have children, as she was already older. But as time passed, he changed, pressuring my mother to have a child while simultaneously oppressing me in every possible way. His selfishness pushed their marriage to the brink of collapse. It was only after their divorce that I realized my mother had been silently protecting me from him all along. She wanted to give me a good life, but he did not.

At the same time my mother entered a new marriage, I stepped

into high school, carrying the hope of a fresh start. A new environment, new people, I thought things would be different. I tried to open my heart. But no. Like a double-edged sword, high school was not an escape but a betrayal, masked as friendship, hidden behind deceiving smiles. Those who tried to befriend me were just using me for their own purposes—getting free food, copying homework. They mocked me behind my back, turning me into a joke in their conversations. I felt like a lone wolf surrounded by cunning foxes, and it suffocated me, pushing me into a deep, endless abyss. For a while, I believed I would remain trapped in that dark pit forever. But against all odds, I found true friends in depth, and together, we built our way out—one step at a time.

But no party lasts forever. I learned not to hold on too tightly. Life taught me that people often grow apart—some enter your life, some leave, and a few remain by your side. In the end, I only kept in touch with my three closest friends. The stairs leading me out of my reality were still unfinished, and I found myself stuck in the middle of that “void”, trapped between continuing or giving up on my life. My mind was drowned in emotions, making it hard to see clearly.

Just as I was about to be swallowed by the abyss, a hand from ‘heaven’ reached down and grasped mine. It was my girlfriend. Like a lighthouse in the dark, she pulled me out of the depths, like a shooting star streaking across a pit of despair, like a flame igniting within my heart. She instilled in me a fierce belief in life. Before meeting her, I never believed in angels, they were nothing more than beautiful yet distant tales. But she proved me wrong. Sometimes, angels walk among us, closer than we ever realize. She rescued my soul and became my emotional support. That’s when I realized that her smile had become my objective, my motivation. Though we often argue over our differences, life isn’t meant to be too easy, that would strip it of its true essence. I believe that a bit of ‘spice’ only makes it more meaningful. Disagreements don’t mean we’ll drift apart; rather, they are opportunities to deepen our understanding of each other.

The moment I heard the news that I was moving to America, I felt like I was being torn in two. One half of me was happy, I was finally going to the place I had always dreamed of, hoping for an easier life. But the other half was filled with pain, realizing that I would have

to leave behind the people I cherished: my friends, my mother, and above all, my girlfriend. The distance between us—both in geography and time—gradually became an invisible wall, and the challenges in our relationship grew, making everything increasingly difficult. But the suffering didn’t end there—I was trapped in a ‘living hell’ every single day. In Vietnam, my aunts had reassured me that once I arrived, my only responsibility would be studying, that I wouldn’t have to do anything else. But the truth was far from that. Every day, I was weighed down by endless chores, forced to perform physical therapy on them each night. Even when my hands ached, I endured it all for their sake. In the end, I got nothing. My father insisted that I had to work to ‘repay’ them for providing me with shelter, food, and necessities.

But I’m not giving up anymore. I’m not letting go like I did before, because now, I have the support of my mother, my friends, and especially my girlfriend. I will keep moving forward, no matter how unclear my future may be. My goal now is to learn English well, find a stable job so I can take care of my mother and my girlfriend without relying on the people here—those who have treated me poorly. My story is not over, it is still ongoing, every page, every action fighting against every difficulty and adversity. And I believe that one day, my life will have the happy ending I truly deserve, and I will harvest “the fruits of happiness” from the “tree” I have planted. I hope those who read this story find a harbor, a tiny hope that can help you overcome the hardships and struggles of life.

THE GIRL WITH THE HEAVY ACCENT

Adriana Calderon

That was my nickname on my first months working as a Medical assistant. I need to admit that hearing that from my patients made me very upset, uncomfortable and insecure not only in my person but also doing my job.

Weeks passed by since I heard the comment for the first time . And I heard it again from a five foot woman, carrying a black and pink cane in her right hand, her hair was long and full of gray color. I think she was in her mid 70's " the girl with a heavy accent helped me". My coworker respond who?" She replied again, this time a little bit outraged. The new Assistant with a heavy accent.

To be honest I felt a mix of emotions, disappointed and angry, I started to think about why do I have a heavy accent? What can I do in order to improve it? Maybe I need to start a list of words that are difficult for me to pronounce and I can practice at home, and repeat the words over and over so I can improve. Then I paused and other questions that came to my mind and I asked myself "I know my English is not perfect when I write, read and speak, but it's because English is not my first language, but wait a minute, do you think people who only speak one language have a perfect pronunciations? or do they have a hard time with pronunciation of some words? ". For example, sometimes when I write in Spanish I have problems with spelling, also I can't pronounce some words. If this happened to me in my own language Spanish, I'm pretty sure this would happen to people who only speak one language.

Later that afternoon at home feeling more calm and with my mind clear, I was thinking that maybe for people who have only been living here in Ukiah, California their whole life they need to know about some of the challenges that people have when English is not the first language. All the new things that we need to learn in order

to be able to communicate with others with a heavy accent, all the things that we left behind, and important family events that we are not able to enjoy just because we are so far away.

When I moved to this country it was like starting from zero again, like if I push the reset button in my life, I need it to learn many new things at the same time. I came here in 2009 from Mexico City. I was only 18 years old, I grew up in a City with around 8.84 millions of habitants, street vendors in every corner or convenience stores, a lot of traffic, noisy cars with loud music, people always trying to chase the bus and of course a lot of smoke.

I came here to Ukiah where the country only had around 14810 habitants at that time. a very quiet town, no street vendors or little stores, no traffic, no loud cars, the bus was always empty, and the weird smell that Ukiah expel in the summer afternoons for long time I believe that was the skunks urine the whole neighborhood, until my family told me that was marijuana plants fragrances.

In the city I always use public transportation but moving here I need to learn to drive since public transportation wasn't an option because I need to start work at 3 am and the MTA (Mendocino Transit Authority) starts to operate around 7 am, but the most important thing that I needed to learn was english so I can communicate with others in this town, to be able to order my food without ask for help in spanish, do some important tramits and fill out some forms at DMV, post office, doctors appt. and do not feel like a bother to much my older brother and my dad translating for me, the feeling of having a piece of tape around my mouth and not able to speak for myself to explain with all details exactly what I need, what happened or how I feel.

I enrolled in an English class and I was working and school for a few months at school was learning grammar, vocabulary and some pronunciation and at work I was practicing with my coworkers and customers sometimes they were not able to full understand me but I always tried my best, I just to ask my coworker how to pronounce some words and I looked at her mouth, looking how their lips moved when they were saying it and tried to copy some movements and sounds until I said it almost perfect I got this trick from one of my ELD teacher "Sarah Walsh" she always said to the class "look up to

my lips” when she was pronouncing the word that we are having hard time. That trick 90% of the time helps me a lot, sometimes I am still not able to say it correctly, but I am still using this trick.

15 years pass since day one here in USA and everyday I am still learning even though I Understand more English (reading and writing) and I feel that I became an insider in English when I was able to understand and respond back to people without help, my pronunciation is not 100 % all the time, but this is why I’m unique this represent who I am, all my hard work, and every time that i want to give off learning a new language, a new lifestyle and i never did.

Before, I always looked for perfection in the way I speak, read and write and sometimes I was ashamed about my mistakes. but today my mindset changes and now I’m proud of myself and my accent, today i want to said Thank you to everyone how help my in this journey about learning and i want to give a doubled thank you to people like my patient who sometimes judge others without knowing what is going on with you, that made it continue learning and do not give up growing in my profession and also in my person. Gracias.

MY JOURNEY TO ENGLISH

Jatziry Wendolee Cantu Castillo

The first time I heard English was when I came to the US in 2013, I was ten years old, I began attending a school where they only spoke English. I did not understand anything at all. It was something new for me. It has been a long journey since then, but with hard work and commitment I have gotten improve my English skills.

It all started when one day my parents said that we had to move to the US for a while because there they could try to heal my little brother who had cerebral palsy. I was ten years old, and I was excited to move to another country, so when the day of the trip arrived, I was very happy. When we got to the US everything was exciting until they told my brother and I that we could have to go to school.

I did not want to go to school because I knew they did not speak Spanish, but I had to go because we were staying in the US for 6 months. My dad sent my brother and me to Loleta Elementary School. The first day I cried a lot because I was scared and did not understand anything. Also, I had no friends. My teachers name was Mr. Williams, and he did not speak Spanish, so he told Amanda to support me. Amanda was my first friend. She spoke Spanish, which relieved me a bit. There was also Oliver, and Valeria. They helped me a lot during those months.

