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PASSION IN A NON-TRADITIONAL STUDENT THROUGH HIGHER
EDUCATION: THE GUIDING POINTS THAT MADE HER...HER.

A Thesis Presented

by

Leahn Bass

to

The Faculty of the Graduate College

of

The University of Vermont

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of Master of Education
Specializing in Interdisciplinary Studies

May, 2016

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Thesis Examination Committee:

Robert J. Nash, Ed.D., Advisor
Susan Comerford, Ph.D., Chairperson
Dr. Cynthia Reyes, Ph.D., Committee Member
Cynthia J. Forefand, Ph.D., Dean of the Graduate College

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ABSTRACT

This project explains one person developing an instrument that was stripped from a young age, yet voyaged a pathway of determination to become a teacher of many things. Only nine years ago I went through something no female should ever endure in a lifetime, in a time of darkness, trying to find something to live for something was presented to me out of love, knowing it would be a challenge to achieve, there was a sense of understanding and hope of clarity. This opportunity to create and deliver an understanding for students, staff, faculty, and community members of all ages, a supportive reaction and a positive interpretation, that this can really work out in various favors throughout life. Even if there is much doubt.

A chance to develop a sense of effective thinking patterns and be able to examine life as a whole, to pursue those underdeveloped questions about an academic's career to only conclude for one's self.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To my son Savior that you mean everything to me, always have and always will. You are the only faithful one who pushed me allowing me to finish my accomplishments. I love and appreciate you as a growing boy, and I am grateful to have you as my son.

Even though it has been very apparent over 29 years how much we haven't seen eye to eye, I love you mom. I am thankful for what you have done to try and provide me with the best education.

We met years ago, coming from two very different backgrounds and environments, but you are a sister to me and godmother to my pride and joy of a son. You have raised two of my amazing nieces whom I adore with all of my heart. I go through these spurts where I have isolated myself from the world, but we still have a bond that some may never understand. You always amaze me with your willpower. Thank you!

You have done everything! You have traveled, you have attended schools where people would have only imagined getting into, you have worked in some amazing places, you have written numerous books, you have great kids and grandkids, and you have even found the love of your life. Some people tend to walk around searching for those specific people who own the most expensive materialistic items to flaunt. Some people surround themselves with those people which may be in higher places, just to get somewhere in life, but for you, you are humbly satisfied, with all the "small" things, which make you happy and the person you are today. Dr. Robert J. Nash, no one is perfect, I do know this, but for me, I truly envy you as an individual. I want to truly enthusiastically thank you for such an opportunity. I admire such persistence and guidance. You've done so much to

help benefit you and your loved ones throughout your life, simply by being a great listener; which is one of the hardest traits to come by in any type of relationship. I have seen that you have eventually gotten so fed up with traditional ways that many before us have created so you created a whole new meaning to how someone could truly open up in an academic atmosphere. You have helped me to realize that I am worth fighting for, and that I have become an amazing woman, regardless of what the world put in my path. You have actually helped teach me this whole new meaning to all the words and phrases I have learned from my past and all the words I am currently learning in my growth process.

I met a blind woman once and she explained to me the moment she finally found her passion in life. She told me it was like she could see, not only just shapes and sizes, but all the different colors and textures. I remember she explained how she felt like she could see through all of her senses all at once. This is exactly how you have made me feel through just being you. Real heroic work. At this point in my life you have helped bring life into me. I had gotten to a point where I thought that my words just did not matter. “All stories matter!”

I am jealous that you can just be you and change not just me and my life, but hundreds of thousands of people’s lives that you are in the presence of. I am honored that you are my advisor and friend. I am so grateful and thankful to have been one of the many to have met you in my life.

Lastly, I want to thank my biological mother for one thing only, giving birth to me.

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Gallery

Look it splits in two...Then four...Then twelve.

Sections of indiscretion. All flawless without words.

Strokes of endlessness...

No titles or quotation marks...Just different indifferences.

Look through the glass, each eye different from the next. Significance at each angle.

Pull your chin up, face forward and just look. Look with your left eye...Look with your
right eye. Bend and turn upside down.

Mixtures remain, while all the additions tower throughout the mind.

Safely catalogue, access abstractly.

White, the original color, which steals the innocence of freedom.

Things run away, they stay clear from originalities.

Connect the dots. Connect the lines drawn. Connect those features from imagination.

Can you see all the dynamics wrapped into this longitudinal and latitudinal area?

Assist that sway of life. Define it without shape.

The danger of the unknown, is knowing. So we don't.

Question the unquestionable. Seize the non-seizeable. And silence the itch!

By Leahn Bass

CHAPTER 1: TRUE REASONING

What is my reason for composing this creative writing piece for you, as the reader, or better yet myself in my academic career? Lamott (1994) says that “writing motivates you to look closely at life” (p. xii), so should I disclose my passions for the actual act of writing, or maybe explain how I have shown true devotion and dedication thus far and plan on pushing through my future years in graduate school which is also a passion that is a goal of mine in my academic career? In every person there is a story, in every story there are words, and throughout these words there is a person that emotes the passion that has been dedicated to show towards the world. I thought for years, what exactly is the true purpose of schooling? Is it truly learning? Why even go through the process or the action of going to school, why conform to mainstream learning if I never understood what I was really learning or what learning really was? Now, I think that the purpose of school could be a number of different things. Schooling starts from forming a positive social life in the development aspect, then it slowly moves into a form of a learning structure in the mainstream school settings.

The purpose of schooling or education varies from child to child and person to person. In my opinion, one main purpose for actually attending school is to allow a child or adult, any individual, learn to become themselves, and then be able to form some sort of identity which then suits them as they grow and achieve a sense of individuality. This people should be able to “create creativity” as I like to say. So how does all of this change over time? How does education become a requirement to become something in one’s life, something to prosper towards in life? I was taught through my schooling that if I ever wanted to become a “someone” with money or a “someone” with credentials, to

make something of myself, I needed to further my education past high school.

Bruner's thinking... For he says the way we know about the physical world is not the same as the way in which we develop and refine our knowledge of ourselves and others and the way in which we construct and represent human interaction... We might almost say that in higher education the guiding precept is 'forget the stories, learn to generalize, learn to be theoretical, be impersonal'. (Rosen, 1993, pp. 138-139)

I have always been the type to do the complete opposite from what I was told to do, like a defiant child asking their parent for forgiveness. I have waited for many years, working my tail off for some sort of break. Just looking for some sort of light in the distance, metaphorically telling me the great things that were headed my way. I was unconsciously searching for someone to finally notice all the hard work I had put into my community and award me at least an invisible credential or a physical acknowledgment like a degree. I think deep down I was looking for anything to justify something that was unknown. This never happened until I walked through the door of a local community college. Imagine that! Sometimes I think it is a bit sad. I have worked more hours throughout my life dedicated to my local communities than the average stereotypical student and I received no acknowledgement, no credit whatsoever until I received a piece of paper saying that I back it up with a bit of education. So then I asked myself why go further? Or sometimes I ask how far do I really have to go to prove to others or myself? I have always wanted those credentials and acknowledgements that I belong here, that I belong where I have gone, so if this is how things have to be done, like by being in debt for the rest of my entire adult life, so be it. My passion overpowers all other factors that I

or anyone else could and can come up with for me to be someone, for me and my son to be someone in this society.

So, you are asking me to write again. I re-opened those doors so quickly, and shut them just as fast the last time. As you can see I am ready to write, but am I really ready to not only go through the emotional baggage, but to allow the public to know the ins and outs to a piece of my mind? Now, I say that it is a yearning or a desire that a person has towards someone or something? Can it be the phrases or quotes that one takes to move on towards a better life? I have to be honest, do I believe in which I will be saying quite often in this thesis, that passion could and can be more meaningful towards anything, and to anyone? A common place in which some love within themselves and others hate. But I will disclose at least one's passion to becoming more in life, and becoming a student in higher education non-traditionally learning to deal with struggles that no one person should go through in such a process; breaking my silence to academia.

1.1 SPN/eSPN

How do I start? There is so much to say in so little time. My main task at hand is figuring out my true version of what Scholarly Personal Narrative (SPN) and Epistolary Scholarly Personal Narrative (eSPN) writing is, and that it should not be frowned upon in all educational writing levels. This is and how I can excel in my writing with such a great particular form of telling my story, by allowing me to not only show what I have learned academically but also put my feelings into my writing. Initially, let me just say that walking through these imaginary doors this time in my life, I had truly no idea what a SPN or eSPN meant, what it honestly stood for, or how I could really practice the techniques throughout my writing, until very recently in this project. To me they are a

tool. Strengthening, and supportive tools, in which I have found myself asking my undergrad professors if they would allow me to sit down to explain what form of writing they were and if I may use it on the assignments they previously assigned. It has taken work trying to explain the writing style, but it has allowed me to formulate a very true story creatively, allowing me to use first person narrative, my very own personal voice. All while at the same time including my scholarly mind to seep through my pages. In my eyes and my mind, I am very clear in what I say, some have always questioned “the in between the line meanings”, but this tool has allowed me to descriptively show the reader exactly what I mean. “The core, ethical concepts in which you most passionately believe are the language in which you are writing,” (Lamott, 1994, p. 103). This has been such an eye opening experience and hopefully by the end of my writing you will see how fond, how much I believe in and wish I knew about such a flower of tools earlier in my life.

1.2 Questions

There are so many questions that I think deserve needing answers to. Sometimes I wonder if I truly want them to be answered for the chase, or just have all my riddles solved. Will I ever get them? I doubt it, but I may just ask them regardless. For instance, why should I even write? What is the point? When people read my words I want them to have the ‘ooh’ and the ‘aaaahh’ response, and will they truly understand? Will people grasp my analogies, metaphors, or concepts? How about the hurt and pain, the triumph and freedom? I have been asked to write sections to form in my eyes one huge piece of an academic thesis, which could possibly turn into a manuscript. All these great sections are called themes. What if I have too many themes, which ones sound all over the place? Which ones are sounding sane? Will I be able to deliver as needed or to my own

expectations? Will it be up to par? I read something somewhere that writing or being able to write is like seeing the world through a whole new set of eyes. Whose eyes am I really writing for? Is it for kids, teens, young adults, college students, maybe professors? Is it really just for myself, an uplifting meditation session that will heal me? Could my writing break me into pieces? Or will this piece be sculpted for top notch people who could help me in life for maybe going on for my master's or doctorate career, or the next steps in life?

My problem is not that I am afraid to write something, or hand it in, but to produce something amazing. My problem is not that it would not get done. My problems range from having it be good enough for the next person or the next stages in life, or maybe having enough big words for people to stumble on like I do when reading most books. Or better yet with my life the way it is going, will I really have enough time to really say what I feel, so it can touch those hearts this piece needs to, or turn those heads that need to be turned and reality checks checked.

Let us start off with a game. Who in their right mind does not love a good game once in a while? Even those who may be sore losers or those competitive types even love a great game. To give you a little background information about this game, it has a lot of rules, which tend to change along the way and vary from player to player, slightly and at times tremendously. There will be emotions put to the test, situations brought up that players would have never fathom participating in, and throughout these situations, players may be asked to think of these unrealistic terms towards these situations, but in all that could actually really happen depending on the environment being placed in. Some may choose to decide to play with a professional mind set, some may choose with their

personal mind. Some may even choose to express themselves from the specific background of role models or parental and/or guardian beliefs, which may or may not be influenced by a religious or spiritual setting. To be honest you will never know how this game will change, turn out, or spontaneously end at any given moment. Some who have played this game before say it was the scariest thing that they have endured, some have said it was the best game they have had the opportunity to play, and others say it was such an easy and fun thing to do that they have coasted through. I still have not made up my mind about the game but hopefully this experience will help me to make my official conclusions about such an intriguing game. What could possibly be this certain game, something that everyone goes through, something that people chance every day? A game played by some who do not care of their outcomes, some who care to the extreme, where they plan every move to fit every slot given. The game of Life.

Someone once told me that if I do not make changes around me that nothing would ever pan out, that if I wanted change I needed to change it. Easier said than done, right? Things as small as if you cannot stand your hair color you dye it, if you do not like the texture, you put product in it to smooth it out or make it thicker, for me as an African-American, all I have to do to make it grow or make it something it truly is not, then I have to spend mounds of money for someone else to take care of it and change it when it needs to be dealt with. Just like a smelly perm to make it straight, using synthetic or someone else's hair (Human Hair) to be woven or braided throughout my own hair to make it look like I have genes from a person who can cut their hair every week. What an illusion! If people want to change their eyes they buy colored contacts, or cover up to erase acne, we buy concealer and foundation. And then there are all the body

enhancements or reductions, skin creams, surgeries, bandaging and wrapping to work out as a mover of the body muscles and bones to create a completely different figure after excruciating pain. If you do not like your car you just save and buy a new one, or lease one every three years. If you are not satisfied with your home, you add a new addition to it or sell and buy a new one in a different location hoping for the best outcome. You cannot stand the relationship you are in so you pick and choose for the next time around or be alone. Upgrades are made on a daily basis, and I think it is whether or not you have the strength to go through such changes that can really change a person.

