

STORIES

FROM MY **TEACHER**

ON THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE
LIFELONG LEARNING & OUR



Michelle Ford Asun Villamil
Ana Otto Helena Massó
Rosa González Colilla
Marta Moreno Carol A. Hand

Stories from My Teacher.

On the English Language,

Lifelong Learning and

Our R.evoL.ution

**by Michelle Ford, Asun Villamil Touriño, Rosa González Colilla,
Ana Otto, Helena Massó, Carol A. Hand and Marta Moreno López
de Uralde**

Enero 2015

talkingpeople.net

Be a Rebel. Love What You Do

About This E-book / Sobre este ebook

This page includes paragraphs in English & Spanish.

Esta página incluye párrafos en inglés y español.

What's this? Thank you for downloading this e-book, which is free. This e-book includes stories and fictionalized life anecdotes written by English teachers in Spain for EFL students/learners, and stories by a university teacher in the USA who has recently retired. Other materials include teachers' own explanations and insight about learning and issues dealt with in their lessons.

Las **historias** han sido escritas por profesoras de inglés en la enseñanza pública en España (secundaria, Escuelas Oficiales de Idiomas, universidad), y por la profesora de universidad Carol A. Hand, estadounidense ojibwe, que acaba de retirarse. Incluyen reflexiones o apuntes sobre temas tratados en clase también.

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- This ebook has been published in January 2015 at *eBooks!* - *talkingpeople.net*: <http://www.talkingpeople.net/tp/ebooks.htm>
- Este eBook ha sido publicado en enero del 2015 en la sección *eBooks!* del sitio web Talking People, [vínculo directo: http://www.talkingpeople.net/tp/ebooks.htm](http://www.talkingpeople.net/tp/ebooks.htm)

Cómo citar este eBook / Citing this eBook: *Stories from My Teacher. On the English Language, Lifelong Learning & Our R-evoL.ution*, de Michelle Ford, Asun Villamil Touriño, Rosa González Colilla, Ana Otto, Helena Massó, Carol A. Hand y/and Marta Moreno López de Uralde, publicado en/published at talkingpeople.net

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Editor's Acknowledgements

Thanks to **Michelle's students** who, for a number of years (1980-86, 1996-2013), kept asking her to write down the stories she told in class.

Thanks to **Asun Villamil** for the first story in this ebook, profoundly moving for all the love and acknowledgement it contains towards committed and competent teachers who are invisible in History, even perceived as a threat to the system, but who shine in class, lighting up people's lives and learning. Asun is certainly one of those teachers, though she dedicated the story to Michelle.

Thanks to **Asun, Rosa, Helena and Ana**, who when invited to take part in this project (2013), did so in spite of having far too much on, as usual! This was critical for the project to move on and reach its publication. We lost Rosa in the way, and we miss her. But here she is, anyway. Her words, words she wrote for this loving project.

Thanks to **Damyanti**, a freelance writer whose [A to Z Stories of Life & Death](#) gave us the **idea** to create our own ebook of teachers' stories, and to **Jeff Nguyen** and his blog [Deconstructing Myths](#) for allowing us to discover Carol's writings and a new friendship.

A warm thank you to **Carol and Marta** for joining us in 2014 and enriching this ebook with their insightful stories further more.

Thanks to **Carol A. Hand** for her generosity and collaboration in parts of the proofreading. The Maya Angelou quote we use to open our Table of Contents comes from her last piece in this ebook.

Thanks to **Chris Booth** for helping out with the proofreading of some other pieces.

A loving hug to **Atticus** for turning this text into an ebook! <3

We hope you will enjoy this extraordinary work which would have never existed if **the Internet** didn't exist! <3

Anonymous teachers leaving a track of their existence in classrooms of the world!

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I've learned that I still have a lot to learn. I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.

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About the authors: MF, Asun, Rosa, Helena, Ana, Carol and Marta. Plus a Tribute to Rosa González Colilla (1955-2013)



A Fairy Tale, by Asun Villamil

(About 300 words)

I love stories!! Far-away kingdoms, dragons and princesses, wizards and teachers... Teachers! Who is the most magical creature of all, who can turn emptiness into wisdom, or make Spanish students pronounce "vegetables" or say "people are"? Of course, teachers... So this is the story of one of those teachers.

Once upon a time there was a princess who lived in a castle. She went to balls, rode her beautiful white horse... One day, after a big party at the castle, she met a handsome prince and immediately fell in love. They got married and lived happily ever after...

Oops, oh no, I got it all wrong... Let me start again...

Once upon a time there was a woman who decided to make her world better. She fought to improve women's rights, people's lives, and particularly, English students' lives.

One day, after getting over an illness, she arrived at a school where people were impressed by her knowledge and her experience. Both students and teachers gaped at her storytelling and always asked for more. That was when she decided to write a book. And from that day on she lived happily in her town by the sea...

Agh... yes, this is the story but... Ok, my last chance.

Once upon a time there was a fairy-woman who inspired people and tried to defend what was right, putting her heart and soul into it. You might agree or disagree with her, but she always turned your world a little bit upside down. Her spells reached further than she probably knew, because a hardworker full of enthusiasm is the strongest potion to heal the world.

And that's the end of the story, or... is it?



Traveling: the Forging of a Teacher!, by MF

(US Am English; about 800 words)

Until the 1990s I sort of traveled the world. When I was a child, I was sent to Australia for a year. I enjoyed it as a big adventure, in spite of the fact that it turned out to have lots of ordinary events in it, mostly going to school. I simply couldn't believe why somebody traveling to the antipodes should waste any time going to school! But I was a child and there was no escape.

Later on, while at high school back in Spain, I managed to do some on-the-run traveling! If I gathered enough money to catch a train, I would do so. It didn't matter where it was headed. I just set off, and then improvised. I would sleep in train stations and sometimes eat the food leftovers restaurants and bars handed me in a cardboard box. I don't remember that period well, but I know I needed time off people, quality time on my own.

By the time I had officially become an adult with voting rights, I got a job as a bilingual secretary at an embassy in the USA, and spent three months there, till the boss tried to rape me and I had to punch him hard and hear "Your word against mine, baby". My most dangerous travel destination had turned out to be a luxurious office in a dream job surrounded by highly regarded people! Fortunately, I decided to find better company in life and guess... I quit and took a plane back to Spain! My mother wanted to kill me!!

I became independent and started university. One of the most exciting events was that I started to learn Classical Arabic! So every now and then, I would visit Morocco. I loved the language, the sounds and smells in the *medinas*, the sense of beauty the Arab culture has, and also the landscape in villages close to the desert! I learned that Spanish people got their sense of hospitality from the Arab culture, too. I didn't like the sexism, though. It was as strong as it had been in Spain during the dictatorship.

On the spring when I was about to finish my university studies, I went to a workshop on Nonviolent Action and decided to volunteer as a pacifist activist in countries at war! That was my beginning as a full-time activist – about 10 years living and traveling in Central America, and later in South America and Europe while being based in London, Brussels, Madrid or at Greenham Common Wimmin's Peace Camp, a different planet, I must say. I had no money, but I always had a place to sleep, some food and *ciggies*, like the British say!

When I came back to Spain, I had to start a new life from scratch again. That would be another kind of traveling experience, especially because my mom died. To make matters worse, I was out of work *and* I had *no money*. But I had friends. Eventually, with their help, I managed to go back to university to finish my studies, and then train as a teacher. Finally, I started taking the *Oposiciones*, which are competitive exams that allow you to become a teacher in public education, and after 10 years going through the hell of exams and substitute teacher work I managed to get my post!

Living is like traveling for me – it is something you do alone. Better said, it is something you need to do standing on your own feet all the time, even if you are lucky and your life gets populated by people who keep you good company. As an exercise, then, traveling alone is important because you learn a lot about yourself.

You learn to be more independent. You learn you can manage. You learn to survive and to enjoy what you have – the moment. You learn to control your fear. And you practice problem solving! Practicing problem solving is not something that people who are always in safe places do, because when you are always surrounded by people who love you, you tend to talk about problems instead of trying to solve them. And how can you learn to solve problems without practice? You also learn to be more open, more tolerant, less judgmental... You learn that life is about doing what you can, and that you can do much more than you actually think – sadly, you also learn that most people don't even try. You learn about the value of diversity and why freedom is so important for becoming a healthy human being!

I didn't want to be a teacher. I felt it was wrong for me, for I did not want to be a rolemodel and all teachers are rolemodels, very definitely. On top of that, in 1986, when I quit teaching for the first time, I had concluded I had nothing to teach, but a lot to learn instead. Life needs to be inspired by ideals but it imposes its own constraints and you have to learn to get by. So after 10 years being a full-time activist, the time came when I had to get a regular job. What job could a social activist do? Being a teacher in public (state-run) education was a good option! I discovered a teacher is someone who is always studying and learning, and that her main task is to help people learn. Such a beautiful purpose! *That* was something I could actually try and do!



My Life As An English Teacher & Other Stories, **by Ana Otto**

(British English; about 600 words)

I started long time ago, teaching at a subsidised school as I was called up late in September just when I was planning a visiting scholarship trip to North Carolina. That, of course changed my immediate plans – the trip had to wait for the following summer – and I started to teach full-time both English and... Physical Education! I don't want to go into detail but I'll just mention that my fellow PE teachers recognized my whistle every time I left it behind because it was stained with lipstick... You know, sometimes a girl needs to feel good even if she's wearing a non-sexy outfit! I was twenty-four, come on! That was part of the deal. So I saw my first job in that religious school as a perfect opportunity to learn and I can tell you I certainly did, I got a Masters Degree in Life. Obviously, the experience I got from university was useless, as I had to tackle four classes of teenagers, a task which turned out to be more policing than real English teaching. And then there was the praying thing too! I remember the first day I had to pray in front of my class, first time in the morning and their stunned faces. One girl came to me after that and whispered, "Miss, sorry to tell you but the Holy Father prayer was changed last year. Want me to write you down the lyrics?" Of course, that was a Master's in Life. That was more than I could endure, more than I could envisage and expect at least for the eight years it lasted, time after which I decided I had to quit and look for the bright and real side of life – God knows I had to!

So I quit and started a brand new life where I could be myself and not the-girl-teaching-at-the-religious school anymore – I had no clue about what being myself really meant, though. So I reinvented myself, not in the sense of making up a new personality out of the blue but just trying to be the best Me I could ever be! – the self-made woman Franklin used to mention in his diaries. And that's when I found yoga. Rediscovered love and hate. And made a big effort to readjust myself to a new life full of energy, self-knowledge and power – whatever those words meant.

I've been teaching English for nearly fifteen years now. As a teacher and of course as a grown up, I learned to watch my expectations and listen to people as I tried to learn about their life stories, that is, to connect with their own expectations about learning the language so as to win them over. Learning a language is of course a very difficult task, and people are afraid of making mistakes in front of their peers. So I had to learn to be very patient and I made myself learn to wear a permanent "Come on, you're doing it great! Go for it!"

It hasn't always been that "easy-peasy". I've had my ups and downs... There are those days when you wake up on the wrong side of the bed, those days in June when you are worn out and just trying to deal with loads of exams to mark, and all that stuff, and you nearly forget you've been working with REAL people, not just exams and "compos". And real people do matter. Exams don't always, or at least not in the way they are thought to by the educational authorities – but that's another story...



It all started with after school activities, by Helena Massó

(British English; about 3,000 words)

Things change slowly, but they eventually change

In those days, after school activities were becoming fashionable, particularly for kids living in cities. Of course, there wasn't such a wide variety of activities as there is nowadays, especially at a girls primary school: no Chinese, no Kumon, no swimming, no piano, no drama lessons...

Anyway, in my school we could learn handball, basketball, Spanish dance or... English! These lessons were arranged by the so-called APA, which stands for *Asociación de Padres de Alumnos*. The name just referred strictly to fathers and male students, even though most of the members used to be mothers, and this single-sex school was only for girls! In fact, most state schools... indeed most schools used to be single-sex schools. Women and girls were taken for granted in terms of language, that is, they weren't even mentioned. Now this type of parents' association is called AMPA, which stands for *Asociación de Madres y Padres de Alumnos*. It sounds a bit weird in Spanish, but at least includes both parents – though it still forgets about female students.

Making a good choice is a big deal

My parents weren't really prone to follow the *Mens sana in corpore sano* motto. I was a flat-footed girl who used to wear insoles in her boots and all that stuff, so my parents decided that the best choice for me was English, according to their overprotective view of life.

Sometime later I found out that my parents were absolutely wrong. The best choice for my feet, muscles and ligaments was sport, any kind of sport but particularly judo, running, walking, riding bikes or swimming... I eventually realised that because of my parents' wrong assumption I had come across an unexpected opportunity. You never know. I also have a gift for keeping fit now, as a middle-aged woman, so had I started practising any sport in my childhood, I might have become a sportswoman and thus I would have written a totally different story.

Beginnings are usually tough

The point is that in those days I was a student in third year of primary school and on my first day of after school English lessons I found myself right in the middle of an overcrowded classroom among a wide range of students up to sixth year. All of them looked huge to me as I was the youngest girl in the class. It was a mess at the very beginning, but from then on I realised that I liked that strange language with a verb called *tubí*, which meant *ser* and *estar* at the same time.

The teacher was a dark-haired young woman with a hoarse voice. She was from Andalucía and was very proud of it because according to her: *loh andaluceh hablamoh ingleh mu bien porque nozotroh ahpiramoh la hashe* [We Andalusians speak English very well because we don't pronounce the h.] I listened to her very attentively although I didn't understand most of her words: what's the meaning of *ahpiramoh la*

hasheh?

The next thing I remember is one day when the teacher told me to come up to the blackboard. In those days blackboards were black, now they are dark green or white, that is, whiteboards, and they are even interactive. If a teacher learns how to use a particular brand of interactive whiteboard and produces some materials for it, then they'll find out that they cannot use that material with ANOTHER brand of interactive whiteboard.

Interactive but incompatible: Confusing.

My job was writing the verb *To Be*, and that's what I did! A few seconds later all those huge girls of sixth, seventh and eighth year were giggling and then laughing out loud. I turned around and I stared at them confused and blushed. I couldn't understand what was going on. I had done my very best:

TO BE

I be
You be
He be
She be
It be
We be
You be
They be

The pit in the gap

Time passed by and I found out that I enjoyed learning English. All of us finished every new school year and those huge girls finished eighth year. There were just a few options once you had finished primary school: the best adapted students used to go on to BUP (Baccalaurate); the average students used to study Vocational Training, to become a secretary, a hairdresser or a nursery assistant. Weak students used to leave school at the age of 14. They just wanted to forget about school and get a job as a cleaner or a babysitter or whatever.

Some years later we realised that leaving school at the age of 14 proved to be the worst option: too much time and nothing to do but hanging around in the streets. Spending too much time in the streets in San Blas and other similar areas in Madrid meant the loss of nearly a whole generation. Yes: drugs and then AIDS swept up too many young people in just a few years. All those people who still think that the LOGSE act (the educational reform of the 1990s) was piece of crap have probably never thought about the pit in the gap, how deep the gap is between 14 and 16.

Learning (written) English (no audio, no internet, no CDs, no computers, no films...)

We used to study English with a method called *Peter and Molly*. I guessed that English kids were just ugly because the pictures showed that Peter had just four straight hairs on his head and Molly was a skinny girl with long face and long straight hair. This was my first contact with English culture, apart from Enid Blyton's books on *Famous Five* and the Thames TV series on *The Ropers*. I had never heard a word in English from a native speaker, except for songs which always sounded to me like *wachuwachu*.

Teaching methods didn't include any listening activities. Literal translation, and in spite of it I liked English.

Yes, time passed by. Those huge girls were no longer at school and the Andalucian teacher had already left the after school lessons. Our new teacher was also young, but sweeter and she wore glasses. I had reached a higher level of English, so she would give me work to do on my own; sitting down next to her while the rest of the class went on working on their Peter and Molly's stories.

My book was different, it was called *Developing Skills*. It basically consisted of reading practice and comprehension questions. My dad and I bought it in La Felipa's bookshop in Libreros Street. La Felipa was a showwoman. We also bought a Spanish version of *Oliver Twist* there, deeply impressed me and made me feel very concerned about poor people and children at the time of the Industrial Revolution. I think I was around 12.

Many years later I was really happy to visit Charles Dickens' house in London.

I remember one of the first texts in *Developing Skills*: "A Skeleton in the Cupboard". And obviously, there was a funny picture showing a skeleton in a cupboard, very British style. It took me a while to work out the link between the title and the story and... what the hell was that skeleton doing in that cupboard? I don't remember the plot, but I can still see the picture in my mind.

French, Kiss (my *)**

In our sixth year, we started learning French at school. It was part of the curriculum under Villar Palasi's Education Act. First lesson: dammit! Pronunciation: <ai> and <ei> are pronounced /e/. <Eu> and <oeu> are pronounced /e/ with pursed lips. <Au> and <eau> are said /o/ with pursed lips, too. *Some water* in French is *un peu d'eau*, hehehe, the same put in-put on silly thing in English. One step beyond: in French there are *three!!!* accents: *aigu*, *grave*, *circumflexe*. Gosh! I *do* love English – I thought – there are no accents.

In addition, our teacher was a woman who absolutely deserved her nickname: Ms Rottenmeier. She excelled at dividing the class into two groups: *Las Listas* y the rest (therefore... Tontas), like San Isidro's traditional doughnuts: The Smart and The Dummies: hmmm! She managed to create hatred towards the group of students with higher marks, from then on known as the Nerds.

Anyway, that's another story: How to Face Bullying and Survive the Teacher who Created it. And...

This is NOT the Way to become a Language Teacher

To be honest, Rottenmeier was as good at classroom management as at fostering the joy of learning French. I finished eighth year and that was the last time I touched a French book... Until now: my elder son is learning French and enjoying it a lot! What a difference! It's a bit late for me: anytime I hear Edith Piaf singing I feel the shivers, because that was the sort of GRRRRrrrotenmeier Pgrrrronunciation!!! Drilling words such as *Arretez* after this histrionic woman felt like Jack Nicholson hitting the door with his axe in *The Shining*.

Scary! Nothing to do with Tip and Coll's show filling the glass of water (a famous gag by two Spanish comedians). I wish it was different. Maybe one day I'll try to start

again. But at least I learned what NOT to do as a teacher.

Introducing Real English

Later on, English became a little more demanding because learning English was so exotic. In many schools only French was taught, so adults were really annoying because they used to ask questions such as, "What was Jimmy Carter talking about on the news?" How stressful! After I answered "*No idea*" many times they got bored and gave up, fortunately.

When I finished EGB (which stands for *General Basic Education*), at the age of 14 my parents decided that state secondary schools were dangerous places for a girl, because they were Places Full of Boys, and boys were Beings Full of Hands, as they would say in *Some Like It Hot*. So they sent me to a convent school for girls only.

Exactly: It was absolutely crazy like in *Some Like It Hot*!!

There were excellent teachers but also very weak teachers. The English teacher in first year was great fun! She was lovely: half Spanish and half Scottish, very spontaneous and cheerful. She had pale skin and curly red-brown hair. Her look was a bit eccentric, wearing her clothes with a special British touch.

This was my first contact with REAL English and I loved it.

Working out Real English

That year I started to write transcriptions and to translate my favourite songs. I did it totally by hand: there were no MP3s, MP4s, DVDs or CR-ROM players, no Internet, no computers, no Bill Gates producing software, no Apples. The technology available was just a pencil, some paper and a tape recorder, and the procedure was clicking *play* and *rewind*, *play* and *rewind*, *play* and *rewind*... on and on and on. Looking up words in a dictionary trying to guess what Mike Oldfield's words for *Moonlight Shadow* meant. From time to time I would show my work to my English teacher and she would say that it was a very good job, that I had an ear for English because it was really difficult to understand. She was soooo lovely!

She got married and left school.

I made up my mind.

The next year I experienced REAL boredom with another teacher. It was really hard for me to keep wide awake in those afternoon lessons after P.E., trying to listening instead of just hearing her monotonous voice. She could wait a lifetime until someone would finally decide to volunteer. It was so boring that the only good thing was the book: *Arthur and Mary*, kind of young *Peter and Molly*. Arthur had just 4 straight hairs on his head and Mary was a skinny girl with long face and long straight hair.

There was a chapter about a visit to Wales in the pouring rain and their arrival at a village with an extremely long Welsh name, impossible to pronounce.

What an exciting country! These kinds of things and all the ginger beer which the Famous Five used to drink in all the books I had read about their adventures pushed me to visit Britain one day.

In spite of that teacher I decided that I really liked English and I really wanted to study it more deeply. Someone suggested that I should study English Philology at Uni, and that was my decision in spite of the set books: *The 39 Steps*. The boring abridged version changed it into kind of 390 Steps!

On the other hand, I enjoyed *Animal Farm*. You cannot imagine the big mess which three Pigs can make once they get angry. Nothing to do with the Penguins in Madagascar! The best part was their revolutionary slogan: *All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others*.

It rings a bell.

Great Expectations, but Disappointed in the End

And then I started my studies at University. Vertigo!

Teachers at University were totally different from those I had met before. I started to experience the Pig's slogan in my own flesh. I had the feeling of being looked at coldly and from a long distance. The classes were crowded: the common proportion was 100 girls to 4 or 5 boys.

We felt about our English teachers the same way we would have felt about the Vikings: they were scary! There was an eccentric English teacher from England who used to wear tight colourful trousers: yellow, transparent white with underpants decorated with little red hearts or kissing mouths. He was really sarcastic to students in general. When we were taking our tests he used to say: "Don't share your ignorance" instead of suggesting not to copy but try and do our best. But as time passed I realised that although he was too straightforward, he was right, and shocking, so he was effective: much better if you are assessed according to your own mistakes instead of according to your partner's mistakes.

He suggested some magnificent examples of English in hilarious contexts: *A Fish Called Wanda* and the works by David Lodge: *Small World* and *Changing Places* – about the professors and their private lives. Some years later I got an appointment for a job interview and when I rang the bell and the door opened...I almost fainted! THAT teacher just in front of me was the interviewer.

I felt miserable.

But I found out that he was lovely at close range. I had never dared to talk to him at University... and there we were, talking about those years and he showed me his human side. I was shocked!

Short time later I heard of his death, so young. I'm glad that I had the opportunity to meet him again before he died to see another side of him.

According to Madonna, Time Goes by So Slowly... (until you are in your 30s!)

I finished my university studies on time: 1992, the year of the Olympic Games in Barcelona. It was time to find a serious job, but the main choice for a degree in Philology was becoming a teacher, and I wasn't confident in my abilities. I learned to drive, I learned karate, I learned to live by myself.

I took a lot of courses in didactics, translation, diversity, tutorials, literature and lots

of other things. I went to lessons with a wide variety of trainers: from terrible to magnificent, so I decided that maybe I wasn't that bad and I could dare to be a teacher one day. I studied for the exams to become a teacher of secondary education and I started to work as a substitute teacher until I managed to pass them with good marks... on the third attempt.

I studied for my exams at a private school, and there I met an inspector who taught the theory of pedagogy and the didactics of teaching. His lessons were, in fact, lectures, so it was a paradox: learning didactics through lectures and theory. But it worked: I learned from him the importance of laying a hand on a student's shoulder and saying "Good job, keep on working hard".

I learned the actual job of being a teacher by practice, putting all my knowledge into practice, making mistakes and trying again, and copying the techniques used by my colleagues in primary education. Copying Japanese style! Anytime I met a teacher I liked, I would say to myself, "I want to be like this", and I would observe EVERYTHING.

Beginnings are usually tough

The first years as a teacher were a bit hard. I used to dream that I was in the classroom with my students. I realised that the main rule for dealing with such a difficult audience as teenage students is to be honest to them because they never forgive you if they feel that they cannot trust you.

Some days are better than others, but year after year things are very similar the first day of school with your groups of first years. There are a lot of small faces, still children's faces, eyes wide open, looking at you, scanning every detail of you, and asking the usual questions: "With pen or with pencil? Notebook or folder? Should we copy it into the notebook?" And some months later it's you who has to look up to talk to them because they grow up really fast!

Free at last!

Now, I'm a secondary teacher of English with a position in a dynamic state school and one of the best things about my job is when they start the year commenting that they don't like or they aren't good at English, but some day later on they say that they're starting to make sense of it or even to enjoy it. That's the greatest day!

It's also great when they smile at me when we meet in corridors or in the street: *Profefeeeeee!* I spend a lot of energy on them, but in exchange they give me back some youth and quick reflexes, a lot of reflexes, every day.

Being a teacher in secondary education is a type of extreme sport: you need quick reflexes when the bell rings and it suddenly gets so crowded with lots of teenagers eager to leave their classrooms, especially in the areas in the school where the first and second year classes are.

One of the janitors used to call it The Gaza Strip.

:)



A Little of My Life: Secondary School, a New World, by Rosa González Colilla

(British English; about 400 words)

Before starting secondary school I had been to a religious school. Unlike other nuns, the ones in this school did not wear a habit and dressed like laywomen. However, I'm not sure I would say this showed they were progressive.