My days at school were good, although the first few weeks I spent time crying and lying, saying that my stomach hurt so my mom would take me home. At school I learn to use Duolingo, and I had a teacher who made me read stories in English and then write about them, but I mostly learned when Amanda translated what the teacher said, and I communicated when she helped me say phrases in English.

We lived in the US with an aunt who had a son named Francisco. My dad told him to only speak to us in English, so for the next months, he spoke to me in English almost all the time. My aunt

Martha read books to us, she also made us read and write stories in English, and sometimes she told us words and we had to write them. Although I often did it wrong, she helped me by correcting my work and teaching me how to pronounce what I had written.

Another English lesson was that every morning we watched a program on TV to learn English words. It was a cartoon and I like it a lot. I also had another aunt who helped me learn English. Once I went to stay at her house for a week, and my auntie said that we would not play until I had an English class. That night I learned the complete alphabet with a song, and the following days I learned colors, numbers, names of animals, and some other words. My family and friends did a lot to help me learn English. I will always be grateful for their effort and their time.

The day of the end of the school year arrived. By that time, I was no longer afraid to go to school. I had friends, and I liked being there. Even though I still did not understand much, or dare to speak on my own, I could write and understand several words and phrases.

Then the day came when I had to go back to Mexico. I did not want to go back, but I had to. I returned to school in Mexico, and everything was fine because it was my native language. When I started high school, I had English classes, but it was not the same, I did learn a little, but not at the rate I learned in the US. During those years in Mexico however, I kept practicing English so as not to forget what I knew. In 2015 I returned to the US and went to school again, it was just for two months, but it helped me learn more. Then went back to Mexico and continued trying not to forget what I knew using Duolingo, listening to music and watching videos.

I came back to the US 2 years ago. I took ESL classes at College of the Redwoods. Those months that I had been going to class I feel like I have learned a lot, but what I need the more is to talk. I am making progress, though and that feels good. Now, I am attending credit classes at CR, sometimes it is difficult for me to understand the classes, since the vocabulary is more advanced, but when it happens, I ask for help. I like knowing a second language, and I will continue trying to improve and become fluent.

FROM OUTSIDER TO INSIDER: MY JOURNEY LEARNING ENGLISH AND EMBRACING A NEW IDENTITY

Laura Isabel Ceballos Montoya

Learning English has been one of the most important things in my life. I am from Colombia, and our first language is Spanish. If a person speaks a second language especially English, it is a big plus; it makes a difference. You can get better jobs, you would be able to find more possibilities to apply to scholarships, and much more. Since I was a child learning that language was a goal for my parents. My family had limited economic resources; both of my parents started to work early in life, and neither had a chance to go to college. In my culture, when somebody speaks English or understands it, people think that that person has or will have a well-paid job in an important company in the country. As a result, my parents had that idea as well. They wanted things that they never could have for me. They wanted all the opportunities and experiences that they wished for their lives, and for them, the way for me to achieve it was through learning a second language, specifically, English. Although at first, I didn't share my parent's interest in English, over time, I had the opportunity to embrace the language. I went from the stage when my parents were the ones who introduced me to the language, to the stage where I was doing it for myself.

My journey to learning English began at the age of eight, when my parents enrolled me in classes to learn the language. My initial experience was filled with fear and lack of enthusiasm. I did not like it at all because it was hard for me to understand it. I will never forget my first class. The teacher was a young adult guy who was teaching us the basics like the ABC, the fruits and vegetables and the family members in English. At the end of the class, the teacher asked every-

body to say a word in English. It could be fruits, an animal, a part of the house, even “mom” in English would be great, but I froze. I could not say anything. I remember my cousin, who was taking the classes with me, said it and she went outside with my mom, but I was still in the classroom unable to say something, I was scared. At the end, it was just the teacher and me. Finally, the teacher helped me, and I was able to go home, but I was sad. This is what I call the resistance stage. This experience made me feel like a complete foreign in this language and led to my resistance toward the language.

My story with English took a positive turn when I was 11 years old. I started to understand like my parents the importance of English and I began to see all the opportunities I would have in the future if I were able to learn the language. At that point, I realized I was not just learning it to achieve my parents’ goals, I was doing it for myself. My parents registered me in an academy called Comfama to learn English. In this place you would be able to find a lot of opportunities for family development. Luckily for us, they also had English classes. I used to go there every Saturday afternoon. The classes would change every semester. I started in the basics, and slowly every time I passed the final exam, I was able to go to the next level. I was always excited to share that with my parents because even though I was doing it for myself, my parents were my biggest supporters. I stayed there for almost three years; I used to study a lot. I would do my homework and the extra activities that the teacher assigned, it was my way to be connected with the language and be interested in it. However, although I was doing my best to learn the language, I was still feeling like an outsider. I knew words, but I was not able to have a conversation with somebody. This is what I call the interest stage; I started to be more interested in the language on my own and I decided to do activities like listening to music in English.

Winning a local scholarship to learn English in 2012 was a turning point in my life, one that required me to take full responsibility for pursuing this dream. My feelings toward the language changed completely, and everything I did afterward. At that time, I was 14 years old, and I was in eighth grade in middle school. I used to be a great student at school. One day, I was in my English class, and the teacher started to select some girls from my classroom because they

were selected to apply for a scholarship, but we did not know it. She selected around four girls at the beginning. I was the last one she called. She told us to go to the other English teacher because there was an opportunity for a scholarship to learn English in a good English academy called Centro Colombo Americano. It was the best in the city at that time. We went to talk with the other teacher, and he gave us all the information. I started my process on my own, I shared it with my parents but the motivation that I had at that moment was 100% mine. As part of the application process, I had to gather letters of recommendation from previous teachers, a statement of purpose, and my transcript. A few weeks later, I got a call from the academy saying that I was preselected for an interview. I was so happy. My parents were too. They could not believe that I was in that process. They felt that the seeds they planted when I was just a little child were starting to germinate. It was always their dream for me to study there, but the academy was expensive, and we were not able to afford it. I remember when I used to go with my mom to Comfama, we had to pass by the good academy on the bus, and she would say “You will study here one day.” So, for them it was amazing that I was in the process of applying for a scholarship there. The day of the interview I went with my mom. We were so excited and nervous at the same time. We were in the place we wanted to be. The interviewers were nice. I still remember when they asked me: “why do you want to study English” and I said more or less: because I really like it, I think I can have a lot of opportunities for me in the future if I embrace this language. That was the most important question of the interview, I have always thought that answering that question in the way I did allow me to win the scholarship. Days later, they called me and told me that I had won the scholarship. It was one of the best days of my life. My parents got very excited as well. My mom told me: “I knew you could do it.” Later when I told my dad he was exhilarated, he was immensely proud.

The scholarship changed my life by giving me the opportunity to spend four years in an elite English academy. I learned everything I needed to know about the language. I used to make presentations in English, performances and different activities related with the language. I was required to speak English, and the teachers spoke only

in English too. This was something completely different from the other academies I went previously, because in those ones the teachers were speaking just in Spanish, but in this one you will have to listen and talk everything in English. The academy and the teachers took me from an A1 level to a C1 level. This refers to the levels of proficiency in the language A1 being the lowest and C2 the highest one. At the A1 level we were able to learn basic phrases and vocabulary to handle simple, everyday situations, while at C1 we were able to express ourselves fluently and understand almost everything in the language. I had a lot of fun there. However, it was a rough journey. Every day after school, I would go back home, have lunch, change my clothes, and take the bus to start classes at 3pm and go until 6pm. It used to be exhausting. I had to do homework from school but at the same time I was needing to do projects and homework from my English classes. This experience is what I refer to as the immersion stage, where I fully immersed myself in learning and growing with the language. I learned a lot about the language, but I was not feeling like an insider at that point. Not even when I finished the program and got a C1 certificate I did feel an insider in the language. Every time somebody asked me to speak in English, I would get shy, or I would do it, but I would start to say wrong things. I finished my program in 2015, and my English studies stopped there.

Although I hadn't used English in 8 years, my journey for English picked up when I decided to apply to be an Au Pair in the US. In 2022 as I was finishing my career in Management engineering, I decided I wanted to become an Au pair in the U.S. What I never knew was that becoming an au pair would expand my beliefs and frontiers, in other words, my entire world. All what I did in the past made sense. During the process of becoming an au pair I had two interviews with families from the United States and in one of those ones my parents wanted to listen as well. Although I was very nervous, when I was asked the questions, I answered fluently in English! It felt like everything I studied for in the past was coming together at this point. I expressed my interest in working with them and they understood everything I was saying. It was a very exciting moment. My Parents were also impressed; they were proud. This is what I call the integration stage, when all the work done in the last years

comes to place and everything makes sense.

