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Pink Glasses: A Work In Progress

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Pink Glasses: A Work In Progress



Little Old Me. Circa 1981 Photo by Gayle Maldonado

Dominique M. Maldonado

Senior Capstone

Literary and Film Studies

A Creative Project / Creative Writing Anthology

Professor Qun Wang

Division of Humanities and Communication

Fall 2016

Dedication

To my Mom & Dad, my sisters Desiree & Dana, my brother-in-laws Johnnie & Josh, my nephews Brandon, Taylor, David and to my extended Ohana.

“I would not be here today without your years of love, hugs, encouragement, discipline, humor and strength; especially these last few years as I have worked on earning my Bachelor of Arts degree. Thank you and I love you all very much!” – Dominique M.

Acknowledgments

Thank you to Professor Qun Wang, Professor Debbie Busman, Professor Ernest Stromberg, Professor Kyle Livie, & Professor Darby Campbell (ASL), for being kindhearted, encouraging, amazing teachers and for seeing my potential to learn, makes mistakes and have successes at California State University, Monterey Bay.

Table of Contents

| | |
|--------------------------------------------------|---------|
| SENIOR PROJECT PROPSAL | 4 - 6 |
| CREATING A MEANINGFUL CAPSTONE TITLE | 7 -11 |
| THE DEVIL’S NAME IS MR. MATHEMATICS | 12 - 14 |
| POEM: THE INVISIBLE DEVIL | 15 - 18 |
| POEM: A FEW SOUND BITES | 19 |
| Wait, Your’e How Old ? | 20 -22 |
| POEM: THE GIVER OF WORDS | 23 -24 |
| SHORT FICTION: THE TRAVELING DREAMER | 25 |
| SEARCH FOR IDENTITY IN LITERATURE AND FILM | 26 - 28 |
| MY GOALS | 29 |
| REFLECTIVE ESSAY | 30- 35 |
| FINAL SYNTHESIS ESSAY | 36 - 38 |
| ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY | 39 - 42 |
| RESUME | 43 - 47 |
| ATTACHMENT (DEFINITIONS OF LEARNING DISABILITES) | 48 - 49 |

Senior Project Proposal

1. Name and Area of Concentration

Dominique Maldonado - Concentration in Literary and Film Studies

2. Capstone Title

“Pink Glasses: A Work In Progress” - A Creative Project -

3. Project Description

Out of the three-capstone options that are available – creative project, internship, or essay, the one I have chosen for my senior capstone is the Creative Writing Anthology/ Creative Project Option. As a Human Communication major with a concentration in Literary and Film Studies, I will be using this anthology, to showcase personal written works of poetry, fiction and non-fiction, and present previous read, researched and written essays that compare, contrast or dwell into the examination of previous HCOM assignments (i.e. Puritan to modern point of views and cultural expectations in literature and film mediums).

4. Alignment with Common Theme

The Fall 2016 theme is Search for Identity. “ This Senior Capstone (Seminar) is designed to encourage students to place the study of self and society in cultural, historical, political, and/ or economic contextualization. – This (seminar) will explore and address some of the critical issues in literary and cultural studies such as: how is

human experience represented and/or is (miss) re-presented in literature? ... How do we define our relationship with some of the great literary works? How does that understanding help us find our own identity toward the eventual goal of the achievement of self-actualization?" (Wang. HCOM 475/2: Senior Capstone Handout, pg.1).

5. Expectations

While presenting written pieces that examine literature and film search or acceptance of identity, I will also be presenting first and third person point of view of how as an older female / learning disabled student how my years of studies at California State University of Monterey Bay have made both a positive and negative impact and outcome on me. In addition, please - See “(#3) Project Description” and “(#4) Alignment with Common Theme”.

6. Specific Skills Required

In order to complete my Creative Writing Anthology / Creative Option, I will show that I have learned and followed the California State University of Monterey Bay's Division of Humanities & Communication / eight required Multi - Learning Outcomes / **MLO 1: Critical Communication Skills, MLO 2: Media, Narrative, and Ethnographic Skills, MLO 3: Relational Communication Skills, MLO 4: Philosophical Analysis, MLO 5: Critical Cultural Analysis, MLO 6: Comparative Literary Analysis, MLO 7: Historical Analysis, MLO 8: Creative Writing and Social Action.** Thus, showing that I have the ability to (present) and “(to) establish broad knowledge, communication skills,

creative talents, critical thinking abilities and multicultural awareness”

(<https://csumb.edu/hcom/requirements-and-pathways>), having taken and passed former classes such as HCOM 301: Ways of Knowing, HCOM 323: American Drama and HCOM 348: Race, Colonialism & Film (RTI).

7. Next Steps

My next steps to complete my Creative Option is to work on former pieces of poetry, fiction and non-fiction, create new pieces, edit, self-critique, and organize the written works into a proper binder that follows the outline requirements (i.e. table of content, cover page / image) and in addition, create and present my senior capstone poster at the capstone festival at the end of the Fall semester.

8. Timeline

In order to complete my project to my satisfaction, I will be giving myself a two month (October – November) work period deadline, to use the weekday hours I have (when not in class or doing service learning) to work on 1 or 2 rough draft pieces (i.e. poetry or fiction) and during the weekend to edit, self-critique, and print out a final draft of written work. During the allocated two-month period, I will also be working on preparation and final revisions of the complete presented binder, poster and mini-speech to give at the capstone festival.

Creating A Meaningful Capstone Title

When Professor Wang informed the class that we get to create our own senior capstone portfolio titles, everyone including myself was quite surprised. With the theme of “Search for Identity”, this was the chance to create a meaningful, serious, and hopefully liked title, it became of most importance. This title would determine the outline, flow, and voice of my Creative Writing Anthology. I was very excited and nervous. I wondered for days what would make a good capstone title and could catch the eye of the reader, to think *hmm, this might be interesting.*

Then the first part of my senior capstone hit me while I was on *Facebook*, looking back at childhood photos of my sisters and I. We are all adopted (yay!); my twin sister Dana and I came as “K-Mart Blue Light Special” pair. Prior to being adopted, I spent the first year of life (4 months to a year old) alongside my twin in a wonderful foster family. Where in our first Christmas, one of the toys we each received was a stuffed animal. Dana - a blue elephant and I - a pink kitty that we each still have and cherish to this day.