I see people walking around with so many different attitudes towards life that it really baffles me. If you are privileged, you are privileged. If you are poor, you are poor. If you are a certain skin tone, then that is the skin tone you are. If you have worked your entire life and now are having fun, then have fun. If you were just handed things down and having fun, there are 9 times out of 10 television shows about you or your type of people. If you are a struggler, then hopefully you would not have to struggle your entire life. There are all types of people who walk around about different aspects of life that are definitely taken for granted, in which I see way too often in such a rural state. I have not been given every opportunity that others have been given and I think that I am glad for that. Do not get me wrong that over my 29 years of living I have not wished for better or for more, but if I was not given the dealt cards I was given, then I would not be this person writing my thesis for all to read.

You have either asked questions or have known a loved one who has asked questions, or have worked with people who have all asked those seemingly small, but in their eyes huge, questions of, who am I? What do I stand for? What can I contribute to

this world I am living in? How can I even help the family I have created on my own? How do I truly know myself? How can I truly love or even like myself? How can I create myself more morally and/or ethically? How do I raise children of my own or biologically from my significant others'? How do I really become the best parent or guardian I can be? What are the steps to take that will not only benefit myself but others around me? How can I truly change for the better if I keep making the same mistakes because my heart is overpowering my mind? How do I find a significant job or career choice where I can live comfortably, and then take care of my loved ones, my parents, or my significant others' parents? I mean truly, where do all these questions come from, where do they all end, and why are we all the ones to think about such depth in our chaotic lives? Hopefully, throughout this writing piece I will be able to answer some if not all of these questions that wander through my head in my own words from my own experiences. In my opinion, everyone knows their own answers, but really do not have the time or give themselves enough credit to actually say or in this case write how they really feel about these questions.

How do you swindle? How can you possibly swindle away from the life you are given and make it for yourself? I get so heated to the point where I want nothing to do with living this double life anymore because things cannot let up and go somewhat the way I need them to go. I want and need change so badly that when I do try to change things dramatically, it ends up almost never being in my or my family's favor, either because I waited too long, or that one specific door that so slowly opened is now nailed shut.

Have you ever looked or thought about how much passion spreads around the

world? Such as, looking deep within someone and just seeing that they would do just about anything to be better, or do great things or to overcome anything. I mean truly, even a slight thought about all those different kinds of people looking for something significant in their life. For instance, the young girls in the 'hood' who have no parental support for college so they strip or prostitute. Or maybe a boy in the city who has a baby on the way, so he hustles for the baby or for the proof of saying he is a man and can prove for his family to get out. Or the suburban teenager struggling for straight A's to impress their parents to get into the Ivy League school so this individual lets off steam by staying awake daily for studying to become better, and eventually becomes an addict, being looked at under a microscope. Maybe the young adult who just got out of the longest relationship of his/her life and searches via internet because of loneliness and separation issues and ends up on the side of some interstate because they gave way too much personal information out and met with the wrong person. What about those single parents who fight society daily, trying to live by the rules or fit in, but barely making ends meet every month, dead end jobs, never showing an ounce of sadness towards or to their children knowing it would only break them down, trying to not only prove to society, their family, and themselves that going to or back to school can and will better their and their child's life?

What really is about those parents, especially those single parents, raising another human being all by themselves, paying for the roof over their heads, food on the table, clothes on their backs, hygiene up to par, running water, heat in cold winters, lights when trying to teach their son how to read and write, furniture to sit on, beds to sleep on, blankets to cover up with. And then the phones to communicate with outside community

members for emergencies, any type of vehicle to transport not only their child or children to school, but also them to all their jobs and both of their doctor, dental, and whatever else appointments. And what about also back and forth to their higher education university, all the tuition expenses and fees, books, taking care of three meals a day to be either prepared for sit down or packed, cleanliness of home, I mean the list can go on and on and on. But the main reason why I came to this point was to show that people can really make things happen. That people can really do it by themselves, with a lot of passion.

1.3 Redirection

Dear Redirection,

People are destined for their own future. Whether others plan out as much as they want or they think they need to for their loved ones, the future for all can never be guaranteed as planned. How do things happen? I am a strong believer that things truly do happen for a reason, but do they? Do things actually happen for specific reasons? “Our own destructive emotions pollute our outlook, making healthy living impossible” (Lama, p. 1). Life itself is such a funny thing and place for everyone. No life path is chosen, no life path is completely constructed to dot every I and cross every T. Life just doesn’t happen this way. Thus, as such a firm believer, I am the product of my own environment in this life. Some say I have a utilitarianistic personality where “the worth of an action is determined by its outcomes” (Stangroom, 2010, p. 7).

Things burn down in a blink of an eye. It starts with a small piece that is flammable and turns into an entire world, all gone with no replacement. I am nailing life right to the wall with all my accomplishments, but what are these prices that I may pay

for? What are all the sacrifices I am making, or that my family and loved ones are making or have made? One of my strongest flaws has been putting others before me or the ones closest to me. I catch myself doing this on a daily basis and even several times a day. Yes, that is a dilemma, and in some sense a piece of my seven layered cake in my casings, but how universal is this? Having an opportunity to make change in not only the community you associate with or in, but cities or even your own personal world, at whose expense?

In some points in my life I tend to be a code switcher. An adapter is a person who can adjust or fit to certain situations, environments, social settings, and conditions. I can adapt to all situations and sceneries. As so it's been known or that's what people have said. But is it really true? Can I adapt? Can I become what I need to be for each situation I encounter? Who truly can? I think it's all within a person to be all that they can be. Clues are all around us, but we have no idea what's next. When you venture in the woods, becoming farther and farther from the main road, you find yourself lost and alone. When you find yourself having nothing in common with a lifelong friend, you feel lost and alone. Or maybe looking back at your life and wondering how much you could have changed, those feelings of being lost and alone come into place. Being tired of the same life, the same things, the same people, things need changing, things need to be rescued. It's moving, our life is moving, my life is moving, my heart beats so fast lately. Things are scary, life is scary. What are the plans in store for life? How can one stick to these supposed plans, because from looking at my life, I have noticed that yes, I get to the end goal, but my plans that are in the mix are never in route or what is to be expected? I have been told not to drop what I stand for, but my question is now, what do I really stand for?

Is it world peace, no one in the world goes hungry, or maybe the simple things like having a life where my family can walk down the street without being judged or to be able to get the same education as a predominately Caucasian state like Vermont. I need to be stronger, I know exactly what it's like to be left, meaning not one person should ever feel that way. It can really mess with individuals' emotions for the rest of their life.

According to Rosemary Altea (2004) in her book *Soul Signs*, more or less, I am in between three different energy signs. These signs are the signs of Fire; "Acts with emotion... Influenced by a powerful and sometimes hard-to-control energy, the individual born of Fire is likely to be somewhat uncompromising and willful, but also passionate, fascinating, creative, and challenging" (p. 44-45); the Hunter Soul "may seem to be extroverted but often hides their true self, internalizing their quest to fulfill their own needs. It's actually a strong internal drive, to be able to really figure out what they want in life and to go and get it... they will need to feel in control, often showing that extreme energy, and planning and strategizing" (p. 129); and lastly the Dark Soul, "influenced by this extreme Introvert energy, will internalize, harbor grudges, hold feelings inside, and then explode, staying angry and self-absorbed... Introvert energy manifests as a person knowing and also needing self-interest, who has a tendency to apply judgments or conclusions of most situations based on how they perceive they might act, react, or feel in that same situation. Looking to self-first, and internalizing, then able to look beyond self, and to broaden their view-this is their natural-born flow, this is the direction they instinctively take. Their direction is subjective" (p. 130).

Part of a conclusion in such a complex idea lies with both my feet planted in two different worlds: one from the past which tends to place me in unpredictable conflicting

situations, and the other in the world of the future I have spent the last 10 years building for myself educationally, and professionally. The few friends that I do have in my life, and the few family members that I have who have stuck close with me, are my main supporters. They all have contributed in some type of way to help construct my main stream of trying to live right, make certain decisions, and consider a future for myself with all of them in it. There aren't honestly many other institutions in which I could have an opportunity to talk about other than the Universities I have attended or this non-profit I have been engaged with for many years. Their mission is, "To assist in the transition to a safe, independent life for all those who have been affected physically, sexually, emotionally, or economically by domestic abuse and to promote a culture that fosters justice, equity, and safety" (<http://whbw.org/about/>). The one thing that made them trust me completely and signed the deal for me to start working with such an amazing organization was this: "We value change. We believe an evolving, adaptable organization is key to serving our ever-changing community's needs" (<http://whbw.org/about/>). These people that have truly helped defined my virtues or my moral feelings, I noticed that's where my beliefs come into play. I have also noticed the less the better, you can learn a lot from the smallest moments, and develop the greatest moral character you can be with fewer individuals in your life that you may have never even expected. You just have to look out for them and be aware that these communities you form can surprise you. If I were to make any kind of decision, I know that these certain communities will stand by whatever decision I make in the end, not because they know it is my decision, or that I am adult, but because they personally know that as a person, professional, colleague, or classmate, they know that they are a part of life which is very hard for me and my past to

attach to something or someone so dearly.

I used to feel as though I would no longer have too many goals to keep up with due to splitting up my time, I would have lack of supporters, lack of focus, fear of failure, no self-confidence, and fear of success, just because of these two feet of mind in two different worlds. But I made decisions, which may take me the rest of my life to do so, but can I still believe in my postmodernist personality? Will I be able to:

Learn to respect each other's' ethical languages, that we try to understand them on terms other than our own; that we practice empathy when we do not understand them; that we challenge them in a nonviolent way whenever we disagree with their assumptions and conclusions...that we even adopt them and make them a part of our own ethical lexicon. (Nash, 2002, p. 179-180)

Or will it all wither away? Am I giving myself enough time to choose between each world, a specific life, to decide to be one person with many parts who may end up changing the relationships I have professionally or personally outside of home life? "My life is my son, my life is my future and hopefully shared with this husband in my dreams, but I need to feel, something, anything" ...I feel something and now is my wonder enough to show others that this will work?

Sincerely,

The one who really needed directing.

1.4 Conclusion

Somewhere along the line we are liable for the process of reaching out and telling

our stories, which basically recruits more accountants, librarians, and even people like social workers for the future. Things so small to one person, like sharing the smallest catastrophic event, could allow another's mind to want to change the world one person at a time. Or allowing one's 10 layered wall to slowly fall down, by sharing a story that touches someone's heart, that story gets to be shared again and again. People say word of mouth is the most effective way to reach everyone, even the ones who do not want to listen. Anne Lamott (1995), "Drama is the way of holding the reader's attention (p. 59)." My life has been filled with so much drama, so adding to Lamott's theme, then the time comes I will have several books that are best sellers. Funny! What's even funnier, was I was sitting outside, sky dark blue and the moon shining bright, and a man says to me, "May I ask you a question?" and with my inevitability stubbornness replied, "It depends." He says that, "It is a small question," and of course my emerging curiosity says, "Go for it!" He asks me, "What is the last thing I have done for the first time?" I hesitate mysteriously, searching my overworked brain for the day and answer with an ecstatic, "A MANUSCRIPT!" Lay it on me. Anything. I may show my true feelings, but I can handle it. I have handled thus the unthinkable and impossible situations, can handle anything, especially a manuscript of a thesis. Now it is official that was my excitement, now I do not know it will stay the entire time of writing my piece, but I feel I have mindless creativity at my fingertips. Meat, dripping with blood, red, just like my bright 2005 Chevy Aveo. A standard, four doors and my cheesy non-automatic windows, and outdoor printed seat covers; raw material.

Where Am I...

I am from closed doors, flickering lights and running water

I am from the brown bases and even darker brown trim smelling like dandelions

I am from the sweet aroma of tulips

The weeping willows whose long limbs I remember as if they were my own.

I'm from Pie night where you may not enter without one and my first May 23rd, 1986.

And from my dearest grandfather Roger

I'm from deviance and alcoholism and PTSD and even from depression, well actually we as a family just have a lot to be sad about

I'm from never to show emotions and not to cry

and singing at the top of my lungs.

I'm from putting away differences on Christmas so that all sides of the family can enjoy the joyest of holidays.

I'm from Dallas, TX, and of different nationalities, which list would you like me to pick from at his point?

Green bean casseroles and homemade biscuits with gravy.

From tractors, lawn mower rides, and horseback riding and breeding, and maple sugaring in Winters.

I am from a chaotic background!

By Leahn Bass

CHAPTER 2: IS IT REALLY MEANING?

2.1 SPN

Before I took this caseload in writing this thesis I honestly heard the name of an amazing man, a great professor, and an impeccable mentor, but I think over time I may have heard so little about Scholarly Personal Narrative. The whispers were to get ready to learn so much from a man who has taught all the amazing people throughout the University of Vermont. I have heard of so many courses not to take, easy A courses, programs with less writing, etc., but I do not think I ever listened to all the signs where I heard of this so called name, Robert J. Nash. Through undergrad I never investigated what Scholarly Personal Narrative (SPN) stood for or put two and two together that you were the one who so eloquently and adamantly believes that everyone should at least know about SPN, if not apply the form of writing to the academic field. After listening to people, listening to the voices who obviously knew what they were talking about, maybe I just was not ready, maybe because I could not hear them at first. Maybe it was not my time to meet such a powerful influence and person like Professor Nash.