Being an insider is not easy. Some days you feel like an insider, for example when you can communicate with the people around you and you can be part of the activities they do; but other days you feel more like an outsider, for example when you feel that you do not belong to here, that the food is not the one you like and you miss your culture. I guess it is part of the process. I am thankful for that scholarship because it allowed me to get a base in the language, which has been helpful now in my life, with my parents because thanks to their help I am where I am right now. But more than that, I am very thankful to myself, because all the hard work has been very fruitful. Right now, I can say I have been reaching the goals I put when I was 11 years old. Now, I am using English to talk in school, to communicate with my fiancé, to share my ideas and understand people's ideas. My journey has not stopped. I am still taking classes in the language, but now with more confidence and appreciation of my process.

Finding a purpose was the key to becoming an insider and to lead the language to get a position in my life. Try to find a purpose for your goal, you will be surprised at what you can achieve.

ME ENCUENTRO CON EL INGLÉS

Ruth Nuñez Pabst

Mi primer experiencia en el inglés, en escuchar o escribirlo fue cuando empecé la secundaria, los primeros días el profesor nos explicaba en español después nos decía oraciones en inglés, recuerdo en una ocasión que él me decía: “Cierra la puerta”, “Abre tu cuaderno”. En ese momento sentí ganas de correr porque todos mis compañeros tenían su atención hacia mí, Y yo no sabía que me estaba diciendo hasta que un compañero que esta cerca de mí, me repitió en español lo que significa, mi mente estaba bloqueada. Me es más fácil memorizar frases o palabras en inglés, escribiéndolas varias veces en inglés y a la par en español.

Mi mamá nunca estuvo en la secundaria ya que ella le daban migrañas muy fuertes, solamente pudo terminar la primaria, y esto fue porque en mi país; Costa Rica, la primaria es gratuita y obligatoria, ella no pudo seguir estudiando más, mi papá era un hombre muy inteligente. El no sabía nada de inglés ni me podía explicar técnicas de cómo yo podría aprender el inglés sin consumir tantas horas de estudio y con tan pocos resultados o avance en mi aprendizaje en esa lengua.

Cuándo tenía examen de matemática, física, o inclusive química se me hacía más fácil porque estudiaba las fórmulas, las comprendía y podía desarrollar el proceso para llegar al resultado final, entonces yo trataba de hacer unas cuantas prácticas y listo...preparada para hacer el examen, mis calificaciones eran mayores y consumía menos tiempo estudiando, en comparación con inglés.

Los tres primeros años de secundaria llevamos dos idiomas: Inglés y Francés y por supuesto el español, El cuarto y el quinto año teníamos que escoger uno de los dos idiomas, a pesar que a mí se me dificultaba tanto el inglés, yo sabía que cuando yo fuera adulta y escogiera una profesión, el inglés iba a ser muy importante, así es que escogí el idioma de inglés.

El día antes del examen de inglés, dormía con dificultad porque constantemente me despertaba pensando que no iba a poder lograrlo, sin embargo los cinco años de mi secundaria logré pasarlos satisfactoriamente, aunque fuera con la nota básica.

Yo termine mi secundaria me casé era muy joven, tuve mi primer hijo volví a estudiar, mi interés era encontrar trabajo pronto, pase la mayoría de mis años estudiando para ampliar mis conocimientos en contabilidad, y así poder tener más oportunidades laborales con mejores ingresos, pero nunca pensé en estudiar inglés, porque mi tiempo se iba rápidamente entre trabajo, estudio y cuidado de mis hijos.

Mientras pasaban los años, tuve la inquietud de estudiar una segunda profesión afín con mi carrera profesional, fue entonces que estando en una clase de Elementos de la Macroeconomía entró un empleado de la universidad al salón a promover nuevas carreras universitarias, cuando él salió el profesor nos dijo: “No se llenen de títulos que al final del camino y en vez de favorecerlos los van a limitar a encontrar trabajos, ya que ustedes estarán sobre calificados, tomen una buena decisión, estudien inglés porque un profesional que no sepa inglés, estará estancado en un puesto...” Palabras muy sabias.

En una ocasión, recibí una llamada telefónica de una amiga, ella me dijo que había una empresa que necesitaba un profesional con mis características, yo fui a la entrevista y me pareció increíble el puesto, porque duplicaba el salario que yo tenía en ese momento. Mi experiencia laboral y personalidad cumplían con los requisitos solicitados; solamente había uno que yo no cumplía, la empresa era transnacional, y el requisito era saber inglés, así me lo hizo saber el entrevistador, aunque era un inglés técnico o sea con términos contables, que serían fácil de aprender, me imagino que llegó una persona que si sabía inglés más que yo, aunque no cumplieran un 100% el resto de los requisitos... Porque a mí nunca me llamaron.

Después un par de años más tarde, aplique para trabajar en una empresa, recibí una llamada para la entrevista, era una empresa muy importante y grande, era una transnacional “Conair Costa Rica” fui a la entrevista pasé todos los filtros y el último era el gerente financiero, todo iba muy bien hasta que me preguntó en inglés cómo está mi nivel de inglés, con mucha pena tuve que decirle: no hablo inglés,

después de unos días me llamaron para agradecerme mi interés por participar en las entrevistas pero yo no fue escogida, segunda vez en mi vida que perdía una buena oportunidad laboral por no haber estudiado más inglés, sin embargo un año después, recibí una llamada de la misma empresa fui a la entrevista y fui contratada, era para un puesto que no se necesitaba el manejo del inglés. Yo trabajé en el departamento financiero por cinco años fueron unos de mis mejores años laborales, sin embargo terminaron porque esta empresa decidió cerrar operaciones en Costa Rica y abrirlas en China. A pesar de esta situación, continué haciendo lo posible por salir adelante porque soy una persona positiva.

Yo fui a una cena de Navidad y dijeron escribamos una carta donde pongamos nuestros deseos para el nuevo año, yo entre mis deseos recuerdo haber escrito quiero viajar y quiero aprender inglés, a los años sin pedirlo se me dio la oportunidad de migrar a Estados Unidos y dar un paso para cumplir uno de mis deseos de muchos años atrás... aprender el inglés.

Yo vivo en Estados Unidos desde agosto del 2012, sin embargo mi avance en inglés fue muy poco, porque me dediqué más a hablar español, la mayoría de mis amistades tanto de origen latino como anglosajón hablaban español conmigo, y para mi era más comfortable seguir hablando español.

Yo matriculé clases en el Mendocino College, aprendí más a escribirlo que a entenderlo, la conexión entre lo que escuchaba y entendía era muy poca, lleve un curso de verano, la profesora no hablaba español y empecé a entenderle mas lo que ella hablaba, su historia personal y esto fue muy satisfactorio para mi.

Mi esposo habla un poco español y yo un poco de inglés, ambos nos esforzarnos por aprender mas, yo de inglés y el de español, hemos logrado avanzar mas en nuestra meta, sin embargo en ocasiones me desespero de tratar de hablar en inglés y que no me entiendan, pero trato de tranquilizarme y visualizar como un bebé dura años en poder aprender, entender y hablar el idioma de su mama, y se le hace difícil, pero con paciencia y perseverancia, lo logra y se que yo también lo podré lograr al igual que el bebé que aprende a hablar un idioma, se por experiencia propia que para aprender no hay edad límite, cada día se aprende algo nuevo.

Me método es practicar más la escritura y escuchar la pronunciación y repetirla, esto podrá ayudar a pronunciar mejor, corregir mi mala ortografía y me facilitará poder hablar usando una correcta estructura de la oración.

Yo termino con las frases: “Nada es imposible si se hace con perseverancia” “Debemos de ser agradecidos con el país que nos abrió sus brazos y nos acogió, y que mejor manera de demostrar esa gratitud; que hablar el ingles y no esperar que las personas aprendan nuestro idioma para que me entiendan”.

MY LIFE OF LIVING IN MANY PLACES

Pakou Her

My family used to live in Meuang Aum village in the state of Xaysomboun until I was around one year old. Then we moved to many different villages in many different states. We returned to Meuang Aum village for four to five years before moving on to somewhere new and somewhere else after that. The most important and meaningful place to me is Meuang Aum. It is my first home.