Fast forward to 1986, I am attending afternoon Kindergarten with my twin sister. Our two teachers took one look at our identical faces and different colored glasses and came up with a quick rhythm to tell us apart, “Dana Blue and Dominique Pink.” Looking back, I find this to be humorous on two occasions in that, **1)** Dana’s name came first even though I am four minutes older, and the rhythm stayed with us all through elementary school and we sometimes still reference it in silly ways in conversations and **2)** our stuffed animals and glasses colors were totally unplanned and lovely coincidences. Thus, I decided the first part of my senior capstone title would be *Pink Glasses* in reference

towards those two mentioned incidents. The second part of my senior capstone title, “A Work In Progress” came to me when I was chatting with my mother about the past three years of myself attending California State University, Monterey Bay.

In the past, the very reality of applying and attending university was unattainable and heartbreaking for me. I am a life long documented Learning disabled Student. *What is that?* According to *Types of Learning Disabilities*, “Learning disabilities are neurologically-based processing problems. These processing problems can interfere with learning basic skills such as reading, writing and/or math. They can also interfere with higher-level skills such as organization, time planning, abstract reasoning, long or short-term memory and attention. It is important to realize that learning disabilities can affect an individual’s life beyond academics and can impact relationships with family, friends and in the workplace” and “Generally speaking, people with learning disabilities are of average or above average intelligence. There often appears to be a gap between the individual’s potential and actual achievement. This is why learning disabilities are referred to as ‘hidden disabilities’: the person looks perfectly ‘normal’ and seems to be a very bright and intelligent person, yet may be unable to demonstrate the skill level expected from someone of a similar age. A learning disability cannot be cured or fixed; it is a lifelong challenge. However, with appropriate support and intervention, people with learning disabilities can achieve success in school, at work, in relationships, and in the community” (<https://ldaamerica.org/types-of-learning-disabilities/>). My learning disabilities are Attention Deficit Disorder, Auditory Processing Disorder, Development Dyslexia, Dyscalculia and Receptive Language Disability (see attachment).

From first to third grade, I was placed in a special pull out reading program and received additional instructions. I was also taught twice a week by a private tutor who was trained at the Chartwell School for dyslexic students. From Kindergarten to 12th grade, I was placed in Special courses for remedial math and science. I didn't even fully learn how to read until the end of third grade and had speech problems that required speech therapy. *How does a person cope being learning disabled?* “I have learned study techniques and methods of studying which have allowed me to succeed in reading and my other classes. I highlight textbooks, write out notes in pen / Word documents / highlight those, read and reread notes / textbooks, enlarge print when needed, rehearse presentation speeches, need to sit in the front row of each class in order to see, hear, ask repeated questions and re-write these and the answers down, use a calculator, have extra test time and sometimes in a quiet room, been allowed to take an exam in a different form or time, ability to contact teachers via class time, email and with documentation from Student Disability Resources and show the papers to each teacher each new semester and have it signed and returned for more documentation, meet with an SDR counselor, early registration, etc.”. Sometimes its hard to verbalize my learning disabilities, how my brain does or does not work and I can truthfully say that over the years, I have experienced friends, relatives and educated people think and voice negative things about me – “you don't *appear* disabled”, “I've heard you speak in class, how are you not processing my lecture,” or the “I think you are just trying to get out of a required class” and the epic one of *try harder*.

When you are learning disabled, facing a certain subject (i.e. math or science), the layers of no understanding combined with mental / emotional responses and grading can

cause extreme damage. I have experienced serious anxiety, depression, panic attacks, crying, and just plain feeling like an ignorant moron because my brain is unable to process what others easily can or may not realize how much they take for granted. Endless times, I have ended up feeling like the two main characters Sam and Rita in the film *I Am Sam* (2001). For example, when mentally challenged Sam and Lawyer Rita have this verbal exchange: “[Sam](#): Yeah, but I tried, I tried hard. / [Rita](#): Try harder! [Sam](#): Yeah, but you don't know, you don't know! / [Rita](#): I don't know WHAT? / [Sam](#): Yeah, you don't know what is like when you try, and you try, and you try, and you try, and you don't ever get there! Because you were born perfect and I was born like this, and you're perfect!” and when Rita the Lawyer has her breakdown, “...It's like every morning I wake up and, I fail. And I look around and everybody seems to be pulling it off, but I-I-I can't! No matter how hard I try. Somehow, I'll never be enough.” Thus, being a life long Learning Disabled Student is *definitely* a “Work In Progress.”

I've had to work harder than I ever imagined, try and try and try some more, fail, cry, attempt to understand my different disabilities over the years, accept and embrace them because while they are huge issues that have helped define my identity, they are not all my identity entitles. *No Sir*. I am so much more than just my learning disability, even in my darkest hours; I am still my parents' daughter, a sister, a goddaughter, twice sister-in-law, a godmother and an aunt to three nephews. Despite certain issues, I received my high school graduation diploma (1999), my Associate of Arts degree (2011), two Early Childhood Education Certificates. I've been employed as a Support Preschool Instructor (2000-2006), a Teacher's Aid, and a Nanny to an amazing special needs baby girl. I like to volunteer in my communities where I've been an Advocate and Certified Sexual

Assault Counselor for the Monterey County Rape Crisis Center (2007 – 2009) and was a former Baby Cuddler in a hospital Neo-natal Intensive Care Unit and this past fall semester, and for my Service Learning requirement I've volunteered at the Boys & Girls Club in Salinas, CA.

I have been told I have a special gift and am encouraging when working with children. So my identity has both positive and negative aspects, and the above written are just a few examples of the ingredients, which make Dominique Maria Maldonado a full person. I am still growing in mental and emotional periods. Why, it was just nine years ago, at the age of twenty-seven that I earned my driver's license!