In the year 1974 I was doing COU (a pre-university year) at the Padre Juan de Mariana secondary school in Talavera de la Reina. I don't know why, perhaps because it was a new school, but the fact was that numerous young teachers with progressive ideas were posted there. So you can imagine the kind of teachers they were, let me just illustrate: they used to take us to the cinema and the theatre in Madrid! They would take us to the arthouse cinemas. I think that's when I saw Buñuel's film *Belle de jour*. They also told us about the Greeks, including homosexuality in the ancient world. It's hard to believe that after so many years, homosexuality remains a taboo.

That year was the first year there was COU because before that it was called PREU. Getting to secondary school was, for me, discovering a completely new world. And the most important discovery was the teachers – they enjoyed teaching! Their aim was to awaken in us, their students, a passion for learning. I must mention María María Jesús Sandoval Alonso, my Greek teacher, who also helped us with other subjects, like English or Maths. She was a True Teacher. She also told us about the meaning of the bombing attack that killed Carrero Blanco [during the Francoist dictatorship]. When the bombing took place, those of us who had chosen Greek as an optional subject were in class with her. I think Elena Colilla was in that small group, and Santiago Manzano, Inmaculada Chinchón (Macu) and Virginia Gil. With this teacher we also learned about Cat Stevens's music – actually, his parents or grandparents were originally from Greece!

I am telling you about all of this because I'm going to tell you a story: why I travelled to London in the year 1975. It was at secondary school where I developed the need to learn about other worlds!



Why I travelled to London, by Rosa González Colilla

(British English, about 500 words)

Why did I travel to London? Perhaps it was simply because I had a passion for adventure and because, as I said in my previous post, secondary school made me interested in learning about the world. It triggered in me the passion for learning!

I had no need to leave my parents' house because they gave their children all the freedom we could dream of. I never had to ask for permission to go on school excursions. We never had to ask *May I...? Am I allowed to...?* at a time when most of our classmates had to. They were never allowed to do anything. I never had any problem with my parents in this respect – they were very open-minded. When I finished COU I told them I wanted to travel to London to learn English. They didn't oppose the idea – they even encouraged me to leave! However, they could not help me financially. They gave me a thousand pesetas [about €6 nowadays] in case I needed to make an emergency call [international calls were very expensive before the internet] – calls were through operators back then.

I remember that in that summer of 1975 there was a murderer in London who, if I remember correctly, had killed three young nurses. Just imagine my poor parents: I was there, on my own, and so young! The more I think about it, the more I realise my parents were ahead of their times.

My brother also had a passion for adventure. Just before his call-up, he decided to join the Legion. He probably learnt more and met more interesting people there than if he had done his ordinary military service, like most other young men.

In those days, when a young woman wanted to learn English she usually looked for a job as an au pair. Looking after children as a job meant living with a family, and this meant, you would have a house to live in, and the chance to learn English. Things usually turned out differently. In most cases, the foreign student did a lot of cleaning and very little speaking. I never managed to make myself apply for such a job. I needed freedom and independence. The only job I did that might be similar in some way was looking after a dog, Mr. Paddington! It was not a job, really – it was a gift! Mr. Paddignton's owners were what years later would be called "yuppies," Young Executives. This gave me the chance to live in a luxurious flat, very close to the Spanish Embassy, in Belgravia, number 3 Eaton Place.

The best way to find a job back then was at the private language school you went to, because those places were full of ads. It was there that I learnt about this Japanese woman who was going back home and leaving this amazing job of looking after Mr. Paddington!


 **Teaching – and the Wonder of Life in a Blade of Grass, by Carol A. Hand**

(American English, about 1,700 words)

Although I didn't realize it at the time, Sister Lorita, my undergraduate advisor from St. Xavier College for Women in Chicago, taught me more than botany. Through example, she taught me what it means to teach. Students made fun of her because of her weight and because of her enthusiasm for her subject, a subject they found boring. One day when we were meeting, Sister Lorita looked at me and said, "I know students laugh at me, but I don't care if people make fun of me. It's worth it to me if they learn to see the wonder of life in a blade of grass."

"The wonder of life." Isn't that the most important thing we can learn? Although I was a chemistry and biology major at the time, my life took a different path. Instead of science, I teach students how to work with people, although there are many times when I would rather be an ecologist.

When I first started teaching, I did not remember Sister Lorita's lesson. I taught the same meaningless theories and content in the same boring ways as most of my previous teachers, yet I noticed there were differences. Unlike colleagues who told me they never admitted they didn't have an answer to a student question, I was honest. While other faculty told me they made up an answer, I admitted it was a good question that I needed to research before giving an answer. I was encouraged by a friend, a linguist and Jewish scholar, who supported this approach. She told me that the Hebrew word for the verb "to teach" is an intensive form of the verb "to learn." It is this chance to keep learning that makes my work so rewarding. The other difference I noted was my tendency to highlight student strengths and accomplishments, rather than merely point out errors in their work.

It took me years to recognize that these differences were truly significant. Like Sister Lorita, I became far less concerned about what others thought of me and more concerned with how what students learned in my class would affect their views of the people they were responsible for helping during their careers. Could they learn to see the wonder of possibilities in all people, regardless of their past and present circumstances? So I began experimenting with ways to consciously "walk the talk."

I am consistently exploring ways to operationalize a liberatory praxis framework in my research and teaching. Liberatory praxis is based on a dialogic approach for raising awareness about the ways in which dominance is established and maintained. Praxis, the synthesis of theory and action, results in recognizing that both those who dominate and those who are dominated share in the perpetuation of oppressive institutions and paradigms (Freire, 2000).

As an Ojibwe scholar, a linear descendant of hereditary chiefs, I have been socialized to accept responsibility for providing leadership and for challenging and working to transform oppressive ideologies, institutions, and practice paradigms. (Ojibwe leadership was not a position of status. Instead, leadership carried obligations for community service and responsibility for community survival and well-being. No one was obligated to follow leaders – this was an earned status based on a leader's ability to preserve the community through wisdom and generosity.) I have learned through

example that this means that I must reflect critically about the roles of power, political ideologies, and practice paradigms in the reproduction of hegemony over oppressed groups and individuals. Both the content and methods that I use for practice, teaching, and research are consciously selected to reflect a recognition of individual and group strengths and the importance of structural and environmental forces.

As an educator, researcher, and practitioner, I believe I have a responsibility to model respectful partnerships that explore and create "the best we can imagine" for our clients, colleagues, communities and world. This means I am always learning, not infrequently from approaches that prove short-sighted or ineffective. If there is anything I learned from my doctoral work and subsequent research, it is how much more there is yet to learn. This realization is a powerful foundation for working in partnership with others, especially those who have internalized the belief that they have little power or knowledge. It also gives me the freedom to experiment with new approaches and connections, to synthesize and create, and to take risks.

Years ago, I was watching an educational show on methods for teaching diversity. Although I have long forgotten the name of the show, the slogan the presenters used has remained with me and has particular salience for social work education: "to learn, to care, to act." As a social work educator, it is my belief that I have a responsibility to teach students the knowledge and skills they will need to work respectfully and effectively with clients, organizations, and communities. Liberatory Praxis, the blending of theory and action, is a crucial teaching foundation that requires going beyond merely requiring students to memorize facts and theories (Freire, 2000; Wallerstein & Duran, 2003). It moves beyond the "banking model" of education that views students as empty vessels to be filled by the teacher's knowledge. Liberatory praxis recognizes that teachers are also learners and are responsible for creating environments based on principles of awareness and respect for differing perspectives, mutual responsibility for learning, and consciousness-raising of both learners and educators through dialogue.

It is also crucial to encourage students to develop and apply critical thinking skills, and to help them develop an understanding of, and empathy toward, people who come from very different backgrounds. Given that social work professional ethics require challenging social injustices and inequality, students need to be able to critically evaluate the practices and policies we teach. Often, as social workers, we are all required to work toward client and community empowerment and liberation within the context of limiting, deficit-focused paradigms and policies.

In order to operationalize a liberatory praxis philosophy, I interweave a number of different approaches into the courses I teach: (1) a breadth of professional perspectives in required readings; (2) readings that expose students to the emic (or insider) views of oppression rather than merely relying on etic (outsider) observations and assumptions; (3) in-class exercises and modeling that encourage teamwork, the development of empathy, and the application of critical thinking skills; and (4) assignments that require experiential involvement with the focal topic, critical thinking, and self-reflection.

During the past several years, I have had an opportunity to read more broadly and reflect on the cultural fit of this egalitarian, dialogic, and consciously modeled approach for working with others who have less power in a given socially constructed community or institution. It is my belief that social work educators have an ethical responsibility to teach students the knowledge and skills they will need to work

respectfully and effectively with diverse clients. Unlike other disciplines, social work educators have an additional responsibility to model strength-based, empowering practice in their pedagogical approaches with students. We know that students do as we do, rather than what we tell them to do.

Experimenting with different approaches for modeling empowerment with students has been the primary focus of my work as an educator during the past twelve years. As a result, I believe that I am better able to articulate to students the specific approaches I am using with what hoped-for outcomes. I am also better able to create classroom and online environments that enable students to learn through exposure to rich and diverse perspectives, self-reflection, critical dialectical assignments, and evaluation of their own applied work and that of their peers. In that sense my work has remained both liberatory and applied.

Most importantly, I ask students to become mindful of the lenses they look through to understand the world and other people. We are all socialized to see the world in certain ways by our culture, socioeconomic class, and religion, etc. In order to unpack what we have learned to accept as "normal" and "good," there are a number of questions each person needs to explore and answer for themselves. There are no right or wrong answers, although they may differ from the answers others have.

Cosmological questions: Are people basically "good" or "bad?" Some cultures believe that children are born in a state of original sanctity, as gifts from the creator to be protected and allowed the freedom to express who they already are. Other cultures believe that children are born in a state of original sin. They need to be taught right from wrong, using coercion and punishment if need be to help them learn to behave in morally acceptable ways. How cultures answer this question can be discerned by looking at the institutions and policies they develop to socialize, educate, and protect children and families. Is the world a place of scarcity or abundance? Competition for scarce resources results in inequality and war. Yet abundance is the result when people believe that there can be enough for everyone to share if people work together, using only what they need, and acting as stewards for the resources in their environments.

Ontological questions: Is there one truth or are there many (Creswell, 1994)? Are both possibilities? The answer to these questions differs across people and cultures and indicates our willingness to respect the trustworthiness and value of beliefs other than our own.

Epistemological questions: What is the relationship of the observer to that which is being observed (Creswell, 1994)? That is, does my very presence as an observer affect the behaviors of others and therefore, change what I observe? Or am I in a protective bubble, as it were, capable of being present with no effects on others I am observing? Am I capable of remaining invisible to those whom I am observing, and separate and detached from what I am observing, allowing me to be completely objective?

Axiological questions: Is our understanding of others value-free, or do values color how we make sense of the world and other people's behavior?

Understanding one's self and the ways in which one has been socialized to see the world are indispensable for understanding others in respectful, inclusive ways. Learning to see the wonder of life in a blade of grass is perhaps one of the most

important things we can learn. If we can't see the beauty and wonder of life in nature, how can we see it in each other?

I am truly grateful for the opportunity I had to learn from Sister Lorita's example and her words of wisdom so many years ago. May her spirit rest in peace knowing that at least one student did listen, even if it took decades for that student to remember. Perhaps many others listened as well.

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Article originally published at <http://carolahand.wordpress.com/2013/11/22/teaching-and-the-wonder-of-life-in-blade-of-grass/>, where you will also find the graphics illustrating it.



Asking Questions in Church, by MF

(US Am English; about 1,150 words)

It's hard to trace one's beginnings as an activist, but there is an episode in my childhood that could be considered a good example of how things got started.

When I was ten, my mum asked me if I wanted to spend a year abroad, to learn English. The options were a boarding school in England (I'd never survive there!) and... Australia! I ran to our atlas and looked up the biggest island in the world! I saw pictures of kangaroos and aborigines, with their amazing boomerangs. I daydreamed of living in a hut, of building a tree house and of traveling in kangaroo pouches, or perhaps on their backs, depending on their actual size! My answer was fearless. I found the best wooden stick Spanish soil could produce – I'd exchange it for a boomerang in some kind of welcome ritual, I presumed – and packed my basics.

Apparently, in Australia there weren't many aborigines – they had been murdered or trapped on reservations where they were given alcohol, like they did to American Indians in the USA. I didn't know that, though. I just gaped at the huge fleshy red flowers in those bright green trees and the neat houses with trimmed backyards. My house had wall-to-wall carpeting, a sewing machine to make felt clowns and clothes, cinnamon toast, a parakeet, a cat and 42 Nancy Drew books. The music that was playing when I arrived was "The Entertainer," Scott Joplin's rag used in the Paul Newman and Robert Redford movie *The Sting*. Cool, but that was not the kind of adventure I was hoping to jump onto.

The woman who was going to look after me was a Catholic – a real Catholic, not like many Catholics in Spain, who are mostly atheists. She expected an obedient Catholic girl wearing a golden medal of some Spanish saint, not a critical thinker. When she first saw me, I was being dragged out of the plane by a pissed-off flight attendant. I had taken off my woolly pants in Singapore because it was boiling hot – in Madrid it had been snowing! – and I thought that my upper clothing item would do as a dress. My suitcase, my pants and I were completely soaked in stinky anti-lice lotion. My uncle had instructed me as follows: "The moment the plane lands, pour this magic green liquid all over you and your things. It'll protect you from cannibals for a year." And that was exactly what I had done. The problem was that people started throwing up and the plane became an unbearable place to be in. Everybody hated me. But I was a little girl on my own in exotic and dangerous lands and I had to take care of myself. Would they rather have me simmering in a pot?

Actually, I almost simmered... in Hell! It was the first time in my life I was going to study at a convent school. We were forced to go to church on Fridays, and we had to confess our sins. I got some briefings on sins, but I kept having tons of questions about them. Then we had to do the same two days later, on Sunday. I was mostly argumentative about confessing twice a week. In my view, I couldn't possibly have enough time in two days to commit sins, so why should I go to church again? I had things to do at the weekend! I was accused of talking back (that was a sin) and of arrogance (another sin). I felt rather bewildered by all that Sin System which suddenly entered my life. I was told I could not be argumentative. I was expected to obey blindly, without making questions! Faith was like that. Being good meant forgetting about using your intelligence. It meant believing things that were

completely crazy. Belief was contrary to imagination and reasoning. I was a bad girl. I was a sinner. And sinners had no rights.

I was ten, so they did make me doubt. Everybody seemed to agree. People thought I was a bad girl because I kept explaining – explaining my views about not being able to sin so much, about how absurd it was to go to mass twice in just three days, and also about God's views, yes!, because I was sure God wouldn't be angry at me, even if I never went to church, because I had never been to church before and God seemed to be all right about it.

Things *did* get pretty complicated. At every mass the priest told an amazing story called a "sermon." It was the best part of a deadly boring and kind of robotic event. I've always been irrepressively spontaneous and extremely well mannered, so whenever I had a question or comment, I'd stretch my arm high up in the air and voice it. I did so on three (tragic) occasions. The first time was when the priest told us the story of Adam and Eve and the apple. Eve had been curious about learning, which I thought was smart, and then had shared a delicious apple with Adam, which was really kind of her. But what did she get in return? A demented violent God criminalizing her for that, and kicking both of them out of paradise as punishment! God seemed to have a hell of a character! "Excuse me... Sharing your stuff is good. My mum always tells me. It wasn't Eve there who was misbehaving!" I can't remember what happened next. But I remember a second occasion. The question was about Noah, the guy who didn't love God that much because when God asked him to do something positively unfair, he went ahead and obeyed blindly, instead of helping his Father to become a better ruler: "Gee, that was cruel! How could he pick two animals of each species if they were all innocent?"

My third (unconscious) and final action at mass was viewed as the unquestionable signal that I had the devil inside of me, and cost me a series of months of being terrified into beatitude. "If hell existed, my mum would have told me," I defended myself at the beginning. But they had resources. They brainwashed me into salvation and eventually all my hopes focused on the possibility I might be a prospective saint because some saints had been bad girls before. That third interruption of the sermon was when the priest told us the story of the multiplication of the loaves and fish. I burst out laughing and exclaimed, "Oh my! I can't believe THAT!"

It's always been like that since then – when you use rational thinking, a great alternative to violence, people think you are being aggressive. Ah, pitiful species, wasting its intelligence away! If God existed, it'd surely make that a sin...



The Bullfighting Experience, by MF

(US Am English; about 1,200 words)

When I was 13 my mother was invited to a *capea* and she took us along with her – her children, my younger brother and me. That was what she usually did when her "admirers" or "candidates" wanted to take her out! She used to say, "If they like me, they have to like my kids too". This time this admirer of hers was a well-known Spanish bullfighter whose name... Holy Molley... I don't remember!

Let me explain first that a *capea* is an informal event people in the world of bullfighting hold, to have fun and hang out with their friends. The problem is that *capeas* involve mistreating a young bull in a small bullring where the men pretend to be bullfighting – without using swords or *banderillas*, the kind of short spears they use in bullfights with barbed ends that are thrust into the bull's back so that the bull becomes weaker. That is, the bull is not killed. Still, it is torturing the bull. It is frightening and infuriating, if you are not into watching how animals are tortured by humans.

I suppose I should describe here what a bullfight is, so that you can learn how to do it in English! But if I do, I will forget about this story, so here's what – listen to [this audio](#) I published on talkingpeople.net

Back to my story, on that day my mum and I fought a bull. It was 1976, in Franquist Spain (well, in English people say "Francoist" but I prefer what I'm using). My mother was "the (dumb) blond", wearing tight jeans and high heels! Men teased her about fighting the bull and they did it in those sexual ways which read as if they were saying, "We want to fuck you," if you know what I mean. Really nasty. The thing was, they didn't know her. She took up the challenge (of bullfighting, not of going to bed with them)! Taking off her shoes, she jumped onto the *arena* – the ground where bullfighting takes place. Life was mostly an adventure for my mother. Wherever she was, whatever she was doing, life was full of promise and excitement.

So there was my dearest mummy, using the *capote* to entice the bull and sort of dance with it by giving it passes. The *capote* is a cape, a piece of cloth used to do the bullfighting. This one was not yellow and pink, like the one they use in *corridas*, bullfights, but red, like the ones they use when *toreros*, bullfighters, are going to kill the bull. But this one was smaller and lighter, of course. People leaning against the walls of the small bullring shouted *olé* each time the bull passed by her. They cheered and whistled and said obscene things, too, because she was a woman (they don't do that when it's men, I mean – they just appreciate his skill and art). My mother did pretty well, I must say.

And then, the second surprising event of the afternoon happened. Mum called out my name: "Mimi! Come over here! It's your turn!" My mother never doubted me. She seemed to think I was not afraid of anything. I was, of course, more often than not, but mostly of people. I was proud, too. In spite of being a girl, I had not learned to control or tame my pride. I suppose I need to mention here that I was a tomboy. I hated being a girl. Nobody expected anything from girls except them being "pretty" and "clean" and "nice", and then being willing to work for others for nothing. Girls had no honor. No intelligence. They were treacherous and frivolous and weak and spoiled.

Girls had to accept being overprotected, which meant being incarcerated in homes and hairdressers', a radical limitation to their freedom of movement. Like my mother, I loved being independent and strong and free! I loved racing my bike and daydreaming on tree branches. I spent most of my days hating the world for wanting me to be a girl, for continuously reminding me of it, for *making* me *be* a girl. But my mum treated me like I could do whatever and be whatever! For me, spending time with her was just like going on adventures! And then, I shared a passion for life with her, endless curiosity!

One more thing – I also felt continuously compelled to fight injustice – this hasn't changed much, I must admit. Anyway, I needed to mention this to explain what happened – why I punched a man that eventful afternoon.

My mum called me, so I jumped over the wall and onto the *arena*. She passed me her cape and I was left in front of the young bull. Men started shouting, "We want to see the blond! Out with that skinny girl!" but my mother was ignoring them, joyfully watching me and asking for the public's support. So I stood quietly in front of the bull, holding the cape. I made a pass and then another. It was a very intense experience. I didn't like it, though. I think I was in a state of shock because I was looking into the bull's eyes, and the bull was a living being, and I wondered what was on its mind, how it would feel...

Out of the blue, a man ran to me, took one end of the cape, and kneeled, so I had to kneel too, to level the cape. When the bull charged towards us I remained kneeled, because I thought that was the plan. However, the man ran away and jumped over the wall for protection. The cape was covering the bull's eyes, so the bull couldn't see and crashed against the wall. When the cape fell from its head, the bull was bleeding in its nose.

That had been cruel! That man was laughing with the others, at the bull. They thought it was funny to be cruel to animals! So that got me furious. I ran to the man and punched him in the stomach! Just then, the bull jumped over the wall and started to run free in the fields!! It was so exciting!

We were mesmerized. Some men rushed to get into their cars and jeeps to capture it.

I couldn't bear the idea of the bull being captured by those stupid brutal men. I think I ran away and climbed a tree. I was really upset and overwhelmed. Later on, in the dark quiet night, when we were driving back to Madrid I told my mother what I thought about bullfighters and their macho world full of violence.

After that, the only thing I knew about the torero was that he had been sending my mother flowers and pictures of his "corridas". My mother, however, had moved on – way passed him!

The Casino Story, by MF

(US Am English; about 1,150 words)

When I was a college student I had become independent. I shared an apartment with two other people. One was an older friend of mine – a misfit just like me! – and the other was a young businessman who smoked dope non-stop and loved a Spanish singer that I hated! All of my other friends still lived with their parents, so our rented apartment was very much booked for all kinds of events, and populated by all kinds of people!

Those were wild days, but not like people imagine "wild" – I just mean, days full of youthful ideas and actions! I used to make myself up in strange ways. Instead of using mascara, I used the eyeliner to paint the universe or the tree of life on my forehead! I used to walk barefoot and wear all kinds of clothes, from African tunics to a leather jacket! I used to house people who needed a place to stay for a few days, pay for everybody's drinks, organize poker games (we played with *duros*, five-peseta coins, and *cinco duros*, 25 *ptas.*) and give away books "as if there were no tomorrow" (to quote Rocío, my physio). I would walk in the city night and talk to people I met, and I met a lot of very special people. I was always making friends. I had all kinds of friends, who I met in all kinds of places. They could be from left-wing political parties or people who believe in tradition, religious believers or non-believers, cheerful people, depressed people, rich or homeless!

One day I had arranged to meet my friend K., her boyfriend and her boyfriend's best friend. After our last meet up, we wanted to find a new hangout spot, because in our usual place we had been poisoned – by eating some river crabs that had gone off! (And what a night that was! Just imagine!!) So that afternoon we went to a different area. Some good jazz / blues music attracted our attention. We walked into an extremely crowded, noisy and smoky pub and found... a pool table! After a few beers and a few games, I had to go to the toilet. As I was squatting and aiming my pee flow, just next to my right foot, I spotted a wad of notes! A wad of money notes! I couldn't believe my eyes!

Once out, we flocked together and counted the money excitedly: 80,000 pesetas! Nowadays that is €500. Today I wouldn't be able to pay my monthly rent – that's just half of it! In the 1980s, 80,000 pesetas was Big Money! At that time, we were paying 24,000 pesetas for a three-bedroom apartment. We just paid a third each, which, plus shared expenses, was about 10,000 pesetas a month each. I was earning 100,000 pesetas a month for eight months a year teaching English in private language schools, where they did not require the qualifications the public system requires people to have, and managed to get by the rest of the months without having to find another job.

Going back to my story... That night I had found enough money to pay my rent for eight months! But those were sweet times in terms of finding jobs. I used to find a job whenever I needed money, so I was carefree. On top of that, I was young and eager to experience things. So this is what happened with the money...

We started making wild proposals on how to spend all that money! It didn't cross my mind to give it to homeless people, because it all felt so merry and unreal! Then

someone said: "We could go to the Casino!" The Casino! Never in a thousands lives would I have thought of that! The Casino was totally out of my reach, our reach, in every way. Consequently, it was on. Gambling for real!

We rushed to my house to borrow the businessman's car and then drove to the Madrid Casino. We were allowed in, which amazed me – I was sure *I* wouldn't be – because we were wearing our usual clothes! I actually looked like a hippy. The two boys were wearing casual clothes, and my friend looked a little bit better. She had actually made up and was wearing rings and bracelets. We were an odd-looking gang, but there we were!

I can't remember all we did. I mostly remember an intense feeling of excitement and a scene or two. I remember our friends playing blackjack and winning. And I remember my friend K and I spending our part in different kinds of games. Then I remember the boys giving us their winnings. Apparently, they thought we were putting it away, keeping it safe! Instead, we were hopping joyfully to the roulette, and losing it all in seconds! Then we would go again to our friends, and because they kept winning, they would hand us more money, and we would rush again to the roulette to lose it! Obviously, our intention was to become rich, but the roulette was fast as lightning and had no mercy on us!