When we came back to Meuang Aum, I was nine years old, and then I started to help my parents working in the fields. I remember we used to go to the field to sleep over there, and in this way, we could finish weeding our field faster. In the early morning around four am, the sounds of birds singing would wake me up in a little house beside the field. When dawn came, I would hear the loud sound of a tractor, and I would smell the smoke from a fire because my mom was making breakfast. When we finished breakfast, we would start to plant rice in the mud. My dad was plowing the field. I walked in the mud without shoes and would bend down to plant rice. My nose was near the earth, and I smelled mud and dead worms.

After working all day, I said I felt pain in my midback because I bent over to plant rice, and I was tired. Then my dad would reply, "You are a child. Even though you are very tired, after you take a shower, you will not be tired anymore." Then in the evenings before dusk came and until midnight, I heard many frogs croaking beside a little creek with water rushing. It made me have a good peaceful sleep.

I miss the many times when we were at the field after lunch. My mom always kept working, but my dad wanted to take a nap for a little bit and then would work. My siblings and I would like to take a nap too.

Then my dad said to my mom, "Don't hurry. Work never finishes.

You will have all your life to work, so just relax sometimes."

And we said, "Yes, Mom. Relax for a moment."

Then she replied, "When you all have many children like me, you will understand why I want to keep working."

Now I understand her.

In spring, we chopped down the forest to open up the field. In summer, we planted our crops of rice, pumpkin, corn, cucumber and vegetables. In fall, we took care of our crops or weeded them. In winter, we harvested our crops and prepared the wood for cooking. I really miss farm life when I was a child because I did not have a lot of stress. Our life was like a circle. We did the same activities over and over again through many years together. However, farming life was peace for me.

When I got married, I moved to live with my husband. He had bought a piece of land and built a house there before we got married. I lived there alone without family and friends, or even my husband who lived in the United States. He visited me one or two times each year. Every day I stayed there, I felt scared and nervous after the sun went down. When I lived with my parents, I always felt protection, but then I lived alone. I made a big decision for myself to be strong and protect myself since No one was there for me.

I always slept with the light on. It helped me to feel safe. However, the second year of living there, around midnight, someone tried to enter my house. While I was sleeping, they unlocked the top and middle latches of my front door and then tried to grab my purse that was hanging from the wall with a long wooden hook. When they got the purse, they could not pull it out, so the purse dropped to the floor. The sound woke me up. I got off the bed and saw my purse on the floor. Then I knew something was wrong and opened the curtain to see if someone was there, but there was nobody. I called my parents and told them, and they stayed with me for one week.

After I gave birth to my son, he was living with me. However, he was just a baby, and I felt even more nervous because he was my responsibility. I thought living there in that lonely house was just temporary and not for all my life. This helped me feel better about living there.

When I came to live in the United States, I thought I would start

my new life here with happiness and peace, but as a matter of fact, it is not easy living here. I felt like I was a child again because I had to learn many new things. Here everything is different, and it is a challenge for me. The big issue for me is speaking English. When I first lived here, I would go shopping with my husband, and when we came to the cashier to pay the bill, they said, “Hi! How are you? Did you find everything?” I stayed silent. I knew, they were speaking to me, but I did not understand at all. I just pretended that I heard nothing. Then my husband replied to them, but I still felt ashamed. I said to myself, you should learn English.

When I came to the US, I knew nothing about living here, but I am satisfied that I have a good helper. My husband was my first teacher. He pushed me to learn many new things even when I struggled learning English, he would encourage me many times. If I make a plan A, and it is not working, I will make a plan B to continue learning. I will not give up until I achieve my goals.

When I got married, I never realized that I would separate from my family forever. It is true for many women, but I felt that I didn’t have enough time to stay with my parents after I was already married. I started my life before I was ready to leave them; however, I have made it through all the years. I am proud of what I have now.

Of all the places I have been living, the one I am most homesick for is Meuang Aum because I grew up there. Even though it was a rural village, I miss all the fields where my family worked, every path we walked through, every smile, all the fun and excitement that we made together. If I could go back to the past, I would enjoy my parents more than I did. Hopefully, I will bring them here with me to enjoy this incredible country. I am joyful to have all the experiences of living in many places with everyone who has been a part of my life. These are just memories, but they are parts of me and will stay with me forever.

WHEN I WAS LITTLE

Karla Zazueta

When I was little, I lived on a small ranch in Culiacan, Sinaloa. During the Christmas season, my paternal family from California always went to Culiacan to spend Christmas on the ranch with the whole family together. All my cousins used to speak in English, and I didn’t understand anything. I felt uncomfortable for not understanding, and I knew that at that moment I couldn’t learn it. So, I spent my time with my cousins Esthela and Ale from the ranch.

These were my favorite times of the year because my house was full of family, my parents and uncles made a lot of food every day, like pork, carne asadas, fresh seafood, and a lot of Mexican food. There were many celebrations, like birthdays, Christmas, New Year, and Reyes Magos. I remember that most of the days were parties and all my family was very close and felt happy.

Also, in my summer vacations, my family and I used to come to California to visit our family and spend vacations with them. We used to arrive with uncle Alejandro on his ranch in Riverside. But it was a little bit boring because when I watched TV, everything was in English. If we went to the movie theater, the movie was in English. It was uncomfortable to watch a movie in English and have everyone laugh and you not understand what they said in the movie. I was not interested in trying to understand or learn English because I was little and it seemed like a very difficult language to me.

When I was 15 years old, my dad decided that my family would come to live in Ukiah, because he wanted my brother Pedro, my little sister Mayra and I to have a better education. At first, I wasn’t happy because normally I’m shy, and like I always thought that to learn English it would be complicated. Also, my dad has 18 brothers and sisters, so in Ukiah, we have many family in Ukiah.

My first time at Ukiah High, I was worried about my classes and what I had to do, because my school in Mexico was very small with few students and we all had the same classes, and this high school

seemed very big to me, full of people speaking a language I didn't understand, and many classes to choose from. On my first day of school, I went to my ELD classes, and I discovered that there were many teenagers like me who didn't speak English. I had a Spanish class. My math class was in Spanish! It was something that I couldn't believe, but it was really good for me because I was comfortable in those classes, and I was thankful to Ukiah High that they have those classes for teenagers arriving from another country so we can be comfortable in classes and participate.

The first months weren't easy for me because I was adapting. I was trying a lot to learn English but I felt like there was nothing in my head. I didn't memorize anything and no matter how hard I worked, I quickly forgot everything. All my life I have felt that I have a bad memory. But I don't know if it's a bad memory or if it was just my insecurities because I didn't feel comfortable speaking English. My first friend at Ukiah High was my cousin Irasema, who had come from the ranch two years before me, so she introduced me to her friends and they welcomed me very well and we were a group of 7 who had a lot of fun at lunch and sometimes after school.

After 6 months of living in Ukiah, my dad and mom decided to go back to Culiacan, but at the time, I felt good living in Ukiah. I talked to my parents and told them that I wanted to stay here. My dad decided that I could stay in Ukiah to live for a few months with my uncle Isa (Irasema's dad), his wife, and their five children. Irasema and two of her brothers went to high school with me. When my parents and my little sister went to Mexico, there were times when I felt lonely and sad, but I wanted to benefit from the opportunity that my dad gave to me to have a better education and that way I put more effort into learning English.

After one year of living in Ukiah, I started to understand English. Everything happened little by little. I put a lot of effort into my ELD classes, I listened to music in English, and I also watched TV in English. First, I understood a lot of words from books, and I was doing my homework very easily. Then, I understood conversations, and over time, I started to talk to people in English, even though my English wasn't very fluent, but I tried.

After 2 years, in my senior year, my counselor put me in English Honor. I liked that class very much because I was more familiar with English, at that time I already felt like an insider in English. In this class I learned to write my first essay in English. I passed that class with an A, and it was very encouraging for me because I was making progress in my second language.

In 2014, I graduated from Ukiah High, and I felt very proud of myself that I knew a second language, passed all necessary exams to graduate in English and math, and got a scholarship upon graduation.

With my ELD classmates, I learned that some learn a new language faster than others, or even have better pronunciation. We shouldn't despair over the time it takes to learn a new language. There's no exact time to know how long it will take. The important thing is to practice it, be consistent, and when you least imagine, you'll be an insider in that new language.

