

5-2019

## Stranger In a Foreign Land

Yasmin Mays

*California State University, Monterey Bay*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.csumb.edu/caps\\_thes\\_all](https://digitalcommons.csumb.edu/caps_thes_all)



Part of the [Nonfiction Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Mays, Yasmin, "Stranger In a Foreign Land" (2019). *Capstone Projects and Master's Theses*. 458.  
[https://digitalcommons.csumb.edu/caps\\_thes\\_all/458](https://digitalcommons.csumb.edu/caps_thes_all/458)

This Capstone Project (Open Access) is brought to you for free and open access by the Capstone Projects and Master's Theses at Digital Commons @ CSUMB. It has been accepted for inclusion in Capstone Projects and Master's Theses by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ CSUMB. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@csumb.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@csumb.edu).

Stranger in a Foreign Land

Yasmin Mays

Senior Capstone: Creative Project

Creative Writing and Social Action

Concentration

Professor Umi Vaughan

School of Humanities and Communication

Spring 2019

## Table of Contents

Capstone Senior Project Proposal	Page 1
The Journey Starts Here	Page 3
Making Marines Earning the Title	Page 10
Land of Plenty	Page 17
Reflective Essay	Page 23
Final Synthesis Essay	Page 26

·  
·

## HCOM 475 Senior Capstone Creative Project - Project Proposal

1. Yasmin Mays and my concentration is creative writing and social action
2. Project Description: My project idea is to create a collection of fictional short stories describing the struggles, trials and tribulations that young African Americans faced in the United States, related to their race and the struggles that came with being an African American child; young African Americans and how they stay connected to their 'African' roots.
3. Alignment with common theme: My project's direct alignment is with diaspora and the widespread movement of African American people's, and how their lives were influenced by the moving from slavery times to now modern America.
4. Purpose: Project's primary purpose - to inspire and enlighten people of the struggles trials and tribulations that African Americans have faced.
5. Format Rationale: This project format is the only format that fit with what I wanted my project to encompass. My concentration being creative writing and social action, a research essay or internship wouldn't've made very much sense.
6. Working Capstone Title: African American Upbringings through the Eyes of a Child
7. Working Summary: This project is rich in details and concrete examples of the trials and tribulations that specifically young African American children have had to face, based on where they live. It is a very different story of a child being raised Philadelphia, versus a child being raised in South Los Angeles, or even be raised in a completely different country like Japan, yet not look a single bit like one's classmates. It's a real struggle for most African American children growing up. Most are seen as other, or lesser than their classmates.
8. Expectations: The expectations I have for this project is as such, I expect to gain a deeper understanding of African American diaspora, and what it means to be African American in today's society. Everyone has their own vision of diaspora.
9. Specific Skills Required: I will demonstrate my knowledge of the creative writing arts and techniques by writing a collection of short stories. I have taken multiple creative writing classes of differing difficulty up until this point. I've taken Dr. Debra Busman's Intro to Creative Writing class and her Women's Writing Workshop class. I have taken a creative writing class before that went in depth into the various fundamental techniques of creative writing as a craft.
10. Next Steps: For my project's next steps, I will gather ideas for my short story pieces, different African American children are raised all over the U.S. and the world. There isn't just one single story about African American children, each child has his or her own unique story to tell, and I plan to tell those stories through the fictional pieces I write based on real life people I know who have experienced many different aspects of being African American. I will start writing my short story pieces, furthermore once they've been written I will meet with other

professors to have them read over my stories and give me constructive feedback and ways to revise and enhance my writing further.

11. Timeline: I can have two short stories completed by March 13th, I wrote one story a week, and revise and edit both and have them finished by March 13th. Then from that date I'll write two more short stories for my collection of works by April 5th, that's to include time for the editing process and the needed revisions. I plan to get my feedback during workshop days that I have for another class, but also email drafts to others to be looked over. The remainder of my time will be spent working on the synthesis essay and the reflective essay for the portfolio. Finally piecing everything together, the short story pieces, the two essays, should bring me up to final draft date of April 29th. The poster will be completed by May 6th.