After gambling away the money we had found, which included great fun all the way and some flamenco dancing in the spectacular toilets, meeting and talking to weird people and giving a hard time to some waiters, the boys came up to us and said:

—Let's go and have dinner at the Ritz Hotel!

Puzzled, K and I looked at each other, "Did you win more?"

—More? You've got the money, haven't you?

—We said we were going to gamble it all!

—What?!

They were really upset, but they didn't dare to show it because they were still young and innocent and the fact was that I could have kept the money for myself after finding it. I had done something generous, share my good luck with my friends, so that we would all benefit!

Nowadays I would not spend any money in a casino, that's true. Actually, it was my first and so far my last time in one. The world around casinos is an underworld, full of crime, tragedy and abuse – these days very much protected by democratic governments! – even if quite a few people just go there and have a drink and a laugh, like we did when we were young.

Today I would probably give the money to homeless people or to an organization supporting immigrants or fighting gender violence (patriarchal violence against women), or keep it to finance the independent self-financed projects we're contributing to, like talkingpeople.net or mujerpalabra.net.

Anyhow, the best and the worst thing about youth is that – the tons of mistakes you make, some certainly regretful but some others great fun!


 **Dishwashers, by MF**

(US Am English; about 1,300 words)

Before leaving for the Congo, my dearest friend Sandra Pò came for a visit. I had just moved into a beautiful apartment and away from the big city to this little town where you can hear birds singing and bells ringing! So this time instead of a tiny house with a broken flush and packed to the rims with books, paperwork and newspapers, I was able to offer a wonderfully ample, clean and well-lighted space – the 50 square meter attic upstairs, with an ensuite bathroom! My partner and I had just finished a one-month process of unpacking, cleaning and tidying up the newly painted house (whose rent was a bit too expensive, but hey, *carpe diem*, let's live it up!)... The house was furnished with the basics, and we were determined to keep it that way, so as to have tons of space to move about. (As you grow older, wiser, you make things much simpler!) My partner was now away on a holiday, and there we were, Sandra Pò and I, ready to sit back and relax, enjoying the few precious days we were about to spend together. The timing and the space couldn't be better!

Throughout two decades Sandra Pò and I have been meeting every now and then all over the world: the first time was at a Nonviolent Direct Action training in the north of Spain. Then we met again in Guatemala, where we were volunteering with a pacifist NGO operating in countries at war. After that, she sometimes visited Spain, because of (paid) work, and she would take advantage of that to do some (unpaid) work for our grassroots network, which included meeting up with sisters! I also visited Belgium a couple of times because I had a relationship then with another Belgian activist, and because a bunch of total resisters from the CO movement and I decided to drive in an old van to an international pacifist meeting in Namur!

Just imagine it all – Sandra Pò and I could be eating beans and *tortillas* (small and thin Indigenous American corn breads) on a dirt floor house where people had been threatened by death squads, or having a beer in the ad hoc bar of a squad in multicultural Lavapiés, a neighborhood in Madrid, or tasting the most delicious wine in her cozy little home in Brussels. We had the physical strength to be committed to on-the-front activism (Good old times! Now my strength is just mental!) – which means not having private things or spaces and undergoing and dealing with all kinds of privations (you're cold, you're thirsty, you're afraid, you're exhausted or overwhelmed, you're hungry, you're lost) – but we also tried to keep our capacity of appreciating the good things in life, doing so without feeling guilty.

When I had to return to Europe at the end of the eighties, in the midst of war I told a nonviolent activist (who, in the past, had been a member of one of the Latin American guerrilla groups which sought social justice and the end to all the horrors people were being subjected to) that I might feel guilty in Europe each time I was enjoying the good things in life. He replied, "The issue is not that people who have the chance to be happy should renounce that opportunity. The issue is that all of us can actually have that opportunity in life." I certainly agreed. His words allowed me to avoid any confusion thereafter! I had always sensed that sacrifice was not good or a requirement in striving for a better world. Since then, I've always tried to be loyal to that idea, and avoid the kind of activists who emotionally blackmail and guilt-trip every single living being! (You see, there's a better world also in the world of activism!)

My friend Sandra Pò is the kind of activist that understands that idea, too. We're two of a kind! We can spend hours and hours together, just being there, or talking non-stop, or talking and then being in silence. We can have, or have not... (Although time wears you out, and then there are certain things you cannot go without, like an eight-hour sleep, a chair to sit in, or a proper bed to lie in!)

And now that Sandra Pò is literally risking her life and well-being in the Congo, I look at the dishwasher and smile, or giggle, or laugh. When we moved here, the kitchen had a dishwasher, and I thought, "Oh my! Dishwashers stink. They are also useless. What am I going to do?" "We won't be using it," I had told the landlady. "Well, just keep it," she replied. And then Sandra Pò came for a visit and taught me how to use the dishwasher, and also this little story:

When an activist who was having lunch at her house saw her placing the dirty dishes in her dishwasher, he exclaimed "You have a dishwasher!," accusingly. And then, "You live on your own and you have a dishwasher!!" (Did that also mean, "You're a woman and you have a dishwasher!!"? Did he know, for instance, that having guests for lunch involves working out the menu, doing the shopping, cooking the meal, setting the table, *clearing* the table, *doing* the washing up and putting the dishes away...?) Patiently, Sandra Pò replied, "I've got better things to do."

Sandra Pò was not going to discuss the matter with him. You can often sense when people are incapable of listening or understanding that the world is not only what they think it is – that there may be different reasons to do or not do things. She didn't tell him that she had studied the issue carefully and realized she saved more water and washing-up liquid using that gadget. She just told him something that was simply true – she had other priorities. Nowadays in some countries of the world women may have other priorities, other than doing the housework. Human beings can have all sorts of priorities in life, when free to choose, and most of those deserve some respect, even if it's women having them! Sandra Pò needed her time for her priorities, and that's all there was to it.

Ah, throughout the years, I keep wondering... Why is it that people are most demanding with the people who give the most? Once, Rosa, a colleague of mine [who has contributed a few stories to this ebook], answered, "Because only those people give."

Now that Sandra Pò is away, in our dearest beloved superexploited forgotten-by-all violence-ridden Africa, I look at the dishwasher and regret not having taken a picture of how skillfully she maximized the space when she loaded it the week she taught me how to use it. She knew it all about the best soaps to use (*c'est bon marché ça*), she even knew in what direction to place things to get this or that kind of wash! I deeply regret not having taken a picture of Sandra Pò pointing at the *full* racks and smiling. Or one of Sandra Pò and me in front of the dishwasher drinking to... dishwashers? Or one of the dishwasher all alone, and us in a different room having a drink of rum or wine and chatting away in the dead of the night while the dishwasher did the dishes. Long live dishwashers! I miss Sandra Pò each time I use the dishwasher. I guffaw each time I use the dishwasher and remember Sandra Pò replying to the outraged young man, "I've got better things to do."



Living in the Space Between Cultures, by Carol A. Hand

(American English, about 1,900 words)

My first memory as a child is so clear in my mind even though experts in brain development say it is not possible. It was my first Christmas. A February baby born on the cusp of Pisces and Aquarius, I lay in my crib as the winter sun streamed through the window. My mother and father stood on opposite sides, arguing. The personal pain and insecurities that led to their argument were so clear to me. But more compelling were the strengths and beauty I saw in both of them. I struggled helplessly in a body that could not give voice to what I saw. All I could do was cry.

I don't remember choosing to be born to parents from different cultures, both deeply wounded by their own lifetime experiences. And even though some religions believe in reincarnation, I am unwilling to speculate about things I cannot know for certain. I only know that for my mother, I was both "the one bright star" in her life, and a constant reminder of the shame she carried because of her Ojibwe heritage.

I do, however, remember the day I chose which culture would define my sense of identity. But before I tell the story, I need to back up a little to earlier times. My father grew up with abuse in a dour, cruel Anglo-American family. As a man of smaller stature who joined the marines, he was often the victim of cruel teasing and bullying. He learned to be the first to strike out with biting words, fists, and whatever weapons were close at hand. My mother was an easy target. Programmed in Catholic boarding school to believe that she was inferior to whites because of her Ojibwe heritage, she accepted emotional and physical abuse without question. No one would help her. My father's family was certainly not concerned, and my mother's relatives were too geographically distant. Priests and counselors told her it was her duty to stand by her husband. So she did, until one day when I was 4 and my brother was 1. She left, taking little except me and my brother. I remember the train rides as we sped across the country on a series of new adventures, living in apartments and trailers in a number of states – Texas, New Mexico and finally, Wisconsin. Each time, when my father would find us, my mother would move again. The final stop was at my grandmother's home on the Lac du Flambeau Ojibwe reservation where my mother was born and raised.

I remember that day clearly, although I was only 4-and-a-half years old. We were standing in front of my grandmother's house when my father arrived. He told my mother that he was taking my brother and me back to New Jersey. If she ever wanted to see us again, she would have to come too. My mother stood there sobbing, with my brother in her arms, as my father stormed off to the car. I ran to catch him. He turned and looked down at me as I started to yell. I kicked him in the legs as hard as I could and screamed, "I hate you for hurting my mother. I won't let you hurt her anymore!" That day, I chose to be Ojibwe, as I consciously chose to become the family scapegoat. I did protect my mother, although she rarely did the same for me. I now understand why she couldn't. I also protected my brother to the best of my ability until I left for college. I learned how to withstand insults and beatings with strategies that have left me with unique strengths, or serious weaknesses, depending on the context.

But my ancestry is both Ojibwe and that of the descendants of immigrants from Europe. The fact that I chose which cultural identity to call my own has little to do with how others see me. Because I grew up between two cultures, I never felt that I really belonged to either. There were no family members or classmates or teachers to serve as guides to teach me how to walk in two worlds. But I quickly learned that the liminal space between cultures is often a lonely place to live.

Rupert Ross (1992) observed, "When you try to be a bridge between two cultures, you should expect to get walked over by some people from both sides." (*Dancing with a ghost: Exploring Indian realities*, p. xx). This is true from my experience, but not the most difficult challenge to overcome. Because I was in-between, I had to learn to listen and observe others intensely to try to understand who they were and what was important to them. Not surprisingly, this often meant I learned to bridge many differences. Because I learned how to stand up against abuse, I was most interested in working with people whose experiences were in some ways similar to mine. By watching and listening to people from many different cultures, I became increasingly aware of the larger structural issues that underlay their shared oppression. But to be an observer who also sees a broader context is a space of distance that prevents one from really ever just "being" with people. (Perhaps this is one of the reasons why I have always found *The Prophet* by Kahlil Gibran so compelling.)

For years, I tried to avoid living in this liminal space. I started college, switching settings several times before leaving. I tried chemistry and biology and French and philosophy before dropping out with more than enough credits to graduate if I had ever decided on a major. Instead, I traveled and worked at minimal skill jobs – a nurse's aide, a telephone operator, a donut finisher, a seamstress, a receptionist who couldn't type but who was skilled with people, and a waitress in elegant restaurants and greasy spoons. I did find a reason to choose living in the liminal space between cultures again when I took a job as a kitchen aide, and then as an attendant, in a horrific institution for people who had cognitive and physical disabilities, Belchertown State School for the Mentally Retarded.

In my first few weeks there, my helper, Donald, was dealt with in an overly violent manner by one of the long-standing attendants, a large, angry man. Donald, then 21-years old, was referred to as "BoBo" by staff, a nickname that sounded demeaning so I didn't use it. Donald was born with Down Syndrome. His parents, shamed by doctors into institutionalizing their son soon after his birth, rarely visited. Living in the infirmary was the only life Donald knew. He never went to school, did not have anyone who worked with him, and learned he would only get people's attention if he had a tantrum. One day, his glasses were rubbing the back of his ears raw. The nurse on duty would not help him, so as I walked by, he grabbed the cart I was using to distribute juice to residents. He was screaming and pounding the floor. I just left the cart and carried things by hand, intending to help Donald when there was nothing left to spill. When I was done, I headed back, just in time to see the angry attendant grab Donald off the floor and knock him into the wall, twist his arm behind his back, and drag him down the hall and throw him roughly into the seclusion room. Donald remained there for hours, screaming and beating his fists bloody.

I spent a sleepless night, pondering what I should do. I knew I would suffer if I reported the incident, but I realized that I could not remain silent. After all, the attendant had violated the institutional rules he agreed to follow, not my self-righteous notions of how one should treat residents. Needless to say, things got a

little dicey and remained that way for a while. My punishment came as a promotion to the job of attendant in the heavy-lifting ward. (I think I weighed about 100 pounds at the time.) I actually loved the residents, and it was interesting to see how quickly people who were classified as "total care" and "profoundly retarded" learned to help when I came to lift them. But I felt powerless to change the conditions of oppression that dictated every moment of their lives. I decided it was time to do what I could, little though it might be, to try to change the systems of oppression that continued to wound so many people from generation to generation because they were classified as different and disposable.

Decades later, I am grateful for the decision I made to assume the responsibility for doing what I could to not only address injustice, but more importantly, to experiment with ways to live from a stance of liberatory praxis, combining theory and action. My graduate studies focused on understanding organizational theories and social welfare policies from dominant cultural perspectives and subjecting them to a critical analysis from an Ojibwe worldview. During my career as a policy developer, administrator, program developer, educator, and researcher, I experimented with ways to consciously work toward liberating people rather than merely imposing approaches that encouraged conformity and powerlessness.

In this last phase of my life, I feel a sense of urgency to use my remaining time as constructively as I can, even though it means remaining in the liminal space between cultures. I have begun writing a book about the child welfare system from a critical ethnographic Ojibwe perspective, an approach that explores not only what is, but also what was and what could be. As I revisit the stories I gathered from Ojibwe people of all ages about their childhood experiences, I often find myself wishing I could simply blame colonial oppressors for all of the atrocities indigenous people have suffered throughout the ages. But as Bourdieu, Fannon, Foucault, Freire, Gramsci and so many others point out, it is not really that simple. Hegemony remains in place because of our everyday decisions to take the easy road, to keep too busy to care about the world around us, to remain silent about the injustices we see, to sometimes use oppressive systems to gain our own piece of the pie, or to invoke the power of the police state to resolve disputes instead of dealing with them ourselves. To blame all of the world's ills on the ruling elite robs us of our free will, our personhood. It would be like blaming my parents for all of the mistakes I have made, sometimes because I was clueless, sometimes because I was lazy, and sometimes because I just wanted to self-destruct.

We cannot change history, although it is often "white" washed in the texts we study. We can only change the future. It is my belief that we can only do so from the liminal space between nationalities and classes and cultures and genders and ages and abilities – and all of the socially constructed distinctions that divide us. I hope enough of us can remember what it is like to be a child who is able to see the beauty in others that they may not be able to see for themselves.

In closing, I wish to say *chi miigwetch*, Jeff. Thank you for encouraging dialogue and providing a place where diverse perspectives are welcomed.

Article originally published at <http://deconstructingmyths.com/2014/01/11/mic-check-carol-a-hand/> and its translation into Spanish at http://www.mujePalabra.net/conoce_a/pages/carolahand/espacioumbra.htm



Being a Mom, by Ana Otto

(About 700 words)

Of all the scary things I can think of a woman can undertake in adult life, I'd say that being a Mum – yes, its capital letters! – is probably the scariest. Or at least it is for me. Let me tell you about it. As a teenager, I used to think about babies as the lovely tiny creatures we girls displayed in our folders. As a matter of fact, back then motherhood was kind of a presupposition for women our age and every time I considered the possibility, the images in my mind were as honeyed as those in the TV commercials – all creamy colors, thin, stylish, relaxed women, getting bunches of flowers and chocolates when in hospital, bottle-feeding their babies surrounded by a quiet and mild atmosphere, and showing no sign of serious sleep deprivation, dark circles or baby blues.

Because society never shows the secret life of mums, we are never told about the sacrifice, the pain and the great burden of responsibility one feels when having a newborn in her lap as well as, on the other hand, no commercial will ever be able to describe the intense joy motherhood can entail. At least I wasn't told that way, but for one person. That's why I thanked my sister so much when she told me about the strange feelings I might observe as a brand-new Mom. I will never forget the first time I saw my cutie pie and the awesome responsibility I immediately felt. I became so overwhelmed that I thought to myself "Ok, that's it! I can probably have other things in life but I am permanently removing sleeping soundly from the list!" And I certainly did, not because I thought my baby was not able to sleep several hours in a row – he did for sure – but just because I had the feeling that my new condition was not a temporary one but a long-lasting one, the one lasting forever. And this is for us Moms more than for everyone else in the world. Fathers do matter and care about babies but in a different way. Go to a restaurant on a Sunday morning and supervise family tables around you, no matter who is sitting just next to a baby but it is always a mum the one feeding her, paying attention so that she is sitting properly at a table and not doing acrobatics with the inevitably risk of falling down every now and then, picking food samples and cutlery from the floor, cutting the meat in small portions and secretly hiding in a napkin those ones she was unable to chew at the same time we are smiling at the waiter to convince him we seriously need two straws exactly the same shade of color if there happens to be two kids sharing a meal.

And then there's this stupid thing about multitasking. Multitasking does not mean we are able to do more than a thing at a time, are you kidding? Come on, we've been doing it for ages, you don't need to be a mum for that. It really means that no matter what you are doing, maybe you are doing nothing at all but painting your nails while you're listening to your favorite show at Divinity channel but you are always and will always be thinking about your babies and believe me this is exhausting!

And let alone school – that horrid place where children are simply left for you to worry about possible threatens and dangers: Why is that bloody bitch called Miss X taking care of *my* kid and not *myself*? Will she notice the cute and sensitive guy he really is? What is his role in the group? Is he in or out? Will he be chosen first for football or last? Is he a good student or does he struggle? Will people like him? How much?

I am terribly afraid the show does go on and on, and it will continue the same for

good. Welcome to the wonderful world of motherhood where you become the lioness you have always longed to be.



Three Things, by Asun Villamil

(US Am English; about 600 words)

My family is the most important part of my life and they keep teaching me things every day. There are three important things that I have learned from them throughout the years:

Number 1: I don't want to be a medical wife.

Number 2: Everyone is a princess.

Number 3: Questions are important.

Number One

Before we had any children yet my husband and I spent one summer in the States. He was going to be a visiting doctor at a renowned clinic there and I planned to spend the time finishing my thesis, which I was eager to get rid of. During the weekends we wanted to do some sightseeing at in the end we would have our real holiday visiting California. It was a great plan, though hard, since we worked long hours – he was at the hospital all day, I typed, and thought, and revised and checked and did the daily shopping or cooking.

One day my husband came back from work with some magazines from the hospital to tell me about something which I had asked him about before – and of course I've completely forgotten what that was. One of the magazines had the title of the feature on the cover 'Medical wives'. I couldn't figure out the meaning and I went on to read the article. It consisted on two interviews with two women who were married to doctors and their experiences with dealing with their husbands' jobs. I couldn't have been more horrified. One of them, apart from describing how she had had to support her husband in his career, mentioned anecdotes like bringing clean underwear to the hospital for him after a night shift. As I said, I couldn't be more terrified. I swore to myself never to become a medical wife. Time will tell...

Number Two

I have a little girl who is two and a half. She is the sweetest thing, she's an adorable little one who hugs you and kisses you and asks you thousands of sweet questions every day. Like many mothers, I guess, I call my little girl all sorts of names: 'my little angel', 'sweetie pie', 'my little princess'... I had never really thought too much about them, I just feel like hugging my children and saying them.

One day, she did something good and I said: 'You are my princess'. She thought for a while and answered: 'And my brother too.' Yees, I said. And then she added: 'And Daddy too. Daddy is a princess'.

So from that day I know the real definition of the word 'princess'.

Number Three

My other child is a five-year old boy. He's a very active child and though he's really warm-hearted he's always up to some mischief or another, as most five-year-olds are. After making his father and me angry for something I have forgotten, his father

roared: 'But what were you thinking about?' The child, who I suppose did not understand the reason for such an uproar, answered quietly and innocently: 'And you?' Hard as it is, I try to ask myself that question every time I see my children doing something I consider wrong or my students making a mistake – and me? What have *I* done?



Jazz Among Friends, by Marta Moreno

(British English; about 1,500 words)

In the 1980s there was an emblematic TV programme called *Jazz Among Friends* (*Jazz entre amigos*). This could be the perfect title of this issue. All the people involved are linked by the bonds of friendship and their passion for jazz. It's a collage: I invite you to imagine this collection of interconnected images. I'll be your guide in this trip, which will take you through time and space.

I started working as a teacher at the Official School of Languages in Ronda when I was very young. One of my colleagues there was poet Albert Torés. He used to give me a lift back to Malaga on Friday evenings and we would listen to jazz and eat Cadbury chocolate while Albert negotiated the dangerous winding road to San Pedro. Sometimes I wondered how he guessed there was a curve when the fog covered the road. "I know it by heart," he used to tell me. Later on Albert moved to San Roque, where he met a shy fifteen-year-old boy who improvised jazz on his piano: Juan Galiardo.

When I met photographer Lorenzo Hernández in the middle of the 1990s, jazz was the topic of our first conversation. At the time I was living in Jaen, a small city in the north of Andalusia. I mentioned the famous club *Chubby Cheek* (which, sadly, no longer exists), a miracle place where the Nirvana-loving youngsters from the town learned to love Charlie Parker. I suggested that he gave me a ring whenever he visited Jaen so that I could show it to him. Well, the rest is history. I ended up marrying him; *it's one of those things*.

When our daughter Carla started going to kindergarten, we met Ángel San Bartolomé, whose son Álvaro, now a talented pianist, was one of her classmates. I remember one end of the year party when we decided to disguise our children as Billie Holiday and Miles Davis. Nobody recognized them. Our friendship with Ángel and his wife Rosa continued along the years and our passion for jazz lead to several projects. I especially remember the 2000 New Year's Eve party at hotel Puente Romano in Marbella, where Ángel was playing with the Malaga Big Band and Lorenzo was the band's photographer. There was a moment when Ángel, with his back to the audience, was trying to signal the musicians to start *Stormy Weather*. But they refused. He tried several times before turning over to find a girl in an aquamarine all-transparent dress dancing with an old man. Ah, the power of women!

One of the members of the Malaga Big Band was saxophonist Javier Denis, who we met by chance in Utrecht some years later. Lorenzo and me where there in Autumn 2009 because he was exhibiting some of his work at the *Utrecht Art Festival*. It was a Sunday morning and we were looking for a place to rent a bike. We asked a lady and she advised us to forget about cycling and go to a music festival that was taking place all over the town on that day to celebrate the beginning of the arts season. Imagine our surprise when we saw Javier and his *Andalusi Jazz Band* playing on the main stage. I specially remember a toddler who was passing by with his mum. The little boy stopped to listen to Javier's bewitching sounds and refused to move, no matter how much his mum pulled. This made me reflect on the primeval nature of jazz, which connects with the unspoiled soul of small children.

When I moved to Fuengirola in 2000, one of my first advanced students was Javier Rodríguez Barranco. Javier was a Renaissance man; he wrote, he acted, he was writing his thesis about Bioy Casares. His compositions, as you can imagine, were a pleasure to read, and his speaking presentations were, of course, about jazz. Javier had a 12-year-old son, Sergio, who was mad about comics. Some years later, he became one of my students as well. He was the only boy in a class full of adults and he made a presentation about Marvel and DC Comics. To illustrate it, he brought his own collection of originals. I still remember his suffering look, as he saw how his classmates were not treating his treasure with the utmost respect. Actually, they were just joking. Years later, this boy became Xero Fernández, our designer. If you follow his work, you'll realize that one of his main sources of inspiration is John Coltrane.

Along the years we've had several language assistants at the Fuengirola Oficial School of Languages and some have a special place in my heart, like Amy Nickerson or Priscilla Schmidt, who are also *Collage* collaborators. But six years ago there was a girl who worked as an assistant in La Cala Primary School and came to the EOI Fuengirola every Thursday to give me a hand with our theatre group. I remember her enthusiasm, her creativity and "her notebook". Her name was Julia Halprin Jackson. We have been in touch since then, I follow her promising career as a writer and, as usual, I find her support in all my projects. When we planned this issue, I invited her to collaborate and, to my surprise, not only did she say yes, but also found another contributor, her mum, journalist Lyra Halprin, who has written a moving piece on David Brubeck. I couldn't believe my luck.

My friend Priscilla Schmidt told me that the difference between a journey and a trip is that the journey changes your life. To end this editorial, I'll tell you about two unforgettable journeys. The first one took place in February 2009. Barack Obama had just taken the oath, hope was in the air and we wanted to be in Chicago, one of the cradles of jazz. One of the advantages of being the wife of an artist as great as Lorenzo is that his photography allows you to get to places you would never reach. Some weeks before setting off, I contacted a musician through *MySpace*. I didn't know him, I just liked his voice and his look. His name was Saalik Ziyad. During our trip, he was our guide and our model. We had a memorable session in a house in Hyde Park where he improvised a rehearsal with his band, *The 5 after 7 Project*. Listening to these talented musicians while Lorenzo moved around taking photos is one of the happiest memories I have. But Saalik is not only a singer, he's also an educator and he teaches through his lyrics. This is the topic of his contribution to *Collage*. He's coming soon to Spain, so watch out for his concert dates.