The Devil's name is Mr. Mathematics

I can easily remember the subject of math becoming a hard learning issue when in elementary school, the concepts of multiplications came up and not *once* did I manage to turn in a fully complete class test. I was very aware and humiliated of not succeeding like my peers. In middle and high school, I was placed in Special Education for math class. In junior college, I only passed one course due to the teacher letting students use notes that he repeated explained and wrote on the board, there were only three exams. However, in the next required course with the same instructor, it involved more mental calculations, less notes, and progressed at much faster pace.

In this class, I tried to keep up, took a lot of notes, and asked questions but my brain just could not process any of it. This caused bad mental / emotional episodes for me, I would wait until a break in the class, place my head in my hands and quietly cry because I felt so completely ignorant at being unable to process basic algebra or understand simple multiplication while all around me students younger than I were either excelling or just shrugging off their lack of homework as “whatever, I’ll just take the course against later”. Each night, after class, I would drive home, burst into hysterical sobbing at feeling so utterly stupid, than I became depressed at the realization of never being able to transfer to university and earn a proper degree. Luckily, my family was always there for me to provide encouragement, compassion and endless hugs. You might be reading this, pause, and think, *wait a second* – how did this CSUMB senior get admitted if she can not pass the basic math requirements?

I was admitted to CSUMB in the fall of 2014 under Special Circumstances due to my learning disabilities, especially in math. I was previously diagnosed with math learning disabilities in elementary school. At the request of CSUMB's Student Disabilities Resources, I was tested by Joan Smith, Ed.D – Speech / Educational Psychologist on June 14, 2013. Concerning my previously, retested and documented learning disability Dyscalculia / Math, Mrs. Smith on June 15, 2013 wrote, "Math was especially stressful for Dominique. She has a distinct fear / aversion / emotional reaction to doing math and appears to experience confusion which is unique based on her good aptitude. She does not dialogue math procedures nor have processing strategies / sequences for performing simple problems. She does not appear to have an understanding of fractional representation. She is concerned about her ability to complete a B.A degree without accommodations regarding math requirements". So, in a nutshell, I was not admitted as a regular transfer student but under different circumstances and understood that at any moment of class failure, my dream of obtaining a bachelor degree would go up in smoke. *Poof! Delete.*

In order to pass the required math courses I previously took two math at CSUMB, "I worked very hard to understand the math concepts, take notes, re-write notes, highlight notes, asked the teacher questions, (went) to ASAP and private tutors and STILL I (failed) math because of the inability to retain or comprehend the mathematics concepts. I (left) each session feeling depressed and on the verge of tears". In the end, I spent my first year at university taking required HCOM courses, documenting my tutoring sessions, first / second point of view narratives, working with the Student Disability Center (before & during time at university), and I was able to petition the university's

dean to ask for a class substitution. That following summer, I took and passed the online science course titled *Intro to Environmental Science*, which worked in place of my required math courses. In conclusion, I am amazed at people who understand math and can do the processes in their “heads.” However, the subject of math is still one of the most difficult and hardest course and concepts I have ever and still encounter.

Poem: *The Invisible Devil*

And who in the hell set thing up like this anyway

My invisible yet visible learning disability of math ... sorry – **dyscalculia** - prevents

Me from passing what you call

Two simple remediation algebra courses where

I sit and take notes of never learned concepts such as

Polynomials x to the power of 2 + 2x – 3

Letters representing numbers

A+ b+ ab + - bb divided by X

?

You - The Powers that Be – The Administrators, Judges, Teachers and Aids

Expect automatic assimilation of the numbers into letters

When I can't even retain pure multiplication or even subtraction in my head.

That I've been *tested, tested, tested* and *re-tested* by specialist sin high academic fields

Where

Even the last one called Smith, officially documented my math ability and comprehension

At

The 3rd or 4th grade level and I quote, “Which the student will never get better or be able to grasp algebraic concepts.”

Smith, who you sent me 2 - who saw the real **Me** and still

You say I must take algebraic math 98 – 99.

And

If **I** fail.

Well.

Sorry.

You - Powers That Be - say.

“Dear student, you had extended time, notes and a calculator for the exams. *Sorry*, that you are trying your best and received all “A”s in the fall and winter semester courses you took (except for math 98, which received a large “F”).

Sorry

“We must disqualify you from our university because you can’t pass two simple math classes”.

Who decides this new rule of no more waivers for the learning disabled, only scientific substitute course allowed?

IF / The DEAN approves / *IF* your transcripts are correct and even those

From 1999 when you graduated high school, after

All the lifetime of the tutoring you endured with mighty pride and attempt

Paid and non-paid sessions with tutors

Me who can recall enduring daily and nightly and yes even in sleep – emotional and mental roller coaster ride of hysterics and depressions “don’t mean “*Boo*” to us”.

Who in the hell set things up like this anyway?

Where behind me sits a gaggle of girls who snicker and loudly laugh

When I attempt to orally answer a mathematical question.

To call **ME** unintelligent

Why should others make faces and sneer when They 2

In remediation math at university level

I have Dyscalculia – what’s their excuse for not listening to the teacher?

(Gossipers)

To recap being plainly told

“We can dismiss and disqualify you from university learning”.

Well.

Fuck you!

Fuck you and the all your regulations and unrealistic **expectations**.

You’ve never struggled all your life while having a thirst for learning.

Well ...

FUCK YOU and the bitch you rode in on!

Poem: *A Few Sound Bites*

After having a bad night terror / dream:

“Describe your monster and we can tie it either to the big tree in the backyard or on
Daddy’s side of the bed.”

Age 3, replying to be asked to clean my room:

“Am 2 tired, Am 2 little, Am 2 lazy.”

Singing in the car along to Bette Midler:

“From a dee-st-eense.”

Visiting the east coast, eating ice cream with Mom and sisters:

“Don’t eat with your spoon upside down!”

