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# Medical Cannabis, Depression and Self-Identity: A Journey Home

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# Medical Cannabis, Depression and Self-Identity: A Journey Home



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Berenice Melchor

Senior Capstone

Creative Writing & Social Action

Creative Project

Dr. Qun Wang

Division of Humanities and Communication

Fall 2016

## Acknowledgements

Thanks to Dr. Wang for helping me, even when you told me I didn't need it. To Katerina Koesling for always wanting to help and keeping me on check. To Diana Garcia, for inspiring me to keep writing and reminding me to articulate my thoughts. And most of all to Ryan Pimentel for being my support system for these past 3 years.

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## Proposal

### **1. Name and Area of Concentration**

Berenice Melchor – Concentration in Creative Writing & Social Action

### **2. Capstone Title:**

“Medical Cannabis, Depression and Self-Identity: A Journey Home”

### **3. Project Description:**

I will create an anthology of poems and a short story on the theme of self-identity in combination with medicinal marijuana. My four poems will identify topics of depression, marijuana, and home. While my creative non-fiction short story will tell a story of a young girl introduced to marijuana as a way of healing and finding home. These pieces are meant to evoke empathy for cardholders and bring awareness to the stigma to cannabis users.

### **4. Alignment with Common Theme:**

With new laws passing throughout the globe, the perception of marijuana has shifted to the potential benefits it delivers. Yet there is still a stigma of how cardholders are viewed- confusing them for those who want to abuse the laws. My project presents my process, as well as others, of searching for the self while suffering emotional distress and using medicinal marijuana as a way to heal. I'll show the development of identity expedition of self-identity and how I empowered myself, while in search of a metaphorical home.

### **5. Expectations:**

I expect to reflect on my personal past and the empowerment I have gained in my journey. My five pieces will demonstrate obstacles myself and other cardholders encountered and give honest perspectives. As well as complete each piece in a timely manner for revision and feedback.

**6. Specific Skills Required:**

As an HCOM major with a concentration in Creative Writing & Social Action, I have the ability to make four poems and a short story as part of my capstone project. I previously took three creative writing course under MLO8 (Creative writing & Social Action), HCOM 330: Intro to Creative Writing, HCOM 432: Social Action Writing, HCOM 339S: Creative Writing and Service as well as HCOM 332 Poetry Writing Workshop, which I'm currently enrolled in. I also took multiple MLO 6 courses as part of my research and theory intensive requirement, and an MLO 2 course for ethnographic writing. I must have the ability to conduct my own research as well as use my creative writing skills to interpret my overall message on medical marijuana.

**7. Next Steps:**

I will begin developing and editing my creative pieces. I will review any past assignments and personal journal entries to incorporate into my project. I plan to have my pieces revised several times by peers and HCOM faculty as well as organize the order of my pieces.

**8. Timeline:**

To avoid procrastination, I will keep a planner of personal deadlines to have pieces completed. I will develop “A Way Out” and keep revising multiple times, until I feel satisfied with my character. Use peer and professor feedback.

Create some poems from HCOM 332: Poetry writing workshop as a way to receive peer and professor feedback. Revise these poems for Capstone project correlating to theme of identity.

Create poems based on home, depression, marijuana, and identity. Try combining some topics together.

## Abandoned Tree

I climbed the oak tree,  
as I followed my older brothers.

I faced my fear of heights  
my goal: slide back down the rope.

To remedy the burns  
on our palms, my brothers  
recommended toothpaste, burning the reddened crevasses.

My brother's face:  
darkened by the grainy mud on his cheek,  
smiled as it slimes into his teeth.

My siblings, inseparable  
by fun activities around the ranch, could be remembered  
from pictures, preserved.

Instead of staying glued together,  
the mutual enemy and empty Budweiser cans, pulled us apart.

The childhood swing,  
the tree, abandoned by  
constant machista demands.

Our home:  
walls of one-layer plywood,  
chipped corners letting a night's breeze in can no longer provide happiness.

Our hill to parade and  
escape from society became the dreadful marathon to catastrophe.

The house I called home,  
can no longer serve me as a sanctuary.