I am not quite sure whether or not listening was the main key; it might have been the commitment in following through with the conversations about the “Robert Nash” I finally have met. Or the scrolling of the mouse to find the course that I found online which needed his prior approval. Or what about the mental preparation within my head about all the books I would have to read during such a small time frame in a semester with all my reading and memory issues. I think the key may have been telling myself that even though it was Graduate level, that I could do it, that I could have an opportunity to accomplish not just something, but something amazing that allows me to “tell my story.”

2.2 My Story

Yes, I am finally saying it: I have been in this world for 29 years, and have attended a well-known community college in Vermont named Community College of Vermont for six years. I was a transfer student after earning my Associates in Liberal Arts to this worldwide known University called University of Vermont, and have been here for three years now and yet to “tell my story.” At first I did not know what a story was or better yet what my story was, and then I waited for someone to even ask. I waited for anyone, even anywhere. Not once. Not the one-on-one check ins with instructors to figure out how I could excel in courses that I might have been failing in, not the one-on-one check ins with the one advisor I had for six years not ever knowing anything about my learning disabilities, or even the ones I have more recently that I have had or have now. And what I have come to the conclusion that with no adult best friends, with a mother who does not and never has gotten along with me, I have never opened up to anyone to the fullest, not even therapists or psychiatrists. I was never there long enough for me to ever get to the opening up phase or session. As soon as any of them started to ask me those personal questions, my mind flipped to what society says about therapists and psychiatrists and how they are getting paid to allow words to come in one ear and out the other with some side comments or questions. So my fear took the best of me and I worked myself up to the point where I would bounce from person to person throughout time and tell the same background of my life with as little detail as possible. What a waste of money over the years, goodness, now I realize this. No one who truly knows the depth of my life.

I got to a point recently in my decision making to further my education, whether it

would be beneficial or more hurtful in the long run. I thought to myself many times what would I leave behind if I were to just pick up and leave with my son. All the people, all the loose ends from my past that could actually hurt me to further prosper professionally and personally. As far as employment, my plan is to get my foot in the door professionally at The University of Vermont and at least make my name heard of before I plan on moving. As far as my education goes, I plan on finishing my Master's in the Interdisciplinary Program, which I should be done in December of this same year. Exactly four months away. The way that I was looking at it was if I could go through 10 months of pregnancy, I could finish the program. But there were always doubts, and with a person who internalizes everything, these doubts become frustration, and then into extreme measures. There has always been a sense of pressure in many aspects in my life to pursue furthering my education, but I believe as of today as I am writing this piece, the most pressure that is put on myself is from myself.

To transform is to convert, to mold, to reconstruct or alter, and this is exactly what I have done educationally and professionally. I cannot say as much personally outside of these settings, but I know now that this could ultimately be a lifelong journey. "When we go without certain things, it's easier to forget just how much we need them. We forget what we had once, we forget what it's like to live with the thing, not that we need, but what we want. That's why we have to remind ourselves, for us to remember. Just because we can live without something, doesn't mean we have to" (Dr. Grey, Grey's Anatomy, Season 11). I can only see up, either way I may choose, but the fact that my mind and body told me to pull the plug, to throw my hands up, and throw in the towel, is a very scary and compelling feeling. I have always given myself a 10-year plan, and when the

10 years are up, I happen to extend some things and add them to the next 10-year plan. Or I made those 10-year plans while making smaller or larger 5-year plans where they were very opposite, authentic, or different from any other plan I told myself to commit to. But I have been very loyal to myself and others that I have so hesitantly woven into my path. Or so I thought, but it has been brought up recently that I may have a very different definition of loyalty. And sometimes I feel as though I am sometimes obligated to obtain these plans for these people in my family, educationally, and professionally. Do not get me wrong whatsoever, I have much gratitude for everyone I encounter, whether they become a positive or a negative part in my life, I always learn regardless, but where my heart stops is when my mind says NOW.

Now I know that by writing this some may be very leery and cautious about addressing me. But something happened. So many emails were sent to me for encouragement. I was talked to not only as an adult but as a friend, and even sat down for those amazing brunches, a home away from home (Chef's Corner), which all has given me a silent leg up in my mind. But if you want me to be honest, I was going to bring it, all my emotions and how this huge decision would affect all my small communities I have been creating, but I went as far as to actually look up other schools in the Southwest, and other Master's programs, housing, employment, and so much more. But you want to honestly know what ended my search? It was not only the brunches that we have had, but I was looking up the policies for transferring mid-way through semesters, or taking leaves of absence, or the cost I would lose out on from add and drop dates (which would be way more than the initial acceptance and cost of course fees), but I took a deep, and when I say deep I mean an audible breath and went straight to the

Interdisciplinary Program website. It states that, “This degree’s program is for students who wish to pursue an individually designed, integrated program of study. The program draws primarily from graduate courses in Educational Leadership, Counseling, Higher Education and Student Affairs Administration, and Educational Studies but may include courses from other departments within the College and the University” (<http://uvm.edu>).

I think my subconscious and my innermost piece of me needed to really see what a great opportunity I would be missing out on right in front of me. And something came over me, I went straight to my first 10,000 word SPN manuscript done in December 2013 named: “Title Less, Could This Truly Be Me: Mocha Coca Chocolate of Mindless Creativity”. I remembered three points that helped me make one huge life changing decision I made to still keep on going on professionally in my academic career. One main point was Maya Angelou’s poem Still I Rise, which goes as follows:



Figure 1.1 The Cruise Boat on Lake Champlain (Taken by Leahn Bass)

Still I Rise

You may write me down in history
With your bitter, twisted lies, ...
Does my sassiness upset you?...
Did you want to see me broken?...
Shoulders falling down like teardrops,
Weakened by my soulful cries...
'Cause I laugh like I've got gold mines...
You may shoot me with your words,
You may cut me with your eyes.
You may kill me with your hatefulness,
But still, like air, I'll rise.

- Maya Angelou

(Angelou, 1986, p. 154)

2.4 SMART

I found my role and expectations in my previous dilemma having a lot to do with commitment. Commitment “is when the individual develops a view of morality that is complex, situational, and based on the dedication (or pledge) to something larger than the self” (Nash, 2002, p. 192). In my own words, I have based my commitment on those who have ever committed to me. I fell in love with a nihilist, I am nowhere near this. I may be a utilitarianist, serving to many peoples’ needs; an altruist, selfless, giving oneself up for the greater good or cause; supererogatory, doing way more than even expected;

deontologist, doing what I believe is right; and maybe even subjectivist, using my emotions and feelings to make decisions, but the one thing I am not is a nihilist or an anti-intellectualist. I believe he is an unhealthy skeptic most times where his truth is the only truth, and this is not positive for a true relationship that got off on the left foot, veered South soon after, and is starting to develop nine years later. We both have been hurt before that ultimately needs to stay in the past, but the way we were brought up prevents us to do so. We tend to be moral strangers; having “the relationship people have to one another when they are involved in moral controversies and do not share a concrete moral vision that provides the basis for the resolution of the controversies” (p. xiii) (Nash, p. 109). But we also have a unique ability to use things and materials given to us in this world in unexpected ways. We try to recognize our faults, differences and negatives, but again it has taken us many years to do so. I have curiosity and he has now developed patience which I have time after time tried unintentionally. We want to explore and discover a world together and promote confidence, but this is not the formula or equation that my family or friends are fond of. I have finally started to take pride in my own personal and professional abilities in finding out more in life and the opportunities in which the world can bring, but it is very clear that my identifying circles of communities have seen the hurt, pain, suffering, and negativity that once was from this relationship. I believe that this issue is more present in my Second Moral Language due to the facts of the people who surround me. Something that was once told to me by someone who is dear to my heart said that I always need to be SMART about the things that I do. Now at first I took it to heart and thought that this woman did not think I was intelligent and I should stop trying to succeed, but when we grew only stronger she then broke down the

word with: S, Specific; M, Measurable; A, Action-oriented; R, Realistic; T, Timely.

2.5 Dear Teacher

Respectfully with all this being said, this was another one of my main reasons of how I truly made my decisions to keep pushing, which is an addressed letter I am writing to a previous teacher I had thought so fondly of growing, and she just took me by surprise:

Dear the teacher who doesn't even know my name,

I was the one who sat in the front row, not at first but slowly changed seats because I felt as though you seemed to glide across the classroom like the mellow water that fathers take their sons on fishing trips for a day to bond in front of the room. You would always look over me but I thought it was because it was an opportunity for you to take the block of teaching to make others feel included. I was the one who handed in homework on time, sometimes early, even when no one else did. I was the student who at the beginning and the middle of the academic year was an A student and some would say much of an over achiever, but honestly I was just doing the homework and understood the material given by you. You so frequently would connect to students through lectures or classroom discussions; I know I definitely thought I had an unspoken connection where we could understand each other without even speaking.

As the person I am I made sure I was never in pajamas, or sweats, always in something somewhat professional, to show that I respected you and your teachings. I really dug deep with all of my writing to show that I respected you. I really listened to your stories because I respected you. I found myself talking with peers about how good the class was and how much we have all learned from you, because I respected your

teachings. I would have monthly meetings with my guidance counselor at least mentioning your name once about how much I have learned in your class.

I was the one who randomly emailed you about the questions I had about some of the concepts you had discussed in the prior week. I was the one who emailed you the second half of the year suggesting some extra credit opportunities for not only me but for those who may be a bit behind on their work. I thought I allowed myself to show my abstract thinking and I thought you had liked this side of me. “Perception is simultaneous and layered, and to single out any aspect of it for naming is to turn your attention away from myriad other things, those braiding elements of the sensorium—that continuous, complex response to things perpetually delivered by the senses, the encompassing sphere that is such a large part of our subjectivity” (Doty, 2010, p. 3). I perceived you as a nice, gentle, and humble woman who looked out for her children. I perceived you as a loving caring person who wanted everyone to succeed. Throughout my life I have been wrong about many things, but I never thought any such things would ever come from you. So I think this is maybe why I trusted you.

To be completely honest I am done talking about all the things I thought you were and just want to let you know how you made me feel, and how you allowed me to see the other side of people. Because that is exactly what you as an individual did and for me at such a very young age getting adjusted with a lot of life changes that were happening. You showed me that the truth from people needs to come from themselves and not out of others. You showed me that if an individual is not true within themselves then they are misguided and that can lead to some very destructive situations. You taught me at one point in my life that I really should just trust myself and only myself. Thank goodness I

had some guidance elsewhere because I would have been troubled for the rest of my life. You showed me hurt and anger for the first time. And to be honest you showed your true colors.

This letter is to you, not in a mad state of mind, not hard feelings, more of forgiveness to world and its people in it.

I just wanted to explain to someone where a piece of me comes from that no one knows about except for you because you were the only other one there. I came into your office that day, second half of the school year, excited to get a letter at home from you wanting to discuss my official A for the year. I had just finished up with my last class, called my friend to remind him he would be picking me up late and proceeded towards your office. My palms were sweating but I think it was because I was nervous about how I would react to your comments and maybe I was getting nominated for an award when I graduated because you saw my hard work and dedication in class. I think I was still a bit shocked to be the only one meeting after class individually and not in a group to get help with homework. I was grateful it was me and no one else. For generations I have heard that everyone wants approval some way or another. At this point I was 'the everyone' now. I sat in front of her desk, put my hands over my lap and waited patiently for her to slowly look up while grading homework assignments. She asked if she could help me. Could she help me, of course she could? If only I could pick your intelligent brain. I explained that she had sent me a letter and that I should come in to talk about my work. She looked at me with disgust. It was like she was trying to digest what she had been chewing on and could not. "You are Leahn?" she asked. I said of course I am; I am the only one in the class with a hesitant smile on my face. The only thing I was thinking of

was oh my goodness she saw me do something outside of school with friends and now she doesn't think I fit her perfect box. She told me there was a mistake and that this couldn't be right. Yup, I knew it, my break was too good to be true. She even made me write a couple sentences to make sure they matched my other work. Really how rude. Maybe I was just lower than I expected on her totem pole. I never would have expected how low though. "Leahn I am sorry but you are not the one I am looking for." I sat there almost in tears with confusion in my eyes. I have always been nosey or efficient some people like to say, and I think this was one of the times I should had left things alone. "Can I ask why?" In such a soft spoken, almost whimpering voice. She sighs like I should had already known. "You're black, I never expected this work to come from a black student." Well, well, well, the truth comes out. I walked out in shock. And now my shock turned to disbelief to agony and pain. I thought to myself, had she been looking over me all year. Did she really just say this to me? Should I tell anyone? I mean what really happens when people give reasons...this. I was just heartbroken. A grown woman, my teacher, the one I looked up to for the past 12 months, is a racist. This was the last day and finals were over and I magically failed the class and had to go to summer school to retake the class. Being punished for something you have no control over devastated me. Put me in a spot that I wouldn't get out of for some time. Like I said before this is a forgiveness letter, you changed me for the better to look deeply within others and myself.

