

Shantal Rodriguez

Caitlin Geoghan/ Molly Mosher

Language and Literacy

September 25, 2021

### **Cover Letter**

The audience in my essay are my peers and as a result, my language didn't change from my typical way of speaking. I believe that by being true to myself, others can easily catch on, and the essay could've been read and/or understood easily. I believed this essay helped me present my trauma in a way that isn't so dark. I was able to express myself and convey the idea; I am resilient till the end. Providing context has most impacted my writing practices. I received feedback from one of my peers to provide more context. Having to work on that without jeopardizing my mental health is essential because life will consist of writing about my life, which I find difficult. I believed this assignment helped me achieve number 3: develop strategies for reading, drafting, collaborating, revising, and editing. I have never truly peer-reviewed an essay or had it done to me. I believe it was effective because it was a student, the same as I, not a teacher. I wouldn't have altered anything because I enjoyed my process. I found it fun to dig up my past. Swiping through my memory was almost therapeutic and aided some form of internal healing process.

## Language Narrative

I thought I knew what I was going to base this narrative on, but truth be told I was mistaken. I am an Afro-Latina that was raised by a single mother that can't speak a lick of English. I helped her raise my brother and as a result, I have a surplus of stories. As I sat and dissected all these mental souvenirs, finally, I understood my underlying insecurity was my lack of ability to articulate words. My insecurity has broken me down and reconstructed the person I am. It has sculpted the lens through which I see the past, present, and future.

Straight out of the womb, my father and I connected. I didn't have to talk to him, for him to understand me, but to comprehend him, I had to learn his language. I learned how to mimic his form and as a result, I was able to enunciate words in Spanish before anything else. He was the only person I could effectively communicate with for the first 3 years of my life. There was nobody else but us; the separation between my father and I is honestly been the start of my inability to have confidence in myself.

When I started school, I didn't speak at all and was expected to acquire "all the vital knowledge of the English tongue" from a website called [Starfall.com](http://Starfall.com). My language barrier was evident rather quickly, given the fact I was speaking only one language for the first four years of my life and I was bombarded with something completely foreign. From time to time, I would try and talk to myself. My most frequent mistake was to pronounce the English words in Spanish and, for that reason, I felt incompetent.

I believed they called me to the classroom carpet once. I was asked to read from the smart-board and when I spoke for the first time, everyone laughed. I became incredibly

self-conscious about speaking out loud in a classroom setting. To all my teachers, I read choppy-mostly because I pronounced the sentence however it registered in my head--- *and the they road da a un the street*. That being the case, I consistently remained a couple of reading levels behind every other kid.

In 5th grade, my class was instructed to write an essay on the historical events of The Trail of Tears. Part of the assignment was a read-out-loud of our final draft, I am practically certain I broke-night rehearsing my essay! Parents were invited, and my mom recorded a video of me reciting it, all I heard was mistake after mistake after mistake. Following that, I swore to myself, I would never read out loud unless it was insisted upon me.

I didn't break that promise until 8th grade, where I heard my first poem, *Phenomenal Woman* by Maya Angelou. Shortly after, I started reading a poetry book called *Inside Out and Back Again* by Thanhha Lai for class. I fell in love with the fact that poetry could be so expressive with a limited number of words. With this newfound interest, I figured I could pore over books more often to improve my ability to "effectively" use words.

I never grew up on books. Nobody was around long enough to read me a bedtime story or found words interesting enough to motivate me to explore them. As a result, I never found it necessary to deep dive into the world of books, or any form of speech for that matter. But once I found poetry I was locked. Every other form of figurative speech caressed my thorns and each stanza licked my wounds. Despite the lack of encouragement I had with reading, this new muse shaped my involvement with language.

I buried myself in books to make myself better for everyone else. My reading skills became proficient over time, but only independently. I felt like I was back at square one when it

was time to popcorn a text in class. I struggled to read in front of others because I never became comfortable with the idea of others listening.

As time went by, I was completely submerged within the world of each young adult novel I read. I sit currently and know I've read my way past every negative comment made about how I speak or utilize language to approach the world. My passion for books was driven by the fact I wanted to excel for others. They made me feel inadequate, but what they didn't realize is that my love for books is all I needed to persevere. They furnished an intention to push past that insecurity. They lit a fire that now illuminates my path to become an English teacher- passing on the relevance of language and its repercussions against society.