William F. Mays Age, 18 (1982)



The Journey Starts Here

Lynwood, California, 1983

Shopping Center, Lynwood, CA

It was a cool 75 degrees this morning in May as the young African American man walked from the bus stop to his final destination in the shopping plaza. The collar of his windbreaker jacket pulled up around his neck for the moment. People hustling and bustling all about him on the busy Los Angeles streets. The young man kept his head held high and looked straight ahead toward his destination in the shopping plaza.

He wasn't nervous at all, he'd moved out here to get away from his home back on the East coast out of necessity. That was one of the reasons, another reason was that he wanted to do something totally different from what all his friends were doing at the time. Being the middle child of seven children was tough, with three brothers and three sisters, his mother, his grandmother and the family dog all living under one roof was trying for anyone. Much less than for a nineteen-year-old who was always the peacemaker of the house trying to keep his younger siblings from fighting and getting in trouble. He needed to escape Philadelphia, so he thought why not move halfway across the country where his eldest sister was attending the University of Southern California.

His mom had told him it was either join the military or get a job out in town. Not too great of a choice for a kid with no real direction in his life thus far. He'd done well in school so he figured enlisting wouldn't be too far of a stretch. One thing was for he wasn't going to stay in Philly longer than he had too.

Maybe he would come back and visit one day when he was older, but right now he needed an out and the military was it. He didn't move out here all by himself though his sister Linda was close by. He had to remain focused though, and focused he stayed as he continued walking down the street and until he was stood in front of the building that would change his life. He took one big deep breath and pulled open the door. The building once inside was normal enough and an open style floor plan. Lining the left wall were all the different branches of the armed forces and their offices. The young man walks up to an older gentleman in a Navy service uniform. The uniform itself stood out because it was all white mostly except for the patch on his left shoulder that showed his rank with three what look three red v's with two crossed anchors

above it and above the two crossed anchors was a white stylized eagle. He'd always liked the idea of traveling all over the country. According to the pamphlets he could go all over the world with the Navy, he liked the possibility of travel.

“How can I help you son?” the man asked.

“Well sir I'm looking to enlist, I wanted to see what you have to offer.”

“Oh, we have plenty to offer you young man. What's your name?”

“William, William Mays.”

“Nice to meet you William, I'm Petty Officer Collins.” The man with short straight black hair introduced himself. “Now let's get down to business what were you looking for in a Navy career.”

William told the recruiter what he was looking for, and the recruiter takes in all his information. Then William stands up thanks Petty Officer Collins for his time and proceeds to check out the Army recruiter.

The Army recruiter had potential for William. He still had the opportunity to travel, but he'd also get deployed, he'd go to war. The seemed like it was the perfect fit they had a lot more opportunities. A lot of different jobs that interested William, he liked the idea of being a soldier



and fighting for his country. The benefits he'd get were nice as well. He wanted to keep his options open though, besides he still had the Air Force and the Marines to check out.

Something that he noticed though as he was conversing with each of the other recruiters at their desk was that while they were practically pulling young men and women in with their speeches and sales pitches the Marine at his desk wasn't doing any of that.

While the Air Force also held his intrigue with Security Police (basically base cops enforcing the laws on the installation), and again the benefits of joining the Air Force seemed better than any other branch. The living conditions on base, the amenities etc. Also, the travel opportunities again in the Air Force like the Navy were very appealing. But he wasn't just going to enlist in a service just because he could go to Aviano, Italy or Misato, Japan. He wanted to make his service mean something. Although the allure was definitely there.

He'd so far talked to three service recruiters and the Marine at his desk hadn't said anything to him. He just kept working at his desk head down and typing away on his computer.

*How arrogant can you be, well nothing I can do.* William thought to himself.

As he was walking out with hands full of different pamphlets to the bus stop, he had to walk past the Marine recruiter's open office door. Not even looking up from his work, the Marine spoke, "When you are ready to become a real man come see me."