The second journey took us to Århus in Denmark. Thanks to another Jazz lover, Lucas Ruíz, we contacted saxophonist Benjamin Traerup and singer Indra. What can I say about her? She's pure sweetness: in the way she sings, in her contact with the audience, when she's speaking and singing to you while she's posing for the photos. This shows in her article, *The Meeting Place of Music and Love* and in the recordings you can listen to in his website.

Photography led us to jazz again when we met Renée Hutchins. She was singing with her beautiful voice and Lorenzo had been hired as a photographer for an event. A friendship started on that day. Renée has modelled for Lorenzo several times and she has come to sing for our students at the Official School of Languages in Fuengirola. She's also someone you can count on for any project. Last summer Lorenzo exhibited a selection of his fashion work and asked some friends to play during the opening.

Renée would be the singer, Ángel would play his trumpet and through Ángel we met an awesome guitarist, Nicky Vargas and his wife, singer Daphne Pelet. It was a memorable night among friends.

We have seen Nicky and Daphne perform several times. They don't just play, they live jazz. I won't say more about them because you'll discover everything in this issue.

Finally, meeting Mo Malone was like a miracle. My friend, the writer Siobhan Galvin, used to tell us about her and how much we would like each other but we never met until Siobhan's funeral. It was as if we had known each other for years and we have been friends and collaborators since then. Mo is one of the most generous people I know and of course has contributed with a poem she wrote specially for us, *The Jazz Singer*.

I invite you to become part of this miraculous collage of interconnected friendship and music. Just go on, read and listen.

Originally published as: Editorial de The Jazz Issue, Collage Magazine no. 5 (abril 2013). Available at <http://www.collagemagazine.com/>



On Human Dignity, by MF

(US Am English; about 600 words)

If your sense of dignity lies outside yourself, anyone can take your dignity away from you, but if it lies in your inside, in your mind, nobody can take that away from you.

For me, my dignity lies in the fact that I will never see what is not there. If my solution to a problem involves that I have to do something I am critical of, I have my intelligence to know why I did it (to analyze things to get to understand them), and also, to know that *that* was not what I would have done. This means I will never make up stories to justify what I did and knew was wrong, because those lies are violence against yourself and others.

Sometimes we don't do what's correct. Life is complicated. The next time we can surely do better if we learn from our experiences and we do some critical thinking. If we justify ourselves when we act in ways we would not have wanted to act (usually that involves dumping bad things on other people), we'll open a door to acting that way again. We'll open the door to repeating the same mistakes. We'll be unable to learn from life. When we don't, when we are honestly aware we did not manage to solve the problem correctly, we'll be giving ourselves the chance to learn from that, to become what we would like to become – we won't lose track of who we are and of our dreams and ambitions.

Here is the issue of courage. Courage, in my view, is about controlling your fear, keeping your panicky tendency at bay, by fighting not to lose track of what you know is also true.

Life is full of useful information, really! And (I think) I will never understand why we don't use it in constructive ways... Life could be much nicer, easier, more fulfilling. But through lying we degrade or reduce our chances.

Another useful idea to construct one's dignity is, in my view, this: all the things I fight against in life are in my inside, too. Feminism has contributed that idea and that reads it's actually the most self-critical social movement, which is a rare and positive thing. So what happens if you are part of what you fight against? Well, you just need to try to keep track of your ideals and work on your life and self in constructive ways.

I have to say, that although I'm often doubtful about my own performance and beliefs in life, and at times I think I have made no progress, that there is nothing to do, that I'm simply wrong in my approach, still, I cannot change my approach. This happens because I have not found a better option and because there are other times when I *do* notice my progress, when I notice how all that work and effort has made me a better person than *that* which I would have been like if I hadn't made all that effort.

In job-hunting, in a language lesson, anywhere, everywhere, I find that things point to the road of *seeing reality*, that it all amounts to the same fundamental issue of being able to contemplate life with a clear gaze, the freest possible gaze, and never abandoning our amazing capacity to learn and a couple of ideals. Mistakes will never make me feel humiliated. Not being able to see what's going on *would* because it would deprive me of my feeling of dignity.



Ah – The – Um – Clicker by Carol A. Hand

(American English, about 1,000 words)

Years ago, I was a faculty member for a school of social work at a western university. It was not a school that welcomed diversity. Many faculty members used a heavy-handed method for assuring conformity, an approach that was at odds with my beliefs about education as an opportunity to help students learn to unlock their potential. I was astounded when a graduate student related her experiences in a class on human behavior in the social environment. The instructor wanted to teach students to become accomplished public speakers. He noted, "Social workers are so often terrible speakers." Perhaps, but so are many others from other backgrounds.

The teaching method he used seemed at odds with a program that was purportedly based on promoting a strength-based foundation for working with people. What astounded me in the student's account was her feeling of humiliation. Public speaking is, after all, the number one phobia of Americans. I still suffer the effects of this phobia. So, I am particularly sensitive to others' challenges. My colleague's unique style of teaching this skill quite frankly would make me grow silent.

Rather than focusing on the message, the organization, the audio-visuals, the strengths of voice, facial expression, or a host of other positive attributes, the focus was on a student's verbal fluency (or lack thereof). That is, the faculty member counted the number of "ums" or "ahs" the student used during his or her presentation. The logic of this approach escapes me. In fact, I found it hard to believe that a faculty member in social work, in a strength-based program, in a program that emphasizes a commitment to social justice, would actually treat students this way. I asked another colleague for confirmation. "Was this practice really happening?" My colleague laughed and said, "Well, yes. But it's better than it used to be."

I learned that what used to be was even more troubling, but thankfully students rebelled and the practice was changed. On presentation days, the instructor would arrive with a small instrument, a "clicker." It was a small twanging instrument with a button that was pressed by the instructor each time a student uttered "um" or "ah" as they presented in front of the class. The audible click each time the button was pressed added to the students' humiliation. The "clicker" tallied the total number of the deadly space-fillers, and grades were assigned in large measure on the results of the count – the more ums and ahs, the lower the grade.

I listen to public radio regularly and often wonder why there are so many speakers on an auditory medium whose speech is punctuated by hesitations of various sorts, or whose voices are stridently nasal or lackadaisically monotone. Yet I ask the questions, "What is the most important way to judge a message, even on an auditory medium?" and "What is the purpose of communication?" I have encountered a lot of gifted snake-oil salesmen in my career, and a lot of people with profound messages haltingly delivered. (I would rather listen to meaningful messages delivered inarticulately than the self-promoting drivel of a snake-oil salesman any day.)

As I write this, I shake my head, still in disbelief. What are the real lessons of this exercise? But this story doesn't end here.

One of the students who had class with "the clicker" internalized the message that she

was not good at communication and needed to improve if she was going to graduate. It was not until her second year that she asked me to serve as her advisor. During our first meeting, she told me that she had been told she needed to learn how to communicate. So, I asked her to tell me what she meant by "communicate." (I knew from reviewing her past classes that she had been studying dance.) Her response was that she needed to learn to speak in front of audiences. My reply was that speaking was one form of communication, yet 85% of what we understand is based on cues other than the words that we hear. How people look, the pitch and volume of their voice, their body posture and facial expressions often tell us far more than their words. I asked her if she thought of dance as a more powerful form of communication than a speech.

She listened politely, but I could tell (not by her words) that she really wasn't convinced that anything other than speaking in public was real communication. Over the course of the year, however, she had an opportunity to discover the power of movement as a form of communication. It just so happened that she worked as an intern for an agency that was designed to help teenage girls improve their self-image by becoming involved as leaders in local environmental issues. She became aware of the negative images the girls had of their bodies, and how this prevented them from really expressing themselves as leaders. She worked with the girls to design a presentation that involved movement, not words. When the girls performed their creation at the end of the year, their teachers and parents were profoundly touched by the beauty, strength, and pride expressed through dance.

My advisee did graduate. Yet unique among all of the students, she did not use oral argumentation to support her graduate portfolio. She danced. And amazingly, "the clicker" attended and even participated when the audience was invited to join. Although he was deeply affected by her performance, he later decided that no other student would ever be allowed to defend their work in any way other than spoken argumentation.

Fortunately for all of us in this profession, this student has gone on to use movement and dance as tools in her work with individuals who suffer from mental illness. I am truly grateful that I had a chance to work with someone who was courageous enough to break through the taken-for-granted definition of what it means to communicate. Certainly a method that helps young girls overcome the silencing shame they feel about their body image may offer all of us a way to express ourselves with greater freedom and joy.

As human beings, we have a simple choice. We can choose to relate to others in ways that are hurtful and oppressive. Or, we can choose to help others find their strengths and the song in their hearts. But we cannot help others until we find the song in our own hearts first.

Article originally published at <http://carolahand.wordpress.com/2013/08/25/ah-the-um-clicker/>, where you will also find the graphics illustrating it.



Remembering Our Lost Ones, by MF

(US Am English; about 550 words)

Well, tonight is the night when some people around the world remember their lost ones. In Christian religions they call it All Hallows' Eve (Halloween) – "hallows" meaning 'saints,' 'souls,' or the date referring to the dead. Apparently, Christians took the idea from pagan festivals, from the Celtic harvest festivals.

I'm not a believer, but I know what it feels like to lose someone you love, and as a symbolic animal belonging to the human species, I also try to do something to honor the fact that the dear ones I lost were once alive, and we loved each other – in spite of fights!

This year I recorded an audio version of a poetic prose I wrote two years after my mother's death, in 1990, and I painted a picture, too. Before this year I have written poems or stories. Or simply sat down to look at photos. Or laid in bed thinking about her. [For advanced students, I'm using a present perfect here instead of past perfect because the action is still open in the present.] But it's true I remember her very often, unintentionally I mean, for instance, in class, when I tell you stories about my past!

That was the case yesterday, when I told the Casino story in Y3C (it's the second year I tell that story) and after that remembered what an extraordinary mother I had had!: somebody who taught me to play poker, or to have lovers instead of boyfriends if I was not positive the person was the right one for me! :D I like it when memories come this way because they make me laugh instead of making me sad.

Because my family was small, I did not enjoy something which I think is really valuable, not for the religious reason but for the sharing that takes place: the sharing of memories. In wakes, most typically, people who loved the person who died spend long hours together, and this gives them the chance to share stories, anecdotes, about the person. That's amazing. You learn more about the person you loved, from other people's viewpoints or worlds. And many of those stories make you laugh and feel consoled – keep you company in some way.

So both for believers and non-believers I *do* recommend that you get together with people you love and share your memories on the person you all lost. It doesn't have to be in a wake, of course. It could be anywhere anytime! I did this once with some friends of mine who had lost their parents. We went out for a Mexican meal and started sharing memories and rounds of Margaritas, while singing the songs their parents used to sing, and having a lovely time together – until the waiter suggested we leave, because we were being far too loud! He actually informed us that a restaurant was not a tavern!! 0_0

Then, of course, we shouldn't forget about the other side of death. This also helps with keeping our private hurt in some kind of container. I'm referring to remembering how many people are getting starved, tortured (including rape) or killed because of the greed and the violence of others. I also try to remember this, to give me energy to fight for a better world, and to help me appreciate how lucky I am in a positive way: by learning to defend my happiness while nurturing a commitment to trying to make people feel fine or connected, if possible.

Happy Day of the Dead! Make the most of it!



Grandma Paquita and the Wondrous Life Pattern, by Marta Moreno

(British English; 1,300 words)

Lives are lines that criss-cross time and space; sometimes these lines meet serendipitously, sometimes they run along parallel lines that are never meant to converge. However, if we could observe these lines from above, we would marvel at the beautiful pattern they make.

Let's take two moments separated by one thousand miles and nearly twenty years in time. In the first one there are two women sitting at the Tate Modern Members Room contemplating how the weak November sun sets behind St. Paul's Cathedral. One of them is pregnant, but the baby is not the topic of their conversation. They are talking about the history behind her family, who left Indonesia after the independence war that followed the Second World War. It's the most engaging story: a beautiful Indonesian woman had two daughters: the first one with a Dutchman and, ten years later, the second one with an Indonesian man. When the colonists decided to leave the country, the 'pure' ethnic Indonesians took revenge on those who were descended from the Dutch, because they had enjoyed privileges which they never had. Many people who had just returned from the terrible Japanese prison camps were interned again in Indonesia, especially those of Dutch descent. The government of the mother country made a decision: the Dutch descendents would be invited to move to Holland. However, the Indonesians would have to stay, however harsh their plight. This separated the two sisters for life.

In the second moment, the woman who was listening to the story is eighteen years younger. She is in the South of Spain, in her hometown, and she's visiting her grandmother, who is very ill. The old lady lives with her youngest daughter, who is married to a Dutchman. All of a sudden, she looks restless, and asks her granddaughter to come nearer and whispers in her ear: "My darling, as you like travelling so much, I'm sure you'll be able to lend me a suitcase. I am going to the USA." The young woman thinks that her grandma is speaking nonsense, that this request is just another symptom of the dementia that has been taking hold of her life during the last months. She promises that she will bring her the suitcase, being sure that she will have forgotten by the end of the day. This day the young woman's life will change forever, but I won't tell you about this. Yet.

The two moments are connected because there are two parallel stories, the story of two sisters who were separated for life but stayed linked by an invisible thread. The first woman in the story is my friend the painter Marenka Gabeler. I am the second one. This is the story I told her that evening in the Tate Modern.

In every family there is someone who is the guardian of the stories, who keeps them and who transmits them to the new generations. In my family, it's my mother, Paquita. She says it's important to tell the children where they come from. When we were kids, she used to tell me "adventures" instead of fairy tales. The protagonists of these adventures were always members of the family: there was the one about how my uncle Juan Manuel ran away from the seminary several times (how my grandma thought he could become a priest is a mystery to me), the day my mum took a sun ray for the Virgin Mary, how *la tata* María cut the chickens' necks and they started to

run about headless... The stories went back generations until the middle of the nineteenth century, when my grandmother's grandfather, a Frenchman, came to the South of Spain with Empress Eugenia de Montijo. This man spent all his fortune on gambling and having a good time, so there was no money left for the next generation, who had to earn their living as labourers. In fact, his son, my great-grandfather, worked in the building of the famous *King's Path* which goes around *El Chorro* reservoir. Life was hard, my grandmother, another Paquita, was the oldest of twelve children of whom only five survived. My mum always said that the sadness of seeing so many of her brothers and sisters die in their infancy never left her.

A very important person in my grandmother's childhood was her cousin Francis. They were like sisters, as Francis was growing up without her parents. Her mother was dead and her dad had emigrated to America. My mum told me that her grandparents almost did the same but when my great-grandmother, who was holding my grandma Paquita in her arms, saw the ship, she told her husband: "I don't know about you, but I'm not travelling on that shell"; so all the family decided to stay.

One day, when the two girls were thirteen, Francis's father returned from America as a rich man. I can imagine the shock of meeting a father you had never seen since you were a toddler. He suggested that he could take his daughter to Malaga to buy her some new dresses. The village where they lived is only twenty minutes' drive nowadays, but then it took more than a day to get to the capital. So off they went, and they never saw Francis again. Her father put her on a boat and they sailed to America. Cruelty? Certainly. It was a great blow for my grandmother to lose her cousin. But with hindsight, it wasn't such a bad thing for Francis to be taken to America: she went to the best schools, married a millionaire, had a good life. Paquita, on the other hand, went through the civil war and the post-war years in a country that was in ruins and, without international help, did not start to recover until the 1960s. On the bright side, all her six children survived, including my mum, who was always ill and spent months in bed during her infancy. According to what my mum says and as far as I remember, my grandma had a perennial smile on her face, which was one of her charms.

Despite the distance, Francis and Paquita kept in touch. She even visited Spain in 1942 with her husband, as you can see in this photo. She also sent parcels to her family, and this is how my mum received nice clothes and nylon stockings. But she did not return until both of them were old ladies in their late seventies, when following the American tradition, she decided to spend a holiday in the place she came from. I was living abroad then, so I never met her. My aunt Cristina says that her English was exquisite but she spoke Spanish with the broad accent of her village, which was very funny, considering she was such an elegant lady.

So this brings me back to that evening almost twenty years ago, when my grandma wanted to make the reverse journey and go to the USA to visit her cousin. One week later my auntie told me that she had received a phone call from America: Francis had died on the same evening Paquita had asked me for the suitcase. I don't know if she somehow sensed her cousin was dying but the coincidence is intriguing nonetheless.

Paquita died two months later on 31st december 1996.

Marenka's grandmother refused to go back to Indonesia. The two sisters reunited for the first time in the ninety-seventies. Marenka told me that her great-auntie had the power of seeing people's spirits; my grandma certainly had a connection with her

cousin's soul.

And how did my life change on that day? After leaving my grandma's house, I went out for the first time with a man I barely knew. My husband.

Originally published at
<http://rememberinginlondon.blogspot.co.uk/2014/01/grandma-paquita-and-wondrous-life.html>, where you will also find the graphics illustrating this article and relevant links



Celebrate Living Creatures' Rights Day!, by MF

(US/UK English; about 1,200 words)

Vacations/Holidays are all wrong. I certainly believe that we should talk about the winter break/holidays, the spring break/holidays and the summer break/holidays because not everybody believes in this or that religion. Season breaks would be more rationally sequenced and they can coincide in part with those traditional dates for religious groups.

Rearranging the holidays would be a matter of wanting all of us to live together in more democratic ways, really. For example, take December 10, Human Rights Day. Why isn't this a holiday – nationally, and even internationally? Why should we *celebrate* October 12, the date standing for the European Invasions of America and the genocide of the original inhabitants of the continent? It's taken us till the 20th century to understand that all human beings have the same rights! We should celebrate that notion! Before we managed this idea, some people were considered worthless and some others the representatives of God on the planet, or those who could exploit and abuse feeling totally entitled to do so. Obviously, reaching this understanding cannot wipe out all the harm done. But this would be just a beginning, the beginning of a better way to organize societies.

Before we coined "human rights" it was religion organizing/organising societies and what Men and Women could do in life, their roles, what their hopes and dreams should be. Today most people understand that religion and spirituality should not organize society, for those are private issues, to share with like-minded people, but not to impose on the population. We are learning to respect non-believers and also different kinds of religions or spiritual options.

The genius of the human rights notion is that it protects (respects) *both* believers and non-believers, so if we all respected the notion, we would be able to build juster and less violent societies.

It is true that patriarchal monotheist religions are having a harder time with this notion, because their dogmas have assigned gender roles to human beings, and women have always been defined and treated as inferior – intellectually, emotionally, spirituality –, a faulty version of Man, a source of evil if not controlled by Man.

Please, don't pretend I'm talking nonsense. There is far too much evidence – both in the past and still today. Why is it that Man has traditionally decided whether to impose motherhood (through rape and banning abortion) or abortions and forced sterilization on women (to religious and indigenous / black / poor women), regardless women's opinions? This comes from this tradition of considering women men's property and beings incapable of sound decision-making.

In spite of all this, numerous believers in those religions are moving beyond their religious dogmas, at least the violent ones! They are refusing to believe that it was women who brought suffering to the world, they are refusing to believe that sexual intercourse should exclude pleasure, or that women should have as many children as God sends them, or that it is Men who need to decide that for women because women's judgment is not good enough. They're challenging all that and they're trying to build a kind of spirituality consistent with the human rights notion.

Cruelty to Animals

December 10 also celebrates, at least for the Animal Defense/Defence movement, the rights all animals have. So here's another good reason for celebrating this day!

People in the kind of societies we have built are incapable of living together with other animals, of respecting animal rights. We can see this wherever we look. We have taken up all the physical space, and locked up other animals in zoos or food production places. In food production places we treat animals in most horrible ways (find out what chickens' lives are like, for instance). We kill animals continuously for food and in spite of the existence of laws to prevent "avoidable suffering," we don't kill animals painlessly if these animals are quiet, e.g. lambs. We torture them to see what happens – sometimes we find it's justified, although even for medical purposes there are alternatives to testing on animals, so the true reason is we simply do not care much. We make animals work for us. Fortunately, sometimes they seem to be OK with it – I'm thinking only of pets. Some dogs and bitches are really happy to protect you. But then – pets have a special relationship with some of us. However, most animals are cruelly exploited in various ways by humans – from the demented food production system to testing for cosmetics. We as a species also "celebrate" things by torturing animals, which is one of the scariest thing we can still see and which reminds us of those obscure times in which people were entertained with executions and murdering rituals.

Animal rights activists raise important issues in society, about our relationship to (other) animals and I believe they should get respect from us: we should listen to the points they raise. Vegans say:

- Don't kill animals for food. Many people can actually choose their diet, and we can be healthy without having to eat animals.
- Learn about the consequences of mass food production in nature – animal and the environment.
- Don't exploit animals: vegans are against animal testing, and this relates to different areas of our lives, from cosmetics to medicine.
- Don't torture or kill animals for fun: it degrades us.

Personally, I am an omnivore. I do not feel guilty, ashamed or proud of that. It is annoying when activists resort to guilt-tripping (addressing you from a superior position) and then it is unnecessary because vegans' reasoned points are powerful and can stand on their own. On the other hand, the majority that understands things in the exact same way should stop insulting and making fun of vegans – they're fighting for a world where the rest of the animals are on an equal footing with humans, they're not abusing anyone.

I'm not linking to the most famous animal right group in the USA because their campaigns are often misogynist (and therefore do not respect women's rights) and in spite of well-founded criticism they refuse to change that, learning to overcome their own sexism. I would like to see the men in those groups playing the part they give the women in those groups play in their poster campaigns, for instance. To put it in their own words, they, the men – are animals, too, after all. (That's how they justify using women in that way.)

Useful Language. Eating Lifestyles

I'm a vegetarian: I don't eat any kind of meat (beef, chicken, fish, seafood..., *jamón serrano* or Spanish ham). I have dairy products (vegetarian cheese, milk, butter), honey, this is, food coming from animals that remain alive, and then all the things a vegan eats.

I'm a vegan /vígn/: I don't eat anything from animals, whether dead or alive. Furthermore, I don't use products that have been tested on animals, I don't use clothing and footwear made from animals. I consider myself an animal, like the rest of the animals on the planet, so I don't feel I have the right to mistreat them, exploit them, or kill them.

I'm an omnivore: I eat anything, everything. Still, I don't agree with cruelty against animals, and our food production system is extremely cruel to animals. To make matters worse, we kill to throw away, and this is immoral towards animals and other human beings who are starving in the world. The meat industry is also a main cause of damage to the environment.

And what's a 'freegan'?!



For a Well-focused Gender Discussion (Celebrating Feminism), by MF

(US Am English; 2,000 words)

For upper intermediate and advanced learners, with infinite sadness but also with loving fury!

Considering how critical I am of how badly gender issues are presented in textbooks, I decided to put together this in case students are interested in preparing for well-focused gender discussions – mainstream gender discussions are grotesque in every sense, and brutal, cruel. The quotes below come from the chapter called "Know Your Enemy: A Sampling of Sexist Quotes" in *Sisterhood Is Powerful. An Anthology of Writings from the Women's Liberation Movement*, edited by Robin Morgan (Vintage Books, 1970). I included info about the men who stated them and it is frightening that considering the diversity of their cultural backgrounds or occupations, they agree so clearly on women's inferiority, lack of a human mind.

Why do people mistrust feminists, when the case is that most people have not read a single feminist book, or met a feminist in their lives? Isn't this hate and mistrust of women thinkers and activists consistent with the century-long traditional idea that women are not to be trusted, that they are inferior intellectually, physically, spiritually to Man, the true image of God, the Father? Why hate feminists when thanks to this nonviolent struggle our lives are better, more truly human? And why should genitals play a more important than human minds in determining our identities and roles in society?

We're all antifeminists when we don't think twice because we are brought up learning what Men and Women are supposed to do in patriarchy, not learning how to be human. That's the power of culture, and we've had patriarchal culture for centuries – unlike today's developing diversity, which is making the system collapse.

Here are some key ideas we've been led to believe century after century.

Can you collect similar quotes from your traditions or present society? Try to explain what's wrong with these quotes, why you think they're considered sexist.

Know Your Enemy: A Sampling of Sexist Quotes

From *Sisterhood Is Powerful. An Anthology of Writings from the Women's Liberation Movement*, edited by Robin Morgan (Vintage Books, 1970) [We have numbered them for easier reference.]