Checking the daily mail:

“We got a card from the Carl’s Jr.?”

Dad: “Don’t speak in stereo”.

Mom (my interpretation): “Shit, fire & save matches!”

Dominique (36) about being a university student:

“Of course I work hard in school. Hello, I’m a learning disabled perfectionist.”

Wait, You're How Old?

I was born on April 18, 1980 and hold my Child of the 80's badge with honor and happiness. I graduated elementary school in 1992, middle school (1995) and high school in 1999. However, I didn't obtain my Associate of Arts degree until 2011 and entered California State University, Monterey Bay in 2014. I have been taking course between the age of 34 to 36, the ages where most of my former high school classmates have already been university graduates for years, gotten married, been employed in different jobs and are enjoying their third or fourth child. Thus, I am an older female student around classmates that can be between 18 to mid-twenties.

This was most reflected on while reviewing an assigned reading in my fall 2016 class of *Social Impact of Mass Media and Service Learning* with Professor Kyle Live. The assigned document was entitled, "What a Difference a Century Makes!" for example, "19th – 20th Century Learning vs. 21st Century Learning: Textbook learning from one source, primarily print" vs. "Real-world, real-time learning from multiple sources, mostly visual and electronic," "Pencil / pen and paper or word processing for expression" vs. "Powerful multi-media technology tools for expression" and "Facts and information are "spoon-fed" by teachers to students" vs. "Teachers use discovery, inquiry-based approach." The comparisons of education in two centuries made perfect sense to me and caused a good amount of laughter when I presented it to my mother. Having spent my pre-university days in school prior to the mass usage of the Internet, I can clearly recall, looking up books in the library card catalogue. Stuffing my backpack with heavy and solid textbooks covered in brown paper bag wrapping, praying the pen

ink doesn't bleed through the paper, learning to type on an actual typewriter and now able to enjoy the huge noise decrease on a laptop keyboard, stapling my essays to turn in instead of using iLearn, hoping to catch my teacher between classes and not emailing him or her about a question or absence, taking notes on the chalkboard (not a whiteboard) and rushing to get all the notes off the teacher's overhead machine reflection, passing neatly folded paper notes in class and not glancing down at a text message, if I used a computer paper for an important essay, praying the dotted sidelines didn't turn into a cross paper tear, looking through the actual college catalogue for classes and times, relying on your group's amazing coloring and gluing skills when presenting a topic with a huge cardboard cut-out instead of PowerPoint and Google Doc.

I am the student who still forgets to bring her laptop to class, relying on my pens and notebooks to take down notes or rough drafts of assignments and heads to the library to find topic sources before searching the Internet (although not so much this semester). I am thankful for Word Document since it is much easier to hit the delete key than use *White Out Glue* and the tool – Spelling and Grammar since that is one of my weaknesses. Until recently, I would also buy used textbooks at the school but while at university, I discovered how to use Amazon and Rent Used Textbooks. In some classes, I will reference a source (author, film, musician, or world event) and get strange stares from some of my classmates. For example, a quick recollection of the 1989 Loma Pietà Earthquake when I was nine years old, came with two replies of, “Uh, we had an earthquake today?” and “... yeah, I was born ten years after that event...”

Even in my service learning / volunteering, one afternoon, when hearing the song *Girls Just Want to Have Fun*, a 5th grade girl told me, “Oh I know who that is. My mom

loves her but I don't think she makes any more music because she's like 80 years old now." I told her that I used to have a *Cindy Lauper* tape cassette and she nodded then glanced back at me with a confused expression, "What's a tape cassette?" *A music tape, before music CDs.* "What's a CD ... wait is this before the Internet?" I said it was and before the creation and usage of everyday cell phones.

She replied, "Everybody has a cell phone, what did you use instead?" *If you were in school, you asked to use the main office's phone or if you were out with friends, then you would carry change around and use a phone booth since they were on every corner.* The 5th grader shook her head, "No way, that's insane. That's like living in the Dark Ages! Miss Dominique, how did you survive your childhood?" I replied, grinning, "Oh, you know we just rode around on dinosaurs looking for phone booths." I had to laugh and luckily, she did, too.

So being an older university student does require a sense of humor and the ability to laugh at you and be proud that you completed a proper education prior to the Internet and lived through the "Dark Ages".

Poem: *The Giver of Words*

1, 2, 3 and even 4

1, 2, 3 and even 4

The giver a waits

Surrounded by a silent womb

And out of the darkness

Comes

ONE

RED

EYE

UNBLINKS

1, 2, 3 and even 4

1, 2, 3 and even 4

Electric slapping

The red eye moves

Transforms

Into blue

The silent womb explodes

Respective

Consoling

Birth orders stamped

1, 2, 3 and even 4

1, 2, 3 and even 4

The images split

Splicing

Apart

Screams of withered age

1, 2, 3, and no more

Short Fiction: *The Traveling Dreamer*

If I wrote the way I sleep, my writing would be filled with dreams as large as Buckingham Place from every historical corner, edge of brick and elegant wallpaper.

These items would have blended conversations amongst changing sides of men; women and children in fancy and subdued attire. Old and young dancing while others sipped sharp red champagne under a candlelight chandelier. My sleep taking my imagination further to the Tower of London to learn its silent secrets, hidden trap doors, and ghosts of wronged wives and nephews.

The cold corner brightens with the arrival of a small child sneaking below the upper levels of the Palace to see what Father Christmas brought and being told, “Two a.m. is not the same as two p.m. Go back to your chambers”.

The slumber of writing would bring along the historical tin soldier guards, from one character awaking to another shoving a dark torch against the enemies skins while lovers slip away.

That is if I wrote the way I sleep.

Search for Identity in Literature and Film

In the medium of literature and film, different items can be used as a visual link to the characters sense of identity. These visuals can be seen *A Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mary Rowlandson* (pg. 125 -143), the play *The Piano Lesson* by August Wilson and in the screenplay / film *Smoke Signals* (story and screenplay) by Sherman Alexie. The three items are faith / Bible, a family piano and the element of fire.

A Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mary Rowlandson describes the Puritan woman life of eleven weeks of captivity amongst the indigenous tribe the Wampanoag's in the state of Massachusetts in the 1600's. According to *Puritan Mission*, a Puritan woman's identity was tied closer to her *faith*, "The Puritans as a people were extremely devoted to gaining Christ's salvation and in turn seeking to convert as many souls as possible." When she (Rowlandson) was faced with being the one survivor amongst twelve killed, she would later write, "It is not my tongue, or pen, can express the sorrows of my heart, and bitterness of my spirit that I had at this departure: but God was with me in a wonderful manner, carrying me along, and bearing up my spirit, that it did not quite fail"(pg.130). When she was given a used *Bible* after the death of her six - year old daughter, Rowlandson relied greatly on scripture, "Be still, and know that I am God - Psalm 46.10" (pg.134). In the play *The Piano Lesson* by August Wilson, the character Berniece finds the family *piano* to be a great reminder of the lost of her father, husband and mother's sorrow of losing a husband young in life, the piano is an important visual (engravings of faces) record of lost family member due to slavery and having no other recorded visuals (i.e. drawings or photographs).

Throughout the play, Berniece does not want to give the piano to her brother (paid or free) or have her daughter learn to play it but she does keep it properly clean she and while not wanting to acknowledge the house ghosts, she later does rely on the lost identities that the piano holds to help evict the house spirits and family sorrows by singing to her ancestors.

I want you to help me

I want you to help me

I want you to help me

I want you to help me

I want you to help me

I want you to help

Mama Berniece

I want you to help me

Mama Esther

I want you to help me

Papa Boy Charles

I want you to help me

Mama Ola

I want you to help me

(Quoted in *The Piano Lesson*, Wilson 107).

The element of fire plays an important role in *Smoke Signals*. The story is about two men - Victor Joseph and Thomas Builds -The -Fire, two Coeur d'Alene Indians who

have grown up together on the Coeur d'Alene Reservation in Idaho. They have also been bound together by a tragic event during infancy, an accidental house fire. The event and memory of the house *fire* is an important visual identity for both men. It causes Thomas to become parentless, instead raised by his grandmother and causes him to be considered a miracle baby by the community.

The fire's identity is later also a form of hidden truth, **VICTOR:** "I don't, I don't... I can't... My dad started the fire?" (pg.97) & **VICTOR:** "I wish he would have let you burn in that fire, Thomas! I wish he would have let you burn. He would have been my father, then. He wouldn't have left me. He wouldn't have left me" / **THOMAS:** "He was always leaving, Victor. He would have left you no matter what"(pg. 111). Victor eventually comes to the realization and acceptance that while his father started the fire; he was also running towards the burning house to *save* baby Victor when he accidentally / actually *caught* baby Thomas flying out the window of the burning home (pg. 98). It is with the acceptance of past events, his father's death, cremation and letting the ashes fly across a water damn, that Victor Joseph can truly heal and embrace his once broken identity.

Items such a burning fire, a piano and faith can help represent individual's identity and their link to both historical and cultural identities.

My Goals

The First Goal

To officially earn my Bachelor of Arts degree in Human Communication with a Concentration in Literary and Film Studies from California State University, Monterey Bay and walk in the spring graduation ceremony. I will then become the third member of my immediate family to graduate from CSUMB.

The Second Goal

To obtain a job in either a school or literary setting, to also keep volunteering in the local community with children or babies.

The Third Goal

To write that children's book that my mother keeps encouraging me to do, and someday play the excited and happy wide-eyed tourist in the United Kingdom and in the end to have lived as good and positive life as possible.

Reflective Essay

Aesthetics

The aesthetics that I used in my creative writing anthology were a single visual photographical image of myself as a baby. This single image radiated to me of a time of being purely innocent, happy, serious yet hopeful and in a sense ignorant of the future educational experiences that I would encounter, adapt to a degree and overcome as a good champion. I also enjoy the photography because it was **1)** taken by my mother before a stroller walk and **2)** my twin sister Dana is actually sitting in the front of the “homemade” double stroller and has a huge smile on her face while I am a bit worried but feeling safe and comforted. The voice of my portfolio change from pure happiness, glee to sadness, guilt, extreme anger and resolve to become a more educated and positive individual despite certain set backs. The rhythm of the piece is then jumping from different comedy to dramatic pieces in a theatrical play.

Hopefully, the flow will make sense to the reader and not just to myself in the end. The play is always changing, so is the setting of the written pieces. They go from personal reflection on growing up towards academic documentation, personal rollercoaster of emotions and at one point, therapy sessions of letting that anger and guilt burst and become resolved in the form of a poem *The Invisible Devil* (pg. 14 – 17).

Audience / purpose

The targeted audience or purpose of this portfolio is **1)** a requirement to graduate, **2)** to reflect on how far I have come as a student (K- University), **3)** to educate readers about being a an older female student with learning disabled from (mainly) a first point of

view, 4) to hopefully bring a bit of joy, laughter and 5) sympatric eyes and ears toward students of all ages who face a life with being learning disabled, able to learn and succeed yet in a different format and timeline. By using *Creative Option*, as a writer, I am able to let the reader chose if they want to read a poem, short fiction or non-fiction piece in order to educate and find similarities in their own educational experiences. A person does not need to read the whole anthology if they wish, and perhaps, they find information better in a imagined story or poetic form than just statics or professional academic lingo. Either way, as the writer of this anthology, I found myself not only recalling certain memories and emotions but was able to see how far I have come as a learning disabled student, reviewing the good, the bad, the most depressing periods and the delightful ones. If anything, I will always have this portfolio to remind myself, that I, can and did create a powerful piece of literature and that I am very proud of it.