*Was he talking to me, he couldn't be talking to me. Was he?*

There was no one else walking by the office at that time. He had to be talking to him. William continued walking out of the building back to the bus stop. *How dare he say such a thing. Who does that arrogant guy think he is.*

He stood standing at the bus stop thinking and waiting. He couldn't get what the Marine recruiter had said out of his head. It's like it was playing on a loop in his head. "When you are ready to become, a real man come see me."

Real man what the heck was this guy talking about. Decision made in his head, right before the bus came William marched back into the recruiting station. Determination set in his chocolate brown eyes. He stuffed the rest of the pamphlets into the inner pocket in his jacket. He walked at a steady pace back to the end of the hall. He knocked once on the open door.

"I knew you'd be back." The Marine called, as he stood up to greet the young man at his door.

The first thing William noticed about this man was his height he was easily a foot and several inches taller than him. If he had to guess he was probably 6'2" 190lbs. His build was slim and athletic like a runner. The man's voice was also firm, and clear. No misunderstanding what was coming out of that man's mouth at all.

The Marine was dressed in only what William could assume was the service uniform for the Marine Corps just like the Navy Petty Officer was. The man's uniform consisted of a long-sleeved tan collared shirt with his rank on the left sleeve. Dark blue dress pants with a scarlet stripe down the seam of each of the pant legs and very shiny and polished black dress shoes.

There were also quite a few bars and ribbons on the man's chest, it looked impressive to William.

"Have a seat, my name is Gunnery Sergeant Greene." The Marine introduced himself. William did as he was told and sat in the chair in front of the Marine.

"My name is William sir, William Mays." He introduced himself.

"Good to meet you now let's talk about not what the Corps can do for you, but what you can do for the Corps."

They talked for a couple of hours in fact. The more and more that the man said the more William thought that this was the service for him. Little did he know that he had a lot more in common with this man than he did the other recruiters he'd spoken too. William was a determined individual and wasn't leaving that Marines without signing on the dotted line.

After all was said and done and talking over, the man slid over a piece of a paper a contract. There was that infamous dotted line at the bottom.

"Once you sign this contract there's no going back." Gunnery Sergeant Greene informed William.

"I'm positive this what I want to do sir." William told the thirty year or so old Marine.

"Don't call me sir I work for a living." Gunnery Sergeant Greene said seriously.

William didn't get what the man had meant at the time, but he signed the dotted line anyway. Determined, focused and motivated to get through the toughest and longest boot camp there was.



Private William F. Mays Age 19 ( January 1984)

Making Marines - Earning the Title

**MCRD San Diego, November 1983**

**Week 0 Day 1 - Receiving Week**

The famous or infamous yellow footprints depending on who you talked to, loomed ahead on the blackened asphalt of the ground. William didn't see the yellow footprints though no; his head was currently down in in his lap. He was dressed smartly in black dress pants and a button down light blue collared shirt. He clutched his required paperwork tightly in his hands. The young Caucasian teenager next to him sat much the same way head tucked down into his lap

not daring look up at his surroundings. The large white and black striped bus pulled up and to a stop.

The bus lurched to a stop, and William felt his head fall forward and smack against the padded seats in front of him. He didn't dare rub his sore head, although he was sure there was a small bruise forming. He could feel it. Everyone on the bus the 40 or so young men didn't move a muscle when the bus came to a jarring halt. Nobody talked, nobody dared move an inch or breathe.

William heard the bus doors open and a Marine with a funny looking wide brimmed hat on his head strutted on the bus. *This is it this is the start of the rest of my life.* William thought.

“All you look up and look at me right now.” The Marine at the front the bus barked out.

William's head snapped up in attention so fast he thought he caught whiplash with the movement.

“You all right now are aboard Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego, California, building 622 Receiving Company, from now on the only words that'll come out your mouths are yes sir no sir, when somebody asks you a question is that clear?” The Marine asked the bus load of young men.

“Yes sir.” William chorused loudly along with the rest of the buses' occupants. *What the hell have I gotten myself into.*

“Stand up get up now get of my bus.” The Marine with the wide brimmed hat ordered.