01. The glory of a man is knowledge, but the glory of a woman is to renounce knowledge. –Chinese proverb

02. Do not trust a good woman, and keep away from a bad one. –Portuguese proverb

03. Women are sisters nowhere. –West African proverb

04. Whenever a woman dies there is one quarrel less on earth. –German proverb

- 05.** Never trust a woman, even though she has given you ten sons. –Chinese proverb
- 06.** In childhood a woman must be subject to her father; in youth, to her husband; when her husband is dead, to her sons. A woman must never be free of subjugation. –*The Hindu Code of Manu, V*
- 07.** I thank thee, O Lord, that thou hast not created me a woman. –Daily Orthodox Jewish Prayer (for a male)
- 08.** There is a good principle which created order, light and man, and an evil principle which created chaos, darkness, and woman. –Pythagoras (c. 570 BC-c. 495 BC), Greek philosopher and mathematician
- 09.** We may thus conclude that it is a general law that there should be naturally ruling elements and elements naturally ruled ... the rule of the freeman over the slave is one kind of rule; that of the male over the female another ... the slave is entirely without the faculty of deliberation; the female indeed possesses it, but in a form which remains inconclusive ... –Aristotle (*Politics*, c. 350 BC), Greek philosopher
- 10.** If thy wife does not obey thee at a signal and a glance, separate from her. –*Sirach 25:26*
- 11.** When a woman thinks ... she thinks evil. –Seneca (c. 4 BC- AD 65), Roman Stoic philosopher
- 12.** Creator of the heavens and the earth, He has given you wives from among yourselves to multiply you, and cattle male and female. Nothing can be compared with Him. –*Holy Koran of Islam*
- 13.** And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. –*Genesis 2:22-23*
- 14.** How can he be clean that is born of a woman? –*Job, 4:4*
- 15.** Suffer women once to arrive at an equality with you, and they will from that moment become your superiors. –Cato the Elder, 195 BC
- 16.** Let the women learn in silence with all subjection ... I suffer not a woman to usurp authority over men, but to be in silence. –St. Paul
- 17.** Wives, submit yourselves unto your husbands ... for the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church. –*Ephesians 5:23-24*
- 18.** The five worst infirmities that afflict the female are indocility, discontent, slander, jealousy, and silliness ... Such is the stupidity of woman's character, that it is incumbent upon her, in every particular, to distrust herself and to obey her husband. –*Confucian Marriage Manual*
- 19.** God created Adam lord of all living creatures, but Eve spoiled it all. –Martin Luther (1483-1546) German monk
- 20.** All witchcraft comes from carnal lust, which is in women insatiable. –Kramer and Sprenger, *Inquisitors (Malleus Maleficarum)*, c. 1486)

21. A man in general is better pleased when he has a good dinner than when his wife talks Greek. –Samuel Johnson (1709-1784), English writer

22. The whole education of women ought to be relative to men. To please them, to be useful to them, to make themselves loved and honored by them, to educate them when young, to care for them when grown, to counsel them, to console them, and to make life sweet and agreeable to them—these are the duties of women at all times and what should be taught them from their infancy. –Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), French philosopher

23. Women have no moral sense; they rely for their behavior upon the men they love. –La Bruyere (1645-1696), French philosopher

24. Most women have no characters at all. –Alexander Pope (1688-1744), English poet

25. I never knew a tolerable woman to be fond of her own sex. –Jonathan Swift (1667-1745), Anglo-Irish writer

26. Man for the field and woman for the hearth: / Man for the sword and for the needle she: /

Man with the head and woman with the heart: / Man to command and woman to obey; / All else confusion. –Alfred, Lord Tennyson (1809-1892), British poet

27. Men are men, but Man is a woman. –G. K. Chesterton (1874-1936), English writer

28. Nature intended women to be our slaves ... they are our property; we are not theirs. They belong to us, just as a tree that bears fruit belongs to a gardener. What a mad idea to demand equality for women! ... Women are nothing but machines for producing children. –Napoleon Bonaparte (1769-1821), French war monger

29. To men a man is but a mind. Who cares what face he carries or what he wears? But woman's body IS the woman. –Ambrose Bierce (1842-1913), US American writer

30. Regard the society of women as a necessary unpleasantness of social life, and avoid it as much as possible. –Count Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910), Russian writer

31. A woman who is guided by the head and not the heart is a social pestilence: she has all the defects of the passionate and affectionate woman, with none of her compensations; she is without pity, without love, without virtue, without sex. –Honoré de Balzac (1799-1850), French writer

32. And a woman is only a woman but a good cigar is a smoke. –Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936), English writer

33. Women have great talent, but no genius, for they always remain subjective. –Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860), German philosopher

34. One must have loved a woman of genius to comprehend the happiness of loving a fool. –Talleyrand (1754–1838), French diplomat

35. If the feminine abilities were developed to the same degree as those of the male, her (woman's) maternal organs would suffer and we should have a repulsive and useless hybrid. –P.J. Moebius (German scientist, 1907)

- 36.** The great question that has never been answered, and which I have not yet been able to answer despite my thirty years of research into the feminine soul, is: What does a woman want? –Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), Austrian neurologist
- 37.** The woman's fundamental status is that of her husband's wife, the mother of his children. –Talcott Parsons (1902-1979), US American sociologist and Harvard university teacher
- 38.** *Man's superiority* will be shown, not in the fact that he has enslaved his wife, but that *he* has made her free. –Eugene V. Debs, (1855-1926) US American union leader
- 39.** Women should receive a higher education, not in order to become doctors, lawyers, or professors, but to rear their offspring to be valuable human beings. –Alexis Carrel, *Man, the Unknown* (1935) French surgeon & biologist
- 40.** Woman as a person enjoys a dignity equal with men, but she was given different tasks by God and by Nature which perfect and complete the work entrusted to men. –Pope John XXIII (1881-1963)
- 41.** The only position for women in SNCC* is prone. –Stokeley Carmichael, 1966, militant in the Civil Rights and the Black Panther movements *Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC, pronounced "snick")
- 42.** It would be preposterously naive to suggest that a B.A. can be made as attractive to girls as a marriage license. –Dr. Grayson Kirk (President of Columbia University during the 1968 protests)
- 43.** Women, in general, want to be loved for what they are and men for what they accomplish. The first for their looks and charm, the latter for their actions. –Theodor Reik (1888-1969), US American psychoanalyst
- 44.** My secretary is a lovable slave. –Morris Ernst (1888-1976), attorney and co-founder of the American Civil Liberties Union, on the 50th Anniversary of his having hired Paula Gross, secretary
- 45.** The only alliance I would make with the Women's Liberation Movement is in bed. –Abbie Hoffmann (1936-1989), took part in the 1968 protests in the USA
- 46.** Women are usually more patient in working at unexciting, repetitive tasks ... Women on the average have more passivity in the inborn core of their personality ... I believe women are designed in their deeper instincts to get more pleasure out of life—not only sexually but socially, occupationally, maternally—when they are not aggressive. To put it another way I think that when women are encouraged to be competitive too many of them become disagreeable. –Benjamin M. Spock, *Decent and Indecent* (1970), US American pediatrician
- 47.** Women? I guess they ought to exercise Pussy Power. –Eldridge Cleaver, 1968, Black Panther leader

[I'm not including the selection of saying about "a woman's place," on page 36. I think this is enough to help us focus things better.]

Download a printer-friendly format in three pdf pages at <http://www.talkingpeople.net/tp/skills/speaking/discussions.htm>



It Doesn't Take A Rocket Scientist..., by Carol A. Hand

(American English, about 1,300 words)

"Just tell me what to do!" These were dreaded words for me to hear in my roles as a teacher or supervisor. It signaled an internalized belief that only an expert in power could dictate the terms of their life, their work, and their studies. The question implied that the speaker had either been successfully colonized or domesticated, at least superficially, or they were unwilling to take risks to chart their own course – an absence of vision and passion that was deadly. They were willing to wait for someone else, someone smarter, someone with higher "status," to tell them what to do.

It's never been easy for me to follow orders, so I am very cautious about giving them. Whether it was in a classroom or a work situation, I have always preferred to explore options through dialogue with the people who were most directly affected by issues and those who had to implement tasks, solutions and innovations. I have often wondered why so many people unquestioningly follow leaders and are unable or unwilling to simply decide for themselves. This inability to recognize one's own ability to transform at least some parts of one's environment perpetuates the status quo. We wait for those in power to do what is more effectively done on a local level through face-to-face engagement. Why can't we decide how to address homelessness or hunger in our own communities? Or end racism and discrimination? Improve schools that don't teach students what they really need to know? Change hospitals or prisons that don't help heal people? Or improve social services that don't even provide effective band aids let alone cures?

Too often, we willingly accept the pronouncements from above that social problems are not due to structural inequalities, they're due to poor decision making, bad personal choices, deviant people, or deficient cultures.

The generic process of Blaming the Victim is applied to almost every American problem. The miserable health care of the poor is explained away on the grounds that the victim has poor motivation and lacks health information... The "multi problem poor," it is claimed, suffer the psychological effects of impoverishment, the "culture of poverty," and the deviant value system of the lower classes; consequently, though unwittingly, they cause their own troubles. (William Ryan, pp. 5-6)

I remember serving on a technical review panel to uncover the causes of alarmingly high infant mortality rates for Native Americans in Wisconsin. As the only Native American on the review panel, the only one without a medical background, I read the medical records from a different perspective. Where others quickly detected patterns of poor health decisions and potentially criminal behavior, I saw consequences of the legacy of poverty and colonial oppression. The solutions to address deviance and criminality are to increase surveillance and enforce compliance with professional or legal dictates. As the boundary spanner on the panel, my role was to translate another paradigm. My staff and I developed alternatives – programs that worked to reweave connections to support families and create services that community members found welcoming and culturally appropriate. We needed to convince nonbelievers on the panel that this was really a more effective approach. We needed to convince tribal communities that it was possible to be partners in creating new health service

paradigms. And we needed to find funders.

Instead of relying solely on medical records to find underlying causes, we asked tribal staff and community members "What has changed as a result of colonialism?" We listened, observed, and reflected on what we learned and designed a series of projects to respond. If colonialism has disrupted traditional community bonds, diets, governments, spirituality, education, where do we begin? How can we help families so their infants can survive their first year of life?

Our challenge was to walk in two worlds – to reweave traditional community informal supports and re-envision the role of health providers. Our goal was not to change individuals but to work in partnership with each community to rebuild networks of support for families. We created a network of nurses and paraprofessionals with the "dream catcher" as the symbol of our work together. Like the strands of the dream catcher, we would work together to screen out the harmful influences in the lives of children and families and only allow the good influences to come through. With maternal child health nurses, family advocates, and community mentors, we built a network across nine geographically dispersed Algonquin nations, drawing from traditional cultures to create ceremonies that brought people together to share and honor their work.

Our critics were not convinced that this was the best approach. The federal funders for the project wanted to require all of the infant-mortality reduction projects located in poor communities across the country to force participating families and infants to "comply" with medical appointments scheduled in clinics at times that were convenient for healthcare providers. As the federal staff noted at the national meeting in Washington DC, "*Those people* need to learn how to be more responsible for their own health." I looked around the room and noticed that the directors and evaluators of the other 35 projects in the room did not appear to be ethnically representative of the communities they were hired to serve. I watched as the majority nodded their approval of this new requirement. I nudged my evaluator, a nationally-renowned child welfare researcher, and whispered in his ear. "I'm sorry if I embarrass you, but I can't let this pass unopposed." I stood up and responded. "I'm not sure about the other project directors, but the families I work with are *my people*. The goal of our project is to help infants survive. We don't care how families and infants access the services and supports they need, we only care that they do. Let me tell you a story that explains our approach."

I proceeded to tell the story of a tribal family advocate on her first day of work. She went to a scheduled home visit to check on a newborn. When she pulled into the driveway, the house was quiet. All the curtains were drawn and it looked deserted. Knowing the community, she got out of her car and walked toward the front door. Suddenly, she heard a loud whisper, "Carrie, Carrie, come to the back door. Hurry!" Carrie hurried to the back and walked in. "Duck", said the mother. "We're hiding. The health department is coming." Carrie laughed and replied, "I am the health department." It makes a difference when communities are able to hire staff that community members trust, people who are welcomed into the homes of community members. As I ended my story, hands went up around the room. All of the project directors had changed their minds. This requirement would have to go.

There were other stories I could have told about the benefits of working in partnership with communities on the projects that affect them. Staff in one community asked elders to make dream catchers for a small honorarium that helped offset their

extremely low incomes. Traditional healers blessed the dream catchers and presented them to each new infant. Staff in another community created a women's crafting circle. The women gathered together to knit, crochet, and sew gifts for infants. As a group, the circle of women presented their gifts to newborns, each holding the new child to welcome him or her into the community. The staff person explained the significance. "By holding the child, each woman creates a promise that she will always be there to watch over the child."

If we create opportunities and spaces for communities to reweave connections, I'm convinced anything is possible. It doesn't take a rocket scientist. It takes heart and vision.

Works Cited:

William Ryan (1976). *Blaming the Victim* (revised, updated edition). New York, NY: Vintage Books.

Article originally published at <http://carolahand.wordpress.com/2014/10/20/it-doesnt-take-a-rocket-scientist/>, where you will also find relevant links and the graphics illustrating it.

★ Twentieth Century Revolutions in our Neuronal Circuits! Slogans, collected by MF

(US Am English; 300 words)

For people interested in knowing where we come from... The social revolutions in the 20th century... and the most powerful nonviolent revolution ever: feminism!

May 68 slogans

What do you think these slogans mean?

Imagination to power / All power to the imagination

Be realistic, reach for the impossible

This concerns everyone

Photo Info: Situationist graffiti: *Il est interdit d'interdire! Prohibiting is prohibited*



Hippie movement / Peace movement slogans

Make love not war (nowadays, moving onto Make love not money!)

One, two, three, four! We don't want your fucking war!

Draft beer, not boys!

All we are saying is give peace a chance (Lennon)

Flower Power

Sexual freedom

If you're not part of the solution, you're part of the problem

All we want is to change the world

Endeavor to go confidently in the direction of your dreams and live the life you've imagined (Thoreau)

Power to the people

Live and let live

Fuck the establishment

On the road

Feminist slogans

The personal is political

Feminism is the radical notion that women are people (The Feminist Dictionary)

Sexism is not a side issue

Smash patriarchy

Fight rape!

Riots not diets!

Sexism: the original sin

Herstory missing

Respect!

Reclaim the night

Get your rosaries off my ovaries (from Spanish)
This is what a feminist looks like
Stop violence against women (now we have Nov 25)
What part of "No" don't you understand?
My mind, my body, my rights!
I think, therefore I'm single
Your silence will not protect you (Audre Lorde)
A woman's place is everywhere
Vagina warrior (V-Day)
I'm pro-choice

Some concepts we needed and had to create: herstory, feminicide, women's rights, empowerment, sisterhood... I recommend you browse videos where the Mexican thinker and activist Marcela Lagarde speaks, so you can learn about these concepts. She actually coined "feminicidio" and analyzed "empoderamiento" and "sororidad".

The 15M at Sol-ution Square. Making Feminism & Nonviolence Visible, by MF

(US/UK English; about 3,200 words)

There is a square in Madrid, the capital city of Spain, called Puerta del Sol, The Door to the Sun, *Sol* for short, which became worldwide known as a landmark of social struggle after May 15, 2011.

Before this, Sol was just a popular tourist site. Located in downtown Madrid / in the city centre, Sol is an area full of establishments where you can spend or waste your money – shops and places to socialize and have meals. Because it is roughly in the geographical center/centre of the country, there you will find *el kilómetro cero*, kilometer / kilometre zero (with miles, it would be called the zero mile marker) – the starting point of the network of roads in Spain. In Sol you can also find a statue of a he-Bear and a *madroño*, which is a kind of beech tree called strawberry tree because it bears fruits that look like small red hedgehogs! Someone somewhere uses the *madroño* fruits to make a liquor most Madrileans have never tasted! Sol is most famous for being *the* meeting point to celebrate the 31st of December, because the clock that Spanish people use to mark the end of the year is there.

So before telling you about the 15M movement, let me tell you about the Spanish tradition of Having the Grapes.

New Year's Eve in Spain

As the Sol clock strikes midnight on New Year's Eve (everybody follows on TV) people have the Twelve Grapes – a grape for each bell strike, if they wish to have a prosperous year. Keeping the clock's beat makes people choke, and few manage to finish having the grapes on time because it's so funny to watch people around you! Then everybody kisses and drinks champagne and those who are in their homes join the rest and go out on a spree till the early morning, moment when they have *chocolate con churros* for breakfast in bars. *Churros* are a kind of fried dough loop you dunk in steaming hot chocolate. It's delicious and gives you lots of energy!

Sol, the Landmark of 21st Century Social Struggle

On the 15th of May 2011 (by the way, May 15 is International CO Day!) people in 58 Spanish cities and towns were called to protest the economic situation. In Madrid, the meeting place was *la Puerta del Sol*. The protest was impressive – not only in terms of the number of people who attended but also in terms of the variety of issues people raised. People were reclaiming democracy, wanting politicians to do their task: organize/organise human societies along the lines of rational empathy, so that we take good care of people and the planet. Politicians were being asked to become true builders of actual democracies, "True Democracy", as demonstrators put it.

The diversity of people's demands or social struggles illustrated how rich and varied society had become, and how very much kinder and committed to the building of a juster world for all, where people can live together even if they have different lifestyles and ideas. Banners and conversations were about building a truly working democracy, where people's rights and the protection of the planet would count more

than protecting markets and those whose wealth we can't even imagine in spite of the price it has on all of us. Among the many issues brought up you could find unemployment, abusive employment contracts with extensive loss of labor rights (ETTs in Spanish, or temporary employment agencies), economic conditions of the most vulnerable groups, the outrage because banks had been bailed out while people unable to pay their mortgages were being evicted – supposing they hadn't already contributed to the increased the suicide rate. Conversations were about welfare cuts in the public system, the attack to people's health, rights and lives via trying to destroy public healthcare – the key to why we live "longer" – and public education – they key to the kind of society we build. Sucking on the "excuse There's not enough for all", Privatization Wars are aimed at protecting the fiercest and ignoring the most vulnerable groups, like differently-abled people and immigrants. Out with women's rights, too, starting with cutting reproductive rights and with giving protection to women targeted in the invisible murderous war of gender violence. The newly legalized non-traditional family units (lesbian and gay marriage and adoption) were threatened too. The backlash to conservatism would probably crush again the trans population who had just recently won the right to have the sex they felt they were in their ID cards...

Our society was finally developing respect for a kind of social life where different people would be able to live together, under the shared understanding of human rights – in contrast to the dictatorship past, where a particular religious belief was imposed on all and non-followers were demonized.

And now the crisis and the cuts were not only felt as the abuse by the few from mismanaging and superexploiting people and resources but also as a step back in civil rights for all.

Another key claim was for politicians to end political corruption, and for people to get involved in politics, because politics was about us living together. Bipartidism and the electoral system were criticized, people were urging politicians to take immediate action to reduce the illegitimate influence economic powers have in politics, demanding some political system which cared more about justice, did not allow corruption, was more transparent and encouraged and respected true participation, posing the idea of re-establishing a *República*, the third in Spain.

When the demonstration was over, people didn't want to leave the square. They were eager to solve problems, they wanted to take a meaningful part in politics beyond voting. Encampments were set up and *asambleas* were held to find answers (*soluciones*) to the problems ailing the population. Assemblies are the classic anarchist tool for self-governance (direct democracy), so that was really interesting! Immediately, the name of the Sol underground station was modified to *Sol-ución*, Solution, answers to problems, and the place was renamed *Plaza Sol-uciones* or Solution Square (see second picture below).



Photo Info: Unknown author. **15-M.** Puerta del Sol on May 20, 2011. (Top left, the Sol Clock.)

In the *asambleas* that thereafter were held in Sol and in the neighbo(u)rhoods (*barrios*), over 30 committees (*comisiones*) or Working Groups were spontaneously and gradually set up. Some of those, like the Economy Working Group, had to break up into smaller groups – Housing, Economic Policies, International Financial Systems and Global Economic Relations. These committees were key in taking the Sol protest to the neighborhoods, where people kept holding *asambleas* and organizing/organising time banks, jumble sales, exchange street markets, free cinema and discussion forums, solidarity actions – what in the History and (unrecorded) Herstory of Nonviolence is known as Nonviolent Direct Action (NVDA) and Civil Resistance.

Read about all of this on the blog that was created at madrid.tomalaplaza (go to Links) (*toma la plaza* means 'occupy the square').

Useful Language: Nonviolent Struggle

Gathering actions and Spreading info actions, Joint-thinking actions, or Joint problem-solving, analyzing/analysing (discussions): using freedom of speech to communicate constructively in assemblies using or occupying the public spaces, setting up exchange markets or time banks (exchanging goods and services), organizing cultural activities like viewing of documentaries and movies/films followed by discussion forums, online activism in social networks to spread information, collect signatures to get issues to Parliament (particularly against evictions and the privatization of public services) and call to action (demos, encampments, other nonviolent direct actions), showing solidarity...

NVDA: lock-ins in schools, hospitals, places that are threatened by the privatization policies, embracing buildings, *caceroladas* or potbanging, hanging banners from balconies, putting up banners everywhere, protest grafitti, protest flashmobs, protest street performance, blocking evictions, communal free shopping to help people with nothing to eat, sit-ins, protest camps or encampments, watching buildings or *escraches* to get in touch with politicians representing people at Parliament (preferably public but also private when politicians consistently refuse to listen to citizens' demands)...

Demonstrations, demos: mareas ciudadanas or Citizens' Tides or Waves, massive protest marches where people wear different colors/colours to indicate concern for specific issues: green for education, white for healthcare, yellow for Justice, orange for Social Services, black for the rest of the Public Sector, violet for women's rights, red for unemployment (and against evictions, housing, at times), rainbow for GLBTI rights...

Making Feminism & Nonviolence Visible. On the Importance of Women's (Everybody's) Participation

Let me point out two issues about these protests which are invisible to most people because of how deeply the patriarchal ideology influences what we can actually notice or see. The Sol protests included two relevant developments that have insistently been coming up in the 20th and 21st centuries:

1) Feminism: women's participation.

2) Nonviolence: women's increased participation in the public sphere has encouraged and reinforced the use of nonviolence (not for biological reasons, but for cultural and intelligent reasons!), which is offering us a chance to change the ways we pursue changes, moving away from the old patriarchal "revolutions". Women's participation is also changing traditional leadership and encouraging the use of nonviolence not because women are peaceful by nature (as the patriarchal myth goes), the biological fallacy (or phallacy!), but because women have been banned by culture from the use of violence, and have had to solve their problems by other means. (Men, in contrast, have always been encouraged and rewarded for using violence, using violence has always been a fundamental ingredient in the construction of their manhood, of their Being a Man.)

On top of that, women have always suffered all the kinds of violence patriarchy requires Man to enact, including gender violence and the very specific torture weapon which is rape. Consequently, like most people who have survived war, they tend to abhor violence. They get no "reward" from it. Traditionally, women have had to find other ways of solving their problems and expressing their feelings, so they are much better and more experienced at getting ideas to struggle through nonviolence.

The *Comisión Feminismos* was active from the start. One of the first things they contributed were posters addressing misconceptions about feminism. You can find some at mujerpalabra.net (path: Activismo – Poblaciones en resistencia – Movimiento 15M).

Here is my translation of one of the texts:

What Feminism Is Not

1. It's not the opposite of "machismo" (sexism, mysogyny)
2. It's not a war against men
3. It's not a women-only struggle
4. It's not about excluding but about including people
5. It's not new
6. It's not a fashion or a trend
7. It's not what frustrated women devote their lives to
8. It's not about (men's) repression but about (women's) liberation

9. It's not something we don't need anymore

The *Comisión Feminismos* came up with (or decided to use) what would become a relevant slogan for us all, *La revolución será feminista o no será*, which means, The revolution will be feminist or it will never happen. (I wrote "they came up with or decided to use" because fortunately, in social movements today, like in scientific research, we don't have "the person who said or did something for the first time" because Things Happen as a result of many people's participation. Moreover, ideas spread like wildfire at times, so it is hard to track the origins. Social change is a process and more often than not there are individuals getting the same ideas in different places.)

Well, but although feminism has been fighting for a better world since the first proto-feminists were guil(l)otined for demanding that the Rights of Man became the Rights of Human Beings during the French Revolution at the end of the 18th century, the fact remains that sexism, *machismo*, and misogyny still prevail among the majority, and when the feminist activists put up the banner of *La revolución será feminista o no será* they started being bullied by passers-by who actually were incapable of understanding what this meant.

Below you will find a picture of this feminist banner that was put across the exit of Sol underground station. Later on, they also wrote "I think, therefore people are annoyed" or *Pienso, luego estorbo*.

Photo Info: photos taken by Pilar Escamilla Fresco, May 2011. We put them one on top of the other because it was two pics. It's two feminist banners women put up shortly after May 15, 2011, in Sol: "The Revolution will be feminist or it will never happen" and "I think, therefore people are annoyed."

Photo Info: More on this at mujerpalabra.net (Path: Activismo – Feminismo – 15M). Incidentally, in 2001, *mujerpalabra* published a similar graphic idea: *¿Molesto? ¡Luego existo! "Am I annoying you? Then I exist!!"*

More was happening against feminists. Women had been having a hard time at night, getting sexist and sexual bullying from some male passers-by. This was as invisible as ever but this time feminist activists and thinkers, the women but also some men, would insist in making it visible. On June 2, the *Comisión Feminismos* released a statement explaining women did not feel safe enough to stay in the *Feminismos* encampment during the night. People in other Working Groups, namely in the GLBTI movement (the Gay Lesbian Bisexual Trans and Intersex movement), and especially trans people, suggested each encampment volunteered in night watches in solidarity. Unfortunately, there was not enough solidarity, and eventually the *Feminismos* encampment had to close at night in Sol.