Guilt overwhelmed me,  
seeing my family struggle, as I left for a better roof.

I left my oak tree,  
not knowing if I could reminiscence.

As I stay here searching,  
I see that one day I can find my own tree,  
to make my own memories.



## My Blade

I grab the blade. I dig in. the cut goes deep. I go over it again. I'm lost. I need to feel. I go again. I slash my arms. Stop when the blood drips. I wake up to grab the longest sleeves. I hide the real pain. I roll them up. No one asks. No one cares. This is why.

*People stare, wondering why she is unstable.*

Nobody cares. I dig in deeper. There is no escape. It's a competition to beat the day before. There's blood everywhere, scars everywhere. Look at this.

The scars over my body. I did this. I did this to myself.

Because no one bothered to ask what's wrong with me. No one bothered asking me if I was okay. No, you can't force me to talk to you, not in this office with your smelly unopened book, not outside, where everyone can see my cry. I did this. I did this to myself. I shouldn't have done it in the first place. I should have thrown away every blade I own to stop this habit. But I did this because I have no other option.

No, I won't kill myself! Stop asking me what happened to my arms.

My cat scratched me. I did this to myself. What do you want me to say? Do you want me to get on my knees and beg you not to call my mom? I did this to myself. Don't tell me what to do. I don't need your help. I want to leave. Stop holding me prisoner in this room.

I grab the blade. I dig in. I let it go deep. I go over again. I'm lost in this world.

## A Way Out

Rose locked herself in the room, dug into her drawer as she grabbed her journal. She quickly snatched her new blade, held it at an angle and slowly dragged it across her arm, not caring about the size of each cut, only that it was deep enough to feel. Rose's rage clouded her rationale on the consequences of each slash. She didn't realize that at the end, blood coated her arm from several deep gashes. Blood trickled out, like maple syrup oozing out of a bottle, all through her forearm. She ran to the corner of her bed and grabbed her black bandana to wrap her arm and give her the comfort of a tight squeeze. She wept her sorrows; she knew there's no way out, but to keep feeling pain. She grabbed her notebook:

*Why do I feel so lost? Can't anybody see that I'm hurting? I just feel so empty. I want to be alone, yet I want someone to care for me. Nobody here understands what I'm feeling. Nobody understands why I'm crying myself to sleep at night, when I can't figure it out myself. I want to leave. I'm not happy. I haven't been happy since I started seeing him come through the front door, demanding all chores done his way. I can't be happy in a home where I don't feel welcomed or comfortable. Nobody bothers asking me what I want. It's as if I'm invisible in this family. How can I tell them that I long for a family to help me out of this hole? How can I muster the guts to end the pain of loneliness?*

As she ended her entry, she reassured herself to taint the page with the accomplishments of her blade, as if every time was a competition to beat the previous. She laid in bed wishing she could be anywhere but home. She gripped her sweater and headed to the living room to check on her younger sister. She stayed silently played her Nintendo DS attempting to beat her friends online in a duel of Pokémon. Rose heard her father shouting at his favorite soccer players chasing the ball across the field to score the winning goal. Rose flinched as she heard his voice rising. Usually it

indicated Rose to head to bed before he went on a rant of nonsense. Her mother worked all day, which left Rose in charge of making everyone dinner. Her mother always took any opportunity to work- with three children in school and paying off the monthly bills, she never took a break. Rose wanted more for her mother than a strenuous job that slowly killed her back. If only she was capable of having a better job as a middle class citizen than a house cleaner. As she walked through the hallway back to her room, she heard his door open. Rose ran to her room and quickly closed the door, grabbed her headphones and blasted her music until slumber approached.

The next morning, Rose prepared for another day of school; she grabbed her warmest long sleeve shirt. Rose headed to the kitchen and snatched her breakfast, her favorite- a concha and a cup of coffee. She gave her mother a kiss on the cheek and scurried out the door. The worst part, having to readjust her shirt from snagging on her torn skin. Rose knew better than to show up to class with a short sleeve, exposing herself to her peers and teachers.