William got up out of his seat and rushed out of the bus with everyone else. There were yellow footprints on the ground spaced exactly forty-five degrees apart of from each other at the heel. He's silently glad he opted for the long-sleeved dress shirt it was brisk and cold out. Stood on the yellow footprints in front of the mustard yellow building William faced the front in line and faced directly towards the Marine standing in front of him.

William along with the other recruits were all neatly packed into tight straight little lines. He stood clutching his manila envelope which had all his required documentation in it.

The next several hours were filled with a flurry of activity for William he feels like a chicken with his head cut off. He's being moved this way and that way, told when to be here when to be there. From the contraband search to getting his haircut. William was sat in the barber's chair with about five other guys all getting their heads completely shaved. He watched morosely as his short tight curly locks fell in black clumps on the white tile floor. Quickest most efficient haircut he's gotten in his life. *Wonder how long this'll last and how many times I'll have to come back.* He thought to himself as he ran his right hand over his bald head.

*If any of my sisters could see me now they'd be laughing their heads off.* William thought as he made his way back out of the little room to the end of the line. Head shaved and searched for all manners of contraband the stop on William's list is clothing issue.

He's taken into a large warehouse like room, and given two bags that are quickly filled up with all the clothing (uniforms and PT t-shirts and shorts) he'd need to survive the next the thirteen weeks here. Talk about culture shock, he'd never met another being on the earth with more intensity and fire in their eyes than the Marines that were currently in charge him.

Finally kitted out in his camouflage uniform standing in his barracks with thirty-nine other recruits, William feels a sense of belonging that he's never felt before. All this yelling and running around was going to take some getting used to, but now that William was here he was not going to back out. No way no how. In barracks laying in his rack he dreamt of what was to come in the next twelve weeks.

### **MCRD San Diego, November 1983**

#### **Week 0 Day 5 - Black Friday**

William sat bolt upright in his bed hitting in his head on the top rack above him at the sound of the bugles playing throughout the barracks bay. "Ah that smarts." He grumbled quietly.

"You okay down there Mays?" His rack mate a young Caucasian guy asked. He looked about the same age as himself 19 years old. He introduced himself yesterday before lights out. His name was Kurt, Kurt Schwaninger.

"Yeah I'm fine man thanks." William replied barely above a whisper gingerly rubbing his sore head.

From the minute, William and Kurt woke up it was a flurry of activity from the get go. The same drill instructors from yesterday came in and started yelling at them to all to get dressed and to move faster. William and Kurt look back and forth between each other a knowing look on both their young faces. *What the hell did we get ourselves into.* William thought.

Shortly after getting dressed and going through various other tasks it's now early afternoon and William and the rest of the platoon are taken to a large open area in the barracks bay and told to sit down criss cross applesauce and not say a word. Nothing, absolutely nothing could have prepared either young man for what was to come next.



Out of an office off to the side of the main barracks walked three men all clad in the same uniforms of khaki shirts and olive green trousers as the other drill instructors. Though these three men walked with a purpose and walked straight in front of William, Kurt and the rest of the seated recruits on the deck of the barracks bay.

An older looking Caucasian man who stood tall and on his left sleeve had Sergeant chevrons on his left arm sleeve strides forward a few paces in front of the two other Marines. He opened his mouth and loudly addressed the recruits in front of him, "Sit up straight and look at me right now, my name is Sergeant Zorman and I am your Senior Drill Instructor. I am assisted in my duties by: Drill Instructor Sergeant Little." An African American man to Zorman's left William's right steps forward, as he's introduced and then stepped back. "And Drill Instructor Sergeant Quinata." A man to Zorman's right, William's left with tanned skin steps forward briefly before he steps back as well. "Our mission is to teach each one of you to become a United States Marine. A Marine is characterized as one who possesses the highest military virtues. He obeys orders, respects his seniors, and strives constantly to be the best in everything that he does. Discipline and spirit are the hallmarks of a Marine. Each one of you can become a Marine if you instill discipline and spirit. We will give every effort to train you, even after some of you have given up on yourselves." Sergeant Zorman informed the recruits.

Sergeant Zorman goes on with the rest of his speech and not a single recruit seated moved an inch. William and Kurt were seated right smack dab in the middle of the front row how the two managed that they'll never know. These three men were the Drill Instructors that would be in charge of William's training for the next 12 weeks.