Sincerely,

Leahn Bass, once a very fond student of yours



Figure 2: Pink Flower Photo (Taken by Leahn Bass)

2.6 Creating

They say today is the day to live. Today no one can stop you from living. To fight in what you believe in and what you stand for. What is it that I stand for? What is it exactly that I believe in? When do you really see me fighting? I mean if I were fighting I would weigh less and look fabulous. If I were fighting for my son and he would be learning at an elite private school speaking a different language which by the way costs \$8,000.00 a year; I only know this because it has been two years later since he has stepped foot in this school and I just paid them off. If I were fighting I would have money in the bank for every occasion, for a house, a dream wedding of a lifetime, vacations, local yearly fairs, shopping sprees, jewelry, oh yes pedicures. I love them dearly. Jesus, what the fuck am I doing? I cannot even pass a course at school. I cannot even be loved by the father of my son. I mean when have I really been loved by any true man...ever? NEVER! What is really wrong with me? They say you will never be loved if you cannot love yourself. How am I supposed to love this, ...me? They, who are they? THEY are people who have already gone to college, grad school, earned their degrees, and written

about things to get their names and works published. Why is it when ‘they’ say whatever, it goes? When ‘they’ say they have a new theory, we as the simple people jump like a brand new puppy from the pet store being trained by their owner. What the fuck am I doing?

It is simple, I guess; I am creatively creating myself. People call this creative writing, and I think it can be my new therapeutic art for a while. This question that Mary Pipher addresses “What do you know to be true” comes up a lot in my life. I cannot tell why I have not yet tried answering this, whether it will take too much time and energy, or could it be because I would really have to dig deep and come to terms with a lot of things that have been buried for some time now? An exercise that was exactly needed for an experience to write for me was just being able to place two feet on the floor and stand still. It is just something hard for me to do living in such a chaotic and constantly moving world. Just to take a second to breathe in, which is such an act taken for granted, I truly asked myself what I stand for. All these questions I ask myself have blank answers. I literally shoot blanks from my brain to my mouth. Pppffttt! Today, with the help of other minds, I was allowed to open myself to myself and come up with answers. It may not be much to some, but for me it is everything. Because if I do not have at least one question answered once in a while, my mind, body and soul shuts down. And when I say shut down, I mean I breakdown. I stop going to school, call out of work, my writing is nonexistent, and my main line for everyone around me is, “I will be alright, don’t worry about me, it will all come together when the time comes.” No one knows that this is exactly what I have been going through for years and it happens semi frequently. But I have finally been able to breathe out and create an answer; my thesis, my words.

So what do I stand for, what is it in life that creates me and the ground that I walk on? My very short three answers are optimism, courage, and proof. These are what I believe to be true for me. Regardless of what may have happened or what is happening, I pull through, I find ways around these things that may pull me to the side, slow me down or slightly stop me in life. My mind never fails me and can control me to believe in the goodness that my body takes control to limitless accounts and levels to overcome and push through. My backbone, my boldness, fearlessness, spirit, and courage just come from the pit of all pits. It is not there one second and then things like a chance to take a deep breath in, and in one second later it is there. Right now my proof is the fact that I am writing. I am writing to you explaining my truths. I am writing for you to see the passions that were lost one too many times in my life and have now resurfaced just in time for me to live my life the way I deserve to live it. And when Mary Pipher says that “precision with details involves the selection and leveraging of images to create intensity and meaning” (p. 119), I think about SPN writing style as a perfect way to tell such an intense story that no one has ever heard, my story, from me that is.

THEN

Life torturing

Empty soles

Royal hearts

All the depth, construed in the life you are living

Messy hair, rotting teeth, unprotected, no progression

A race with the fullest potential

Brutally excruciating

Hosting a family that's supposed to be your own

Awesomeness, bitterness, a black hole

Dark, spiny, twisted

A fire less pit

Something or someone has been hidden

Twists, burns, bruises

A curse, living long with no breath to take

Where to go?

A brilliant mind that wanders aimlessly.

You gut a nerve. What is happening?

You can run, you can stay, but can you fight?

Ride the horse for hours but when you look down, you have been going in circles.

Lights flicker as if you can see

You wake up in cold sweats, nightmares of gold.

We are all excited when we received a gift, a present, but what happens when it's the gift
of depression, loneliness, anxiety, delusions, form of darkness?

You grow up, you have nothing to love, no one to love you.

You hide a place from within.

The warm breath you can see looking like smoke on a cold winters day.

Mile long bricked walls, fenced with cement, standing in shock

Reading an endless book filled with pages of suicide.

Fireplaces filled with spotless, spineless energy.

Packing the past.

Drowning in a pool of dreams.

Street lots, smash to the ground of hope.

Tense help, bones ache, jaw clenched, hearts fade.

Stories of enviable failures.

Truths beyond belief.

Courage and fight.

Spunk and wisdom.

A sense of help, belonging.

The wanting and yearning for love.

Look at the picture in an old photo album,

Nicely throughout, created, line up with poise and gratitude.

Is it a form of justice you seek, equality, venture?

Looking over a bridge watching the water trickle down the side of the earth, being able to

throw all shapes and sized rocks into it.

Snuggle close with blankets of freedom, rejoice, and happiness.

Life lived, absolutely not!

Now is the time, nothing or no one can or should stop you or me.



Figure 1.3: Pink water lily with orange fish photo (Picture from http://www.shutterstock.com/video/clip-4146142-stock-footage-koi-fish-swimming-in-garden-water-pond-with-water-lily-flower-blooming-and-green-lily-pads-x.html?src=search/hyAG9O_ILT7D1BQkooP7EA:1:12/gg)

CHAPTER 3: ALICE

“What is this life, full of care, we have no time to stand and stare.” - W.H. Davies

Mutual feelings, understandings, connections, thoughts, and encouragements should and can come from stories and storytelling. A time for a heartfelt dialogue that could possibly help or change a life. It is true, I want to be understood, I want to be heard but my question is whether or not these things will occur. We come from warmth and comfortably secure with the right nutrients in small areas. Growing daily to be out in the world. When this day comes we are cuddled, coddled, and swaddled with love and affection. It does not matter the sounds we make because it is adored. It does not matter the moves we make because it is remembered. Such sweet innocent and pure creatures. We as children rely so much on the positive influences to help improve the way of life. Giggling, walking, and talking are just three of the smallest things that contribute to the growth of children into adults. We are caressed with...

But please show me the truth, show me that history can be change for the better. I want to be the person who can believe in things. Anything. Show me that the future will be safe. Why cannot writing be like your first love? All those amazing questions being asked, all those first times that people meet with flutterbys (butterflies) in the pit of their stomachs, talking on the phone for hours, laughing, giggling, and secretly blushing. The man or woman of the person's dream. That first succulent, wet juicy kiss, when the lips finally meet each other. Staring at each other, wondering what each other is thinking. The honeymoon stage of being together, teenaged love. Never going to bed mad at each other Knowing that a relationship will rain but never pour. Perfect bliss. Lights down on dim, huge imagination, and hearts open. But instead to some, writing is like the breakup.

Anger, rage, frustrations of wondering why. The stomach cramps or pains that you suddenly get making you keel over with. The time period where people try to make things work even though they inevitably know it will not work. Lay it on me!

I honestly do empathize with the people trying to search for something to connect to and to be a part of, but I feel as though over centuries and throughout history you have been nothing but trouble, you have torn people apart that I care not to even think about. When Ferrucci (2006) mentions his opinion on humility in *The Power of Kindness*, he says that, “We often reach a point in our lives where, rather than remaining open to learning, we want safe and predictable plans...we take everything for granted and give up questioning, give up admitting that what we know is possibly no longer true, that our cultural equipment is beginning to be obsolete” (p. 94). What was your true plan? Why is it that you still after so many decades cannot come up with some middle ground, some sort of an agreement between all the religions, and not by stepping on toes? People have always believed what they wanted to believe and for centuries more will always do the same, but you have installed in many, many minds that it is not okay to do this. You created people turning on loved ones, judgments, wars.

No one gets to choose if you get hurt in this world, but you do have a say in who hurts you (“The Fault in Our Stars” movie), and I am not sure if I like my choice. See I think more or less the real reason that I cannot trust you is because I have not been able to close my own personal doors and trust myself. But like I told you before, I believe that you have not given me any reason to look past all the hurtful things that you have created which in the end has made life the most difficult to go through. Just sitting here thinking about you, you remind me of an infected scab because a person is anemic; you can put

creams and bandages on it to try to make it heal and be one with your healthy skin again, but it just takes months and months to try and heal. There will always be that scar to remind you of the pain and struggle you had to go through. You are like a numbness that brings someone to fight against. Some people resort to violence, some people live through life in denial, and some like me have used alcohol to just not experience the hurt and betrayal that they live with because of you. “Tension means narrowing of the mind. It becomes so narrow that nothing can pass through it. A good hit and the mind opens...because you have forgotten that you were trying to remember something, and suddenly that which was on your tongue is no more a secret; now you know it fully well (Lama, 2004, p. 117).

Life! People look at life as such a prospering, goal achieving a part that happens for humans. How does life or anyone’s life change them for the better? People can walk around on a day-to-day basis and try to change things throughout their lives for the better, but do they really make things better? Or for who do they make things better for? I have been trying for years to live this life or at least a life that I can feel like a princess or better yet a queen, but that is the thing. How can someone feel like a queen or on top of the world when throughout their life have been told that they will never be? Some people ask if I have been crying, or do I want to talk about things. NO! I have just been through a lot, I have been through enough, and I have been through things that a stereotypical Caucasian female or male living on the East Coast would never come close to or even think about coming across in any given day or lifetime. My story is just that, a story, my story. There are things that people will never know, there are things that I cannot make sense of, there are things that I may have mixed up with another memory only to suppress

emotions, but they have happened. And that is the thing, these memories are real. It is just because of being so damaged over time.

People go to get help by telling their stories by paying someone to listen. But that is the thing, being a statistic you need to be aware of how much you speak, your reactions, and your emotions. Being responsible for a child as well puts things into a whole new realm. If you do end up speaking with someone, you need to switch them up like when you are switching your toilet paper rolls. I have thought to myself that I want normal. That I want a normal life, I want my son and future kids to have a normal life, with a husband and a house that I built or searched high and low for the perfect one, but I am creative. I am smart and I have been doing this on my own since day one, the day I was born, thanks to someone who did not want me. My life is my son, my life is my future children, and hopefully shared with this husband in my dreams, but I need to feel, something, anything. I think my problem may just be that I am scared to feel. I legitimately am scared. And the truth is I am scared of a lot of things and it is not only having to do with my life, my so called family, or my son's life, but for the one I am in love with.

As I watch my child breeze down the smooth sidewalk, I wonder if things are going to change for us. If I will be able to accomplish these things that were brought into my life. I see his hair moving backwards from the wind, he checked and perked up smiling because of such a small thing in the world making him so delighted and excited. Where did time go when things most minuet bring enjoyment and pleasure? I feel the air make slight high pitch noises past my ear. A theory about moments, moments of impact. A theory that those moments of impact, which are flashes of high intensity that

completely turn lives upside down, can actually end up defining who we are... The thing is, each one of us is the sum total of every moment that we have ever experienced, with all the people we have ever known. And it is these moments that become our history... A moment of total physical, mental, and every other kind of love... Yes these moments could define who we are, but what if one day you could no longer remember any of them ("The Vow" video).

Lamott (1994), writes:

E.L. Doctorow said once said that 'Writing a novel is like driving a car at night. You can see only as far as your headlights, but you can make the whole trip that way.' You don't have to see where you're going; you don't have to see your destination or everything you will pass along the way. You just have to see two or three feet ahead of you. This is right up there with the best advice on writing, or life, I have ever heard. (p. 18)

I see daily life differently from most and I sometimes cannot understand why, but over the years I have come to very strong conclusions that I do not want or need to know why. As long as I still see it.

Some days I hear the wind blowing, I see little birds chirping, grass green, sun shining, and no cloud in sight. It is a very relaxing atmosphere where I am in my heart. Like a true form of something amazing. My mind goes in circles waiting, but my calm personality brings my mind back to reality. The wonders, what if's, the what not's, mostly the negatives, but it is helpful to think in a positive light. Something that you stretch and reach for will hopefully, eventually come to you. You may have to jump through those obstacles, but I have learned to never give up. Acceptance, for me, it is an

overwhelming feeling of joy and excitement. It has been almost like a career, searching high and low throughout my life. To be accepted by parents, family, peers, my educational aspect in life, employment, communities, and even within myself has been something that I am still trying to reach a certain point in doing. Nowadays this could have been a simple process of looking, opening, and receiving, an event that happens so smoothly, so gradual, so subsequently. I think that could be any one person's ideal process, but of course there are twists and turns added to the story.

I am not saying that I know everything, but growing up the way I did in the life I have, no one has walked in it like myself. No one knows like I know. I am very thankful, but how far does that actually get someone? It is just like someone going throughout life being so caring, humble and giving and then all of a sudden refused like a heart in a heart transplant. In a situation where they are in dire need to get a surgeon who just got back from their month long vacation from the Middle East. True things are hard to come by, but what I have learned at a very young age was that life guarantees are not promising. Work hard for what you want and it could honestly get ripped right out of your hands in a blink. And that KARMA is a BITCH. Even unearned privileges are not guaranteed or granted to those who expect it. And that life itself is not guaranteed to anyone.