MY EDUCATION

Chong Geyer

I was born and grew up in rural South Korea. Living in poverty, I only made it to 6th grade education in Korea. When I moved to the United States, I was 23 years old. I didn't know much English, so I worked at restaurants, cleaned hotels, and did dry cleaning. I worked two jobs for 16 hours a day, and I didn't have time to study English because I was too tired working two jobs. Now I am 60 years old trying to learn English but it's not easy because my memory is not as good as it used to be. In my younger days, I had very good memory. Now as my memory is fading away, I am struggling day to day. It is difficult to memorize everything I am learning. But I am not giving up no matter how difficult it is, and I keep trying to learn as much as possible because I have a dream to write my book. I hope to finish this year, which is why my education is so very important to me. I cannot do without all my educators, and I am very grateful to have a chance to learn at this advanced age.

In 2015 I wanted to get my GED, so I went to adult School in Eureka, and then I realized that I didn't have sufficient English to pass the GED Test. It was then that I knew I needed to improve my English. So I looked around and found the Humboldt Literacy Project. So, I called and left a message that said that I would like to learn English. A couple days later, Emma, the director, called me back. She would find a tutor for me.

It took maybe two or three weeks until I met my tutor, Shane. We met twice a week for a couple hours a day, at the coffee shop in the morning for about five years. When I first met Shane, I didn't know any grammar or how to read or write, but he was a very kind, patient and wonderful person. He taught me step by step, but there was so much to learn and all I could do was take it one day at a time.

What makes Emma and Shane so special is that they helped me in 2015 when my mother was very ill. I tried to set up a Zoom meeting with my mother, but I didn't know anything about computers, so they helped me get connected. Then in 2016, I went to help an

ailing mother for three weeks, so I flew to Korea and arrived at 5:00 PM, but my mother had passed away that morning at 5:00 AM. So I didn't have a chance to say goodbye to her, only to bury her and return to America. After my mother's passing, I couldn't meet with my tutor through all the grief. When I lost the precious apple of my eye, I didn't think I could keep going. When I lost my mother, I wanted to give up my life.

Throughout my life, no matter how much I had suffered, the only reason I had never given up was because of my mother. When I lost her, I felt like there was nothing left for me to do. By burying her, I had fulfilled her last wish. That was one of the most difficult times of my life. Every day I was crying like a baby, day and night, not able to go to work, or to meet with Shane. So I took one month off. Then I went back to meet with Shane and Emma. They took me to lunch, and Shane brought me two dozen beautiful tulips, and he helped me get through the most difficult time of my life, so I could focus on learning my English. He even bought me the book called *Brave New World*, which was the last book we read together, due to the pandemic that hit shortly after.

In 2019, I knew I needed to learn computers, so I signed up with College of the Redwoods, and I met Amy. What I noticed was she was always willing to help her students. A lot of the time I had trouble logging into her computer classes, so I called Amy and then she walked me through step by step, and finally I was able to get in. When I needed to talk to her about something she always said yes. When her students were struggling to learn, she always said, "Let me help you." She always encouraged us to put our toes in the kitty pool. She reminded us that it was fine if we didn't get it right the first time. She has a lot of patience. In 2020 we got hit by the pandemic, and I couldn't go to work, struggling to pay rent. I wanted to give up on everything, thinking I might have to live in my car for a third time. I told Amy about my financial situation, and she said she could help me pay my rent. She contacted the financial department staff at College of the Redwoods and they helped me pay rent for a couple of years. I didn't have to worry, and I could just focus on learning. That's how I got through the pandemic.

When Amy's students failed their tests, she never put us down, only encouraged us. I once called her and told her I failed my first test, and she said she was proud of me for trying, even though I failed. She reminded me next time I take a test to not forget to breathe, visualize, and focus. Then I will pass on the second attempt. I had never met anybody with so much love, compassion, understanding, and generosity as Amy. When I needed to talk to her about something she always said yes. She is a genuine person who cares deeply about her students' well-being, and she is a true educator.

When I first met Kendra on Zoom, I remember the very first time she wanted me to write something I said I did not know how. She told me it was OK, to just write anything. So I wrote one complete sentence, but I knew it wasn't a complete sentence. She explained to me what makes a sentence complete, with a subject and verb. I think that's when I really had just a little tiny bit of ideas on how to write. That was my discovery, that maybe I could write. She showed me there's hope for me to write. She always encouraged me to never give up. Last year she taught me how to write in SEE format and I really enjoyed it. Now I am in her English 1A writing class and it is very difficult, but I keep trying. She gave me a writing assignment, so I wrote and I asked her to look it over.

She looked my writing, and she asked me, "This is an opinion?"

Then I looked at her and said, "Yes, it is to me. I only slept for 3 ½ hours, so in my mind, yes."

Then we looked at each other we started laughing. Over the years I have learned so much from her. Now I felt like I could write my own book. One of my biggest dreams is to write my autobiography this year, and I hope to finish this summer, and publish. That's why I relish learning writing very much with Kendra.

Deva is a very understanding and kind person who also wants to help students. What I learned from Deva was a lot of grammar. I can speak pretty well, but I was terrible at grammar. Learning grammar wasn't easy because at this old age I can't remember everything I learn. This is my struggle right now: my memory problems. I notice how she interacts with her students sometimes, and she comes up with such great ideas for playing games. Whoever wins gets little gifts. She makes her class fun, which is how she keeps her students

interested. When I cannot remember what I just learned, and I ask her to repeat it again. I learned so much from Deva last year.

I also learned a lot from Mary Ann's nonprofit called English Express, meeting through Zoom for a couple of years. Mary Ann has true leadership skills. When Mary Ann teaches, it is very thorough and slow. For her, it's not all about speed, but about whether her students understand what she teaches. She makes sure all her students have a chance to read aloud and with correct pronunciation. She has lots of students, most students are local, but she also has some from Colombia and Mexico. I learned a lot through Zoom, but also from field trips too. She loves to take us on field trips like to Medicus, different parks, and Blue Ox. She knows it's a financial hardship for her students, so she does a lot of fundraisers and grant requests, so when we go on field trips, we don't have to pay for anything. She takes her students on field trips to local food banks, so they can have enough food to survive. She dedicates her life to helping her students and community. She is a true blessing to her community, because she cares so very much, being a kind and loving person.

I met Brian last Fall semester in math class after hearing lots of good things about him. One of my classmates told me about a young man named Brian who teaches math class, and he is very good, so I thought I would like to sign up for his class to get my GED. He was very patient with me while I struggled to learn algebra. I then found out that he teaches computer class, so I signed up for his computer class. Brian always told me and my classmates that whenever we needed extra help with math or computer questions, we could come to him. He was there to answer my questions. This Spring Semester he started teaching me high beginning English. He came to school early every time, so when I had questions about something before the class, he was there. He is so generous with his time and knowledge, and always willing to help. He goes above and beyond. What I really like about him is that when we are having a conversation, and I make grammar mistakes, he always corrects me, and I appreciate him very much for all his time and teaching.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my community, organizations, friends, and family, especially to my educators at Col-

lege of the Redwoods. I couldn't do it without all of you. The reason I am still here learning is because of your love, support, kindness, and generosity. My gratitude to the College of the Redwoods is immense. I cannot find the right words to describe how I feel right now. I love and thank all of you from the bottom of my heart.

HOW WORKING AT THE SCHOOL CHANGED MY MINDSET

Elisea Castillo

When I was hired as a teacher's assistant at Pacific Union School, I felt many emotions, both positive and negative. I was happy because I was good at working with children. But I was scared because I could not communicate fluently in English. I thought that I was not capable of doing this job. I was so worried that I cried for a few days. But it was a very good opportunity to grow.

The first day of work I was very nervous and scared. I could not eat breakfast. I was not hungry. It was because I was so nervous. I met Ms. Villanueva, Ms. Navarre and Ms. Cardenas, the 3 teachers that I will work with. Ms. Cardenas told me, "I speak Spanish, I am going to practice with you." She has curly black hair. I felt very comfortable working in Ms. Cardenas class. She always told the kids to treat me with respect. Ms. Villanueva used to tell me, "You can do it, Elisea." She gave me the courage to believe in myself. I was quiet, and I did not talk much, but my energy and my good attitude to learn were always with me. I wished so hard to be able to communicate well enough to the children and teachers. One week later the principal told me that the teachers told her that I was doing a good job. I felt very happy.

So, I was determined to study English every day, I started to read children books because I would read to the children in the class, I was practicing pronunciation and learning new words from the books. I was studying grammar and vocabulary with my English tutor, and I started to speak only English with my daughter at home, even though at home we used to speak only Spanish.