During school, Rose would stay with her closest friend, Aimee. Aimee knew why Rose was wearing a long sleeve again, she knew better than to ask. Aimee cared about her, but there wasn't much in her control. If Rose wanted to talk, Aimee would become attentive. Rose left class late at night, slowly walking to her car. She dreaded the drive back home. As she walked towards her car, a cold gust of wind crawled up her back, tugging her skin. She took a deep breath in, smelling the wet pavement and heard leaves sweeping through the parking lot. Ironically, each cold breath into her warm body gave her a sense of comfort, like if she stood in the icy weather for hours.

Instead of driving home, she went to Aimee's apartment to study- it was Rose's excuse to be out longer. As they watched TV late at night, one of Aimee's friends went over. Aimee mentioned someone wanting to drop off something. She didn't say much and Rose didn't think much of it. A knock on the door startled them in the middle of their studying. A tall man with several tattoos

across his arms blocked the doorway. Aimee led him to the kitchen where he brought his backpack onto the counter. Papers rustled as he searched into his backpack for two mason jars. Blue was the “local pharmacist” who had access to an assortment of medications. Rose didn’t know Aimee received her supply from Blue. The mason jars glowed with fuzzy bright green bushes with. The moment he opened the mason jar, a pungent aroma of skunk yet sweetness engulfed the room. Blue exchanged his bag of weed for \$10, then left. As Aimee made her purchase, Rose grew worried; if below his baggy jeans or his sweater contained more than just weed. Blue wasn’t sure what she was supposed to do or ask. Under that circumstance, Rose grew curious what Aimee’s intentions were.

“Want to try?” Aimee asked as her eyes widened up with excitement. She reached under her bed for a shoebox containing a glass pipe, a lighter and eye drops covered in socks and zip lock bags.

“Um, I’m not sure. You know I’m afraid of that. Like what if I get sick!”

“We won’t know unless we try. Especially since no one is here to trip us out.”

Rose was anxious, she wanted to try, but wasn’t sure what to expect. She was tense about how she would react to it.

“If anything happens, it’s your fault! Like what if I wander off out of your house, or what if we ...”

“Nah, none of that BS, we are going to give this a try and see if we like it. Plus, you need to chill. If you don’t like it, then we won’t do it again!” Aimee stuffed her pipe with a thumb full onto the pipe. Slowly lit her lighter sparking the weed. Smoke filled the inside of the small pipe. The gold and green swirls of the pipe illuminated with the heat of the smoke and her hand. Aimee held her breath for second before exhaling leading her to cough.

Rose grew tempted by her peers' stories of a deep relaxation, having the munchies, and most of all forgetting about the real problems. She wasn't sure if it was something she would like. Reluctantly, she nodded and let Aimee teach her how to take the first breath. They meet eyes for a quick second- a mutual trust. As she let the smoke fill her lungs, she exhaled a cloud of sweet scents. She coughed as the smoke itched and burned her throat. They gazed into each other's eyes and nodded, affirming each other they were present. They couldn't stop laughing, realizing what they had done and knew they were in for a ride.

An hour in and Rose felt her eyes feeling heavy. A great sense of relief, started from her lower back up to the crown of her head. She glanced at Aimee- who nodded with a grin. They both felt it, but Rose stayed quiet- looking outside the window into the sky, pondering deeply to what she was feeling, hoping she would remember her feeling for her journal writing.

*It was odd. I've never felt like this before. I was in a completely different realm looking at myself from above, seeing myself looking outside the window. I felt every breath I took and my body felt warm all over. I don't remember when I was the last time I felt content to be here and now- thinking that I could easily touch the stars. Or how me touching the cold windowsill made me feel like I was outside, as well as inside. Nobody can ruin that moment of bliss, not even him. I cannot explain it better than me being part of a movie- being in slow motion, as if I were an astronaut in zero gravity. I just couldn't stop laughing at how content I was at blankness. How me looking at the rain hit the window was simply a part of life. The best part was I knew I was safe next to Aimee. I can't ask for a better friend who understands me and wants to see me smile.*

Rose's facial expression said it all: blank stares and high. Aimee saw the aura laminating around her. Even if they weren't facing each other, Aime quickly learned there was no harm.

