

Gloria Ramirez

Week 6

Have you ever had moment where everything just clicks? Where every hardship, mistake, and success finally makes sense. I experienced such moment during my sixth week here. I do not know if it is the home sickness or the longing for successes, but I am eager to return home. Contrary to what you would think it is not because I want to go home to my family, no, it is much more than that. In the time spent here I have come to realize the impact that one person can make, the impact I can make.

Ever since I can remember, I have often wondered why I was “unfortunate” enough to be born Mexican. Crazy, right? Thinking everything you and your family are being a curse. Now, I look back and I am so ashamed, but what else was I supposed to think? I had been conditioned to believe that being Mexican was a bad thing. From elementary to now, my community has struggled to be inclusive. Through the years, I experienced so much racism. Imagine growing up and being constantly told that your family is illegal. That your existence simply serves the purpose of keeping your parents here. It was so hard. Hard to believe that people could be so hateful. To be ashamed of who you are and having no one to defend your pure existence. I always believed the hardships were what fueled me, and that that was why I was successful, but that was not the case. All these years without realizing it, I have been letting it affect me. Suppressing my culture and who I am, I would speak as little Spanish as possible, I never spoke of my parents, and I was not in touch with my culture. Sad to think about really.

Then college happened. Starting college, came with the biggest culture shock one could ever imagine. Everywhere you looked, you could find a different ethnicity, hear a different language, and meet people from all walks of life. As soon as things started looking up, suddenly the confusion I struggled with, in relation to my identity, returned. I was not fitting in with the other Hispanic students and I was once again not fitting in with anyone really. I suppose the suppression of my culture had really affected me. As I was connected with more and more resources, I was able to develop my own identity. Gain more confidence and actually integrate myself into the Mexican culture. As I learned more about myself, I gained more friends, made more memories, and found who I was, well at least partially.

At some point in life, you start thinking that everything is okay. That life is great and it is only getting better. You get comfortable, and then it hits you. Some life changing event. Mine was Trump’s election. Now to be clear, I don’t hate the man and I respect his position as President, but I do not respect him as a person. Politics aside, his election did not affect me because of his position in the Republican party, but rather because he reminded me of my childhood. Calling Mexicans criminals and demeaning us and our culture, it was my past happening all over again. I mean, how do we as Americans elect a man that does not even hold respect for all? I still question it to this day, but I have grown accustomed to the hostility once again. However, things are much more different now than they were the first time around, and that is the reasoning behind my moment.

Weeks after the election, things started to look up again. I had gotten past my Winter term of college, and I was presented with an opportunity of a lifetime: an internship in D.C. I believe I used that same line in my application essay. Funny how even while I wrote that I had no idea just how life changing this internship would be. Now, 6 weeks in, it is amazing to look

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back and see how much I have changed. I am no longer the same timid Gloria that changed who she was to avoid the hardships. I no longer think that I can't change a bad situation for the better. I am much more driven than I have ever been before. Most importantly, I am beyond proud of my roots.

I started my college career pursuing a medical profession. Wanting to help people, but not really feeling passionate about doing Speech Pathology for the rest of my life. After weeks of learning how our government works, shadowing my Senator, working with the United Farm Workers' association, and seeing the difference that one person alone can make, I have changed my career path to pursue Immigration Law. I realize what a radical change that is, but I think it is time for me to stand up for others in a similar situation. With a growing population, Klamath Falls now has more immigrants than ever. The environment that I grew up in is not something that I want any other child to experience, which takes me back to why I am so eager to get home. I am beyond excited to get back and begin the strongly needed change. I feel the need to educate my community and provide the necessary tools for minorities to make it to higher education institutions. In the words of Dolores Huerta "We must use our lives to make the world a better place to live, not just to acquire things." I know my community has potential, and I do not blame anyone for the lack of exposure and education that has led to racism and oppression, but it is time for that to change.

At this point, you may be wondering what it was that clicked for me. If I had all of that figured out, what could I possibly have thought of. The answer is simple, really. As cliché as it may sound, I realized that everything I had gone through and everything I am all happened for a reason. Personally, I am a religious person, and I would like to think that God made this plan for me. For those who aren't particularly religious think of it as fate or whatever else makes sense. What makes sense to me is that my parents, two immigrants from Mexico, came here for a reason. My experience growing up happened for a reason. My college experience and receiving this internship, happened for a reason. Everything happens for a reason. Where ever I go from now on and whatever happens, I will not be afraid as I have been in the past. I will make everyone who has helped me get to where I am proud. My parents' hard work and sacrifice will not be all for nothing. As unsure as I am of the future, one thing I am sure of, and that is that I will work to help other get to that moment. To the moment where it all makes sense and life is okay. Okay, you may ask? Well, what I have learned is that once you reach an okay life, you realize you can do better, and when you find the right drive to reach your dream life you will have made it. Me? I am okay.

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Two Families, One Blessed Life