The kids started to notice that I could not speak English very well. I remember when I was working with a group of children at the table. I started to talk about the steps of the activity. I was sounding out the letters. and they were using magnet letters to build the word.

It was the first time for me to do that activity I tried so hard to be clear. One girl of the group told me that my English sounded broken.

During lunchtime, I tried to eat at the dining room table with the staff. I saw people eating and talking. I could not stay there; I did not feel confident talking with them. I felt excluded from the group. I decided to eat outside on the bench by myself.

When we had school training, I was nervous because everything was in English. One time during training we were split into groups. We got a paper to pick a topic and talk about it, and one of teacher's aide said, "There is not one in Spanish for Elisea." I told her that I could read it in English. She made me feel that I did not belong in the group.

It was hard to make friends, I saw people talking every time that they had the opportunity. During recess time, during meetings and at the dining table. I wanted to make friends. It was always me that I went to them if I had something to say. But they did not come to me. I felt that I was not smart enough to talk about something interesting. I felt intimidated by the adults.

But it was so different with the kids. I felt a big connection with them. I enjoy playing games with them. It is easy to build a good relationship with them by playing. I had so many hugs every day. Kids are very affectionate. Even though it can be hard because some kids have challenging behaviors. There are kids with trauma, kids that can be violent when they are angry.

I have been working at the school for 4 years. I have gained more confidence in myself. I have made a few friends. Laura is one of my friends, I invited her to eat with me during lunchtime and we started to build a nice relationship. Another friend is Ms. Cardenas, I love her. I trust her completely. She is the most honest person that I have met. I am not scared to ask when I do not understand.

Working at the school motivated me to go back to college. First, I want to learn how to speak and write English well enough to do a better job at work. I know that the more English I learn the more capable I feel. I know that speaking two languages is a big accomplishment. I am not alone; I have good people who are with me on my journey.

MY DREAM IS TO HAVE MY OWN HOME

Evangelina Herrera Martinez

My home will be a place where everyone feels welcome and safe and loved. All my children and my grandchildren will visit often to have vacations, and they can enjoy the house, running and playing in the garden. We will make carne asada and grilled bean tacos and the famous longaniza that my husband always tells me about with grilled fresh nopales and salsa. At the end, we will make some s'mores telling jokes and laughing a lot having fun and creating beautiful memories.

My garden will have lots of beautiful plants and many fruit trees. Nopales and cactus. I will decorate every space with love and with my choices and my own ideas and find the peace and serenity within the garden and walls of my house.

Early in the morning I will wake up to watch the beautiful sunrise from my bedroom window and enjoy the songs of the birds. And in the evening, I will enjoy the sunset and watching the stars in the sky with the light of the beautiful moon, drinking a cup of te of Toronjil made of fresh wild herbs picked from the mountains, and having a conversation with my husband. We will tell scary and funny stories to our visitors sitting around a fire pit. When the rainy season starts, I will feel joy at the smell of the wet dirt and watch the lightening illuminating the sky. I will drink a cup of Abuelita Mexican hot chocolate with a piece of homemade pan dulce.

I will share this with everyone and look at their happy faces. That is all I want in life. That is my dream, a place that everyone wants to come back to. I really want my dream to come true. At this moment, I am happy that we started building my dream in Michoacan in a beautiful little town.

MEMORIAS

Maria Cruz Morales

Hola soy Nabi. Te voy a contar como comienzo todo para mí. Y aún así puede que ese no sea mi comienzo.

Aquí vamos, estoy en mi planeta. Mi planeta está más allá del Sol. Pero aún así es nuestra fuente de luz y energía aunque colectamos.

Energía también de metales y del agua. Tenemos, flora y fauna. Mucho más enriquecida que el Planeta Tierra, te he mencionado este planeta por decir algo por qué quiero que tengas una idea de qué hablo porque hay infinidad de galaxias llenas de planetas.

Mi planeta se llama Esferon no es detectable para otros ya que tenemos una protección totalmente translúcida para los demás.

Simple nadie nos puede ver. Ahora te hablaré de mi familia, mi gente, mis animales, planetas y de mí.

En mi familia, somos solo mi padre, mi madre y yo.

Ahora bien mi padre es el gobernante. Supremo del planeta. Por ende, tiene en sus manos una gran responsabilidad y por supuesto que esto no lo realiza el solo tiene a sumando millones de personas, muchos están muy lejos y otros no tanto pero eso no es un impedimento para que allá un orden total.

Mi padre monitorea todo desde un gran salón donde solo él y sus más allegados de confianza lo ayuden desde allí.

Mi madre solo hace tareas digámosle de hogar ella hace encarga de mi educación Él cuidado de nuestros animales plantas y ya limpieza del hogar.

Ahora te diré como somos en general. Somos físicamente como los terrestres. Y aunque fuimos creados por la misma fuente.

Dios, Creador, Diosa, o Energía aun así te podría decir que no somos iguales te diré por qué.

1= no nos enamoramos. Pero, nos amamos los unos a los otros o sea no nos hacemos ningún mal nunca.

Y aunque no tenemos sentimientos enteros por alguien, si físicos cuando escogemos a nuestra pareja si nos atrae físicamente. Y para engendrar Hijos lo hablamos y tenemos coito sólo para eso para reproducimos y sólo hacemos para ese propósito. Y somos muy muy longevos. Pero si morimos, podemos interrumpir nuestro existir en este planeta, para transcender a otro plano o simplemente ser energía espiritual para ayudar en otra tareas como por ejemplo un Ángel guardian.

Ahora te hablaré de nuestro flora y fauna. Mira nuestras plantas son bellísimas y deliciosas ellas son nuestra fuente de alimento aunque no la las comemos mucho pero son muy muy importantes para nuestro diario vivir.

Vuestro cuerpo también recibe energía solar y prana y nuestros animales también comparten su energía con nosotros. Ellos son bellísimos son más grandes de tamaño que los que tiene el Planeta Tierra en este momento.

Y te digo esto es porque en el pasado en las civilizaciones que ustedes llaman antiguas los animales terrestres eran 3 veces más grandes que ahora y se comunicaban con los humanos mentalmente y los animales cuidaban de ellos. Igual qué pasa aquí en mi planeta. Hasta ese momento quizá.

Tengas 1000 preguntas para mí pero lo dejamos para después si gustas!

Porqué: ahora vamos a mi travesía de cómo llegue a Planeta Tierra.

Estoy aburrida, tengo 17 años en este momento, mi madre me aconseja qué es tiempo de empezar a salir con chicos de mi edad para que vayamos viendo quién será el mejor candidato para formar una familia. Aaa! Antes que olvide aunque creemos en Dios no tenemos religión ni políticas.

Bueno así, que sólo formamos parejas y el sexo es sólo para procrear. Aún así las parejas viven bien en compañía mutua y hacen muchas actividades juntos. Volviendo a lo mío, estoy aburrida mirando hacia el gran salón donde mi padre se reúne para el orden del planeta pasa siempre ocupado igual mi madre. Bueno sigo mirando hacia al mismo sitio.

De repente veo que todos salen de sus labores y van a sus casas incluyendo mi padre.

O sea no hay nadie y nadie se dio cuenta que estaba yo aquí la última persona que salió dejó abierta la puerta. Y yo instintivamente entro rápidamente, porque esa persona de seguro regresará asegurase que cero bien y dicho y hecho. Pero yo ya estoy adentro...

Y oooooh wow!! Qué cosas aquí hay pantallas gigantes y puedes ver todo y a todos...

estoy muy nerviosa porque de ser descubierta se castigada por mi padre, pero sigue embobada y de repente veo una puerta que dice prohibido el paso a todo el personal esta es área sólo para el gobernante supremo.

Pero como dicen aquí o allá la curiosidad mató al gato. Y aquí voy abro la puerta. Y oooh! Sorpresa!! Es un salón con una enorme pantalla y noto algo extraño algunos números que dicen año 1500 antes de Cristo.

Y sin perder de vista la pantalla empezó a ver grandes ciudades de diferentes partes del Planeta Tierra.

Aviva cuatro ciudades en diferentes partes de la gran pantalla.

1- Egipto 2-Atenas 3-China 4-India

Y decía así hijito camina comienza al gobernar Tutmosis 1 y 2 en Atenas Grecia.

Comienzan los misterios eleusinos eran oritos te inicia anuales a las diosas Deméter y Perséfone. Deméter= diosa de la agricultura y Perséfone hija de Zeus y de Deméter Llamada también la reina del Inframundo.