Should you sit in the front seat of that bulldozer or crane with a wrecking ball attached? Then just let the page fall ever so gently to the floor swaying back and forth until you notice you will have to bend over and pick it up. Why not leave it? I have been awake the entire time even though I was asleep. Eyes open, while shut. I swore I would never fall again. The risk I take could be the save I need. It is like taking two seasons and realizing that they are more alike than you thought. I can remember as an only child I had

to find things to do for myself and with myself. Standing on top of what seemed the biggest hill I had ever seen and wanting to sled down. Freezing cold, cheeks pinked, lips moist from excitement, but never was handed or given the courage to go down. Funny thing was, was that it had been the same exact hill I had been going down for years during the summer and fall seasons. Rolling down, gaining speed, grass in my hair, eyes, mouth and pockets. I could see the end, did it make it safe and secure? What did the green soft, sometimes muddy grass have that the fluffy cold, wet, white snow did not? I feel like something was going on. I feel things are not right. I am not supposed to be here, why am I not further along in life? I need a shoulder to cry on. I need more time; I need a life that I am proud of living in.

In every person there is a story, in every story there are words, and throughout these words a person shows the passions that they have or show towards the world.

4.1 Dear Alice

Dear Alice,

You have no idea who I am but I am assuming you knew you were going to receive a letter one day in your life from me. My name is Leahn Bass. Personally I am more of an independent, intelligent, and fun mid-aged woman who has been refining this letter for about 20 years now. I started my first letter to you when I was about eight or nine and it consisted of about 15 pages of questions and my daily activities with best friends at the time. Over time I have just written over and over again trying to make this amazingly convincing letter of why you should meet me and tried to create this miracle piece that would show you how smart I grew up to be, what I have done in my life and accomplished, and that I would hope you would want to finally break such a physically

long distant barrier in our existence. I once dedicated an entire month where I called out of sick from high school to stay home and edit and reedit this long winded letter of questions.

I am a person of expressions, an individual who values life to various degrees. Yes, I am materialistic, but these materialistic things will come into my life as soon as I am realistically stable. I am hard-headed and as of now I am very honest as you can see in the lines above. I prefer activities that can be symbolic or can have a creative twist in it. I have always been an independent person who involves myself in complex situations. I am a person who loves all types of music; anyone who truly knows me will never make me give up my country music. I love sceneries, pictures, drawings, paintings, graffiti; one of the first forms of hip-hop on the trains out of South Bronx, oh heck I love all forms of art. I am very imaginative and emotional. I am impulsive and expressive. I love to write about everything and about nothing. I love learning. I am a teacher outside of my academic career and a social person although I may act very introverted at times. I can be very convincing and cooperative, kind, sympathetic and also empathetic. Some say I am way too to patient for not having any patience.

I have never told anyone my devotion to my writing experiences to you, but no extra time is anyone's hands and I am only growing older by the minute, so I decided enough is enough and that I should finally open up somehow and just wish for the best. Right now I am in my last semester in an undergraduate program. It is public with more than 150 student organizations on campus and was founded in 1791, which is currently ranking 82 in 2014's Best Colleges in National Universities. An amazingly creative, and intelligent man named Robert Nash has recently come into my life for some reason. I

believed at first but now know that he is here to better not only my academic career but to also better my life in many more ways than he or anyone else thinks. He is the founder of something called SPN, Scholarly Personal Narrative. SPN is my opportunity to live life to the fullest through my writing. I have learned so much through SPN writing, like one voice is not the same, every voice has not been heard, that this may just be the beginning of a way to work through my past, presently and moving towards my future magically. Daily we ask ourselves to dig just a little deeper in our metaphorical writing within ourselves. We are more likely to find our personal experiences throughout life.

SPN writing and sharing is about trust, me trusting you, you trusting me, and me trusting me. My thesis written in SPN style can make or break me. And this is exactly what I am doing right now; I am trying to write a thesis that will turn heads and will allow people to enjoy reading my piece again and again. As Maya Angelou says, "There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you." Until recently SPN writing has received very little attention and I truly am trying to give it the greatest response in the humblest way by writing about it a bit in my thesis. But I have been trying to teach everyone about such masterful work that my professor created. So how do I start, there is so much to say in so little time. My main task at hand is figuring out my true version of what SPN is and how I can excel in my writing with such a great particular form of telling my story. First off let me just say that walking through doors this time in my life, I had absolutely no idea what SPN meant, what it honestly stood for, or how I could really practice the techniques throughout my writing, until very recently. To me it is a tool. A strengthening, supportive tool, in which I have found myself asking my undergrad professors if they would allow me to sit down, explain what form of writing it is and if I

may use is on the assignments they have given me. It has allowed me to formulate a very true story creatively, allowing me to use first person narrative or my very own personal voice, while at the same time including my scholarly mind to seep through my pages. In my eyes I am very clear in what I say, but some have always questioned the in between the lines meanings, but this tool has allowed me to descriptively show the reader exactly what I mean. “The core, ethical concepts in which you most passionately believe are the language in which you are writing” (Lamott, 1994, p. 103). This has been such an eye opening experience and hopefully by the end of my writing you will see how fond, how much I believe in and wish I knew about such a flower of tools earlier in my life.

I honestly wish I “grew up around a father and a mother who read every chance they got” (Lamott, 1994, p. xi). I am not saying that I am not grateful for being able to be around someone who did care for me, but sometimes I really think hard about whether or not it was enough and if it was the right kind of care. “In the dark, I glowed like a light bulb with shame” (Lamott, p. xvii). I was not and still I am not proud of many things that went on growing up. I learned at a very young age that alone was probably the best bet to survive. I know now that things could have been a lot different, or could have been worse, but it is a childhood only few people know about due to the fact that I never want to receive pity sighs or cries of sadness or the looks and glares. I heard once that depression is an inability to construct a future. I ran with it throughout life, trying to push through the abundant amount of barriers that stood in my way. You see I am here now. I am not saying that my life is perfect by any means, or anywhere near, but it has been not being able to express what I really mean through life and now is my chance. Lamott (1994) perfectly stated, “It was not necessarily more profound, but there was a struggle

going on inside me to find some sort of creative or spiritual or aesthetic way of seeing the world and organizing it in my head” (p. xx). So I found things to pass the time.

Writing and music were two of these extra special things that passed my time and helped me try and figure life out as I went along in it. Like Whitney Houston says in one of her most popular songs, “I Have Nothing”, “Share my life, take me for what I am, Because I’ll never change All my colors for you...Don’t make me close one more door, I don’t want to hurt anymore, stay in my arms if you dare, or must I imagine you there. Don’t walk away from me...I have nothing, nothing, nothing. If I don’t have you.” For me education has not only been a struggle since day one, but it has also helped me throughout my life staying out of trouble (not financially), and helping me find who I really am. I do not know where I would be without it. But I have to believe that life can be a façade. The same things, same routines on a daily basis, very tiresome, and annoying, like you just want and need to break out. Until something happens. Something so out of the ordinary it may hurt inside. Something so shocking that you are not quite sure what life handed you. You sit there in amazement, in complete and utter disbelief. Wondering what the fuck will come next. You think about the time you were having or the mental place you were in before this out of the blue thing happened. You search for your vocabulary, any type of word to spit out...nothing. So then you substitute it with something else out of the ordinary, something that was never in the card of your daily living. Mouth opened, jaw dropped, eyes dry from not blinking. You cock your head slightly to the left or right still not sure about what is happening in life. There is just so much pressure. Why this, why that? What are you doing or about to do? So much thought, so much precise thought into every which rule in life. Those rules you never

really knew where they came from or from whom. You are trying to open a door for an explanation.

Do you even know what your own biological child would do if she had seven days left to live? What would happen if you had seven days to live? If I only had one week to live, I would not die on day two or six, but not until day seven. I would not live on past the seventh day, but I would have had an opportunity to see, or do any one thing within these seven days, what would I do? No really what would I do? First off I would make sure my mother was on all of my accounts so that whatever money was leftover would go to my son. And then I would spend time with my son. My only accomplished part of me, and he would not have to go to school for a week, but an even bigger thing to him would be to be able to spend this time with his one and only mom.

Due to trying to provide a better life for my son I have been physically and emotionally distant for years. When I say years, I mean years, I mean I only took weeks off for maternity leave, and have been in school ever since. Every single semester, never taking one semester, or even a summer off to spend with my son to reconnect. To show my growing love for him, but I had no time off, nothing. I have been under the impression that the sooner you finish school the further you will be in life so you can make or create a career, but I have completely shut out my son. Now do not get me wrong, I have been there every single day since birth unless there was a weekend that my mother watched him so I could catch up with my studying or study for my exam, or just in need of a break which every parent deserves, but he has been with me and he is old enough and does to this day say, “my mom loves me the most” in the world. He is my life. The reason I wake up daily, one of the reasons I am in school. He is the reason.

Back to what I would do with my son. I think I would first take him on a train for the experience and we would travel to meet his other half of his family but on the way have him see my half of the family, on the way to his father's biological side. I think I would stay there for a day and keep traveling; I would stop in Washington, DC to the location where Martin Luther King, Jr. made history with one of his life changing speeches. It was known that Clarence Jones, his speech writer, was sitting 50 feet behind King on August 28, 1963 at the Fort of Lincoln's Memorial, where there was more than 250,000 people, never wrote the 'I Have a Dream' speech. Martin Luther King, Jr. improvised that amazing speech. So I would take a picture with my son and move on. By this time, I would have rented a car and explained to my mother the rest of the plans and stops so that she could meet us on the seventh day so he would never be alone. We would make a detour to Florida so he can experience an experience I believe that all children should do as a child, Disney. We would enjoy every single ride possible, stay until closing, take pictures with all the characters he wanted to or maybe even eat with them if offered.

As soon as the gates closed we would travel to Dallas. A place that is strange to me. This would probably be the third or fourth day in which I would bring him some place special, or at least I would hope it was going to be special for us. A place where he could relax, while I explained how much I loved him, and always have and that I always will no matter what happened. A place where I told him about how his mommy would soon no longer see him grow up into the man I know he will be. That I would not be able to see him go through something called puberty, where he would get hair in different spots all over his body and his voice would change and when he soon feels his body

change. I would not be able to see his first girlfriend or boyfriend, his first date, or love. That I could not physically comfort him, when people in the world didn't see him for him because they were just too blinded by the color of his skin. I would tell him the truth about his father and that he left because he wasn't a true definition of a man, and that it was never in any way, shape or form my son's fault. I would ask him if he remembered the different ways he saw how his biological father treated his mommy and explain that that was and still is the wrong way to treat a female or a male, the person you love. It is not okay to take your anger or frustration out on the ones you love, it may happen but the both of you will work through it without violence, it really hurts the person you love, not only physically on their body, but their feelings. I would ask him to read up on old fashioned love and how the men treated women, like opening doors, true love making, marriage for 60 some odd years, and not to allow any person, male or female, take advantage of your love and kindness. I would tell him that I want to make his and his loved one's life better, and this is my wish.

We come from warmth and comfortably secure with the right nutrients in small areas. Growing daily to be out in the world. When this day comes we are cuddled, coddled, and swaddled with love and affection. It doesn't matter the sounds we make because it is adored. It doesn't matter the moves we make because it is remembered. Such sweet innocence and pure creatures. We as children rely so much on the positive influences to help improve the way of life. Giggling, walking, and talking are just three of the smallest things that contribute to the growth of children into adults. We are caressed with small subtle love gestures. Right this second in all reality as I watch my child breeze down the smooth sidewalk, I wonder if things are going to change for us. If I will be able

to accomplish these things that were brought into my life. I see his hair moving backwards from the wind, cheek perking up smiling because of such a small thing in the world making him so delighted and excited. Where did time go when things so small bring enjoyment and pleasure? I feel the air make slight high pitch noises past my ears, it's like a gentle whisper of being alive and enjoying what you have.

When is allowing myself to let my guard down, when I am showing my true vulnerable self to my son I would explain to him how I wouldn't be there to see him at his first or last dance at his wedding, to bail him out of jail for hopefully doing something he believed in, the right thing. I wouldn't be there to see his first car or motorcycle if he chooses or about safe sex and sexual partners. I would explain that I couldn't help him with homework and that he honestly was better off trying to do it himself because unfortunately Mimi (his grandmother) never went to college and she never helped me with my homework. I would gently tell him that I wouldn't be there if he had a child or to see my grandchild grow up and that I would explain everything the best I could for his age and under the circumstances the best of my abilities. And then I would express to him that I have always wanted to meet and have him meet my biological mother or the person who gave birth to me, you, because I wanted to even if they, or you, didn't want anything to do with my life, like they have so bluntly done with my adoption, I would want him to know my bloodline. Yes, I would actually try and find you so you could meet your grandchild.

After the reuniting of the biological family depending on how that went, actually after this I would book it to California so he would find something else so amazing for a child at his age, Disney Land and the amazing amusement park. By then my mother

would be on a flight so we would be able to spend every last minute together, and that the transition would be a bit smoother being with familiarity. The reason I say all this is because if I didn't have a child I would probably waste all my money on bungee jumping, traveling to places I have always wanted to go and then I would send my mother money from my savings, or tell her to donate it to a non-profit or a local charity. Even though I say I would go wherever I would want, I probably would still go to Washington, DC, and Disney Land in California because I have never been. I mean I would absolutely make detours everywhere I would go just because I would be a single adult traveling the US, but if my son was with me I would definitely make the last trip of my life all about my child and us spending time together, my flesh and blood, my own creation.