Early in the morning, Rose awakened from her deep slumber. She was a little disoriented, thinking of the night before. She was in disbelief, “Did I do something wrong?” she thought. However, it made her feel as if there was nothing to be anxious about, not her depression or fear of her parents’ absence. She never quite understood how her depression started, but she noticed it more as she saw her family distancing themselves from each other. It might have been when her father’s job in the factory took budget cuts and laid him off. He grew frustrated that he couldn’t make enough on his own- hence why her mother started working. Although he did find a new job in construction, he never enjoyed it like his old job. Everyone saw him dismayed as he lost control over finances. The stress consumed him, he became verbally abusive, never accepted blame but to put it on others. Rose took the brunt of his outburst, causing her to wonder if she was the real problem here. It was completely new to see her mother working, since she has always been a stay at home mom.

She stopped seeing her cousins as they became older and moved further away. She was used to seeing everyone together for family parties- her family threw the biggest parties. Rose didn’t know who to talk to when her parents worked all the time and her cousins were busy with their own families.

Rose saw her brothers and sister as roommates that minded their own business. It was better to stay out of their way than listening to them having fun without her. The part she hated the most was the drive home. She took the long way home, because the longer she took the less time she spent lonely.

By the time rose arrived to her bedroom, she was exhausted from a long night. There was homework to finish, but she needed time to grasp what really happened. Her body felt it, the need to lay down and close her eyes, even though she wasn’t sleepy.

*I found something. But it's not forever, I know it won't rid of this mood. I accept that I'd never be truly happy. The one time I found it, it lasted a couple of hours. Why can't I possess this for longer? For once, I didn't have to rely on a blade to satisfy my guilt. I can't live knowing that my habits will keep damaging me. Why do I keep going to the same routine of locking myself, when no one is really hurting me.*

Months passed and Rose saw herself going to her backyard to smoke almost every week. She managed to keep the smell from her family by letting the smoke follow the wind and keeping her weed in tight mason jars. After a while, it became her selfish moment. Instead of waiting for her parents to ask one day, Rose decided to ask her doctors for a recommendation letter.

*I realized that it's down to me. Of course, I can't think my way out of depression, but I can learn to handle it better and notice it less. Over time, I have to alter my attitude and how I view the world*

Rose's habits of harming herself became less persistent,

*Depression still plagues me- it is still there in my head, but I find ways to render it quieter. The more I smoke, the less I care about whom I surrounded myself with. I learned to be selfish of my own needs. Even if it's for a moment, I see that I can find pleasure. I realize my happiness is my responsibility, and I can't sit here waiting for a transformation of my thinking. I found weed as my source of happiness, as it relieves the pain of my past. Aimee didn't see me as a curse, but more like a person, she brought in the optimism I needed. I need to surround myself with wonderful and hopeful people- keeping my mind occupied. No matter how terribly lonely I feel, I can't remove the fact that I am not alone, and I do have a family and more than others have. I might not have the best of homes, but I learned that I*

*needed to generate those changes I need. I found myself finding home more when I was alone, rather than at my parents' house. Most of all, in order to find a home, I needed to create a home within myself.*

*Even when the scars taunt me of my past, they taught me this is the real me-- the one with a lonely past. My scars remind me every day of the pain I endured- to find the beauty in my keloid scars, but also my progress, even when it's a slow one. My depression can't stop that. Eventually, it became less work to find existence beautiful. I see beauty everywhere. I still do. So thank you Mary Jane for opening my eyes.*



## Let Me Take a Hit

Let me take a hit, as I see people walking around me. They look at me as if I am a fiend. Let me take a hit as I notice my eyes dropping lower. My eyes stop caring for what they see to what I want to see- making alterations to this world I see. I notice euphoric blues and greens in the sky, whirling through the clouds as the Blue Jays fly. If only I found you sooner my sweet God's Gift. You saved me from the loneliness in my brain and the pain in my soul. You saved me from the darkness eating me. You saved me from the blade engraved with my name. No longer will I need the sharp edge when I have your soothing embrace. So let me take a hit, as I get in touch with the actual feeling of joy and sadness- to feel more like a human again. No one can tell me I am worth less than a penny nor will their words determine who I am. Let my chronic back and stomach discomfort diminish to a blessing of inner peace. My back heats up as if I poured menthol all over. My aches became tolerable, helping me focus more on what's around me. The bigger the hit, the less anxiety I feel, the more I reveal the real person behind the facade. Let me take a hit of Blue Dream, as it soothes my mind, calmly noticing, my breath slow. So let me take another hit, to help me reach the cloud, noticing the reality. Mary jane thank you for giving me the confidence to be in public again. For letting me stop giving fucks about what others think of me. Without you I would have never left my shell, I stopped living in fear of people's words, so let me take this last hit.