3-China-doméstica búfalo para labores del campo. Y cambia su nombre de Cathay que marco polo le había dado ese nombre era por la parte sur de China pero para todo el territorio era pero se usó como termino la gran Catay cero uso a veces para referirse a toda la gran región. El termino China.

4-India

En este 1500 ante de cristo surge el hinduismo como la principal religión de la India. Hinduismo: creencia en la reencarnación, y al politeísmo y una visión jerarquizada de la sociedad, relacionada con el sistema de castas.

Wow! Wow! Wow!

A todo esto aquí estoy yo sin entender nada, Dioses? Diosas? Religiones? Territorios? Cristo?

No se, pero creo que se me olvido de donde estaba doy de repente un salto y salgo del salón privado a atravesar el Gran Salón y salgo de allí corriendo a mi hogar.

Mi padres como me deban ciertas libertad y no desconfían de mí no notaron mi ausencia.

Toca mi madre mi puerta y dice la cena esta lista y yo todavía en shock no escuche, despues, de un rato toca de nuevo he dicho que la cena esta lista y no comenzaremos sin ti.

Hoy han pasado varios días y me encuentro desesperada porque no he podido volver a entrar al Gran Salón, estoy esperando la oportunidad que el ultimo olvide no cerrar la puerta pero ha sido más precavido y no le a vuelta a pasar. Así que tengo que encontrar la manera de entrar he visto como todo el personal del Gran Salón incluido mi padre usa un aparato algo así como rayo laser lo aproximan a la puerta y ella abre.

Hoy es otro día no saldré de casa esperar a que mi padre vaya a su trabajo y buscare el rayo laser para entrar no hay de otra.

Estoy dando saltos de gusto resulta que mi madre no esta en casa, mi padre esta trabajando hoy es cuando se presenta la oportunidad que tonto e esperando entro a lo.

¡Que usa mi padre como oficina y o sorpresa!

Encuentro que mi padre tiene muchos de estos laser y ni siquiera están guardados en un lugar seguro. Pues no creo que fuese necesario. Ya que a que nunca pasa nada malo.

Y bueno, ya tengo un laser en mi poder ahora a esperar mi oportunidad de entrar.

Ya paso una semana y al fin ya con todo listo, porque mis padres viajaron con motivo de trabajo me he quedado sola y aquí voy abro el gran salón, pero no le pongo atención a las pantallas de donde se observa todo lo de mi planeta me dirijo directamente al salón privado.

Y estoy frente a la gran pantalla, pero estabas solo veo que es en el país de la india en el año 1535 D.C veo un gran muelle en el aparecen mucho barcos de vaisías, la casta de los comerciantes y me llama la atención un muchacho muy apuesto. Pero por hoy es suficiente regreso a casa mis padres no regresan hasta dentro de varios días, ya cada día solo tengo que esperar a que salgan los trabajadores. Y listo ya estoy a que de nuevo me dirijo igual al salón privado esperando

ver a ese chico y nada y me digo y ahora que hago otras ciudades otros países todo del Planeta Tierra por lo visto este salón solo es para este planeta específicamente pues bueno aprendo a usar la pantalla con un monto de botones que hay qui y “bum!” vuelvo a la india año 1535 D.C. mismo lugar mismo chico.

Y por varios días lo mismo hasta olvide de cuando iba a regresar mi padre por ende soy descubierta y soy castigada por mi padre muy severamente encerrándome para siempre en mi habitación algo así como prisionera. Y mi madre tenía prohibido entrar solo me daba los alimentos por media de un pequeño orificio que se usó para ese propósito.

Pero fuera de mi prisión mi madre dejo de comer entristeció y se dejo morir porque mi padre dijo que yo jamás dejaría de ser su prisionera porque ya había hecho algo que solo él podía hacer y nadie más y yo tenía mucha información sobre el Planeta Tierra que no se tenía que revelar a nadie.

Al yo recibir la noticia de la muerte de mi madre me desmayo pero sentí que entre desmayo y como mareo alguien tocaba la puerta y con trabajo y fui reincorporado y alguien me gritaba, Ananda, Ananda, Ananda, pero miraba a mi alrededor y no era mi habitación era otra habitación pero la mía al fin abro la puerta, y no lo podía creer.

Era él, el muchacho de la india gritándome Ananda, y yo y tú, quien eres y yo no me llama así soy Renji. No te preocupes sé que tuviste un accidente y que tus padres murieran allí y tu perdiste tu memoria, pero yo te ayudare a recordar pero yo aun no entendía nada solo recordaba su cara y el no paraba de hablar, y hablar.

Y yo lo miraba y empeze a experimentar un sentimiento que no recordaba haber sentido mientras el seguía hablando y viéndome a los ojos pude sentir que el sentía lo mismo que yo.

El siempre trato de que yo recobrara la memoria pero eso no sucedió, nos casamos él viajaba mucho era un mercader muy prospero pero nuestra casa era como un palacio lleno de lujos y riquezas yo lo tenía todo servidumbre joyas hermosos vestidos, mi casa tenía bellos jardines. Cada que mi marido volvía a casa yo moría por estar con el y el lo mismo. Pero un día no volvió más y yo morí de tristeza.

Y que creen volví a casa a mi planeta Esferon donde me espera mi padre y solo recuerdo que me dijo esto, estas lista para tu segui-

ente viaje y no entendí solo perdí el sentido de nuevo.

Y ahora identifico bien donde estoy soy una joven de 16 años que voy a ser sacrificada a un dios Maya pero siento que tengo miedo yo lo quiero hacer. Esta una anciana a mi lado decir ser mi abuela, me dice al fin hija serás esposa de nuestra gran Dios de la lluvia, mi ciudad se llama Chichén Itzá. Sere esposa del Dios Chaac esta tarde será la ceremonia. Me dice mi abuela que desde mi nacimiento fui entregada a ella para se educada y preparada para este gran día. Y yo toda emocionada mi corazón da palpitos tan recio que siento que se me ba a salir estoy emocionada me dice mi abuela al fin al entregar tu cuerpo al cenote te espíritu será recibido por tu esposo. Que te espera ansioso para su festejo matrimonial y abrirá las compuertas del cielo y tendremos mucha lluvia y abra cosecha para todo nuestros hermano de la tierra gracias a Chaac y a ti mi Nina Itzá recuerdo muy bien como me vistieron y me perfumaron antes de mi ceremonia.

Vestía una túnica blanca con azul y una corona de plumas de pavorreal sobre mi cabeza mientras ya caminaba así el cenote iban cuatro mujeres dos a cada lado de mi cada una con una canasta de flores que iban esparciendo por donde yo me iba cada vez mas sumergiendo al cenote y a lo lejos escuchaba a mi gente cantando y bailando alrededor de fogata...

Y volvía despertar y nuevo me encuentro frente a mi padre en mi planeta Esferon. Y me dice Estas lista para tu siguiente experiencia.

No me dio me dio ni la oportunidad de contestarle, solo sentí muy dentro mí que mi padre me estaba castigando enviándome una y otra vez a experimentar lo que en mi planeta no teníamos lo entendí así.

Ahora me despierto volteo a mi alrededor, siento mucha calor, pero veo venir a unas hermosas mujeres se aproximan a mí. Una me dice su baño esta listo, estoy un poco sorprendida todo lo que me rodea es mucho lujo pero con muchos hermosos Jarrones con flores hermosas mesas con muchas frutas, también tengo un par de gatos. Termino mi baño soy atendida para cambiarme en eso una de las mujeres me dice el faraón. Desea que esta noche este usted esplendida y oliendo muy bonito.

Asimilo en mi mente que soy la esposa o concubina del faraón, pero me sorprende cuando me dicen que el ensayo sea después del almuerzo...

Ahora caigo en cuenta ya mi mente está aquí y en el ahora.

Mi nombre es Akila. Y soy la mejor bailarine de toda Egipto. Soy la favorita del Faraón Ramsés II. Solo bailo en el palacio cuando el faraón quiere lucirse con grandes banquetes a sus invitado y sobre todo el espectáculo que ofrecemos mis bailarinas y yo. Cuando las negociaciones terminan, yo siempre lo hace yo vivo enamorada de el y vivo esperanzada a que un día me vea como yo a el aunque no se lo hago notar el solo me manda a llamar para agradecer siempre el gran espectáculo que doy. Y así pasa el tiempo, aunque también cuando el faraón se encuentra aburrido me manda llamar para que baile solo para el. Pero eso es todo. No logro tener su atención de otra manera, ya que el esta muy enamorado de su esposa Nefertari. Aunque él tiene mas concubinas yo no le atraigo y un día me pongo muy muy triste y une despido de este ciclo.