Process

That is not to say, that this was an easy assignment. It was very far from it. While it took me a few days to come up with a meaningful title, the actual written pieces and completion of the anthology was much longer (two all-nighters in early November). I was lucky to have previously *HCOM* papers that I could use and advance within the capstone theme (*Search for Identity*), for example the poem *The Invisible Devil* (14 -17) came from being a student in Professor Busman's class. She encouraged the class to let their inner thoughts, emotions and memories come to life in (her) *Creative Writing and Social Action* / class.

This included, to my great shock, being allowed to cuss in class / written work (to a degree of course). I did not realize until the complete of *The Invisible Devil*, how much anger and guilt that I still held onto. How scared, ashamed and victimized I still felt despite being able to take a class substitution. Also to my great shock and surprise was how understanding, encouraging, sympathy and kind the teacher and classmates were to my poem. How they never knew what being a Learning Disabled Student really entitled and that I gave a strong voice to my fellow Learning Disabled classmates.

This made me feel proud, shy, comforted and like a catharsis therapy session all rolled into one. To complete this anthology, I was able to use my former papers, edit / re-edit and make three or four final rough drafts before completing this one. Instead of using the daytime before my night class or service learning, I instead found myself, skimming my papers and changing certain assignments for a few weeks before tackling almost the whole final rough draft on two November night / next day. I also repeatedly clicked on “Save As” in Word Document and updated my USB drive, just in case the power went out and I lost all the work. In addition to the technological aspects, I was very lucky and able to talk to my family members for their input, questions, my worries and joys and their endless encouragement via verbalization, cell phone messages / animation and many much needed hugs.

Thematic and social /historical content

According to *A Guide to Disability Rights Law*, “ Individuals with Disabilities Education Act: The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (formerly called P.L. 94-142 or the Education for all Handicapped Children Act of 1975) requires public schools to make available to all eligible children with disabilities a free appropriate

public education in the least restrictive environment appropriate to their individual needs. IDEA requires public school systems to develop appropriate Individualized Education Programs (IEP's) for each child. The specific special education and related services outlined in each IEP reflect the individualized needs of each student. IDEA also mandates that particular procedures be followed in the development of the IEP. Each student's IEP must be developed by a team of knowledgeable persons and must be at least reviewed annually. The team includes the child's teacher; the parents, subject to certain limited exceptions; the child, if determined appropriate; an agency representative who is qualified to provide or supervise the provision of special education; and other individuals at the parents' or agency's discretion. If parents disagree with the proposed IEP, they can request a due process hearing and a review from the State educational agency if applicable in that state. They also can appeal the State agency's decision to State or Federal court” (<https://www.ada.gov/cguide.htm#anchor62335>). I was lucky to be born in 1980 because prior to that year, students with any type of disability (physical or learning) were placed into single classrooms with a variety of different students who faced either having a good teacher who encouraged and advocated for them or these students were thought of as unreachable and fell through the cracks of the educational system. With the IDEA, my education was being placed in a regular classroom and only “pulled out” or visited a certain teacher on certain days in certain time frames, for example Speech Therapist Miss Shirley at Bay View Elementary School) with other students of similar age and disabilities. I am still, presently, a friend with the “kids” in Miss Shirley’s class. I can remember sitting at the little table, looking at pictures with a word under it and attempting to say it correctly or in my Special Education math class in high school,

reviewing the same math concept for weeks before it either stayed within my brain or sailed ship.

It's strange because I can recall my mother and I meeting with teachers to go over my *Individual Learning Plan*, how I would adapt and succeed in school yet I was always more upset that I couldn't take an advance English course than anything. At the time, it felt completely pigeon holed or I thought *Why must I always go through this, I can read, write and verbal with the best of advanced students?* I really don't think I truly understood the historical or enrichment of the IDEA until I was in junior college and university. Then I realized that without the Individual Disabilities Education Act, I would never had been given a better chance at a proper education and especially not without my parents, certain teachers and counselors advocating on my behalf. Perhaps, in the past decades, having a child with a disability was not talked much about in either certain class or cultures.

To me, it was a normal part of my identity. It was like saying *Hi! My name is Dominique Maldonado. I have brown eyes, brown hair, two sisters, I love to dance, am learning disabled, allergic to penicillin and my favorite soda is Coca-Cola.* I think it is also because I grew up with a twin sister who is also learning disabled, have dear relatives and friends who are also learning disabled, physically disabled or have Down Syndrome. I can recently recall telling my family, "I guess I just assumed everyone had something that they had to learn about, adapt, overcome and they are amazing and awesome people so I never realized how different, stigmatized or very learning disabled I am. I can't see it so I do forget a lot of times that *they* (learning disabilities) are there, too!

Artistic Tradition and History

I am afraid to admit that I do not know of any other “older female Learning Disabled Artists,” which is weird because I enjoy reading about people who are different and successful. The closest artist that I can think of or relate to is author T. Hayden. “Torey Hayden is an educational psychologist and special education teacher who, since 1979, has chronicled her struggles in the classroom in a succession of best-selling books” (<https://www.amazon.com/Torey-L.-Hayden/e/B000AQ756G>). Her non-fiction books (*One Child* 1980, *Somebody Else Kicks* 1981) let me peek into the world of a special education classroom, viewed children with different disorders (autism, blindness, learning disabled, abused, etc.) and showed me that I was not totally all-alone in the world. Others faced and are facing similar experiences, I learned how they felt about themselves, how others viewed them (parents, educators, students) and how even though gigantic challenges they, as well as I, had the right to a proper and encouraging educational experience.

Thus, during the struggles, “Dominique in Pink Glasses” developed the strength of perseverance, a heart of empathy, and a voice to advocate for others. She is more than the sum total of her learning disabilities even though they actually helped shape her character.