By: Clipart Kid

## Finally

It happened!

10 years in the making

now I can love the benefits

Of the green herb.

For so long we feared

the red and blue lights behind us

afraid of the ruthless conviction of a felony

where lives were easily ruined.

Bernard Noble: serving thirteen years for two harmless joints-

as his wife is left on her own to care for an autistic child?

How can we justify the senseless CPS home visits,

separating defenseless families in search for senseless harm?

How can we rationalize the decade long “War on Drugs”

as an excuse to blame minorities for the crime?

Let’s join Allen Ginsberg “Weed is fun” and “Pot is a reality kick” rallies

because there is so much more than just chemicals.

This is more than rebellion against our overprotective institution-

it’s protesting our need for alternative medicine.

It’s about reducing the overdoses

on prescribed opiates for every ache .

How can we deny a non-addictive pain reliever

to incurable diseases causing agony and anguish?

We can no longer stay in the closet waiting for the day  
where we can smoke in peace.

We should enjoy it without apprehension  
of systemic shackles around our wrists!

Do they not see that we are full of life,  
that without the herb we couldn't find the beauty of the world?

Do they not see there is more than just a high,  
that it helps those who need it more- to feel human again?

So join me in the circle of appreciation,  
as we celebrate together.

Pass the sacred herb  
and enjoy the peace!

## Reflective Essay

### *Aesthetics*

My artistic design came from my desire to test my boundaries of comfortability. My journey through CSUMB was about trying new things and pushing myself to speak up. The overall tone of my pieces are mostly serious and heart-felt- it's not for the lighthearted. Yet I tried to keep it comedic to lighten up the mood. The combination of topics; depression, marijuana, and home- all with the connection of searching for identity, are put in order to where the last pieces lead to my revelation of identity and "outing" myself. The order of my pieces was to present development of my character Rose, leading to a revelation of how she truly feels. In Rose's story, her journal entries allow the reader to understand the internal dilemmas and create an intimacy with her thoughts.

For the poem "Let Me Take a Hit", I chose to provide an image of the green cross, a commonly used symbol for the marijuana community. The cross is seen across many dispensaries to symbolize what kind of pharmacy they are. I also wanted to play with different strains' names for this poem. From commonly known Blue Dream, to God's Gift and Blue Jays they each provide different effects to the body and mind. I won't explain how each one interacts with a body, but each played a role to how this poem is written.

### *Audience/Purpose*

The purpose of this project comes from a need to break a silence of marijuana use. Although laws of recreational marijuana have recently passed, there is still a lot of stigma coming from the consumption of marijuana. I found myself closeted with my medical marijuana card- I didn't want other to perceive me as a "low-life" with no motivation. I grew tired of

hearing people assume marijuana was a gateway drug and how motivation levels could decrease. My goal was to not only share my stories of needing my card, but also allow others to join me in an open and welcoming dialogue. Years of research have proven the benefits of THC and CBD, both having different chemical properties for different uses. As my journey started with my medical card, I didn't understand much of the effects of each strands had on my body, so I let my beginner's experimentation lead me to much appreciation for the drug.

Not only was I able to admire the effects, but advocate for the wonders it gives. I understand there is much research needed for benefits and side effects of smoking, but I want people to understand it through doctors' recommendation and "experimentation" that will help us understand this drug more. This is not to confuse marijuana use with addiction, but as an assistance to emotional and physical distress. I in no way condoning daily smoking as an escape to reality, but to medicate with moderation, when needed.