*Oh, my god these three guys are the most intense people I've ever met in my life. And only one of them has spoken.* William thought to himself. He's pretty sure Kurt and the others

around him have the same thoughts. The words out of Sergeant Zorman's mouth are, "Be proud of yourself and the uniform you wear. Above all that, never quit and never give up. For we offer you the challenge of Recruit Training the opportunity to earn the title United States Marine." SDI Sergeant Zorman finished with his epic motivational speech. If William wasn't motivated before he sure was now. William knew the next 12 weeks would be a very interesting, chaotic and exhilarating experience.

## **Week 12 - MCRD San Diego, Parade Deck**

### **Boot Camp Graduation, January 1984**

William stood taller, prouder, straighter, more confident and self-assured on the parade deck he'd seen numerous other recruits before him walk across. He'll be honest there were times where he didn't think he'd make the full twelve weeks, but here was standing a few rows in front of his best friend Kurt in formation. He looked out at the crowd seated in the covered bleachers and knew sadly that none of his family were there to see him. Was he upset of course he was, was he angry, he didn't think he was. This was a huge accomplishment in his life and nobody was here to see him, to share in the moment.

The speaker who presented the newly graduated Marines spoke one last time before concluding the ceremony, "This is the last order these recruits will receive, and it's probably the best order they'll receive from their drill instructors. The order releasing them from their drill instructors care. Drill Instructor dismiss the company." The speaker told the drill instructors present.

"Senior Drill Instructors dismiss your platoon." The Drill Instructor ordered all the Senior DI's. William and Kurt both excitedly yet stoically waited to hear that final order.

Over the speaker, a female voice was heard, “The Senior Drill Instructors will now release their platoon this’ll be the last order the new Marines receive from their drill instructors. And probably the most welcome order they have received while in boot camp.”

Senior Drill Instructor Sergeant Zorman did an about face and turned to his platoon of Marines. He threw his head back and barked, “Dismissed!”

“Aye aye Sergeant.” William chorused loudly back with his other fellow Marines. William did an about face and broke ranks with the rest of his fellow new Marines. William received several slaps on the backs and manly hugs from other Marines in his platoon. William found Kurt in the sea of new Marines and hugged him, slapping him on the back.

“We did it man. We’re Marines.” Kurt exclaimed happily.

“That we are, that we are Kurt.” William for the first time in twelve weeks smiled fully a wide smile pulled across his face.

“Where’s your family?” Kurt asked.

“Not here.” William said.

“Well you can spend the rest of the day with me and my family.” Kurt stated.

“Thanks Kurt.” William replied in earnest. He knew from Day 0 to Day 72 (Today) Kurt Schwaninger would be one of his best and closest friends. He’d have his back no matter what.

PFC William F. Mays Age 19 (Circa 1984-85)



Land of Plenty

**Marine Barracks Subic Bay, Philippines, June 1984**

June in the Philippines was miserable the weather was cold, wet, and the whole place seemed to be in a torrential downpour. William and Kurt were both stationed here, which was great on the one hand they could commiserate about the crappy weather, and two William could see a friendly face around the base. Clad in his dark green utilities uniform and standard issue raincoat William stood out braving the elements at the front gate to the base. Checking I.D.s was a pretty menial task but someone had to do it. Right now, it was William's job to man the front gates. William stood up and walked out of his little booth gate guard booth, out into the rain.

*Man, and I thought weather back home in Philly was bad. This is ludicrous.* William thought as a car approached the gate window rolled down. William walked over to the car window and saw the Marine inside was in civilian attire. Jeans and polo black polo shirt and a rain jacket over the polo shirt. The Marine in the car hands William his I.D.

Now William had never done or experimented with drugs, but he'd been around some friends a few times who did indulge. So, he knew what to look and the smell quite honestly was horrible. William smelled it almost immediately as the Marine in the car, rolled his window down. He kept his composure though.

"I'm going to need you to step out of the car Corporal." William asked the Marine.