“It is quite impossible to participate in storytelling and not be intensely aware of who is telling, who is listening and, very often, the shared history of the group. The invitation to share a memory is usually a convivial act or, at the very least, the invitation to some kind of assent. To share a memory with someone you know is to advance your relationship even if it is only by the tiniest step. (Rosen, 1993, p. 143)

I ask you why exactly do we not have a memory? Was it out of fear or will the response be like what I see on television shows, out of love? A theory about moments, moments of impact. A theory that those moments of impact, which are flashes of high intensity that completely turn lives upside down, can actually end up defining who we are...The thing is, each one of us is the sum total of every moment that we've ever experienced, with all the people we've ever known. And it's these moments that become our history...A moment of total physical, mental, and every other kind of love...Yes these moments

could define who we are, but what if one day you could no longer remember any of them (“The Vow” video). What do we share other than blood? I just want to be on the same page and communicate.

Holding in nervousness, seriousness, discomfort, disappointment, rejoice, thrill, and even cheerfulness, all at one time can really make a person uneasy. Now, I really have to just let go of those uneasy feelings, those overpowering thoughts that could ultimately change a person’s true personality. Perhaps I really feel excited, maybe a bit anxious at this point. Not truly knowing answers to questions, and in particular ones have quite often been in a form of acceptance. My life as I look at it reminds me of a train. Every few seconds you can hear the wheels hit the track, while this huge train, sometimes empty, runs along faster and faster on this endless track. No specific stops on the way, but has never seemed to land at a station for maintenance or a break. The passengers fade and new ones appear at the blink of an eye. The one specific thing I am truly grateful for which took many years to figure out was that these passengers that fade were not necessarily people. In some eyes these could have been all the negatives in one’s life that have done them and their family wrong. Maybe for me these so called wrong steps that were taken were only to steer me in the right direction, to put me at the right crossing or intersection. Jumping through the hoops in life have not been simple as my train has ran under bridges, but I have remembered all those hoops that were single handedly triumphed, leaping through myself, even conquering steps through life. May I ask what happened to you at least finding me?

Leahn Your Biological daughter (Seed)



Figure 4: Rail Road Tracks (Taken by Leahn Bass)

Your Dreams Can Come True If...

Dreams can come true

If you take the time to

Think about what you want in life...

Get to know yourself

Find out who you are

Choose your goals carefully

Be honest with yourself

But don't think about yourself so much

That you analyze every word and action

Don't become preoccupied with yourself

Find many interests and pursue them

Find out what is important to you

Find out what you are good at

Don't be afraid to make mistakes

Work hard to achieve successes

When things are not going right

Don't give up—just try harder

Find courage inside of you to remain strong

Give yourself freedom to try out new things

Don't be so set in your ways that you can't grow

Always act in an ethical way

Laugh and have a good time

Form relationships with people you respect

Treat others as you want them to treat you

Be honest with people

Accept the truth

Speak the truth

Open yourself up to love

Don't be afraid to love

Remain close to your family

Take part in the beauty of nature

Be appreciative of all that you have

Help those less fortunate than you

Try to make other lives happy

Work towards peace in the world

Live life to the fullest

Dreams can come true

And I hope that all your dreams

Become a reality

-Susan Polis Schutz (Hang in There..., p. 50)

CHAPTER 4: THE ILLUSIONS

Deciding to move on is just so simple throughout a conversation. When the action occurs those demons come out and no one wants to help deal with it. That is what is so messed up about this so called process. People want you to get over your past so quickly, so that they can love you the way they want to, but when given the chance to do so, it is too hard to cope with. Do they even realize or recognize what you may be feeling or know that this response may actually hurt them in such a process in which you may be working through? I keep telling myself I need a vacation, I need to go on a cruise, I just need a break. I know it is not going to happen, but I guess I can dream right? I want so much for my biological family, who have abandoned me. I want so much for my adopted family, who have abandoned me. I want so much for my God family, who have abandoned me. I want so much for the family I have created, but what about me? Do I want anything for me? Does anyone wish this for me? Can I be better at this? This has always been so hard to swallow. I want to just wake up and realize this has been one big joke, that someone put all of these things into my hands to become bigger and better as a person.

I have dealt with some traumatic things during my life and Carl Young once said that, “Young men don’t become torturers, generally it’s the tortured who become torturers.” This is not what I had ever imagined my life to end up, I always want to help, to grow, and to learn. And in doing so I found some very universal aspects in my life that came up in others such as anxiety and PTSD. Some people have no idea what the two are, do not care to know, or they just make things up about them. But in fact there are five primary forms of anxiety: generalized anxiety, panic, social anxiety, posttraumatic stress,

and obsessive-compulsive disorder...But they share one thing: a sense of apprehension so powerful that a person's everyday ability to function is substantially compromised (Davidson, 2003, p. 22).

In 1980, psychiatrists had in mind additional events such as the mass destruction of war, combat terrors, torture, atomic bombings, human-made disasters, including earthquakes and hurricanes. More recently, our understanding of what constitutes a 'traumatic stressor' has broadened to include the kinds of personal and family traumas that in previous decades were hardly discussed, such as sexual and physical abuse in childhood, incest, and rape. (Davidson, p. 60)

Posttraumatic stress disorder can be concluded from what people may think the smallest traumatic event to the largest traumatic experience and anything in between.

Suffering has two parts ("two arrows"); the unavoidable suffering that comes to all humans, and secondary suffering we produce on our own due to the unavoidable suffering we encounter (Quintiliani). Stern (1997) writes that dissociation is "the refusal to allow pre-reflective experience to attain the full-bodied meaning it might have if we left it alone and simply observed the results of our own capacity to create it...

Dissociation is the deletion of imagination" (Quintiliani, p. 98). Dissociation can happen to those living with posttraumatic stress disorder, who do not seek help in dealing with past events.

Trauma is a sudden, intense physical or emotional (or both) event that harms the person experiencing it. A trauma can be a single event or repeated events (Block &

Block, 2010, p. 1). People can develop posttraumatic stress disorder because of such trauma.

PTSD is a severe and ongoing emotional reaction to an extreme psychological trauma. It often involves re-experiencing the traumatic event through flashbacks or nightmares... One of the key symptoms of PTSD is experiential avoidance, which means that trauma victims tend to push away uncomfortable emotions associated with what happened. Unfortunately, such avoidance only makes PTSD symptoms worse, given that suppressed emotions tend to grow stronger as they vie to break through to conscious awareness. (Neff, 2011, p. 124)

According to Davidson:

More than 13 million Americans suffer from PTSD, and the numbers may be greater due to underdiagnoses of the condition. An estimated 70 percent of adults in the United States have experienced a traumatic event at least once in their lives, and up to 20 percent of these people will go on to develop PTSD... Often it arises in the immediate aftermath of a trauma, or more rarely, it develops years later, especially when our psychological defenses are strained by current stresses. (2003, pp. 58-59)

If I sit and think about those numbers alone from this one source that could be almost everyone in my town or every other house on my street. This was taken in the year of 2003; it is 2015 now, so I can only imagine the increase since then.

Why do so many people not get better or know how to help this situation? Why are there not more people teaching people that holding things all in is not beneficial?

How do we reinforce? What is reinforcement? Reinforcement is the positively mediated reward following a specific action, behavior, thought, emotion, etc. Continued habit patterns of behavior that produce reinforcement lead to neuronal sensitization and brain plasticity (process and structure), which ensures the habitual behavior will continue over periods of time...Negative reinforcement is the avoidance of learned triggering cues (thinking of PTSD). It keeps bad habits in place (Quintiliani). When we experience traumatic stress, our biological fear response involves multiple systems...Within milliseconds of a traumatic event, the amygdala stimulates the sympathetic nervous system as well as the HPA (hypothalamus-pituitary-adrenal) axis, which originates in the hypothalamus in the brain (Davidson, 2003, p. 68).

The word “compassion” is derived from the Middle English via Anglo-French from the Late Latin *com-pati*, which mean “to suffer or sympathize” (Schoendorff, Silberstein, & Tirch, 2014, p. 8). McKay and Fanning (2000) define compassion as a multicomponent process that includes acceptance, understanding, and forgiveness-a definition that emerges from their work on self-esteem and self-criticism. “Christopher Germer states that ‘compassion is a quality of mind that can transform the experience of pain, even making it worthwhile. Having compassion knowledge is more beneficial than not having the information. Compassion, then, involves the recognition and clear seeing of suffering. It also involves feelings of kindness for people who are suffering, so that the desire to help-to ameliorate suffering-emerges’” (Neff, 2011, p. 10).

So for people with PTSD, they tend not to have less self-compassion towards themselves because of such traumatic events that had happened. The goal for them would be to work towards such love in their hearts. “Self-compassionate people tend to deal

with negative events in their daily lives...Self-compassionate people also experienced less anxiety and self-consciousness when thinking about their problems” (Neff, 2011, p. 123). As read above, people suffering with PTSD go through their lives with this heavy burden of trauma that they are trying to work through, there is change all around us, and some people are not used to such things. All things should happen over time. Buddhist thought: The only way to overcome negative reactions is through the knowledge and use of mind.

The working memory into a story is not by itself enough, for morality demands performance. The storyteller has to accept a certain responsibility for the display of culturally-learned skills-use of voice, variation in speed, pitch, volume, voice quality, intonation and silence. Add to that facial expression, gesture, direction of gaze and all kinds of body language. (Rosen, 1993, p. 143).

When I first started this program I knew that both undergraduate and graduate level students in different programs were available, allowing a full aspect of ages to chime into their life experiences, so that we all would learn from each and every person. But what I never knew was that this Interdisciplinary Program has been around since 1972. And that hundreds of thousands of us students all have a sense of the same goals in life as educators, strengthening not only our own academic careers professionally, but also helping others to understand human connections, stories, and how a simple conversation could and can inspire. All of which was my dedication towards taking the route to developing a thesis towards my final tasks in this program. My main goal in writing in SPN style was to show that more than one writing style should not be frowned

upon in education, especially in higher education. Being introduced to this writing style has truly helped me to really find out who I am and what I can do academically. There are many reasons why I decided to write a thesis, such as the opportunity to tell my story to people willing to listen, or the opportunity to show that one should not have to conform to one way to succeed, or maybe even that I have had so many struggles trying to make something of myself and that I wanted to prove to the ones who said I could not, that I can do something abstract. I mean the reasons are endless.

This writing piece comes not only from my heart, but also in a light that I have been taught, luckily, from in my eyes, the best. My thesis is my perspective of furthering education past the years of high school. This is my view of higher education and how it has flaws like everything else in the world, and the fact that in my opinion a non-traditional student who has had many struggles to achieve graduate work, but the fact that I am here is such a blessing. I tried not to be so negative, and do not think that I called any one person out for such a negative experience, but I definitely let it be known that things that happened should have never happened, and should never happen again to any one person trying to prove that they are someone living in this society trying to better themselves and put a foot in the door for their loved ones. This project that I am completing to graduate explains one person's developing an instrument that was stripped from such a young age, yet voyages a pathway of determination to become a teacher of many things. Such an experience to develop a sense of effective thinking patterns to examine life as a whole, to pursue those underdeveloped questions about an academic career, only to conclude for myself what life is really worth.

I have learned the importance of time and time management. I have learned to ask questions that people do not tend to ask. I have learned that it is okay to be and become vulnerable. Something that was stressed to me was the fact that no two programs look identical and that I should not follow in the footsteps of others, that I have a great opportunity to create my own path. Throughout my time in this program I have created a creative academic checklist: personal goals, personal expectations, motivators, and those things that may come up that trigger me into falling behind or becoming stuck with my progress. During my time in the program I wanted to do endless reading, endless writing, and vast amounts of learning from my advisor, peers, and colleagues. I honestly think that everything changed as soon as I was enrolled in the Learning to Make Meaning course taught by Professor Nash. It really made me look within myself to figure out why I was furthering education and why I was placed here on earth, now in this time. I have loved every Graduate course level class, but since I have been in the Graduate level program, this has really made my meanings towards life that was shielded prior to now. When I look back into my graded school years I was always tested on how fast I read, if I read and wrote correctly, whether or not I could comprehend concepts, if I could retain subjects. In undergraduate college I briefly get a glimpse of opportunities to pursue if you are introduced to the right people, but mostly I was acknowledged for how much information I could securely hold in and spit out when asked to, only better than the next student. I noticed at a very early stage that it was harder than expected and at one-point thought was impossible. With tremendous amount of help from the ACCESS department I was able to follow through with my academic career and was granted accommodations I wish were available during high school.

This program is perfect for any one person. Like any other program in the Master's Program, people as individuals have to work towards a goal and work hard doing so, but I believe in this program that you have to not only make an academic destination to reach but a professional, as well as a personal goal, to achieve greatness. This thesis is to confirm that you made a great choice in developing this kind of program for Graduate students trying to further their education in life. I can say as a very independent person that this experience has really opened me up to more communal experiences allowing me to find out that people can work from and off from each other. Nothing in life has to be done alone; ideas can be piggybacked which can evolve into more. "It is, in fact, nothing short of a miracle that the modern methods of instruction have not yet entirely strangled the holy curiosity of inquiry; for this delicate little plant, aside from stimulation, stands mainly in need of freedom; without this it goes to wrack and ruin without fail. It is a very grave mistake to think that the enjoyment of seeing and searching can be promoted by means of coercion and a sense of duty" (Albert Einstein).