My intention is show others of the benefits of medicinal marijuana, with a twist of humor. Though some of my pieces – "Blade", "A Way Out" and "Let Me Take a Hit" I attempted imagery that would evoke and replay the same feelings of hopelessness and yet inner-peace. "Blade" on the other side is meant to represent a mental breakdown, leading to "A Way Out"- an initiative to change and improve. I also found this piece reflective of how I have developed my skills as an artist thought my semesters as a Human Communications majors. I found each pieces as my way of growing my learning to articulate my thoughts and feelings more thoroughly on paper.

## *Process*

Throughout my process, I kept in mind how much I was willing to share about myself. Although I have created portfolios before for previous courses, I have never made one based on a set theme. In correlation to the theme of Self-Identity, I reflected on how I got to where I am now with connection to marijuana, home and my depression. I knew it would be a lot to tie in together but I knew that all three had helped me gain conscious of who I am now. At the same time, I wanted outside sources to help me understand how marijuana can help with identity, without stating smoking can lead to addiction. Which is why I chose to do my project on this topic, because I know there is reason why marijuana is becoming more acceptable.

I have previously written “A Way Out” for a different assignment. I wasn’t fully satisfied with my writing skills when I first submitted it, so I took the opportunity to develop my story and my character with a new theme. Multiple revisions followed throughout my writing process, and I was glad I had the assistance from my peers and professors. Most of my revisions involved verb tenses and finding better words to convey feelings.

Another difficulty was giving Rose the proper character development leading to her use. I held back from giving Rose my story, trying to avoid very personal characteristics of mine, but I reminded myself that a Rose’s story doesn’t have to reflect my experiences. I had to learn how to give in to my ideas of the ideal Rose and making her perfect for my story.

I also used my current class assignments to help develop my project. My HCOM 332-Poetry Writing Workshop helped me generate ideas with the intention to use them for my project. My poems “Abandoned Tree”, “Let Me Take a Hit”, and “Finally” were submitted for my HCOM 332 course assignments and used the given feedback to improve on it for my capstone project.

I grew proud of my ability to remove my barriers and thoughts on marijuana. Not many people knew of my uses for having a card- to help with my anxiety and depression. It may not be as severe as other people's reasons for using marijuana, but I wanted to show how a harmless herb could make such difference on a person.

### *Thematic and Social/ Historical Context*

With the theme of self-identity, I found myself waiting for news on Proposition 64 election results. After years of waiting for recreational laws to pass, since Proposition 215 passed in 1996, I found my peers optimistically awaiting for the results as well. Many of my peers know of the benefits of marijuana, even when politicians and the DEA categorize it as a Schedule I drug. Researchers have had to stop abruptly in the middle of their study due to a loss of funding on such a controversial subject.

When Proposition 215 – or “Compassionate Use Act of 1996” passed, it gave Californians an optimistic outlook of forthcoming laws to legalize marijuana recreational. Section I of the Compassionate Use Act of 1996 states:

To ensure that seriously ill Californians have the right to obtain and use marijuana for medical purposes where that medical use is deemed appropriate and has been recommended by a physician who has determined that the person's health would benefit from the use of marijuana in the treatment of cancer, anorexia, AIDS, chronic pain, spasticity, glaucoma, arthritis, migraine, or any other illness for which marijuana provides relief ([cdph.ca.gov](http://cdph.ca.gov)).

What I found thought my years of experimenting with medical marijuana; I heard stories of people asking me to validate my reason for having my medical card. I’ve even had doctor

write a comment of my dependence to marijuana and to terminate my use. Never did he ask my reason for my card, nor the frequency of my use, but his medical background allowed him to tell me to stop. It's doctors like him that discourage patients from being honest with their doctors. After consulting with a present nurse, I was encouraged to speak with the manager of the clinic and have them talk to him about his tone and professionalism.

Part of why I grew excited when Proposition 64 passed, is because these conversations of doctors questioning me don't need to happen, because it will become a norm for people to smoke, whether recreationally or medicinally. I've had encounters of friends believing I was abusing my card rights- apparently, I had no reason to have a medicinal marijuana card if it wasn't serious, thinking I had it for my own desire to consume drugs. I've had to validate my reason many times, making people understand why people need it, rather than want it.