"It's pissing down outside Private." The Marine in question responded.

"I'm aware of that step out of the car, and stand over there." William directed to the guard booth. "Don't move." William hit the radio on his belt and spoke into the device. The raining pounding against his skin and the ground it was hard to hear. Minutes later, two MP's came driving up to the gate from inside the base. William reached into the car and found under the passenger side seat. A decent sized bag of marijuana poorly hidden by the corporal. William picked up the bag and carried it around to the other side of the car to the guard station, where the Marine in question was waiting.

Two non-commissioned officers walked up to William a Corporal and a Sergeant. "What have we got here PFC Mays?" The Corporal asked.

"Illegal contraband found I found under the passenger side seat." William held up the bag of marijuana.

The Corporal turned to the junior enlisted Marine who was standing under the cover of the guard tower. "Is this marijuana yours Marine?" The Corporal asked.

“No, I have no idea how that got there I’m...I’m holding it for a friend. It’s not mine.”

The Marine was rambling now. William saw right through this though. Growing up in a house with six other siblings and being the middle child he knew when people were lying. This Marine was lying.

“Holding it for a friend you say hmm what’d you think Sergeant. You think Lance Corporal Macey is telling the truth?” The Corporal asked his colleague.

“Not a chance.” The Sergeant responded. “PFC Mays what do you think?”

“It’s against regulations to have narcotics of any kind on base. He’s broken the law.”

The Marine in question started fidgeting and worrying his hands he couldn’t take the scrutiny of the all the eyes on him. He knew he was caught. “It’s mine, it’s my weed. Mine okay I bought it of someone in town.” The Marine in question relented pitifully. *Well that was fast. Didn’t expect him to crack so quick.* William thought as stood there still holding the bag of marijuana.

The Sergeant shook his head at the Marine, “Hands behind your back you’re under arrest.”

The Marine put his hands behind his back and let himself be handcuffed and his head down in shame. “Good catch PFC Mays.” The sergeant directed his praise to William. William stood up slightly straighter chest puffed out shoulders back even as the rain still pelted down on all of them.

“I’ll take that bag now.” The other Marine with the military police patch said. “Dispose of it properly.”

William handed over the bag, and then asked. “What about his car?”

“Someone else will be along to collect it.”

By now there was a line of cars behind the unoccupied car and some of the other Marines in their cars were getting impatient honking their horns.

“Hey what’s the hold up?” One Marine shouted out from his car.

“Yeah I gotta get back to my dorm room for a call with my girlfriend.” Another Marine hollered.

“Hold your horses’ gentlemen unless you all want to be like the Lance Corporal here in handcuffs.” The Corporal gestured to the Marine who was in handcuffs in the back of the squad car. That quickly shut up the other two Marines. The two MP’s with the Lance Corporal safely secured in the back seat of the cruiser drove back through the gates of the base and William resumed his gate guard duties. The car of the Marine with the marijuana was picked up shortly by a friend.

*Huh miles from home and anything I find remotely familiar and yet even miles away people are still stupid.*

There were rules that were meant to be broken after all, but trying to sneak marijuana onto a Marine base not very smart on the Lance Corporal’s part. He had to have known he would have been found out. And thus, the hammer was brought down and the Marine got a strike on his record and slapped with an Article 112a, wrongful use, possession, etc, of controlled substances. William shook his head in disbelief as he checked the next I.D. and waved the car through. Still how people could be so dumb to think they could get away with things such as that. It was practically sticking out from under the mat for crying out loud. And the smell alone was horrendous.

William didn't find any more drugs or illicit contraband in any other cars that day, but boy did he have a story to tell Kurt when he got off shift today. The rain still hadn't let up and William feared it wasn't going to, it was practically constant rain downpour.

*Yep just another day in Subic Bay, Philippines.*

## **Two Weeks Later**

### **Subic Bay Freeport Zone, Philippines, Jungle Environment Survival Training (JEST)**

#### **Camp**

"This seriously ten times worse than camping." Kurt griped as he hit a peg into his tent. William smirked and chuckled at his friend. Kurt was a city boy, and didn't do camping, but William he actually liked camping. This wasn't that though William had to agree there.