Final Synthesis Essay

In the class *Human Communication 475*, I have contributed to the “section’s ability to identify and describe major issues” by being an open - minded student who showed up to every Friday at eight am morning class. Ready to engage with Professor Qun Wang and my fellow classmates after previously reading, reviewing written assignments and previous viewing of assigned films (in previous **Human Communication** courses and within my senior capstone course). The “differentiate multiple points of view” that I was able to contribute were / are **1)** as an older CSUMB student, **2)** a female student, **3)** a transfer student, **4)** as a Mexican American student, **5)** as a Learning Disabled Student and **6)** as a former student of Professor Wang HCOM courses. Hence, I was able to contribute towards Professor Wang’s previous lectures, stories, assignments as well as assisting / informing how certain assignments work to other students. I was “able to raise critical questions about (your) section’s shared theme” of *Search for Identity* by sharing short stories of how being an older adult, Learning Disabled and transfer student have affected my personality – *likes, dislikes, sorrows, joys, humorous incidents* – and how no matter dire the circumstances are, that they (students) are achieving their goal and dreams of a higher education and that it is okay to not graduate at the same time as their peers.

That it is *their* success and joy not their peers, parents or siblings. Success can be achieved at different ages and stages in life with the result of creating an intelligent and amazing person. In addition, I would say that I (hopefully) provided encouragement and an “open ear” to hear their thoughts, ideas and so forth. I have also showed the “ability to collaborate with others” by engaging in school and non-school related subjects and

conversations (i.e.. jobs and being a fellow twin), by checking in with classmates via school email and text messaging about assigned due dates or reminders that class has been cancelled the night before so they do not need to awake early (8 am class) and drive to the university (some students came as far as Hollister).

I was able to “work independently” by taking notes in class, speaking before, during and after class with the instructor to inquire about certain topics that I was confused about. I was able to provide my own transportation via my car so I would arrive early to school and not miss a class meeting. I was able to read assignments or review films outside of class in order to prepare myself for the senior capstone project. I was also able to independently use my personal laptop in order to write my rough drafts, edit and critique the materials before sending a final / rough draft to be critique by Professor Wang prior to the final draft, publication and work on the Senior Capstone Poster requirement. My senior capstone “specifically demonstrate ... deepening understanding of ...section’s shared theme” by being a single and complete work of Creative Option / Creative Writing Anthology.

As I previously stated in my Senior Capstone Proposal, within the anthology are poems, a short story, non-fiction, and a short essay on the proposed theme and other related reflection and required details. In addition, I was able to take the theme *Search for Identity* / and by using my senior project “meet the published criteria and standards for assessment” by closely examine the project / creative anthology, took my personal memories and documentation, reviewed, edit, self critique and found a proper and educational way to present the identity of *Dominique Maria Maldonado* to the academic and general public audience.

“ My mission in life is not merely to survive, but to thrive; and to do so with some passion, some compassion, some humor, and some style.”

- Maya Angelou



At Cannery Row with my sisters Desiree, Dana and I.

CIRCA 1986

Annotated Bibliography

Amazon. Com: Torey L. Hayden: Books, Biography, Blog, Audiobooks, Kindle. Web. Retrieved 7 November 2016. <https://www.amazon.com/Torey-L.-Hayden/e/B000AQ756G>

Torey L. Hayden is a professional educator in the field of Special Needs such as elective mutism, autism as well as victims / children of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome and sexual abuse. “Career in education/psychology: Title III special education auxiliary, 1969-72; Title III special education teacher/learning support person, 1973-1974; regular education teacher, 1974; private clinical therapy 1975-1976; special education teacher 1976-1977; special education learning support consultant 1977-1979; private clinical therapy 1977-1979; psychiatric unit research coordinator 1978-1979; university/graduate lecturer 1977-1979; special education teacher; 1979-1980; private clinical therapy 1980-1981; counseling consultant 1982-1989”. She is also the author of non-fiction books titled *One Child* (1980), *Somebody Else’s Kids* (1981), *Murphy’s Boy* (1983), *Sunflower Forest* (1984), *Just Another Kid* (1988), *Ghost Girl* (1991), *Tiger’s Child* (1995), *The Mechanical Cat* (1998), *Beautiful Child* (2002), *The Very Worst Thing* (2003), *Twilight Children* (2005), *Ziji* (2009) and *Innocent Foxes* (2011). The books are based on her previous experiences educating and working with children, teenagers and adults (<http://www.torey-hayden.com/biography.htm>).

Angelou, Maya Quote. Web. Retrieved 11 November 2016.
http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/topics/topic_inspirational.html

I chose Poet Maya Angelou as an artist that I view with respect and honor. I wanted an inspirational quote to help define the essay.

At Cannery Row with my sisters Desiree, Dana and I. Unknown photographer. Photo. Retrieved 11 November 2016

I used this childhood photograph as a visualization of dreams and hope.

Attention Deficit Disorder / Definition of Attention Deficit Disorder by Merriam – Webster. Web. Retrieved 8 November 2016. <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/attention%20deficit%20disorder>

The above website is an online version of the *Merriam – Webster’s Dictionary* and was used in order to find a simple yet educational definition of the term Attention Deficit Disorder.

I Am Sam. Director Jessie Nelson, performances by Sean Penn, Michelle Pfeiffer, and Dakota Fanning, New Line Cinema (United States), 2001. ,
http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0277027/quotes?ref_=tttrv_sa_3

The film *I am Sam* was a popular 2001 move, which told the tale of a mentally challenged single father raising a young daughter who has a normal intelligence. Within the film are incidents of the father and daughter facing the truth that the world can be cruel when viewing and interacting with the disabled yet also joyous at those people and loved ones who can advocate them when the needs arise. In this case, the character of the Dad / Sam faces his parental rights being challenged and possibly being taken away by Children’s Protection Services, a judge and lawyers despite being an excellent, encouraging and loving father to his daughter Lucy.

Maldonado, Dominique. *Narrative Letter*. Retrieved 6 October 2016.

The *Narrative Letter* is a personal document of mine that I referenced for my senior capstone project. It is from the period in my life when I was attempting to transfer to university, applying for special circumstance admission and later through more documentation and official channels, inquiring the school dean to let me have a “class substitution for the university math requirement (s). The letter / document describes myself as a Learning Disabled Student who very much wanted to future her education and attend CSUMB.