You can find information about this at madrid.tomalaplaza.net (Path: Grupos de Trabajo – G-Feminismos) and at mujerpalabra.net (Path: Activismo – Poblaciones en resistencia – Movimiento 15M).

Hopefully, we are learning from all this and working to avoid this happens again, but it takes a great deal of awareness and social commitment.

Language & Society. Developing Feminist Intelligence



Weeks later, in July 2011, when people marching from dozens of towns and cities in Spain would meet in Madrid, *indignados*, the masculine of "being outraged", was replaced with the word as applied to the marches, *marchas indignadas*, instead of to the people so as to avoid this conscious and unconscious omission of women in language.

Since then, we find a lot of feminist language awareness everywhere, which adds up to the changes we have witnessed in language since the 1980s, when women's presence in public life became a social reality. In those days, say 30 years ago, when I demanded to be called in the feminine, for instance, when filling out/in my personal information, I was laughed at, despised, even insulted. Today, most women in paid jobs are called in the feminine and when women who think that is belittling insist in being called in the masculine feminists remind them that that's because the feminine in patriarchy is belittling and we should fight to change that. The right to be named is a fundamental human right, also for women. So all of this is a big step forward, indicating we are beginning to take into account the knowledge we started creating in the 20th century, in social and natural sciences, in art and in social movements such as the May 68 movement: the fundamental understanding that there is a close connection between language, thought and society or culture. That what we understand or imagine is dependant on what we can actually name and all of this, in turn, is connected to how we relate to each other. Find cyberpostcards on the importance of language on the [mujePalabra.net](http://www.mujePalabra.net/lenguajemp.htm) website at <http://www.mujePalabra.net/lenguajemp.htm>.

Social movements have widened their understanding of how we can or should fight for things thanks to the promotion of women after the 1945 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (in some degrees and just in some parts of the planet, though) and this is helping us become more civilized.

Watch the news using this new feminist intelligence: when we see images of populations fighting for something, notice if it's only men on the protestors side – then you will see flags burning, masked faces, arms flinging things...– or if there's women too – see images of the *marchas indignadas* in Madrid, for instance, Brussels, Paris... Remember what happened in squares all over the world when women started disappearing. (At the beginning of the Arab Spring there were a lot of women, but gradually women were subject to the traditional pressure to make them disappear because they were being raped by men, or threatened to be raped.)

June 2013. Some Closing Comments

I cannot possibly tell you about the 15M movement here, or now, but I do encourage you to find out, and also to take part if you haven't, and to always keep women in mind, to train in overcoming patriarchal ideology.

Since the 2004 world demonstrations against the Irak War, populations in this planet are saying "We don't buy violence and injustice are inevitable. If our priority is respecting human rights instead of the right of a few to make everybody miserable, suffering and unsafe, we will be building peaceful societies".

Mainstream media have seldom kept informing, but the Internet is full of information. 15M is playing amazing roles in every single person



taking part in the movement, as true social struggle always does: social struggle changes you from the inside for the better. One of the most amazing things that are happening, because people keep insisting in discussing how to organize society better, because people keep finding out about politics and about social movements developing in the world right now, is solidarity. The solidarity coming from the 15M is keeping good company to people who are targeted for evictions because they can't pay their mortgages anymore. This is just one example of what is going on. Find out about Ada Colau and her briefings on this issue and about how people in different neighbo(u)rhoods are joining her.

Understanding social struggle is not easy because you have to pull from under the heap of cynism and unthinking material selfishness we learn something that has always given us good things: idealism. Ideals are not for those incapable of understanding, but precisely for those who can develop an understanding of reality. Idealism doesn't make you an idiot, it pushes you to become knowledgeable of what is going on around you, and it offers you a guiding star so that you don't lose sight of where you need to get to, so that you try your best in the real world you live in, so that you get involved in building a better life for yourself and also for everybody.

Get or Keep in touch with people. *Por la comunicaci3n, a la r-evoluci3n.* Paraphrasing, it is through communication how we will achieve a deeper and more lasting transformation of society



Workshop for Holding Rational Discussions (Nonviolent Communication), by MF

(US Am English; about 2,800 words)

A. Introduction

When we discuss topics in class we do not proceed like people on TV, in political debates or talk shows.

The **aim** of our discussions is to exchange information, experiences, and use reasoned opinions to explain what we believe, know, and why. **A reasoned opinion** is based on some information you have gathered, or on experiences you have meditated.

Before the discussion you need to be clear about the points you wish to put forward and how you can word each in of those in a statement. Write them down. This exercise is fundamental in life. Taking time to think before discussions can help prevent and resolve arguments (fights) with the people we love. You need to be able to word your idea in a way that allows people with a different experience or idea to listen to you without feeling offended. A **note** on this: There will always be people who will feel offended, so I don't mean to say that you cannot express your point: just remember that you should try to do so in a way that will encourage others to use rationality with empathy, even if they believe something different. Avoid stating your ideas in ways that could put people who may disagree with you in a humiliating or degrading position.

Small Groups: before the Plenary Discussion, we will have some time to work in small groups: in turns, make your points and after that round, start discussing those ideas.

Plenary Discussion: during the plenary discussion there will be a round for people/groups to present their points or a summary of their discussion (somebody can report, as a rep, especially if the rest of the group members plan to take part in the plenary discussion). After we have listened to everybody, we can start discussing: contrasting, investigating ideas.

Culturally speaking (remember we have been living in patriarchal societies for centuries), **the language for discussions is inspired by war**, with "winners" and "losers" (listen to this podcast episode: [Metaphors We Live By: Argument Is War](#). Mark in this text "argument" is said in the philosophical sense). But a discussion should not be violent, a war. It should be led by the use of our intelligence: it should help us to learn and expand our understanding and build respectful relations with others.

Let me clarify some terms:

Defending a position is *not* fighting to prevail. It means, simply, expressing the reasons why we believe something. You can do this passionately. Passion is not a problem. The problem comes when we express our views by insulting people, or belittling them, or trying to hurt them, or make fun of them.

Attacking a position should just mean that you are refuting or questioning /

challenging those ideas not the person, and this refutation is necessarily based on wording ideas or arguments (reasons, explanations), not on using insult or offensive remarks.

Dialog can make us change our opinions, or modify our understanding. Changing our views is not a humiliating experience – it's a sign of intelligence in use! It means you are learning. It's all about learning and evolving, and it happens when we find better reasons to explain things. Being able to hold a true dialog or interaction is not a humiliating experience, but also the result of the use of intelligence! As a species brought up in patriarchal values/cultures we admire those we fear (provided they are men), people capable of being aggressive or violent (conceptually and verbally, too). We despise kindness and the use of intelligence (especially if it's women offering rational thinking - we have been trained to feel women are not capable of that, or that a woman thinker is dangerous or wrong). More generally, we are afraid of new ideas and critical thinking. But we should try to **change this by starting to pitch in, in our everyday lives, by learning to communicate**, a most powerful tool for social change because human communication plays a crucial role in the construction of our identity, not only in the construction of communities.

On critical thinking. Criticizing other people's ideas is positive and it is always done with *reasons*. However, the verb "criticize" has been distorted in people's perception, in our education. To be good at *true* critical thinking, we should develop our ability to listen while avoiding interpreting too fast. To be good critical thinkers we need to improve our ability to express our views with rationality and empathy. More often than not, when someone says something, we do not listen, but interpret the message parting from our learned violence: "never trust people", always think they have "a threatening hidden intention", "whatever happens prevail", be on the "winning side", or simply hurt "the enemy" before "the enemy strikes first". When we are honest, and able to exert self-criticism, we realize these attitudes are part of our cultural upbringing and not of our instinct, and that they are all wrong for the irrationality and violence they bring about. However, the fact remains: **exchanging ideas** is not about war but simply about exchanging ideas and considering whether any can be improved. They're fundamental for **knowledge and learning and evolving**. This learned ability of never to trust or listen and always to consider ideas different to ours a threat – instead of a chance to learn – is responsible for the many arguments (fights) and misunderstandings that happen every day. We have enough intelligence to prevent this. We just need to use it constructively.

If people feel attacked by our ideas, it's their problem if you have just given arguments that can be refuted and have not exerted violence to impose your views on them or ridicule them. An idea is not an attack, even though that is how we name it. If an idea is explained with reasons, there is no violence in that, because reasons can be discussed – there's the respect to others, there's the love of the free thinker, the love of learning about what surrounds us and learning about ourselves. Moreover, respect towards others is shown when people give reasons, not when people say you are right, necessarily! There is respect in the fact that by giving a reason, you give the listener the chance to refute what you are saying, or then learn from what you are saying. Being judgemental with people, this is, diverting attention from the discussion of ideas and focusing on invalidating the person, is one of the most common ways of exerting violence in everyday life.

About people raising their voice. In classroom discussions we should not become

upset to the point of shouting or raising our voices, but this may happen. In any case, this *does* often happen in other contexts, so here is an idea for you to mull over. Consider what the person is saying, even if he or she is shouting, because not all of the shouting is meant to be intimidating, to hurt or manipulate others. Shouting is not desirable, but we have to keep in mind that not listening and some kinds of silences and manipulative wordings can also be violent, intimidating or aggressive. Our rational minds can guide us through this, and help us solve the problem better! The most important issues here are trusting people, trying to communicate with them through reasoning, and trying to be fair. Learning to listen helps people learn to avoid being unfair, too, or at least helps us improve in that. Then participants and the facilitator need to be aware of where aggressive behavior happens, and avoid using the traditional stereotypes of what aggression is. Communication is key for problem-solving and nonviolent relationships.

About interrupting. Try not to interrupt. Take notes (key words) of what you want to say if it's something that comes to your mind during the discussion. If you don't jot down key words for this, you will try to interrupt, and you will be blocking your ability to listen to people because you will be thinking and trying to speak at the same time. On the other hand, keep this in mind, too: at times interrupting, like raising our voice, is a cultural issue and a personality issue – some people are more impulsive than others and some are more intense than others. Then there is the gender issue, how much more tolerant people are when a man "speaks firmly" and a woman "gets hysterical", when a man "needs to interrupt", has a "good reason" to do so, and we find that a woman "keeps interrupting", has "nothing relevant" to contribute. If we *do* interrupt, or raise our voices, we should say we are sorry and try not to do it again. But it is not a crime. The negative issue in a discussion is bad feelings towards others, and raising one's voice and interrupting are not necessarily indicators of bad feelings. We should open our minds to this to learn more about nonviolent communication!

Take part in a discussion. Respect the role of the facilitator, but *do* take part. Don't think you have nothing interesting to say. It's absurd. And even if that were true, you are here to practice your English! Then, if you always take part, try to wait until others who rarely speak go first. You will be surprised as you listen to people who don't usually speak. Sometimes I speak at meetings because I feel nobody is going to raise a point that I have in mind and consider important, and in life I have found that if I wait, other people may also come up with the same point! Or with other points you are very happy to discover. Because the deeper the analysis, the more we learn and know, the better-prepared we will be to solve our problems. Consequently, think of a **discussion as teamwork**, not as war. The more views we bring up, the deeper, richer and more informed our analysis will be. Also, the more we will have shared and learned.

After the discussion, we should find some time to meditate. It'd be great if you could write something about it, for instance, a reasoned opinion on some point of your interest (80-150 words).

B. Discussions: the Workshop

What's the value of discussing ideas?

People process events verbally, so speech makes thinking "visible", something real.

That's why language is so important for feminists and in general for artists, scientists, philosophers, and social activists.

- Discussions are a way of **testing and exploring new ideas**. We acquire knowledge and insight from sharing diverse points of view on a topic, some deeper knowledge on the issue and its complexities. We learn to **create knowledge together**.
- Discussions help us **improve the way we relate to people and communicate**. We can learn to be tolerant, as we get to understand why people say what they say. We learn to listen to people and to express disagreement in a respectful way.
- We also **learn about ourselves and our viewpoints**. It helps us sort out our own ideas and assumptions.
- We **learn to synthesize and to integrate** different views to visualize the whole picture.
- Discussions are vital for us to **evolve**, developing our intelligence and expanding the constructive ways we can use our intelligence!

Remember that **discussing ideas does not equal establishing your value as a person**. It is *just* discussing ideas! Realizing how well or badly reasoned your viewpoint is IS always positive. It can help you be more confident about what you think about things and what your reasons are to do so.

Recapitulation

Preparing for a Discussion: Discussion Format

How to start, what to do when, how to end. First we will work in small groups. Then we will hold a plenary discussion, which will begin with the small groups reporting to the plenary. The plenary discussion will follow the reports.

It is always helpful to establish **roles**: a **facilitator** and a **note-taker** at least. Use this resource not only in plenary discussions but also in the pre-discussion in small groups. There could also be an **observer** and a **time-keeper**, and a **spokesperson** or several spokespeople for reporting on discussions in small groups. Roles improve the quality and the organization of the discussion. See below.

Please, respect **turns**. The facilitator will be like a conductor and we must follow her/his indications. So jot down your replies (key words) so you won't forget or interrupt.

Please, **take part** in the discussion. Everybody should speak.

Last, people are more important than ideas. Remember this if there is a heated debate.

Before the plenary discussion. Working on the question or topic before the discussion enriches the discussion. As stated, first you will discuss the question or topic we have agreed to discuss in small groups. Remember that listening to other people can help you enrich your position in different ways. Eventually, the aim is for you to become clear about what your points are on the discussed topic.

Small Groups: Preparing your Worksheets

Here is an example of concepts for a table:

- Date
- Discussion Question
- Group Members
- Roles
- Points raised (Statements)
- Refutations, if appropriate

CRUCIAL: Go to the Plenary discussion with a **clear idea of how to express your main points**. You should be able to write them down as simple statements. Throughout the plenary discussion you will be able to see if you need to improve the way you express your ideas, views – how effective your wording is.

Plenary discussion tips

- Bring your statement(s)
- Jot down key words of what comes to your mind during the discussion, before you forget what you wanted to say!
- Take notes of interesting ideas
- Take notes for your summary toward the end, if you find a good occasion, in order to remember important points or what you learned from the process.

Tips for the roles

The **Facilitator** has the responsibility to help the group be as productive as possible. How? By guiding the process, eliminating obstacles, working to create a climate that leads to successful problem solving, and keeping the group focused on the task.

The facilitator tries to keep a low-profile and find ways to help everybody participate, integrating quiet people, too. The facilitator should not sound bossy. His or her private interests (ideas or feelings) should not be placed before the interest of the group. Think of natural ethic leaders. They are not bossy. They guide people. They support people, help them to solve their problems. They exhibit generous, caring and committed behavior. These traits are signs of great intelligence - empathy is a great developer of intelligence, and it is undervalued in the patriarchal view of intelligence. In patriarchy, men have been educated to reject empathy and subscribe violence. Note how culturally speaking being aggressive is crucial for the construction of manhood. However, ethic leaders have always overcome this conditioning. Because women have been educated to take care of others, when they develop these abilities, they are not even seen, far the less appreciated or acknowledged, because it is their duty to do that, it is just "biological" - something similar happens with the perception of motherhood. Back to discussions, whenever participants seem to be lost, or whenever people seem not to be listening to each other, the facilitator will offer an overview of the progress and/or a summary of the different positions, proposing ways to continue the discussion if necessary. This is a very helpful attitude and behavior. Another resource is that he or she will repeat, in his or her own words, what people say in order to check that people understand what is going on in the discussion. The facilitator must make sure that the group keeps to the topic but will also be flexible in allowing space for additional information, if it's important. Humor is a good resource. If there is no time-keeper, the facilitator will also take care of overall time management.

Finally, the facilitator will support the note-taker in gathering all relevant information. This is something that can be done after the group work has finished.

The **Note-taker** is the memory of the group. This person observes the event from the background and writes down all relevant information. The note-taker may support the facilitator by asking questions, if needed. After the discussion the note-taker and the facilitator sit together and discuss the notes.

The **Observer** will help us know when misunderstandings are occurring, and will clarify or ask the facilitator to clarify the real state of affairs, what each person involved in a disagreement actually said. Her or his role is important because we tend to immediately interpret the words and actions of others. Instead of taking the time to understand what other people say, we sometimes add what we think their intentions are. This can be a problem, because we are not listening to people then, or **trying to understand what they mean**. We are judging in advance. The potential for misunderstanding increases.

After the discussion

It is necessary to have an **evaluation**. We can assess how the discussion went and reflect upon what we learned on the topic. We could also think about how we feel about the discussion and what we learned about ourselves in that process!

Evaluation worksheet

Did you put your ideas forward?

Did you get your ideas across?

Was the process fluent?

Were the contents clear?

Were there any problems?

What did you learn about your own ideas or about other people's ideas?

At home, you could write a summary so you will remember the discussion.

C. A final note on decision-making processes

In case you need to make decisions, here are some ideas.

Making Decisions Co-operatively – a process. **Consensus** is a process for deciding what is best for a group at a given moment. It cannot be used by people who cannot or will not co-operate or by people who want to manipulate others, because consensus requires that everybody feels his or her position has been considered by the group. The presentation of different positions is seen as help, as something that enriches the analysis. Consensus results from having considered the issue from different viewpoints. Reaching a consensus does not mean that everybody has the same position, but that nobody feels there is a better decision than the one that has been adopted. This means you needn't agree with the decision - you just need to be sure you have no reasons to veto it. Consensus decision-making is the ultimate realization of a direct democracy because everybody takes part in decision-making and consequently everybody is responsible for those decisions. Rather than abdicating power to an individual or representative, it demands that that we take complete responsibility.

Voting – a procedure. When consensus is not possible, then groups need to vote. Voting is another reasonable democratic alternative. It is a procedure, not a process,

so it is less inclusive than consensus, because consensus implies a whole process of people analyzing a topic together in order to seek the best of the solutions possible for them at that particular moment. Voting is especially useful when there is time pressure.

That's all!

Enjoy your classroom discussions!



"But ... We've Always Done it this Way...", by Carol A. Hand

(American English, about 900 words)

Did you ever feel like you were living in the wrong time? That somehow you had missed learning how to simply accept the fact that we should do things the way they've always been done? Wondered who had decided how things should be done initially, and who benefits from keeping things the same? Why so many people automatically react to any proposed change with immediate resistance by using the same old refrain – "But we've always done it this way"?

The question I had to address throughout my career as a social work educator was whether I, like most of my colleagues at the time, should teach using paradigms and topics from the past, tweaking models that haven't worked to improve people's lives because they failed to take socio-economic causes into account. The message was to "Just teach students how to fit into the social welfare agencies where they will work in the future using new evidence-based methods." Hmm. I must have missed something. Despite these individual pathology treatment methods, I don't see much "evidence" that the structural causes of problems – exploitation and social marginalization – have improved as a result of decades of interventions. More importantly, I ask if we can afford such hubris and indulgence when we are faced with global unrest about growing socio-economic inequality and the escalating effects of global climate change. The populations most affected are, of course, the very populations with whom social workers plan to work in the future. Is it realistic to believe that the future we face will be any better served by using past methods that haven't worked?

Why not try something new? Isn't that what education is supposed to do, to evaluate the effectiveness of past efforts honestly in light of what is happening now and what we anticipate in the future? Some students may be persuaded to voice the need to fit in with the status quo, but they're quick to understand why it's important to learn for the future. Most faculty and administrators are harder to convince. It could just be the challenge that motivates me to innovate.

It does take courage to walk into a classroom as the "teacher" knowing you don't have the answers, and knowing no one has your back if you make a fool of yourself. Sure, you may have years of diverse experiences, but as Lisbeth B. Schorr (1998) points out, reinventing the wheel is important. Each group and community that wants to make a difference needs to figure out for themselves how to work together toward shared goals, to own the goals and the process through negotiation, teamwork, sweat, and tears. My approach to teaching research to undergraduate students this summer was an experiential experiment to see if students could conduct their own research studies as teams.

I am pleased to report that the experiment "worked." Yesterday, as each team of students stood together before the class with their Power Point ready to share, the atmosphere in the room was decidedly different than that of the first day. (Only two hands out of eighteen went up that first day when I asked how many were excited to learn about research – more than I expected.) When they presented their impressive work during the last class, it was clear that they had become "teams," they shared the

work, disappointments, and successes. They learned that research is not easy to do regardless of your methodology. They learned through the most effective way there is — by actually doing something themselves and thinking critically about their experiences. They could clearly articulate what they would do differently the next time!

Through participant observation, one team learned about the effects of changing weather patterns on local food production by weekly visits to a farmer's market and conversations with the local vendors. Through surveys, another team learned about local views of climate change and contrasted those with views nationwide. The single subject design team took an inventory of the food in their cabinets and refrigerators and noted where it was produced. They planned to calculate the "food miles" and CO2 production that resulted from their buying choices. Over the next month, they took two more inventories to see if their buying habits changed as a result of trying consciously to reduce their carbon footprint. The photo voice and interviewing teams both focused on exploring the effects of the 2012 deluge and flood that affected Duluth, MN and the surrounding areas. Their experiences countered the common assumption that qualitative research is easier than quantitative studies.

I am so grateful that I had an opportunity to work with this adventurous and creative group of students. It was a fitting way to end my career as an institutional educator. The only thing I regret is that other faculty and institutional decision makers missed the student presentations. Imagine – what could the world become if educational institutions were inspired to explore ways to change how things have always been done in order to honor the earth and all life?

Work Cited:

Lisbeth B. Schorr (1998). *Common purpose: Strengthening families and neighborhoods to rebuild America*. New York City, NY: Anchor Books.

Article originally published at <http://carolahand.wordpress.com/2014/08/21/but-weve-always-done-it-this-way/>, where you will also find relevant links and the graphics with Einstein quotes illustrating it.



Best Anecdotes in Class: a Miscellanea, by Ana Otto

(About 600 words)

I've always encountered many different kinds of people in class: from the teenagers I used to teach in my early days as a secondary teacher to a whole range of people: unemployed, middle-aged, women trying to apply for a better job with the help of English, the amazing combination of ladies, young professionals and the cream of the country's youth from Official Schools of Languages in Madrid, undergraduate students at UNED or the senior citizens at "Universidad de Mayores" (Yes, we can!), students come in all sorts of packages all sharing a common goal: learning a language. I do remember much more about them than they really suppose, and I find it easier to stick a name onto a face than to recall my last dinner.

I love being with people and sharing their stories. This is a tribute to all of them, the lively, independent, determined, friendly and devoted students I was lucky to meet as well as a miscellanea of the creepiest situations in my class.

As a language teacher and also as the chatter box I am, I usually tend to communicate ideas in class rather than talk about the language or explore language use. The final result is that I often talk too much about both myself and my world, easily connect with people and create the type of atmosphere where students can relax, concentrate on using the language instead of analyzing it, forget about initial inhibitions and feel free to express themselves without the fear of being judged for their opinions. These are, in fact the kind of activities which I feel foster real communicative discussions and promote meaningful learning and cooperation amongst people – both being qualities I wish we had plenty of, not only in class but in the larger context of society. What comes after that can't always be controlled by a teacher.

Miguel, the stubborn and lovely developmentally challenged boy who brought us a "Show and Tell" about Pokemon, and insisted on categorizing them as living creatures, using perfectly fluent and accurate English, to the amazement of the rest of the group.

María, the gorgeous girl struggling with mental disorder who was brave enough not to abandon English, and who foolishly took a picture of her reconstructed tooth and sent it to me as an attached file just to prove she was absent from class for a good reason.

Ricardo, aged 77, who suffered an ischaemic stroke while immersed in a class debate and who none of us dared to stop or question although we suspected he was somewhere else, judging by his speech.

My morning B1 class in Carabanchel, so class-conscious and committed to bringing justice to society who didn't doubt a second about raising funds so that one of her classmates could pay the second installment for the enrolment in EOI.

Isabel, devoted teacher who constantly tried to memorize dialogs, kept a note pad with hundreds of questions, and finally made her way into Bilingual Education in

Madrid.

Eva, who came to class just to discover I was the one who married her ex-boyfriend, and never came back again.

My evil teenagers who pointed at my pregnant belly every time I was writing on the board and went like 'Look, there's something moving right now, can't be a foot! Come on!'

Milagros, who admitted she was sexually abused as a child when we were discussing children rights, and who left us lost for words as she became more fluent than ever.

To all of them, and the ones I am not mentioning here, my gratitude. Thanks for sharing your lives and thoughts and contributing to the adventure of learning a language.



What Types of Films Do You Like?, by Asun Villamil

(British English; about 400 words)

In teachers' lives there are a lot of embarrassing moments. Well, at least, in mine there are quite a few. You tend to forget them or force yourself to forget them as you have to go on facing those students who have seen you humiliated. One of the moments I remember best happened one year ago. It was not especially excruciating but it definitely gave my students a good laugh and probably food for thought.

We were speaking about cinema, a fairly common topic, and as thousands of times, I was asking my students what types of films they liked. After several answers, one of them answered: "porn".