"Quit the griping man. It's jungle survival training something we need apparently. Just go with it." William said.

"This is still not what I wanted to be doing on a Saturday and it's still raining. I swear the weather hasn't let up in weeks I'm going nuts."

"I think that's from the lack of sun Kurt." William had pitched his tent and was going to go off and find their instructor find out they were supposed to do next. He thought it had to do with making a fire. But it was raining how were they supposed to make a fire when it was raining. As far as William knew it wasn't possible. But being here in the Philippines William learned a lot of what he thought not possible was actually indeed possible. Like how nice and welcoming the people of the Philippine people were to him and the other Marines. Specifically, the other African American persons. In the three months he'd been here, he'd been treated better than he had back in the U.S. People didn't look at him as an African American young man, they



didn't look at him with mistrust and wariness. All the people saw was a young Marine, following orders and doing his duty. Living up to the title he had earned seven months ago.

The people of the Philippines didn't see Caucasian, African American, Hispanic or Latino, men all they saw were Marines. There was no prejudice toward them at all. This surprised William immensely. Though this was only one duty station and William's first he thought he got pretty lucky with it and the people he got to interact with as well as his fellow Marines.

Apparently one can make fire in the bad weather, if one tries hard enough that's what William, Kurt and the other Marines in JEST learned, that night. Throughout the survival training course, they learned many different aspects of the jungle and how to survive in it. If they ever found themselves stranded. They'd be able to survive until help arrived. How to boil water how to find food native to the area and the good plants to eat that wouldn't get them sick. How to start a fire even in, inclement weather such as what they experienced throughout most of the course.

William laughed and joked with his friends in the downtime they had between 'activities' in the course. Overall the training course wasn't all that bad, even though the weather said otherwise and put a damper on many Marines' moods at times. As William lay in his tent on the jungle floor, he wondered what other surprises, journeys, and places the Marine Corps had in store for him. The Philippines was one place William could cross off his bucket list and one of the places he'd most likely not come back to but he never knew. He was young and still had many years ahead of him. Too wet and dreary all the time. As first duty stations or assignments go he was pleased, but he was always looking forward looking ahead to what lay in wait in his future.

## Reflective Essay

Writing this creative project was by far the largest creative project I have undertaken so far in the college career. This creative project and where I decided to take it, a creative nonfiction piece is something I haven't tried before in my writing. So, tackling this creative project and the genre in which I choice was something new for me. Coming up with titles which I normally have trouble with when writing pieces was fairly easy this time around, the titles were inspired by what is written in each of the pieces. The imagery I used and the descriptive detail about the scenes really brought all the pieces together. Even though each story takes place somewhere different they are all connected in a way through the characters that are in those exotic locations. The dialogue throughout the pieces are rich in emotion and I believe there is a real sense of character and character development through the dialogue. When writing the scenes or setting for each short story piece even though I put a location or setting heading, I tried to describe each place as well as I knew how considering two of the locations I have never been to personally myself. I also had to think of the time frame in which I was writing them. Trying to get into what the areas were like in the 1980's. From the first story to the last one there is a good flow or pacing to the pieces, the rhythm or tempo of the pieces evenly paced and not too fast. There is a clear voice of the main character and the other characters. There is significant character development from the first story of the main character as a young teen to the end story of him still young, but having experienced quite a lot in his young life at that point in time. The purpose of this creative work was to inspire, entertain and to delight the audience in the creative work. Immerse the reader and audience in the story of a young African American teen on his journey to become something greater. Also, all the feelings and emotions that came with moving halfway across the country by oneself and jumping into the deep end of the unknown.

This piece was written to inspire in a way as well all those young people who come from large families with rough backgrounds, that if someone can rise from the turmoil and grow into something better than anyone in any similar situation can do the same thing. The creative non-fiction piece was also written to entertain from the daily life at Marine Corps boot camp to the days being stuck on gate guard duty in the Philippines and all that goes along with that. Writing this creative piece had the purpose of delighting those who read it and hopefully those who read it take away something from my having read the works.