Y regreso a casa y allí esta mi padre.

Quiero que me deje hablar lo logro y le pregunto porque padre? Porque todo esto? Y el me dijo tu entraste a mi salón donde me trabajo es observar que pasa en el Planeta Tierra. Como se comportan los humanos porque a ellos se les ha dado libre albedrio. Ellos son libres de decidir que hacer y como vivir. A ellos nuestro creador del universo, les dio cinco sentidos. 1 hablar, 2 mirar, 3 el gusto, 4 el oído y 5 tocar. Todos estos vienen acompañados. Por los sentimientos como. Amara, coraje, odio, felicidad, infelicidad, ansiedad, depresión, miedo, cobardía, valentía, nervios, fidelidad, infidelidad, amor y desamor, tristeza y aún hay más.

Solo quiero decir que el creador también les a mandado hombres sabios a través de todo los tiempos y como ellos tienen el libre albedrio se les olvido que todos los libros sagrados ten ensenan sobre el libre albedrio o sea eres libre de decidir que haces con tu vida. O sea eres tu el arquitecto de tu propio destino cuando estas en el Planeta Tierra.

Para espíritus consientes el Planeta Tierra es una escuela se te a dado de todo para bien y para mal. Ya han pasado los grandes maestros llevando sus libros sagrados llevando su enseñanza y a todos los han ignorado un ejemplo es Jesus fue asesinado por su propio pueblo. Después de todo esto que me ha dicho mi padre se a quedado en silencio, por un buen rato. Y yo rompo el silencio.

Padre y ahora que? Alfin me quedare en casa?

Y saben que ahora no se donde estoy en este momento estoy frente a una pareja de conejos, si! De conejos como lo escuchan de conejos!!

Se ven visiblemente asustado los observo y mi mente les digo que les pasa? Pero para mí es solo un pensamiento, pero o sorpresa me contestan y me dicen que sus dueños humano ya no los quieren porque el principio era solo ellos dos pero ahora ellos se han reproducido ya varias veces y los quieren atrapar para matarlos. Y yo les pregunto pero donde están tus crías?

Y ellos me dicen síguenos y te mostramos pero ellos están a punto de sumergirse en un gran agujero! ¡Y yo digo esperen! ¡Esperen! Como voy a entra allí? Y ellos me dicen pus así no creo que allá problema y entonces me observo para ver mi cuerpo y ooh! No tengo un cuerpo, me doy cuenta que soy solo una luz y esta vez ha decidido ayudar al reino Animal en la tierra.

Y manos a la obra entramos a su agujero, después de varias metro allí están sus crías son seis grandecitos y cuatro recién nacidos.

Y aquí estoy yo enseñándoles como producir sus propios alimento abajo tierra así que no tendrán necesidad de salir a la superficie.

Misión complida me despido y me alejo sin salir a la superficie aquí hay muchas, muchas, pero muchas cuevas. Y decido recorrerlas y bueno aquí voy.

Y en estas cuevas me encuentro con muchos tipos de animales que han decididos vivir fuera del depredador mas peligroso que en le tierra el Hombre.

Bueno yo sigo en mi labor con las animales.

Esperando un día volver a casa mi Planeta Esferon al lado de mi padre y que ya me levante el castigo ya basta. No quiero mas experiencia en Planeta Escuela...llamado Tierra...

Moraleja: Has buen uso de tu libre albedrio.

CONTRIBUTER BIOS

Jatziry W. Cantu Castillo was born in Mexico in July 2002, Jatziry lived in Mexico, her entire life until a year and a half ago when she moved to the United States. She really likes music, playing the piano and drawing. She loves plants and has a knack for gardening.

Pedro Cantu nació en Oaxaca, México en 1975, estudié hasta la Universidad, se gradué el 2001 como lic en educación,

Elisea Castillo was born in Oaxaca, Mexico in 1972. She came to the US in 1990. She has been living in Arcata since 2011. She currently works as a teacher's aide at Pacific Union School. She enjoys hiking, being in nature, and spending time with my sisters.

Laura Isabel Ceballos Montoya is a 26-year-old Colombian who came to the USA in March 2023. Laura is currently studying business at the College of Marin. In her free time, she enjoys reading, watching movies and listening to music. She considers herself as a friendly and family-oriented person.

Daryl Ngee Chinn was born in Salt Lake City, Utah and spoke Chinese before his father found out he somehow learned to speak English. He is now on his way to New York City to live near family. He bids a kind and sad farewell and best wishes to all who live in Humboldt County, where he has lived since 1975.

Jonathan Chibuike Ukah lives with his family in the United Kingdom. His poems have appeared in The Journal of Undiscovered Poets, Atticus Review, The Soliloquist, Propel Magazine, The Pierian and elsewhere. He won the Pierian Alexander Pope Poetry Award in 2023, Unleash Creative's Editor's Choice Poetry Award in 2024, The Literary Shark Magazine's Poem of the Month December-January 2025, and an Honourable Mention at the After Happy Hour Poetry Contest 2025.

María Cruz Morales nació en un pequeño rancho municipio de Arandas Jalisco. El nombre del ranchito es Los Ángeles. nació el 3 de mayo de 1967. Le gustan las actividades al aire libre. Y su jobi es escribir cuando puede lo haga desde muy niña.

Tấn Dũng is a Vietnamese student writing about resilience, survival, and hope. Tấn's work reflects the journey of overcoming life's hardships, finding strength in love, friendship, and dreams of a brighter future. Tấn hopes the story inspires others who have faced similar struggles.

Chong Geyer grew up poor in rural Korea without the chance for a decent education, but now she is very excited about the opportunity to finally attend school.

Pakou Her is from Laos. She is the mother of two children. She has seven siblings and has lived in the US for four years. Pakou really likes the US because she finds the nature beautiful, especially spring time which is astonishing with its new life.

Evangelina Herrera Martinez is married and a mother of four kids. She has lived in Loleta for 27 years, and loves to cook. Evangelina came from Culiacán in Sinaloa, Mexico. She is very proud of herself for learning English.

Nathalia Loiola is a 25 year-old student at College of Marin. She's from Brazil and she earned her bachelor's degree in Law from State University of Piauí in 2023. She moved to California in the same year to be an Aupair in Marin. Loiola always loved reading and writing in Portuguese and now also in English.

Eva Maria Lopez Garcia Tittmann is from Puerto Ángel, Oaxaca, Mexico. Eva writes, "since I was very young, I start to paint, because I grew up in a small family of painters, now as an artist I maintain a style that leans towards expressionism, surrealism, symbolism and abstraction. My nationality is Mexican, but I have Zapotec roots on my mother's side and Mixtec and Kuna on my father's side, this is the core of inspiration for my art and expression. I studied Maritime and Port Sciences at the Universidad del Mar in Mexico; I have always been passionate about the ocean, nature, and the culture of communities. For me, art is a ritual of feelings and their liberation, a portal to natural expression, a light for everyone."

Ruth Núñez Pabst was born in Cartago, Costa Rica, on September 16, 1965. She was very shy and somewhat introverted, which allowed her to be very observant of surroundings. She studied accounting, married young, and had two children. In 2012, Ruth immigrated to the United States. In 2022, she began studying early childhood education at Mendocino College in Lakeport, California. She works at E Center Heart Start Programs. Ruth believes that goals can be achieved if we are persistent.

Leslie Ortega is a poet mycologist currently finishing her Botany degree at Cal Poly Humboldt. She believes that the more we are able to find ourselves as a part of nature, the more we will be able to care for one another and break systems of oppression.

Umiemah is a writer from Los Angeles. She studies fiction and foreign language at Columbia University and serves as CFO for a multinational education non-profit.

Karla I. Zazueta was born in Culiacan, Sinaloa, Mexico. She moved to Ukiah in 2011 and graduated from Ukiah High School in 2014. She is a proud mother of a girl and a boy. She works as a makeup artist in her spare time, but her dream since she was a child has been to be a teacher. Currently, she works as a teacher's aide to ensure that's what she wants. She loves helping and interacting with students. She is studying child development to fulfill her childhood dream of becoming a teacher.

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Personas is published each May. Submissions are open annually from October 1 to March 15. We accept writings and art in any medium which consider or embody multilingualism. Please label submissions “Personas Submission” in the subject line and include a brief bio (of less than 50 words) in the body of the email. Include the submission as an attachment with no name. Email to jonathan-maiullo@redwoods.edu or hand or postal delivery to 333 6th St., Eureka, CA 95501. And, of course, thank you!

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