On the theme of identity but not my project, there is a rise in people creating religions based on smoking, Cantheism or in combination with existing religions. These religions allow its followers to smoke cannabis under the 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment, but this doesn't come easily recognized by the DEA. In the topic of self-identity, cannabis allows people to feel closer to their God and appreciate the herb that brought them together.

Through years of experimenting with marijuana, I thought of what more could marijuana do than to provide a high. I learned of doctors separating out the THC and CBD chemical compounds to provide different effects- labeled as sativas or indicas. Both serve different purposed and yet each strand of weed had different purposed from pain relief, inducing creativity, or stimulate and appetite. Marijuana helped me understand my body more. As I write this project, I appreciate the benefits that have allowed me to realize what capacities I have as a being and a writer.



Despite Proposition 64 legalizing recreational marijuana, it feels unjust of the federal government to continue classifying LSD, heroin and cannabis in the same category. What categorizes a drug as schedule I:

- The drug or other substance has a high potential for abuse.
- The drug or other substance has no currently accepted medical treatment use in the U.S.
- There is a lack of accepted safety for use of the drug or substance under medical supervision (Drugs.com)

President Obama expressed his opinion to treat marijuana like alcohol. Another reason why there is an increase in users, is because of the rise of opiate addictions and overdoses from doctors overprescribing them for short-term pains. From teen athletes to veterans, the amount of prescriptions allowed people to access the drug easily, yet patients have to deal with withdrawals or addictions, instead of alternatives. I obviously support medicinal cannabis, to assist them as an alternative to highly addictive drugs and a way to ease the addiction.

In order to normalize marijuana, there is a need for more supporters to out themselves and join the community. I'm not expecting people to roll a joint and create a "That's 70's Show" circle, but to advocate and vote for new laws that benefit those who really need it.

### *Artistic Tradition and History*

For my prose poem "Blade" and "Let Me Take a Hit" I grew inspired by Tarfia Faizullah's "100 Bells". In response to readers' questions of whether the poem was about her, Faizullah responded she was against explaining her poem. "Blade" is meant to be without an

explanation of whether this is about me or not. My poem doesn't need to explain my story but rather present the reality of some.

My artistic tradition emerges from "Leaving a Trace: The Art of Transforming a Life into Stories" by Alexandra Johnson. Her book taught me about being observational of my previous journal entries to include in my short story. She provides multiple writing prompts on how to start a journal and what to write about in several types of journals. One being "Select a single journal entry or think back to a specific incident that, although you probably weren't aware of it at the time, shaped how you now view your life" (Unreachable). This prompt initiated my writing process of what qualities I have already to incorporate into my Capstone project. I reflected on my previous entries and thought when I realized a change in tone, compared to others. The entry I saw a change and a dire need of attention was from April of 2015, where I stated my goal was to maintain my happiness. After years of being displeased with the choices I made, leaving home was one of the decisions I made to help me find my identity. I am proud to admit being a pot smoker and I advocate for its medicinal purposes, based on my experiences.

## Final Synthesis Essay

Human Communication 475 has helped me gain knowledge of myself and acknowledge how much I've learned through my HCOM experience. Since my topic had to be about "self and society in cultural, historical, political, and/or economic contextualization", I chose to write about the topic of marijuana scared me, since I wasn't sure if people would be against it. I was afraid people would give me gnarling looks for my decision, but with the help of Dr. Wang, I accepted the fact that this was I- I wasn't doing anything illegal nor was I jeopardizing anyone in the process.

My idea to include my cannabis medication came from me recently receiving my medical marijuana card. Throughout the whole process of signing up for one, I was afraid of government officials targeting me or being a fraud. Once I received my card, I became joyed with how many options I could choose to relieve pain. I now have the right to consume with less fear.

Human Communication has helped me realized I don't have to be afraid of showing who I am. I don't have to be afraid of writing who I am. Thought my process, I have made friendships with people who accidently saw my poems. They realized who I was and grew comfortable speaking about the subject. My friends started speaking more openly about their use since they had someone else to join them, without a judgmental stance.