The process in which I took in creating this creative project a collection of creative nonfiction short stories took hours of time to think of. First of all I had to gather information relevant for the story. I had interviewed my dad and asked him questions relevant to his service in the military and how being African American in foreign countries affected him. The title I chose for my capstone also has a double meaning. Literally, being a stranger in a foreign land to being thrown in unknown atmosphere and totally different cultural of the military. There's a reason they call the start of any military boot camp a cultural shock, because it is. It's a whole new way of life that the recruit is trying to get used to. I chose to write short stories because I believed the stories would convey what I wanted to get across in my overarching theme of diaspora. I could go into more depth and detail with stories than I could with poems. I'm also not cinematography inclined nor can I create my own newspaper. So, I decided upon what I knew best how to do. Originally, I had intended to write about three different military members in my family and how they experienced moving being pulled from their homeland to another host land, but after I had written the first short story how I ended lent toward the continuation of my story through his perspective. I used various techniques and craft elements in which I had learned throughout my creative writing classes to write the creative non-fiction pieces I have. My

creative project and the theme of diaspora are directly connected via the stories in which the theme of diaspora is clearly written. The theme is diaspora and the movement from a homeland to a new host land. The characters in the story are moved from their homes on the East coast to the west coast and the very different nuances between the two cities. It's also the movement of the characters from U.S. to places all around the world. I wrote a creative nonfiction which is similar to Andrew Lam's piece, Perfume Dreams.

## Final Synthesis Essay

This class with the shared theme of diaspora has been like any other class I have taken in my college career. I've never personally thought long and hard about where I've come from or where other people have come from around the world and their experiences. Some of those experiences even around the world are shared experiences. Some not. It is the ones that are shared are the ones that made me realize that even though we as a people are some different and diverse we all share the same sense of wanting to belong and call a place home. Throughout this class many different texts were analyzed and evaluated from Andrew Lamb's Perfume Dreams, to The Brief and Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao by Junot Diaz.

Each of the books had a story to tell of a leaving one place the homeland to go another new place the hostland. Even if some of the pieces were non-fiction they still told a story. I realize that there are whole cultures out there and traditions that are unexplored or unexplained. Going through this class I learned that diaspora can mean more than one thing. There are different components to it that make it up. Diaspora was a concept I didn't understand or even know about until this class, but I feel now coming out of this class and crafting and creating this final capstone project, I have a better understanding and knowledge of what diaspora is. In the seminar part of the class many students in the class talked of their own diaspora, either African American or Mexican diaspora just among the few more widely acknowledged ones. I learned that Africans migrated from many different places all over the world to finally settle in places like Chicago, New York, Los Angeles and San Francisco. There was more opportunity for Africans in the cities than there were in other parts of the world.

The group reading presentations that we were all required to compile and present on a given book that week really opened my eyes to other people's diasporas and where they came

from. Some of the reading was admittedly dry and didn't really read like a story, but as the semester progressed the books only got better and I was able to read and analyze them and get a deeper understanding for what diaspora was. All the texts that we as a class were required to read were like capstone projects on steroids. All of them carefully polished and nice and neatly presented in an easy to digest way. In my specific section of HCOM 475 and with the chosen theme of diaspora there were quite a few different points of view different perspectives. Having been able to present on book entitled The Brief and Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao by Junot Diaz, the text about a young man Oscar and his sister Lola a young black teenager from the Dominican Republic to the United States and back again to the Dominican Republic. There struggles are real ones even though this is a piece of fiction it is extremely well crafted. I was able to pull comparisons from this book to my own life even in the smallest of ways. I was about to work on the group reading presentation with my partner quite well. We both knew what we had to do and we were able to achieve what we were supposed to get accomplished.

My senior project delves into the finer points of diaspora through creative non-fiction stories of of my father and his experience moving from his homeland on East Coast in Philadelphia to move to the West Coast to Lynwood California, and then from there be transplanted or deployed to different areas of the countries as needed. Also, how he was still able to maintain his roots and his heritage throughout and how he was able to improvise adapt and overcome the obstacles that he faced that were presented to him.