Well, not exactly. That was what I understood. With a surprised face I asked back: "porn?" My poor student was flabbergasted: "Noooooo, *horror films!*". He was quite a good-humoured guy and at first I really thought he was pulling my leg, just making a bit of fun of me. But of course he wasn't. The students who sat by him and had heard him more clearly looked at me either shocked or puzzled, I still don't know.

After the longest silent second ever seen in that class the class roared with laughter. The porn/horror-liking student shouted over the general rejoicing: "But, teacher, what ARE YOU thinking about?" Obviously, I turned as red as a beetroot as everyone kept on laughing.

Believe it or not, I am not a porn fan. I don't think I have ever seen a porn movie in my life. It all came down to a conversation that I had had with my husband the night before. My husband is (or was) pretty addicted to the TV series *Friends*. That night he had been watching that episode in which Joey and Chandler get hooked on a porn channel which they happen to watch by I don't know exactly what reason. They become so obsessed that they see their lives as if they were porn movies.

This tricky mind of mine together with my poor ear made the wrong connection that day in class. It might not sound fair to blame someone else, but I swear this is the way it happened. My students will always have a reasonable doubt about my favourite type of films, though. In case they still remember. I definitely won't make the mistake of asking about favourite types of films again.



The Rewards that Come from Working with Knowledge Seekers!, by Carol A. Hand

(American English; about 1,300 words)

Do you ever have times when you wonder if what you are doing makes a difference? Teaching research to undergraduate social worker students has proven to be a challenge. Of course, I wasn't content using the textbook and syllabus that other instructors use. But designing the details of a new course from week to week is never easy. Some things just haven't worked the way I had hoped.

The word "research" often strikes fear into the hearts of students. Yet, as a friend and former colleague has eloquently written, we are "born" to be researchers.

Human beings enter this world with an endless curiosity about themselves, others, and their surrounding environment. In this sense, we are born researchers. At its essence, research is inquisitiveness in thought and action. It is the pursuit of new knowledge and discovery through a creative, conceptual process of researcher engagement with the world and its mysteries. (Maxine Jacobson, 2007)

The purposes of the course I am teaching include helping students rekindle their sense of wonder and curiosity about the world, and inspiring students to analyze and apply research as a liberatory tool to improve the lives of clients, communities, and nations.

Some of the initial assignments have proven to be too daunting a task for many students despite assistance and extensive commentary without grades on their work. Faced with this task, some have opted for an alternative – to take an online tutorial about research and the importance of having committees that screen research proposals that involve people to protect them from harm. The legacy of Nazi medical experimentation and the Tuskegee Syphilis Study (links on blog) underscore why human subject protections are necessary. Students actually found the tutorial valuable.

Yet each week, I struggle with how to best engage students and explain things in ways that make sense and are accessible. Some weeks, it works, and other weeks, I can see their puzzled looks, not even knowing how to ask for clarification. And then, there are weeks like this one that somehow make all the uncertainty and anxiety worth it.

I only have 18 undergraduate students, a luxury. In the other institutions where I taught, my classes rarely had fewer than 25 students and sometimes had over 100. So I am grateful for the freedom I have to experiment here, even though it does engender some displeasure from my colleagues. (But that is another story.)

My class and I are trying something old and something new. In the past, I sat in on a research class that a former colleague taught. She actually had undergraduate students engaged in real research methods to evaluate the social work department. Students learned both quantitative and qualitative methods and produced a report that helped the department meet the requirements of the national accrediting organization. The politics where I teach now really don't lend themselves to studying

the department, and the likelihood that any findings would result in constructive improvements is marginal at best. Instead, the five teams comprised of three or four students are each using a different research methodology to study the local effects of global climate change.

Dialogue and experiential learning assignments are the foundation, so this week I asked each of the groups to write the research questions on the whiteboard – what do you want to know from your study? Each team had good beginning questions refined through thoughtful, creative comments from the class as a whole. As I understand the teams' ever-evolving plans at the moment:

1. The "single subject design team" will be studying changes in their food purchasing habits in the context of the carbon footprint left by the production and transportation of food products. They will be taking an inventory of everything in their refrigerator and cabinets to find out where it came from, calculating the carbon footprint, and measuring how their buying and consumption change as a result of what they learn. In the end, will they make fewer trips to the store? Will they buy fewer processed products, more organic foods, more locally-grown foods?
2. The "social survey team" will be studying the access of welfare clients to community gardens as a way to access affordable healthy local food and reweave community support networks.
3. The "photovoice team" will be studying the effects of the 2012 Duluth flood to discover damage (past), differential recovery progress for poor families in the community (present), and innovations that could be used to help the city prevent similar damage in the future.
4. The "participant observation team" will be studying the effects of changing climate on produce at a local farmer's market, historically through the comments of vendors, and at present by observing the produce size, quality, and abundance.
5. The "interview team" will also be exploring the impact of the flood and possible ways to reduce the impacts for low income neighborhoods in the future.

Will this approach "be successful"? It depends on what "success" means. At the moment, there are some weeks when the curiosity and excitement about exploring the world is so evident. For now, that is enough for me. Receiving an email like the one that arrived the day after this week's class is an added affirmation that we're sometimes on the right track.

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This reminded me so much of you and how you always say we are in this together!

A mouse looked through the crack in the wall to see the farmer and his wife open a package. "What food might this contain?" The mouse wondered – he was devastated to discover it was a mousetrap.

Retreating to the farmyard, the mouse proclaimed the warning.

"There is a mousetrap in the house! There is a mousetrap in the house!" The chicken clucked and scratched, raised her head and said, "Mr. Mouse, I can tell this is a grave concern to you, but it is of no consequence to me. I cannot be bothered by it."

The mouse turned to the pig and told him, "There is a mousetrap in the house! There is a mousetrap in the house!" The pig sympathized, but said, "I am so very sorry, Mr. Mouse, but there is nothing I can do about it but pray. Be assured you are in my prayers."

The mouse turned to the cow and said "There is a mousetrap in the house! There is a mousetrap in the house!" The cow said, "Wow, Mr. Mouse. I'm sorry for you, but it's no skin off my nose."

So, the mouse returned to the house, head down and dejected, to face the farmer's mousetrap alone. That very night a sound was heard throughout the house — like the sound of a mousetrap catching its prey. The farmer's wife rushed to see what was caught. In the darkness, she did not see it was a venomous snake whose tail the trap had caught. The snake bit the farmer's wife. The farmer rushed her to the hospital, and she returned home with a fever.

Everyone knows you treat a fever with fresh chicken soup, so the farmer took his hatchet to the farmyard for the soup's main ingredient.

But his wife's sickness continued, so friends and neighbors came to sit with her around the clock. To feed them, the farmer butchered the pig.

The farmer's wife did not get well; she died. So many people came for her funeral, the farmer had the cow slaughtered to provide enough meat for all of them.

The mouse looked upon it all from his crack in the wall with great sadness. So, the next time you hear someone is facing a problem and think it doesn't concern you, remember — when one of us is threatened, we are all at risk.

We are all involved in this journey called life. We must keep an eye out for one another and make an extra effort to encourage one another. How true is this!! (Author unknown)

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Perhaps the most important lessons we can learn are about life. Research can be a liberatory tool that helps us discover that our lives are inextricably interwoven with the world around us. It's not something I can teach. It's something each student needs to discover on his or her own. I am grateful for the opportunity to be part of the journey of discovery at this moment in time.

Article originally published at <http://carolahand.wordpress.com/2014/06/21/the-rewards-that-come-from-working-with-knowledge-seekers/>, where you will also find relevant links and the graphics illustrating it.



Story-telling. Brainstorming on Language To Use & Narrating past events, by MF

(US/UK English; about 800 words)

Here is a story about a past experience. (But I made it up, I swear!) Notice my **tenses**: I'm going to use the past simple, the past continuous ("when, before, after, while- clauses may come in handy!) and the past perfect (for a past happening before the leading past (simple). Then I'll try to add modals in the past ("used to" and its synonym, "would"-for-repeated-past-actions, or past-habits). I'll organize/organise my narrative chronologically, but I'll resort to the present simple for dramatic effect in one or two of the scenes.

I'll underline things teachers notice when they have to evaluate a level. Guess why they notice those.

Past narrative tenses, "used to," "would"

Underline the verbs in tenses and think about time in narratives. Also, think about my language range. Can you improve it, make it richer?

I'm going to (future of intention) tell you about a travel experience of mine. / I'm going to tell you about something that happened to me in a trip I made. It was in 1993, when I was 24. I had travelled (past before the past I'm telling you about) to London for an English course / to take an English course. Because (informal, very common) / Since I had no money, I decided to stay in a squat, with a lot of people from everywhere! It was interesting. We organized free entry workshops on all sort of things, and a lot of people came. In one of those events, I met a woman from Germany and we got to know one another better and became friends. Eventually, she invited me to stay in her house. It was a wonderful time for me! The house was small but welcoming, and she was great fun. We used to do all kinds of things together. For instance, we would (= used to) go to Candem Town Street Market every weekend and just hang out there all morning, talking to people. It was fun!

*Anyway, well, one day we were listening to music in her sitting-room **when all of a sudden** / **out of the blue** / **suddenly we see (saw)** this guy hanging outside the window! It was a burglar!! And he was getting away with the stuff he had taken/burgled! The poor guy was so stressed out that he didn't even see us. So we rush downstairs and wait for him! Hahaha... As one of the workshops we attended was on self-defense/self-defence we managed to reduce him! Hahaha... Yes! And after talking him into giving us the stuff he'd taken (we were friends with the woman he'd taken the things from), we went for a drink to a little café we used to go to! He was really hungry / starving, so we bought him a meal! (buy = invitar).*

In the end, we asked him to give a workshop on how to break into houses! We wanted to get better at that! — in this way, we'd improve (hypothetical "would") our technique.

Extra exercise. Functional Translation

Translate the story and then read my own translation. If your translation is literal, perhaps you might be able to explain the differences with my own functional

translation.

Underline the verbs in tenses and think about time in narratives.

Os voy a contar una cosa/anécdota que me pasó en un viaje. Fue en 1993, cuando tenía 24 años. Había ido a Londres, para hacer un curso de inglés. Como no tenía dinero, me fui a vivir a una okupa con mucha gente de todos los lados. Muy interesante. Organizábamos todo tipo de talleres gratis y venía mucha gente. En uno de los talleres conocí a una mujer de Alemania y nos hicimos amigas. Al final me invitó a que me quedara en su casa. Fue una época maravillosa. La casa era pequeña pero acogedora, y ella era genial. Hacíamos todo tipo de cosas juntas. Por ejemplo, los domingos nos íbamos al rastro de Candem Town y nos pasábamos allí la mañana, hablando con la gente. Era muy divertido.

Bueno, pues, un día estábamos escuchando música en el salón cuando de pronto vemos a un tío colgándose por la ventana! Era un ladrón! que escapaba con lo que había robado!! Estaba tan estresado el pobre que ni nos vio. Entonces bajamos corriendo y le esperamos. Como habíamos estado en un taller de defense personal, ipudimos inmovilizarle! Jajaja, sí! Y después de convencerle de que nos diera lo que había robado (éramos amigas de la vecina a la que le había robado las cosas), nos fuimos a tomar algo a un café donde solíamos ir! Él estaba muerto de hambre, y bueno, ile invitamos a comer algo! Al final, le pedimos que diera un taller sobre cómo entrar en las casas. Así mejoraríamos la técnica! (frase hipotética, pal range!)

★ Writing: Info on Women & Feminism for Improving Understanding of Changing Roles, by MF

(US Am English; about 600 words)

It's been a pleasure to read your articles, dear students, and a special treat to read your work on Changing Roles and Women. We are finally changing the world!

As I'm a veteran feminist thinker and activist, I thought I could share some relevant information you should certainly find elsewhere and check.

Writing about changing women's roles

New Info (rescued by Herstorians; keep in mind women are not in History because it was patriachs who wrote it, but they were there) people don't usually know, and don't seem to be interested in knowing, which is surprising.

Patriarchal societies started with the so-called **Neolithic** revolution. This means we did enjoy (like we do enjoy in our imagination and wherever we manage it in the small spaces of our private and social lives!) other kinds of societies, where men and women were human beings, not genitalized dolls each for a different purpose.

Modern feminism dates back to the French revolution (in our society; yes, it's been three centuries for this little big change). Truthfully, changes developed faster because of the Industrial revolution — and unfortunately, also as a result of modern wars (and women working in factories). But these pioneers or profeminists were women revolutionaries in the French Revolution at the end of the 18th century. When men decided to write Les Droits de l'Homme, Men's Rights ("man" meant "he-person" it was never "neutral" like the madmen in RAE say now) a document related to today's Human Rights), these extremely corageous women demanded to be inpintada en buenos aires, fotografiada por gaviota paseanderaccluded because they considered women should also have rights, and they were guillotined, imprisoned, and the lot of terrors. Read Olympe de Gouges and Mary Wollstonecraft to learn about this.

Women have probably always fought for a better life, so this – their not fighting for a better life – wouldn't explain the very many centuries of their oppression in patriarchal societies. Perhaps what explains such a long period of time of being oppressed is the intensity and complexity of patriarchal violence against women.

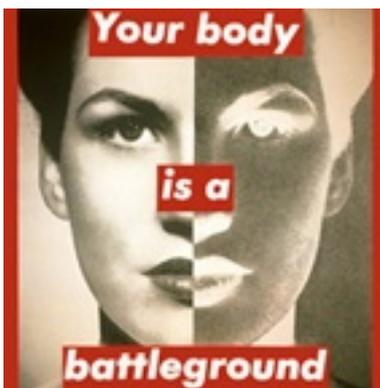


Photo Info: Artwork by Barbara Kruger, 1989

Feminism is not about validating a world where your genitals (well, just two conceivable options, against all evidence) are meant to **determine what your mind can do**, and what you, from using your freedom, can do. Feminism is a nonviolent revolution, and all about social justice, and it is beginning to liberate anyone who is sensitive to this issue. It's not only women who are benefiting from this social struggle. Men are also liberating themselves from the roles the patriarchal system imposed on them. Feminism supports their refusal to rape, and kill, their willingness to love and care and solve things through the use of nonviolence and intelligence, their freedom to chose who they love, too, their freedom to respect that other people might be willing to make decisions on their own bodies and life. Women know about not being allowed to choose or decide anything about your body and life. It's in our genes. And it's *cruel* and *brutal*.

So we keep reminding the human race: the r-EvoLution will be feminist or it will never happen. See Photo in my "About the author" piece.

PS: And hey, **women have been creating knowledge all the way**. Not being allowed to study or access books doesn't mean people cannot create knowledge. The problem is women have been made anonymous not only by the patriarchal gender system, but also, as part of that, by Historians. So I wonder why the Anonymous Movement obeyed so blindly to the patriarchal mandate, and decided to have a male anon. hero (especially when most probably — or aren't they aware yet? — many Anon.s were women) instead of using an androgynous mask, or even a female mask. Always needing Heroes instead of kind intelligent people capable of working and living together in freedom... sigh.



Two Strategies for Academic Writing: Overcoming Boredom & Exploiting Approach, by MF

(US/UK Englishes; about 1,300 words)

Writing Assignments. Overcoming Boredom

At a Distance University course I took, I had to write a composition comparing two cities/towns. I hate that topic and also the feeling of having to write without wanting to. But I had to. If boredom lurks, escape! So my strategy was to find the way to enjoy what I had to do. And I managed it: I wrote this piece, and had a laugh! Notice the title, the beginning, the ending, the paragraphing and the content distribution. Notice how I succeed in complying with the task of comparing two cities, plus the originality! – although this never counts, at least they don't include originality in Assessment and Evaluation Templates!

Assignment: Comparing & contrasting two cities in 500 words

Life and its strange deadly places

There are two places in the world I will never forget, extreme and different in many ways, linked by death in my otherwise uneventful life. One of them is the city of Chihuahua, Mexico, where I traveled to get divorced when Dictator Franco would not allow such crimes to be committed in Spain, and where I ended up murdering my husband. The other is New York, the USA, where I was murdered myself by an ill-humored graffiti artist.

Everything in Chihuahua is extreme. The Lady of the Desert is surrounded by soaring mountains and sheer cliffs, spectacular yellow canyons with beautiful cascading waterfalls, harsh desert land and also forests of pine trees and oak trees, fertile orchards and cropfields. Apples and nuts, cattle and sheep. Plenty of clean air to breathe. Pink quarry stone, zinc and silver. Tortillas and beans and black sweet coffee. Bleached walls against that strange silence of places where caciques own the land and its original owners, where borders are ghostly places of silence and corruption, poverty and fear, and where money can work miracles for a foreigner.

I actually learned about its existence looking at a bottle of beer on a gloomy Sunday evening in a pub in Madrid, with my husband sitting across the table. "Made in Chihuahua, Mexico." Colorful Mexico. It was 1966 and I was drunk. So it was on – we would travel to Chihuahua and divorce.

Everything in Manhattan is also extreme. The Big Apple bubbles away to the sky and sinks to the guts of the Earth – Manhattan is vertical and deep, unlike Chihuahua. Skyscrapers, King Kong, lights in the night. And people with clothes made of material and newspaper, to cover them completely. Little Babel Tower, bustling with scraps of different languages – Italian football radio and Spanish street markets, Chinese busy carts and restaurants with messages in cookies, Jews and packed shops. Black musical ghetto-busters, jazz clubs. Afroamericans playing drums with their kids in the street. Glass buildings imprisoning actual trees. Parks and rapists. Traffic-jams, long streets, noisy police cars. Art and artists, cafés. Museums. Public toilets.

1992. I was graffitiing in the 63rd Street Tunnel, a tunnel to nowhere built with grandiose future plans in mind but soon abandoned because – someone said – it was impractical. In rich countries full of poor, important people enjoy dumping money and wasting time. I was in Manhattan to attend the first annual Charlie Parker Jazz Festival because it was free and because it was in Tompkins Square Park (East Village), where my late husband's sister lived. Or because I loved jazz, really. And while graffitiing I started talking about the past and told her about me and her brother, and also about his death and – though sympathetic – she hit me hard with the ozone-damaging spray can. So I died – it was kind of comical. In a deserted subway platform.

Writing Exam Papers. Approach & Textual Matters.

Example 1

On the importance of approach (where you will place your eye to narrate, point of view) and textual matters (knowing different kinds of textual structure, format, and the ind of language and tone they need)

Once I was given this topic in a Writing test I was taking to get a certificate crediting my level in English: "The Elderly: should they live with their families or in elderly people's homes?" We were asked to write about the advantages and disadvantages of having elderly people in elderly people's homes or staying with their relatives. Examinees would probably write an argumentative essay. I thought of something different. I decided to write a *news story* about an elderly woman who had gone into hiding because her children wanted to take her to their home with them, or to an old people's home, and she refused to accept any of those options. She wanted to be left alone!

I had a great deal of fun writing the piece! The headline was: "Wanted Granny!" In the lead I explained: "Rigoleta Jones, 83, has gone into hiding after her family tried to make her leave her home." As the article developed I even quoted the old lady like journalists do! – never disclosing my sources, of course!

This story is a good example of how you can comply with the topic you are given and be original at the same time, not simply writing the type of text the wording of the topic indicates we should write. Doing this indicates the examinee is confident, resourceful and knowledgeable – she knows there are different kinds of texts, textual structures and textual formats, which require certain kinds of approach and language and tone, and she is creative and skillful enough to explore non-obvious formats for a topic.

Example 2

At the the Public Teachers' Examination for Secondary, an exam I took over the course of six or seven years to become a civil servant, one of the parts of the exam was a 300-word Composition about the Mad Cows Disease. I had just arrived in Spain after having spent a few years traveling, and was completely out in terms of current news, so my first reaction was I did not know a word about that. Then I came to my senses: I thought I did know the meaning of the words. "Mad Cow Disease" was a name for an illness cows were having, which apparently involved they looking mad, crazy. I had heard there was a political debate about British politicians, which means the cows were British. That was all. So I had a starting point! I just had to pull that

thread! I was going to become the cow!

I imagined I was isolated, and missing my loved ones. I wondered why when humans underwent psychological, nervous or emotional problems they were cared for lovingly and why cows were treated that way. And so on. My opening line was "I am sad and blue and nobody seems to care." After finishing the piece, I found a title which would not disclose the fact that the composition was "written" by a cow. In this way, the opening line would keep all of its force.

Prospective teachers were summoned to read out their papers on a certain date. It was a public event, so I invited my friends! When I started reading my composition, the Examining Board couldn't help laughing! Neither could I. We were all actually in tears! The idea of being a cow was so funny, and doing such an exercise in such a stressful and serious kind of exam was so much fun!

In both writing activities I was given the highest mark. It was not only the originality and the humor/humour, of course, it was also my English and my knowledge of writing, but originality set me apart from most other people. And that can sometimes be positive!



Politeness, Language & Culture: *Will & Can*, by MF

(US/UK Englishes; about 1,800 words)

This piece endeavors to explain why Spanish-speakers, particularly Spanish people, may sound impolite in English, particularly in Britain or Ireland – my explanation being it's a language (& culture) problem. For EFL Spanish-speaking learners this article will help them improve their use of English and overcome this communication problem.

One thing is certain: English speakers, especially British speakers, have a way of approaching the notion of future action that is completely different to the Spanish-speaking way of approaching the future! For one thing, English speakers do not have future tenses (except the "Future Simple" or "Will" future), just different ways – based on verbal and prepositional phrases – to indicate – mark my words here – the degree of likelihood of occurrence of a future event. In other words, whether we can expect an event to happen and to which point. This entails a kind of commitment, too – when expressing plans or intentions, English speakers indicate a commitment to that happening. And that is actually why English speakers have this sophisticated system of expressing things about future events.

For the Spanish-speaking mind, none of this applies. In Spanish grammar, there exists a complete set of future tenses, but Spanish speakers do not feel committed to the future happening or not for their choice of tense! The use of a tense doesn't mean anything in terms of how likely it is for the action to happen – at least as if compared to the case in English. The use of futures in Spanish is similar to the use of prepositions in Spanish: we have a great deal of prepositions, but manage with a few, which means, we're not particularly concerned with accuracy. And this is something that relates to culture: if English-speakers rely on language uses and structures to mean a great number of things, Spanish-speakers rely on paralinguistic features (stress, rhythm, pitch, intonation) and body language including facial expressions. To illustrate this, in Spanish we can use the imperative with social relationships (the woman working in the neighborhood/neighbourhood bakery) and be perfectly polite, even affectionate.

So let us now consider what happens when Spanish speakers confront the task of having to express a future event. Even if their teachers explain how the "system" works for the futures (see my notes for Elementary/Pre-Intermediate students at http://www.talkingpeople.net/tp/func_gram/gramwebs/future01.htm), it will take them time to assimilate the information, time and practice! – which is understandable, because the frame of mind in terms of understanding "the future" is completely different in both languages. Until they reach the stage of deep understanding, they will tend to use "will" for expressing any kind of future. This puts them in awkward situations:

British host family: "Would you like to visit the British Library tomorrow?"

Spanish reply: "Yes, I will go."

This is puzzling to hear for a number of different reasons. First, the way to reply to

Invitations/Offerings (this is the language function that we need to consider) is not correct. For "Would you like...?" questions we can use "I'd love to," "I'm terribly sorry. I can't," "Yes, please," "No, thank you," but not "Yes, I will."

Then – what does this "Yes, I will go" mean? Is it indicating a spontaneous decision? The context is not quite right, so that's not what would be understood in a first impression. Is it indicating a promise? "Yes, I promise to go." It doesn't sound right either! It's extremely dramatic! For the Spanish-speaking mind this is the future tense, just indicating a future, but for the English-speaking mind the most likely interpretation is that it is a future for predictions, and replying with a prediction on your involvement in the action when you are invited or offered something sounds awkward, or impolite.

Spanish student in Britain, to British host family: "What will you do tomorrow?"

This can be puzzling to hear, because it could be interpreted as connoting things the Spanish speaker doesn't really want to mean! The unmarked question for adults about their future actions is always with "going to" because we know that adults have plans and intentions. If we use "will" this could feel like we think those adults are incapable of having plans or intentions! These are OK sentences:

To a child: "What will you be when you grow up?" (here, "will" is not exactly about a future very much ahead, as Spanish speakers tend to interpret when they manage considering proximity in time, but as a future we know is just wishful thinking! (Actually I think adults should never ask this question to children!)

To a teenager in her/his last year of secondary education: "What are you going to do when you finish your studies here?" If you ask them, "What will you do when you finish here?" it's because you know the person has no plans and intentions and you just want to know about her/his predictions!

To an adult: "What are you doing tomorrow?" or "What are you going to do tomorrow," never "What will you do tomorrow?" if we're thinking of ordinary life situations.

However, when we wonder about how the person will solve a problem, when we wish to acknowledge he/she has a problem, we say "What will you do?" though we can also focus on his/her having plans and say, "What are you going to do?" or "What are you planning to do?"