When making a walkway with bricks, you need to first make sure you allow yourself enough time to estimate how long you have to finish this unfinished product. Then you should notice how many bricks you have of whole, half, and quarter sizes to be placed down. The next step is to mix the cement to secure all these bricks. The main part to this experience is the action of actually getting down and dirty to physically place each and every brick into the correct place, ultimately forming a walkway to walk, run, jump, and skip on. This program is exactly this process. I needed to think about all the time I had to complete such a task, an estimation of how long it would really take me to do everything and how long I really wanted to spend doing everything I wanted to

accomplish. I noticed how many courses I needed to take which broke down into how many assignments I would have to finish, which in each course varied dramatically depending on the course itself and the instructor. I mixed my cement by making goals and following through with what I started. I got down and dirty though, my writing has been so raw and helpful to so many aspects in my life. I physically placed each and every brick and in this step of the process in this program I thankfully am about to place down my last bricks so that I can walk, run, jump, and skip. What my plan is to save and take all my savings and start a non-profit community resource for people living with disabilities who are trying to just get through life, a person like me cannot just be limited to one option, I will hopefully expand this program or center to people who are trying to finish high school who need help, or the ones who are trying to follow through with their higher education and move on from such a conformed learning experience. I honestly wish to help all, but since I was one of the many who live disabilities and had selected few opportunities, I feel like the next person should not have to suffer through so much just make something of themselves. I just was told that eight percent of Americans, roughly 320 million people only have Master's degrees.

5.1. Possibility

Dear Possibility,

You are supposed to be endless, random, and something to be reached. An idea that is burrowed within someone so deep that eventually seeps through the pores when the light switch is clicked on. A process that ultimately results in more possibilities. But, personally, I have only seen the indefinite side of you. The side in which you faintly show yourself, and not made yourself known or up for grabs. The questions recently

asked was where exactly am I on my meaning making journey? And to be honest I thought you would be right here by my side, but I am not sure if you are more or less a figment of my imagination or just so suppressed and smothered by everything else which could take me over seventy years like finding the titanic, just to find you.

Marietta McCarty explained in *How Philosophy Can Save Your Life* that, “In a child’s world anything can happen and everything arouses curiosity. The future calls out with its unknown and unlimited voice, summoning children to yet another adventure...Possibilities evaporate, and sagged-shoulder disappointment drains the oomph out of lives standing still” (p. 261).

I have always known, unless you are going through a mid-life crisis, or a retirement bucket list phase, that yes, children take the most risks in life. They do not understand all consequences to their actions until they try out the in-depth series of trials to life’s endeavors, to know just how things work. You hand yourself to them with open arms. What is it exactly that stops us as an adult from making these nonjudgmental decisions as we grow into a society? Why is it that I cannot just be hugged and let go with open arms to be granted with such possibility?

These days in a life of, “What if’s”, “It could truly happen to me”, “I may or may not do this”, just is not in the cards for any sane person wanting a better life for themselves. It has taken some time to realize that if and when I want to change that, I need goals, but not just any goals, concrete goals. The pathways may change in how I get to these intended plans, but they must have to be achieved and I must reach the finish line. That is just how you have justified things for me. I have truly given a lot to the world, love, thought, empathy, etc., not looking for anything in return but one could

become exhausted after so many years. And this is where you come into play. Or was supposed to anyway. You are the one hypothetically who gives me hope, aspiration, desire, and thrust for more, but I believe that willpower may have beat you to the punch.

What I teach, who I teach, and how I teach can make someone's outcome in life possibly astonishing. Giving someone a belief that they can attain the possible or the impossible. Promoting the growth for opportunity, and room for growth, can alter a life completely. William Shakespeare once said that, "We know what we are, but not what we may be." Possibilities should be as easy as breathing in and breathing out. In this society, in America, I have heard this is the "free world", people come from all over the world for the endless opportunities and possibilities, to prosper, and make something more of lives.

If you want a promising future, you must look at the past that molded your present personality. Poke around in this stash of influences and figure yourself out. Retrain your will and associate pleasure with chipping away at troubling antecedents; link displeasure to repetition of the old ways. Every choice contains some measure of risk, some eventual consequence, but 'no one can be a great thinker who does not recognize that as a thinker, it is his first duty to follow his intellect to whatever conclusions it may lead'. (*On Liberty*, p. 271)

If I look at things throughout my world, everything is easier said than done. Looking through a magnifying glass, I need this granted to me, I want this allowed so that I can do this or that, but without possibilities I cannot further my thinking. What I have noticed in my academic career is that I have relied on you each semester in my Graduate

program. My advisor, a great educator, and great friend, has blended learning experiences for me and many others. He conducts his courses establishing human connection from all ages and backgrounds. The classes are focused on our own personal stories and reflection towards ourselves. No one person is more superior than another, and it allows all who attend to leave with multiple sources of comfort and trust. This is exactly what I want to be able to share with all the individuals I teach in the future. I want to help engage one another at their own pace, I want to really show that people learn differently, but support a learning space fit for each learner, and facilitate a chance to prove responsibility skills from all ranges of ages. Something that was not possible when I was first in my academic career that ultimately would have made many things less hectic trying to find my purpose or find my reason why and how I was making meaning to my life.

If I am writing to you now, do you think that you would be able to make an effort to make yourself known? Am I really reaching for the stars just to have a conversation with you let alone be a part of my life? I always thought you could be my divinity, “But the number-one ingredient of a happy life is possessing the liberty to turn possibility into satisfying reality” (p. 265). I am willing to do a lot as long as you are willing to meet me half way. “Courage is what it takes to stand up and speak; courage is also what it takes to sit down and listen” says Winston Churchill. Something has to give, this is just life, it is to be expected.

Daily I reach from within myself to be a better person, to become something greater than I once was, something wiser than I am now, but without you there is an uneventful situation. I have in the past and still sometimes believe to this day that either within one’s self, that change from others like a community, or society, can be made. We

all do not have to see eye to eye on every single aspect of life as a whole, but things can be different in a positive outlook. “We can change who we are, thereby freeing ourselves to choose differently” (p. 270). Now are you to blame for all these people in the world, not being able to actually have endless amounts of possibilities to move forward from the past? Are you the one to blame for making history just repeat itself and not stepping up to home plate and hit a homerun thrown by someone who pitched the best curveball of all time? Are you honestly to blame for anything that has to deal with change? Or is it truly me as an individual to blame for not helping to change my environment even more than I have, which in the end allows lesser possibilities for me to move on?

One thing I can say that I have definitely seen, which I am very much grateful for, is you being a part of some of the people I that I know and hold dear to my heart. Regardless if you have always been in their lives, or come in and out when you choose, or just recently became apparent in these lives, you were present which allowed them to see more out of life. They were able to push through. They were able to make those undiscussed changes they needed to be made making room for you. And to be honest, I thank you for just that. Even if I may not be convinced you are here with me up close and personal, you can at least be here with me through them.

Now remember earlier when I had mentioned to you that children tend to have endless amounts of possibilities handed to them due to the fact that they just do not know any better? Well, my question to you, on my road to finding meaning in my life is, how exactly do I, as an adult, pluck out my inner child? Is it even possible to be an adult, act like an adult, and allow nothing to stop from seeking this inner childlike form that everyone may have?

Acting childish and childlike are two very different concepts. “People who are childlike never quit asking questions about the world around them. They want to know why things are the way they are, how things work, and where things go, and every answered question leads to a million new ones. It’s a purely innocent desire to know the truth, rather than the more adult drive to prove someone else wrong” (katcox). And then there are these “Childlike adults don’t care what other people think — they do what they do without batting an eyelash, whether it’s sing karaoke, wear bright colors, or dance at a wedding. They don’t care how they look; they care that they’re having fun and trying” (katcox). “How do we find our purpose? Are we born with it? Is it written in our genetic code? Or is it something we must learn over time? A growing awareness derived from life’s joys or from our life’s loves, or life’s sufferings and achievements? We all have a unique purpose. And try as we might, we cannot run from it, the only question that we remain with is will we be able to stay true to who we are? Or will we succumb to the pressure of destiny and become something else entirely, something inhuman” (Heroes television series).

Possibility, you confuse me to the fullest extent. I just cannot stress that enough. I cannot get over the fact that you are here, you are available, but you are hidden in so many lives like mine. I walk on a sidewalk everyday to avoid traffic and severe injuries if I walk in the street, but you walk with an invisible cloak like the one Harry Potter owns. I just do not get it. Will you ever take this piece of clothing off? Am I the one who has to rip it off and show your true side? When I was younger I was given the chance to believe in you, only at a price. That price was my childhood. I remember it specifically because I was taking care of my adult side at such a young age. Sometimes I really feel as though

life never really gave me a chance to develop and learn fully, but I do not blame you I just think that you out of everyone and everything should have given me an equal chance to see for myself.

Forever grateful, Leahn

Now

I think I may judge too lightly

I look at myself and I see the world

I see hatred, sorrow, love

But what do I see in myself?

Can I even see past the ten thousand layered walls?

Should any of it come down?

Does anyone deserve the authentic process?

Do I deserve the pleasure? Or is it pain?

Local, stately, nationally

Fuck right under my nose!

Confusion, frustration, swelling

Shouldn't I be able to see diamonds by now?

Whispering in your ear...silence

For centuries people promote voicing opinions

Is this my chance?

This is my chance!

My turn is now,

Why not?

Needing for belonging

Craving for solitude, solidarity,

I want change.

I need a chance for change

This is my chance!

Change!

A leap out of my shell,

My already broken, glued together shell.

This will be my piece by piece

My yolk secured in a guest house.

By Leahn Bass

CHAPTER 5: CHANGING FOR WHO? EDUCATION?

5.1 Life

“The key to change...is to let go of fear” Rosanna Cash. Is this really a free write? I mean tell me the truth; how much in life is really free, or how much can I sincerely write feelingly, or how much can we speak freely? If I do buckle down and start writing parts of my life, will there be heads turning afterwards? Or what about those judgment stares? Does it not matter who I am, because I am a female who just so happens to be African American, I have to be careful about the words that come out of my mouth and now the opportunity to put on paper. I have been officially told that I am very frugal in life, especially when it comes to writing pieces. That I can find any resource possible if need be. That I can observe any situation and make sure my life steers away or follows the footsteps of others. I am my own person, I follow no one, I lived and am still living by my own rules, but it has only been because of the life I have lived. I need to break free, but from what, a life of living? How about a life of empowerment, or a life of overcoming daily trials? As the sisters Erica and Tina Atkins, the gospel duo in Mary Mary sings in their song, *Can't Give Up Now*, “There will be mountains that I will have to climb, and there will be battles that I will have to fight, but victory or defeat, it's up to me to decide, but how can I expect to win, if I never try?” The sisters have been around singing about what has been true to them and close to their hearts, what they believe in for many years.

To me it is the curves to the extreme, there are never any straight lines, nothing straight and narrow. Never just like a ruler so consistent and ordinary or without twists and turns. For many years now I have been thinking about coming to a conclusion of my

life or at least try to conclude parts of my life. What things happen to me, why things happen me? Looking at things in a chronological order, people I have met, situations I have been in, downfalls, uplifts, just EVERYTHING, but as of now, right now I think I do not want to know is it too complicated or will it be too much work and time. To be honest I think it would be just like another employment job. One more thing to add to many things I have going on in my life, let alone my 10 pages of resume. Life is not supposed to be analyzed, it is not supposed to be critiqued. Life is supposed to be lived, to be used to the fullest advantage, like a discounted card at the local grocery store, getting all the percentages, high discounts, and the ins and outs to your purchase. Life is revealing, time for exposure, prisoners striving for survival. My life on the other hand has been an adventure, a roller coaster like the Kingda Ka. A roller coaster that may go straight, up, straight up, down with fear and anticipation, sideways, half to the side, then to the other side, in the tunnel, over the water, legs dangling, hands free, mouth open, teeth clenched, cheeks flapping and flopping in the wind like the family dog. Sticking its head out the window on the cross country trip made once a year to your Aunties' or grandmother's house. Remembering the entire homemade fence guarding the acres of land, where your grandfather tends to. Where he used to sit you on his lap with him driving the lawnmower through the field. Life can be like a frozen sour apple slushy, the start cools you off from a hot, humid, sticky summer day from the beach, and then soon switches to having your tongue and throat ice cold. Like when my tongue was being pierced for the first time, all swollen and achy. But felt like a whole new culture SHOCK in a new country. New languages, racial disparities, poverty, abuse not shown on travel guides, and all the unfamiliar territories. Hesitation pops right into effect and this frozen

slushy slides down past your esophagus and the nerves in your brain SPIKE.

My questions just feel never ending. What is this, what is that, how did this happen, why did that happen? Why would this person ever say this about this, or why would we quote these people? What do they have? What credentials do I actually need for people to listen? How many papers or manuscripts do I need to successfully write to obtain a credential that actually means something? Why do I need labels after my name to prove my intelligence or experience I have had? How can I prove that this is a piece to listen to, to read? Will my passions come through within the lines? Can they see my dedications?