My HCOM experience kept me open minded about my own stance and give voice to those who are still afraid to "out" themselves, even if people opposed my opinions on the benefits. As a Creative Writing Concentration, I learned different ways to articulate my thought and feelings- bringing attention to the reasons why people use medicinal cannabis. I might not provide perspective from people opposing it, but I do mention the negative comments have made towards users.

However, this project allowed me to work with peers and understand their points of view. After talking to an adult on the topic, I understood her stance of smoking cannabis. Her perspective allowed me to recognize adults' stance and their open-mindedness. I discussed with her about her constant backaches and if she would be interested in alternatives instead of smoking, like edibles or topicals. Luckily, she accepted the alternatives and even considered getting a medical card. Sure I've encountered some adults who disagree with the use, but I believe me voicing my experiences helped them empathize with my reasoning. I've had friends defend me before their parents commented. Nevertheless, it was her family history and daily discomfort that made me want to give her my experience, with hopes she would consider the alternatives.

On the theme of self-identity, I understood how I label myself as a cardholder and a patient. I understand people have other needs for the card, some being severe like treating side effects of chemotherapy. I use various sources, most being testimonial, like Viceland's documentary "Weediquette" reading plenty of blogs and conversing with my fellow card and non-cardholders' perspective. It was through our conversations, especially documentaries that allowed me to understand the dependency for marijuana.

Most of all HCOM helped me learn that writing my experiences can help me appreciate the love I grew for myself. My past shaped me to who I am now, and marijuana aided me by leading me to a right direction of realization. I may still not know who exactly I am, but I'm less bothered by it than four years ago. All my HCOM courses helped me keep in mind of peoples' testimony of how marijuana helped them to encourage me to write my own. But most importantly HCOM helped me learn to accept who I am.

# Berenice Melchor

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## SUMMARY

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Attending CSUMB to obtain a Bachelors of Art in Human Communication with a concentration of Creative Writing and Social Action.

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## EXPERIENCE

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|--------------------------|--|
| June 2013- July 2013     | <p>Volunteer Mentor/Tutor, <i>CSUMB EOSP- Upward Bound</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>· Volunteer for six weeks with high school students, where the students would take college courses and living in the university campus. I would assist the students with any classwork or guidance needed throughout the program.</li></ul>   |
| September 2013- May 2015 | <p>Office Assistant, <i>CSUMB EOSP- Upward Bound</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>· Create any folders for new students accepted to CSUMB's Upward Bound and file any paperwork created for any of the current students. I would fill in contact logs for students who had any tutoring or advising from the available tutors/mentors. Create documents needed for supervisors and tutors at school sites to help students.</li></ul>                                     |
| June 2014- July 2014     | <p>Mentor, <i>CSUMB EOSP- Upward Bound</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>· Worked with high school students taking college courses in CSUMB and helped organize time for students to study and relax when the finished assignments. Made presentations that would help students academically. Had to be flexible with a very strict schedule and remain punctual when small changes were made.</li></ul>   |
| August 2015- Present     | <p>Mentor, <i>CSUMB EOSP- CAMP</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>· Managed and provided mentorship to assigned student caseload and hold bi-weekly one on one meetings with students. Assisted in planning, coordinating, and implementing cultural, educational, workshops, presentations, and events. Informed and motivated cohort student to attend upcoming events and workshops. Work closely with the program's professional staff and other departments.</li></ul> |

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## EDUCATION

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| 2013-Present | <p>Human Communication: Creative Writing &amp; Social Action B.A, <i>California State University, Monterey Bay</i></p> <p><i>100 Campus Center, Seaside, CA 93955 (831) 582-3000</i></p> |
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## SKILLS AND ABILITIES

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### Languages

- Spanish
- English

### Skills

- Open Minded
- Respectful
- Feedback
- Planning and organization
- Ability and want to learn
- Basic academic skills in reading, writing, and computation
- Accepting responsibility
- Ability to communicate effectively, both orally and in writing
- Public Speaking
- Motivate others
- File records
- Work independently
- Reasoning
- Set realistic goals
- Manage time efficiently
- Use a variety of sources to access information including computer technology
- Analyze and learn from life experiences