Puritan Missions. Web Retrieved on 17 September 2015.
<http://www3.gettysburg.edu/~tshannon/hist106web/site15/GARRETT/overview.htm>

The above mentioned website is an online source that I prior to this course, researched and resourced for another HCOM course on an essay on Puritans and their culture and religious beliefs. It is also a reference towards the autobiography *A Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mary Rowlandson*.

Receptive language disorder – *Better Health Channel*. Web. Retrieved 7 November 2016. <https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/receptive-language-disorder>

The above is an Internet online public resource that I discovered during my research and was able to use in order to clarify learning disabilities and their definitions.

Receptive Language Disorder Speech Therapy – Bilingualistics. Web. Retrieved 7 November 2016. <https://bilingualistics.com/disorder/receptive-language-disorder>

The above is an Internet online public resource that I discovered during my research and was able to use in order to clarify learning disabilities and their definitions.

Rowlandson, Mary. *A Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mary Rowlandson*. The Norton Anthology of American Literature – Shorter Edition – Volume 1 – Beginnings to 1865. New York, London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2003. 125 - 143, 130, 134. Print.

Mrs. Rowlandson was a Puritan woman who lived in the 1600's and was a former indigenous captive. Six years after her release, she verbally told about her experience, which later became a famous bookseller and gave her future popularity within the Puritan community.

Sherman, Alexie. *Smoke Signals*. Hyperion: 1st Edition. 1998. 97, 98, 111. Print.

The author and screenwriter is "a Spokane/Coeur d'Alene Indian" who "was born on October 7, 1966, on the Spokane Indian Reservation in Wellpinit, Washington. He received his BA in American studies from Washington State University in Pullman". He locally and world acclaimed for his many works of poetry, short fiction, novels and "Among his other honors and awards are poetry fellowships from the Washington State Arts Commission and the National Endowment for the Arts and a Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Writers' Award. He has also received the Stranger Genius Award, a Boston Globe-Horn Book Award, a Pushcart Prize, the PEN/Malamud Award, and a citation as "One of 20 Best American Novelists Under the Age of 40" from *Granta* magazine" (<https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poet/sherman-alexie>).

Thomas, Elizabeth and Jolls, Tessa. "What a Difference a Century Makes!" Retrieved 6 October 2016. *LiteraryFor21stCentury.pdf*. (10 of 50) file.

The authors Thomas and Jolls created a multimedia document that examined the inner and personal point of views of how teachers are not only educators butt student / learners as well. The document includes a history and examples of positive literary lessons and outlines for grades Kindergarten to 12th grade.

Types of Learning Disabilities. Web. Retrieved 7 November 2016. <https://ldaamerica.org/types-of-learning-disabilites/>

The above is an Internet online public resource that I discovered during my research and was able to use in order to clarify learning disabilities and their definitions.

Wilson, August. *The Piano Lesson*. New York: A Plume Book. 1990. 107. Print.

Playwright August Wilson was an African American playwright who was born in 1945 and passed away in 2005. “His mother, Daisy Wilson, was of African-American heritage. His father was a German immigrant named Frederick Kittel. As a child, Kittel attended St. Richard's Parochial School. When his parents divorced, he, his mother and his siblings moved from the poor Bedford Avenue area of Pittsburgh to a mostly white suburb in the Oakland section. After facing the relentless bigotry of his classmates at Central Catholic High School, he transferred to Connelly Vocational High School, and later to Gladstone High School. When he was 15 years old, Wilson pursued an independent education at Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, where he would earn his high school diploma” (<http://www.biography.com/people/august-wilson-9533583#early-life>). His play *The Piano Lesson* (1990) is an historical, supernatural and emotionally charged story about an African American family of many generations who are searching / healing from past and buried memories of their ancestral family during and after slavery. It is also a beautiful, truthful and haunting piece of literature.

Attachment of Definition of Learning Disabilities

Attention Deficit Disorder / ADD: “ a syndrome of disordered learning and disruptive behavior that is not caused by any serious underlying physical or mental disorder and that has several subtypes characterized primarily by symptoms of inattentiveness or primarily by symptoms of hyperactivity and impulsive behavior (as speaking out of turn) or by the significant expression of all three —abbreviation *ADD*” (<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/attention%20deficit%20disorder>)

Auditory Processing Disorder: “Also known as Central Auditory Processing Disorder, this is a condition that adversely affects how sound that travels unimpeded through the ear is processed or interpreted by the brain. Individuals with APD do not recognize subtle differences between sounds in words, even when the sounds are loud and clear enough to be heard. They can also find it difficult to tell where sounds are coming from, to make sense of the order of sounds, or to block out competing background noises” (<https://ldaamerica.org/types-of-learning-disabilities/>).

(Developmental) Dyslexia: “A specific learning disability that affects reading and related language-based processing skills. The severity can differ in each individual but can affect reading fluency, decoding, reading comprehension, recall, writing, spelling, and sometimes speech and can exist along with other related disorders. Dyslexia is sometimes referred to as a Language-Based Learning Disability” (<https://ldaamerica.org/types-of-learning-disabilites/>).

Dyscalculia: “A specific learning disability that affects a person’s ability to understand numbers and learn math facts. Individuals with this type of LD may also have poor comprehension of math symbols, may struggle with memorizing and organizing numbers, have difficulty telling time, or have trouble with counting” (<https://ldaamerica.org/types-of-learning-disabilities/>).

Receptive Language Disability: “A receptive language disorder is an impairment in the comprehension of a spoken, written, gestural or/or other symbol system”

(<https://bilinguistics.com/disorder/receptive-language-disorder/>). “A child with receptive language disorder may also have expressive language disorder, which means they have difficulties with using spoken language. Symptoms differ from one child to the next, but can include: frequently grasping for the right word, using the wrong words in speech, making grammatical mistakes, relying on short, simple sentence construction, relying on stock standard phrases, inability to ‘come to the point’ of what they’re trying to say, problems with retelling a story or relaying information, inability to start or hold a conversation” (<https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/receptive-language-disorder>).