Things in my life lead me to ask questions, but what I asked over and over was were they the right questions. The questions should have been, were these questions I have been asking towards to the right people who could answer them for me. I ended up interviewing someone amazing for such an experience that I needed some sort of clarifying statement about what has happened in my life or at least in one aspect, and I first started with not really a question but more as a statement so it did not feel much like an actual interview or less formal. I asked how she was that day and if she was ready to begin? My whole conversation started with a calm tone, “So I would love to switch things up a bit and be the guest in this experience, and what I mean is I have been studying about allowing people to tell their stories compassionating in what people are willing to share, but in this case can you focus on your experiences in your academic career?” She showed pleasure and relief in her face, took a deep breath and asked me if I was ready, and I smiled. As she invitingly expressed that she only remembers so much but she wants to put emphasis on the “time periods” and her “emotions” towards that

particular story that she will disclose and share.

5.2 Attitude

This amazing woman, who chooses to remain anonymous, starts off with an attitude of confidence and pride, but just looking into her eyes you can tell she had been through some hurt, pain, and suffering. Something that catches my ear, “I was raised to respect my elders, white or black. I was raised to think for myself, regardless the situation, and I was raised to no matter where I was located to always enjoy my learnings through education.... Well, that didn’t always happen going through non segregated schools as a child, being told to sit certain places, read certain things, play with only your kind, and that people didn’t understand why I was there because I would never go anywhere because the color of my skin.” This touched my heart. This hurt my head, and now that I look back at it, I think it was because although I was born many years after this woman, maybe even 30 or 40 years, it still went on when I was growing up. She remembered certain names of teachers who in her eyes disrespected her, embarrassed her, physically hurt her, would never speak to her directly, and would never help her in any way, shape or form. But what was great about knowing all of that information was the simple fact that she told me she “forgave them.” She said if she had not she “never would have moved on to bigger and better things, people, places, and experiences.” This great woman said that she remembered those teachers that “wanted me to learn, wanted me to have a better life than the next, wanted me to have an opportunity like any other white human being in America, wanted me to succeed in live, didn’t care of the color of my skin or the people I was raised by, or the location I grew up, just those people who liked and loved me for me.”

Let me tell you right now I loved this woman's words and personality as soon as she opened her mouth. We luckily were able to relate to many different things, not only because of the color of our skin, because of the gender that we both are, but also because of how resilient and empathetic we are. "I have probably been through way too many things I shouldn't have been through but I do NOT blame it on any one person, I tend to blame it on history, politics, and people who do not like change." I asked why is this, and she explained that, "If it weren't for any of these things then there wouldn't have been hate, racism, discrimination, prejudice, stereotypes, and much more in the world." this is so completely true, I mean if it wasn't for things from history following us until today I believe things would have complete changes. As Peggy McIntosh (1988) says so well in her article "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack", "This is not such a free country; one's life is not what one makes it: many doors open for certain people through no virtues of their own." My interviewee told me a specific story that sticks out to her on a daily basis. She said it was not until college that she had such a fighting chance. Where she never would have known or experienced if she had listened to all of those negatively influencing teachers growing up, that she really had much strength in writing. When in grade and high school her work was never really looked at, just passed or failed, it was never challenged or questioned to allow her to defend her academic arguments or to voice her opinion further than what she had to squeeze into the maximum page limit.

She found that college was the place to be able to at least write things down and not be judged, ridiculed, or passed along. "There was finally one teacher I got along with my senior year and he assigned a paper where he changed the class for, he said that he never had done it before and that he wanted to try new things." She had explained to me

that this was right around the time period when Lillian Pierce Benbow left the sorority, and the only way she had remembered that was because her school had not founded any black sororities yet. I thought to myself, who was Lillian and whether or not she was going to ask me to know her, and sure enough she did. She sat there and explained to me about Delta Sigma Theta, and how it was the first African American sorority at Howard University in Washington, DC, of only 22 women. I later looked into the topic, but I had no clue, and I was not going to sit there on my phone and research them, rude? I think so. So she went on to explain that this teacher of hers allowed them to have open minds, to write anything that they wanted, and the only two rules were that the topic had to be relevant to the writer and that it was due in a couple weeks. My interviewee was stuck, she had so much to talk about and could not figure out how to narrow things down, she thought it might have been a trick or a test, she just did not know, and this is where she consulted and confided in the teacher because she thought she could trust him. She explained that, “He allowed me the freedom I deserved and now is the time to just write anything you wanted to, and he trusted me to dig deep, and that I was the inspiration of the assignment, because I was one of the few African American women in the class, and he wanted to see the other side of the fence and have the others in the class see as well.” She ended up getting a phenomenal grade as well as the opportunity to speak in front of the entire school about her paper and the topic.

I asked her what was her role in her school, and she said until this opportunity to voice her opinion she felt as though she was just another fly on the wall, and that this was the beginning of her public speaking, and advocating for African American women being able to have the fulfilling opportunity to just speak what is on their minds. I asked her

what about school, classes, teachers, etc. that she had the most difficult or challenging experiences throughout her academic experience. My interviewee said that, “Up until college, I thought it was the color of my skin, and then as soon as this one individual stretched his neck out to open my eyes and mind, I thought it was the fact that I didn’t have enough time to voice my newly heard mind. I eventually realized that I have my entire life to be able to speak to others and that’s when I decided to go on further in my education. I ended up getting several degrees, I went for my Ph.D., and I have written many books.” I was utterly impressed for a woman of her time and not having the opportunity or encouragement in the beginning of her life.

I wrapped the hours of interview up with my last question of if you could or would give me any advice about my career choice or my future decisions, what would it be? She said simply this, “DO NOT LET ANY ONE PERSON STAND IN YOUR WAY, because from what I have seen and heard you will make a difference.” I told you, loved her!

You see so many women of color graduate from college, or make a speech somewhere, or write a book, or whatever they may have done to impress the world and themselves. There is always some sort of inspiration, but I think that when it comes directly from that successful person, it just means so much more personally. A discussion in a course outlined students becoming teachers having certain responsibilities to ourselves and our students, but we could never really come up with a specific common denominator, but I think after having this interview, my answer is being able to support my students positively so they may be the ones who could change the world one person at a time. “There is no trust more sacred than the one the world holds with children. There is

no duty more important than ensuring that their rights are respected, that their welfare is protected, that their lives are free from fear and want and that they can grow up in peace” by Kofi Annan. Not only as a teacher but as a mother who loves her child, I know that these children are our future and more futures to come, I have faith that some will change the world for the better and it is my responsibility to allow them to be heard. I honestly had a blast with this interview and know now that I need to prepare myself for things that may come up in my child’s life that happened to me or many others throughout the world and take a stand. My passion in going further and my schooling will allow me to do such things.

5.3 Education

So what is my personal belief on the subject of education you may ask then? Is it as simple as all children having a right to an education or to have opportunities to go on for higher education? Could it be a concept as simple as the quality of education should be emphasized to the fullest and that all children should be getting the teacher’s best at all times? I believe truly in things that have to do with education, the system of education, and the teachers who work in the system, but is that all, or is there a deeper meaning, an unwritten piece in the development of a personal belief to education?

Teachers should be united; they may all have their very own specific opinions and views on the outside world, but the whole reason they became an educator was or should have been to teach. To be able to say that they were the ones who helped teach the students who came in the classroom and went on to the next. I do not believe all teachers will ever be on the exact same page on a very single aspect regarding education, but should we not still have the core values in being able to teach our next generation? Some

educators have lost their way and reasons why they went to school to become a teacher, but I believe over time teachers and educators will see with such dramatic changes in the way we are teaching and the way children are learning, that teachers will see the light at the end of their tunnels again.

Maybe it is our responsibility to provide that specific high quality education, or a sense for a child to belong, or to create a space of safety, crafting a space to believe in one's self. Sir Ken Robinson (2013) says there are "3 principles that human life flourishes: human beings are naturally different and diverse, curiosity (if you can light the spark of curiosity in a child they will learn without any other further assistance, they are natural learners... the engine of achievement) ...human life is inherently creative." Not all children learn and think the same way as others do, or get the knowledge at the same time when given, so it is our responsibility to think outside the box, to think abstractly, so that our children who we teach cannot only grasp the knowledge of being taught, but to also excel in schooling so they get a better view and insight in the real world of education. All children are very much worthy of being taught and learning what is being taught. The disciplines we learn and teach should be structured, stern, definite, but never hostile or abrasive. "Do not force premature closure on the moral conversation. Genuine philosophical discourse rarely speaks in clear and unambiguous messages" (Nash, 1996, p. 89). Things and people are always changing, which means educators will always have to be on their toes with new learners. Something that fits perfectly in what they are doing constantly is supporting newer reforms and adding to the older ones, trying to improve education. There are endless amounts of essential things and decisions that we have to look at, some like the leadership roles that float around within a school, the parental or

even community ties to a school or students or the guidance that the professional teachers give out to all of their students. Those are all lasting and meaningful, but they all change daily, person to person, and also in different environments. What is it that students and teachers really need? In other words, “knowledge” is not something that is “out there” that we need to grasp or obtain; rather, it is something that we ourselves build based on our own background, experiences, prior understandings, and the data before us. This means that each of us will construct our own knowledge in what is inevitably a unique manner, and each of us will, therefore, have idiosyncratically derived understandings of reality (and, hence, we see the need for the recognition of “multiple perspective”) (Reagan, 2005, p. 8).

5.4 SPN

So have you come to any conclusions yet about my form and technique of SPN writing or is this story just a ramble of information that is being stored in my brain allowed to be put on paper? Do I intrigue by human experience; do I draw up any relations with my love of asking questions rather than answers? Can you hear my language? Well I am surviving the daily life of living. It hurts to even let go and say that I am not sure of how much strength my bones, blood, and resilience has left. Some people in life can always be one step forward and then two steps back, but it is the thrill of figuring out how you will succeed in making it past those three steps and moving even further towards the fourth. But I feel like this is a never ending thesaurus. Always having a word or phrase for something else in life. A question that may or may not be answered, being plugged in at the end. Making the page turn and turn, longer and longer. The binding gets the most assistance, the most care. The more attention I give it the stronger it

will become, but what about all the pieces of the pie. All the other pages that are slowly ripping out. First starting inch by inch towards the top or bottom and eventually, if not careful, will fall out completely. Being lost forever. How would one put this thesaurus back together, especially with all the aspect one has to take under account? With tape, glue, or imagination? Should this page really stay out in such a hateful world? What if it was a sign to keep such information out? Maybe it was an accident, or was because you were the one who kept going back to the same spot, trying not to, but always finding yourself on the same page reading the same words, phrases, sentences, paragraph, or page. Allowing yourself to listen to your own words, allowing yourself to go back into the past, bringing up an immaculately stacked brick wall that you personally mixed that cement mortar, with water and sand, while allowing to dry, slowly but surely stacked each and every brick with anger, fierceness, pride, rejoice, no regret, tears and sweat.

What really is the question here? Is it to figure out what SPN writing really is, what the writing style means to me? Is it to finally be able to allow myself to find out who I am, what I am made of, what I am capable of? Is this exercise allowing the left or right side of my brain to excel? And all these questions have no straightforward answers. And now I know it is because I have answered them. I may not have them all written down or all answered, but all in good time. I know they are all within me, I am just in my own process of finding, sorting, and acknowledging them through my writing.

Take a look at yourself in a mirror. Who do you see looking back? Is it the person you want to be? Or is it there someone else you were meant to be? The person you should have been, but felt short of. Is someone telling you you can't? Or you won't? Because you can. Believe that love is out there. Believe

that dreams come true every day. Because they do. Sometimes happiness doesn't come from money or fame or power. Sometimes happiness comes from good friends and family...And from the quiet nobility of leading a good life. Believe that dreams come true every day. Because they do. So take a look in that mirror and remind yourself to be happy. Because you deserve to be. Believe that. (One Tree Hill, Season 6)

5.5 Conclusion

I label myself as “other” in all categories in my life, the minority in a group. Now this does not always stem from having had different ethnicities poured into one body, but 9 times out of 10 that is most people's first reaction. I am talking about in my education career, as a mother, as a friend, lover, and it is not always normal in society. Which then allows my mind construct myself as a minority to society. Not quite sure if I want to “fit in” because I have made it thus far in life with this label, but after reading the book, *Liberating Scholarly Writing: The Power of Personal Narrative*, it is allowing me to think positively for the future. “To make a personal narrative is to look deeply within ourselves for the meaning that just might, when done well, resonate with other lives; maybe even inspire them in some significant ways” (Nash, 2004, p. 22).

Questions that stem from thinking if one's work is valuable or respected, is something I struggle with on a daily basis. I tend to overthink things in a lot of different aspects in life and ask a bunch of open ended questions about the smaller scale of things as well as the larger things about life, but that is only me and who I am. But I believe some true feelings no matter how successful one may be in life, can still be so relevant and current in a person's life. The world does not revolve around everyone. You have to

fight for life. From what I have seen and experienced you have to struggle to survive. After looking at my First and Second Moral Languages, I realized that my Third Moral Language is much more structural, more procedural, and something that has already been in place in writing just in case things went sour professionally. My head hurts most days, I cannot concentrate with all these memorizations involving how the world works, if this were to happen, this has happened and these are the steps that need to be taken. I mean the lists just go on. I do believe my world has slowly crumbled over time, but has it really? If I want this so called life that everyone lives, and I want it to look like the millions in life, then I need to make sure my life looks and feels like millions.

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