My mother to me when I told her I was going to travel the world when I was in my twenties: "Where will you sleep?" etc. This meant she knew I did not travel like tourists do, but like wanderers do!!

Well, I'll stop here. Please post your comments, especially if you disagree with any of this, or you wish to add to it in some way, and feel free to post your questions, too!

[About the author] I am an EFL teacher in Spain, in public/state-run adult language education, and although I'm a Spanish/US American English speaker, as I live in Europe, I need to include British English in my curricula.

More on "Will" but First on "Can"

As you know, "can" is a defective verb, which means, it doesn't have all the forms it

needs to form all of the tenses. It just has "could", which can be used as a past (*I could ride bikes when I was 8*) or as a conditional (*Could you please close the door?*)

As you know, we use "be able to" to create all the forms that need "can" but which cannot use "can" because "can" is a present, not an infinitive, and the only other existing form, "could" is a past, or a conditional, but never a past or a past participle. So if you want to express the modal idea of ability (expressed with "can"), with a "will" future of prediction, for instance, *I'll be able to see them there (Podré verles allí)*, or a perfect tense (which uses "have" + a past participle), for instance, *I haven't been able to find them (No he podido encontrarles)*, you would need to use "be able to" because "be" has all the forms: infinitive, gerund, participle.

In the past, EFL teachers also taught the following: Then, in terms of presents and pasts, you would think we would simply stick to "can" and "could", but we don't! We can also use "be able to" (present: *am/is/are be able to*, past: *was/were able to*). So what did EFL teachers explain to solve this mystery?: We used to say: In the present, you can use either. If you use the "able" form you are just throwing more light on the idea of ability. It's marked, the unmarked option is "can". In the past, we use "could" for general past ability and "was/were able to" for an ability we have in a specific moment, *When I was a child, I could ride a bike. Yesterday I wasn't able to finish my paper on "will."* But then students would ask, "Why do people say 'Yesterday I couldn't find my keys,' for instance?" Aha! You're right. People actually (*de hecho*) say that. And it doesn't make sense, does it? But it does! Human languages love to make things shorter, especially what is very commonly said. That is why, for instance, although we're forgetting about using the subjunctive, "If I were rich" remains! (That is why although English lost its declensions, English kept, for instance, the Saxon Genitive.)

Well, here goes: in the Intermediate textbook we are using this year (OUP's, 2013) there is no mention of any difference between "can" and "am/is/are able to" or "could" "was/were able to." No reference to general past ability or specific ability in the past, and we can confirm this doing exercise b, 4A Gr. Bank.

My point is simply to inform you, and show you how languages are alive. They are!

Now I would like to tell you about the following: We were learning about how amazingly complex the world of "will" was. "Will" is not just a word to form "the future." Hopefully, you have understood that there is no future in Spanish-speaking terms in English, just ways in which to express how likely we feel the occurrence of an action might be, and "will" in this future sense is used firstly when we are least sure of occurrence, in other words, for "predictions," as in "I'll see them there" (I suppose / I think). Plus a whole lot of modal functions by "will," like "promising something," "Don't worry — I'll do it," like offering yourself to do something for someone, "I'll do it, if you like," like expressing spontaneous decisions, "I'll have a coke," "I'll answer it!"

Well, you might want to ask me, "Why do people say "We won't be able to go to your wedding. We can't take time off work" when it's certain (they can't take time off work)? And here is what I wanted to say when I started writing this: people could also say, "We are not going to be able to go to your wedding"? but this would be marked. They would be putting light on the fact of the plan or the intention. But for the case above, "going to" is just not worth it. It's too long. So the tendency is to shorten it up and simply use "will" (like when people say "I couldn't find my keys.") Or perhaps this

is the better [advanced] explanation: they are using the "will" for announcements on schedules! Oh no!!

About "will" and announcements and schedules, at airports, train or coach stations, or business emails, it'll have to be another day!



Language Misperceptions in Monolingual Communities in Spain, by MF

(US/UK Englishes; about 1,000 words)

In Spain, for 40 years we were told that people should speak Spanish. People who belonged to bilingual cultural backgrounds were persecuted and banned from speaking their other (and often mother) language – which terrified everybody all the same.

Those times are over. However, after having taught English in Madrid, on and off, throughout the 1980s and 90s, and then for the 13 years we've used up of the 21st century, I keep hearing the same kind of things we were educated in during the dictatorship. The difference is that today we have a lot of information about languages, human minds, cultures and relationships, instead of a Franquist/Fracoist dictator, someone who will hurt us if we don't say what we're expected to say.

There is a Spanish-nationalism tradition in monolingual communities in Spain that exhibits (and exposes) this fact: those people's very-aggressive hostility to bilingual communities. Why should they feel like that? Why such self-justified bellicose outrage? And what if there is resentment among people whose language was banned? (Obviously, those who feel that need to overcome it, after decades of language revitalization policies and the end of past persecution.) What's the big deal their heart warms more when they speak the language that was once persecuted? (If you were forced to stop speaking your family's language, how would you feel? If you had not been able to learn a language that was supposed to be part of your cultural background, how would you feel?) Why should their heart necessarily love more Spanish than their community's language? (I don't mean to justify intolerance on anyone's side, of course. I'm a free thinker and as such, I'm critical of all nationalisms, because nationalism is not — in my view — about collective identities but about collective impositions.)

In monolingual communities we are confronting a problem and people consistently refuse to tackle it: we need to consider that the monolingual people who are always accusing bilingual people of intolerance are not aware that they are perpetuating a tradition which we should have already long overcome. The Spanish democracy restarted in 1976 and the 1978 Constitution included the acknowledgement that Spain was a multilingual country, a country where different cultures coexisted with the Spanish culture: linguistic diversity is acknowledged in Article 3.3 where it states: "The richness of the linguistic varieties in Spain is a cultural heritage that will receive special respect and protection." Co-official languages in Spain: Aranese (in danger of extinction), Basque, Catalan/Valencian and Galician. Other languages in Spain add up to 14 or 15, and that includes three different sign languages.

Since the 1990s I've been bringing up this issue in my lessons, especially when I had Advanced level English students. I've tried to make people think critically about the biased opinions monolingual people help spread, distorting in this way the educational process of language and cultural respect to diversity in Spain. To this day (2013), I'm still shocked at the strength of people's misperceptions, at how they defend these biased opinions as if this was a fundamental ideological issue in their lives, yes, a question of patriotism... Why should someone living in Madrid, an Autonomous

Community in Spain, have a say about whether a Catalan person should not prefer to speak Catalan in Catalonia, another Autonomous Community in Spain? Why should they feel they can actually say / they have a "right" (!) to say that Catalans have to speak Spanish in Catalonia, when we've had Autonomous Communities – protecting cultural diversity – since the 1970s and 80s? From a democratic or linguistic stand, there is no way language and cultural diversity can be seen as threatening or negative for any community or any part of a community.

By-default-mentality people ("ordinary" people) in monolingual communities in Spain say things as false, unfair and openly impolite as this – and it makes me feel so ashamed and overwhelmed that I can't even react properly in spite of my knowledge and my role as a language teacher: "Galicians don't know how to speak / write Spanish" (!! against ALL evidence!), "Catalans / Basques have to speak Spanish whether they like it or not because we are in Spain" (!! Franquist mentality!). Just two grotesque examples (grotesque, if we consider it from an informed and democratic standpoint). The fact is that monolingual communities speak only one language, and bilingual communities speak two, and they do. Why should monolingual people be unable to understand that there exists bilingualism in Spain? And that speaking your mother language or languages is a human right? And that languages that have been banned (!!) have needed language revitalization policies – which we have fortunately had since democracy started? Shockingly enough, in Madrid the educational authorities are pursuing bilingualism – not Quality Foreign Language Education, bilingualism they call it – with... English!, a language which is not in people's cultural background, except people like myself, children from culturally-mixed marriages at the time when Franco, the dictator who isolated Spain from being in touch with the world (with the social movements in the 1960s for instance) welcomed US American airbases in the country. Except minority cases like my own, English is and will be a Foreign Language in Madrid (which doesn't mean people can't learn it well and also in the public education system, where we have qualified teachers like myself!)

People in monolingual communities in Spain like the Autonomous Community of Madrid should stop making the ignorant "jokes" and comments on bilingual people we hear every day. This shames us all. This speaks of people's ignorance and prejudice, it does not "defend" any legitimate Cause. When we tackle the language issue we should exert some minimum respect, and express our questions and comments as such, rationally and with empathy (tactfully at least), because in our past there has existed a terrifying language reality that has made a lot of people suffer and we should not pretend Nothing happened. We should not use our questions and ideas as weapons for showing despise for a different language community. We should question our own perceptions and feelings (in monolingual communities), too, admitting we also have a trauma, the trauma of believing there are languages which are more important than others and should be imposed, if necessary.



Indian Child Removal and the Ga-Ga, by Carol A. Hand

(American English, about 2,600 words)

Recognizing the special relationship between the United States and the Indian tribes and their members and the Federal responsibility to Indian people, the Congress finds--

... that Congress, through statutes, treaties, and the general course of dealing with Indian tribes, has assumed the responsibility for the protection and preservation of Indian tribes and their resources; ... that there is no resource that is more vital to the continued existence and integrity of Indian tribes than their children and that the United States has a direct interest, as trustee, in protecting Indian children who are members of or are eligible for membership in an Indian tribe; ... that an alarmingly high percentage of Indian families are broken up by the removal, often unwarranted, of their children from them by nontribal public and private agencies and that an alarmingly high percentage of such children are placed in non-Indian foster and adoptive homes and institutions; and ... that the States, exercising their recognized jurisdiction over Indian child custody proceedings through administrative and judicial bodies, have often failed to recognize the essential tribal relations of Indian people and the cultural and social standards prevailing in Indian communities and families. (The Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978)

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Years ago, the director of a child welfare agency asked me to do an in-service training for her staff about Native American child welfare issues. She added "Don't tell them about the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978. They already know it. What staff need to know is why they should care." Because I left my position before I had a chance to respond to her request, this essay is my belated way of addressing her concerns.

The most effective way to conquer a nation is to acculturate their children. Although the removal of Native American children from their families by the federal government, under the guise of education, did not become official policy in the U.S. until after the Civil War, it was not a new practice. From the earliest accounts of Spanish and English colonizers, Native American children were a special focus of assimilation policies. Removal by force and kidnapping were sanctioned ways of dealing with the children of people who were viewed as heathens and savages, and who were certainly in the way of the foreign advance forces that were only interested in claiming indigenous territory and resources.

Although the agents of removal have changed over time, the consequences have been destructive for families and communities for hundreds of years. According to an Ojibwe elder and social worker, social workers eventually merited a name drawn from Ojibwe mythology, the ga-ga, or bogey man. In dangerous environments, Ojibwe parents and elders met the challenge of protecting children from harm in many creative ways because physical punishment and coercion were rare and culturally discouraged. In the most serious circumstances, parents and elders used "scaring stories" that were passed on through the generations, sometimes taking on new meanings. She said that according to oral tradition, Ojibwe parents or elders used to

tell children that the bear would take them away if they did not learn to listen and behave. And then, one child was taken by a bear. In order to avoid offending bear relatives and invoke their anger, the ga-ga, a mythical creature like the bogeyman of European fairy tales, was substituted for the bear in the scaring stories.

No one believed that there really was such a creature, until the imposition of colonial domination gave new meaning to this warning. Canada and the United States implemented sweeping policies intended to civilize indigenous peoples by removing children from tribal communities. The agents of removal, Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) agents, missionaries, and social workers, became known as the ga-ga. As the Ojibwe social worker recounted, for generations Ojibwe children have been warned.

I heard the story when I was little. My mother told us that if we did not behave, the ga-ga would come to take us away. They would take kids and put them into other homes or schools. That's all I remember. (Ojibwe elder, Personal communication, July 5, 2003)

The new nation that emerged on Indigenous homelands didn't waste much time in asserting their agenda of political, religious, economic, and cultural domination. In 1819, soon after the United States was founded, Congress authorized \$10,000 annually to support religious groups and individuals who wished to establish mission schools in tribal communities. Stressing white values, the schools taught boys farming and blacksmithing and girls domestic skills. For the next several decades, Indian education remained the responsibility of the churches, with federal monetary support" (O'Brien, 1989, p. 239).

Day schools proved ineffective at dismantling culture and community ties. When the Civil War ended, a new intervention spread throughout the nation, Indian boarding schools. The first federal school, under the direction of the BIA, opened in 1860 on the Yakima Indian Reservation in the state of Washington. It was not until 1879, however, that the U.S. opened what is probably the most famous boarding school in Carlisle, PA, under the direction of Captain Henry Pratt, a veteran of the Civil War and the Indian Wars in the western United States. By the 1900s, the BIA operated 251 schools, 113 of which were boarding schools, the preferred method for educating Native children even though they were more costly to operate than day schools. "It is the experience of the department that mere day schools, however well conducted, do not withdraw the children sufficiently from the influences, habits, and traditions of their home life, and produce for this reason a ... limited effect" (as quoted in Adams, 1995, p. 30).

When children arrived, their hair was cut, they were stripped and scrubbed with disinfectant soap, deloused even if they didn't need to be, and clothed in the garb of the colonizers, sometimes in cast-off Civil War uniforms. They were stripped of their given names, forbidden to speak their languages, and housed in over-crowded dormitories. They suffered emotional, physical, and sexual abuse, and because of crowded housing and poor nutrition, thousands died from tuberculosis, measles, pneumonia, and other causes. They were only taught manual trades, to be farmers, tradesmen, or servants, and indoctrinated to value the morality of hard work and the ownership of private property. Those who did return home "were virtual strangers, unable to speak their own language or understand the ways of their own people" (O'Brien, 1989, p. 239).

After the Great Depression (1934), the federal government shifted the focus of Indian

education from the assimilation of Indigenous children through boarding schools to a broader integration approach within the public school system. The Johnson-O'Malley Act of 1934 provided funding to cover education for Native youth within local public schools in the White communities that bordered tribal communities. The agents of child removal also shifted, from federal agents to state and local child welfare workers.

By 1976, an alarm was sounded by tribal communities and advocacy groups. The number of Indigenous children who had been removed from their families and communities had reached staggering proportions. Surveys conducted by the Association of American Indian Affairs in 1974 estimated that "approximately 25-35 per cent of all Indian children are separated from their families and placed in foster homes, adoptive homes, or institutions" (Byler, 1977, p. 1). The U.S. Senate Select Committee on Indian Affairs established a task force to investigate Indian child welfare issues and discovered that foster care placement rates for Native American children were more than five times higher than those of non-Indians. Adoption rates for Native American children, predominantly by non-Native homes, were also significantly higher than those of non-Indians. The task force concluded that "the removal of Indian children from their natural homes and tribal setting has been and continues to be a national crisis [,] ... seriously impacts a long-term tribal survival and ... Non-Indian public and private agencies, with some exceptions, show almost no sensitivity to Indian culture and society" (U.S. Senate Select Committee on Indian Affairs Task Force Four, 1977, p. 52).

The Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978 (ICWA) was passed the next year to end the destruction of tribal cultures through policies that encouraged keeping Native American children who were removed from their families within their tribal communities or Native American homes. In reality, the law only granted tribal courts some say in decisions affecting children, and allowed tribal governments an opportunity to place some children who were removed with families on the reservation rather than with Euro-Americans families in other locations. The law did not return total jurisdiction to tribes to design the types of practices they defined as best to promote safe and healthy families. Despite ICWA, child welfare policies and best practices are still largely dictated by federal and state governments. The illusion of control represented by ICWA, however, has kept many tribes from challenging an oppressive system. And the backlash to ICWA from counties, states, and Euro-Americans who desperately want to adopt Native American children has been unrelenting.

Tribal child welfare workers with caseloads of 50 to 120 families struggle to keep children safe and families intact. Their clients span multi-county communities, states, and the nation as a whole. One of the biggest obstacles they face is the appalling ignorance of the general U.S. population about tribal histories and cultures. An even greater obstacle, however, is the rock-solid assumption among most non-Native child welfare experts and practitioners that they really know what is best for all children. Culture doesn't matter. Community is irrelevant. What matters is being adopted as part of an insular nuclear family. They argue that nuclear families give children a sense of "permanency," at least until they reach the age of 18.

Yet culture matters a great deal. Being part of a community with which one identifies matters as well. An exercise designed by Vera Manuel, First Nations author and teacher from British Columbia, demonstrates the profound difference between the

Euro-American concept of "permanence" and an Indigenous sense of belonging to a community and culture. She engaged participants in sculpting the organization of a pre-contact tribal community. She placed a small pouch on a chair in the center of the room, explaining that it contained things that were sacred to her. The sacred pouch represented the spiritual beliefs that were the center and foundation of the community. She then asked for volunteers to act out the role of children. She asked them to form a circle facing the sacred bundle. Next, she asked for volunteers to role-play parents and form a circle around all of the children. The next volunteers, encircling parents, were aunties and uncles and other adults in the community. Elders formed the final circle of those community members who were facing toward the children and the sacred center. Around the periphery, facing outward, were the volunteers who agreed to represent leaders and warriors who were responsible for protecting the community from harmful outside forces. Next, a few brave volunteers agreed to play the role of "child stealers," the ga-ga.

In early times, the ga-ga were federal BIA agents or missionaries. In later times, they were state and county child welfare workers. These agents of churches, the federal government, counties, and states broke through the protective circles to forcibly remove the children. Despite resistance by the leaders, warriors, elders, aunties and uncles, and parents, children were removed from their place at the center of the community and taken away by strangers using threats and force. Participants in the sculpted exercise were asked to act out their reactions to losing their children. Without their children, parents, adults, and elders cast their eyes down and turned inward, wrapped their arms over their heart, turned their backs to the center, or left the circle. Warriors and leaders were deeply shamed by their defeat and also turned inward or left. Their meaning in life was lost. When some of the children returned as adults, the community was often disorganized and unrecognizable. Without a purpose, the circles of care that had surrounded them as children were in disarray.

Most agents of removal may well have sincerely believed that Native children would be better off away from their families and cultures. Removal and outplacement continued for generations, funded and encouraged by federal policies and religious institutions. However, for the Ojibwe community members of all ages who have shared their stories with me, the life-long consequences of removal are clear. Each told me that the experiences he or she shared with me were unique and too painful for others in the community to hear or understand. They suffered silently, alone, with the legacy of self-doubt, pain, and anger. Their families and communities suffered as well. Most internalized the shame and blamed their removal on their parents' substance abuse or irresponsibility. Few recognized that their experience was part of an enduring and deliberate federal agenda to eradicate tribal cultures, a repetition of what their parents, grandparents and more distant ancestors had survived.

Healing the legacy of widespread government-sponsored abuse of Native American children, families and communities is not an easy prospect. Children who were removed from their families and communities, warehoused and abused in federal and religious institutions, or placed with families of non-Indian strangers who were at best not able to help children be integrated into their tribal communities and cultures, and at worst were cruel and abusive, face special challenges as parents. Each generation has stories to tell about their experiences:

- being kidnapped from a village road at the age of five and delivered to a federal boarding school more than 100 miles away still carrying scars more than 70 years

later from punishment inflicted on their first day for speaking the only language they knew, "Indian,"

- being the first of many community children placed in a white foster home where Native children were beaten and sexually abused from the age of nine until they were 18 and old enough to exit care,
- running away at the age of 15 to fend for themselves because system interventions only intensified their abuse,
- returning "home" to the tribal community only to find that the mythic culture they created in their imagination to survive years of exile was not there to welcome them and enfold them in a healing circle.

Tribes have done their best to rebuild communities of care despite centuries of destructive policies, and they have made significant strides. There is much yet to do and tribes need allies who understand the harm that has been done and are willing to work in partnership to help banish the ga-ga once and for all. As I write this essay in 2014, Native American children are still more likely to be removed from their families and communities than children from other backgrounds (Summers, Wood, & Donovan, 2013), and the ICWA provisions that offer some protections have suffered serious setbacks. Still, I believe it is within our power to prevent future generations of Native Americans from losing their connections to family and community, to their languages and cultures, and to their self-respect. It is possible to create policies, institutions, and practice paradigms that prevent abuse and neglect while also preserving families, communities, and cultures if we care enough to engage in constructive dialogue and work together as advocates in whatever ways we can.

Chi miigwetch to the community members who made me feel welcome and shared their stories, laughter, and pain, and whose inspiring work to improve the lives of the next generations will continue to give me hope despite these troubling times.

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Article originally published at <http://carolahand.wordpress.com/2014/03/08/indian-child-removal-and-the-ga-ga/>, where you will also find relevant links and the graphics

illustrating it.



Worlds Apart: The Enduring Significance of Ojibwe Culture, by Carol A. Hand

(American English; about 5,000 words)

It makes me angry when I hear about cultural competence. There aren't any cultural differences between the people on the reservation and the rest of the residents in the county. The culture is gone; it's a thing of the past. (County Decision Maker, October 15, 2001)

To say there is not a culture is not true. It justifies them [county social services and court systems] for not learning about us. (Terrence, Ojibwe Community Member, October 19, 2001)

These statements were given voice by Ojibwe and Euro-American community members during a critical ethnographic study in 2001-2002. One perspective carried more weight. Because of the speaker's gender, ethnicity, and position, the statement symbolizes one of the many ways in which Ojibwe sovereignty continues to be constrained and traditional lifeways, disparaged.

The Ojibwe community I studied had been confined on an ever-decreasing landbase and subjected to the policies and institutions of the dominant Euro-American community that surrounded them over the course of centuries. Although this study was focused on understanding the child welfare system and its impacts for Ojibwe families, the question of culture remained a central issue. The importance of addressing the question of cultural differences became apparent when the County Decision Maker forcefully proclaimed "*The culture is gone; it's a thing of the past.*" When the person who controls child welfare funding for all county residents, including Ojibwe people, believes there is no culture, what incentive is there to keep Ojibwe families together and keep children within their tribal community? A leading expert in child welfare research criticized the significance of the study not because of methodological flaws, but because, from his perspective, "*It was a good thing that we [Euro-Americans] imposed our system on tribes.*" As the following essay argues, the assumptions of both the County Decision Maker and the child welfare expert are incorrect.

My research focused on child welfare. What evidence could I draw from the study to address this topic? Fortunately, I had collected evidence about culture. As a new researcher, I wrote down everything I noticed which proved to be a wise practice. The timing of my arrival in the community was serendipitous. It was August 28, 2001, just as the gathering of wild rice was underway in the Ojibwe community, and just before deer hunting season for Euro-American residents in the surrounding county.

A long description of research would be out of place in this essay, but it is important for me to mention that I chose critical ethnography as my methodology because its focus is liberatory. Like traditional ethnography, critical ethnography typically involves several methods: extended cultural immersion, participant observation, ethnographic interviews, and document review. Yet critical ethnography differs in a crucial way. It is concerned with the ways in which the power of institutions, symbols, and meaning are used to "construct and limit choices, confer legitimacy, and guide our daily routine" (Thomas, 1993, p. 6). The significance of a critical stance in the process of

ethnographic work is to explore not only what is, but what could be, to question the "unnecessary social domination" that promotes inequality (Thomas, 1994, p. 5). In the context of the present study, an historical component was added to explore "what was" based primarily on ethnographic interviews and document reviews. Understanding history is particularly important when trying to make sense of present conditions for tribal communities (Weaver, 1999; Flemming, 1992).

Because the question of culture and cultural survival are central to this discussion, it is important to define the increasingly suspect concept of "culture." Early anthropologists defined culture as a complex whole that included all capabilities and habits people acquired as members of a given society, including knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, and customs (Asad, 1986). In more recent times, debates have surfaced about the efficacy and morality of "a distinct, bounded, and unifying culture" that is "an embarrassing colonial artifact" (Van Maanan, 1995, p. 27). For the purposes of this discussion, "culture" in the sense of distinct patterns of behavior becomes central when contrasting the beliefs and behaviors of Ojibwe and Euro-American community members who shared their stories and perspectives with me (Wolcott, 1995).

A simpler definition of culture is "the acquired knowledge people use to interpret experience and generate behavior" (Spradley, 1980, p. 6). This definition suggests that behavior and meaning are learned within the context of one's family and community. Children learn how to "act" appropriately and what it means to "be" a member of a specific group. The strong sentiments about culture voiced above by the county decision maker and the divergent view expressed by the Ojibwe community member made it essential to determine if there was evidence of a distinct Ojibwe culture in present times. A second important focus was to explore whether there was evidence that at least some members of the Ojibwe community were involved in efforts to preserve and revitalize distinct cultural values and lifeways. A third question related to context was the degree to which there was evidence of observable cultural distinctions between the Ojibwe and Euro-American communities.

All cultures are complex, multi-dimensional, and elastic (Handler, 1983). Shared cultural meanings and lifeways rely on "a delicate balance ... [between] tradition and innovation, inherited forms and creativity" (Handler, 1983, p. 219). It is necessary to distinguish what is shared, by whom, in what ways, and under what conditions: culture is multifaceted (Dirks, Eley, & Ortner, 1994). Many factors influence shared culture, the most important of which include gender, age, and social status.

There are wide variations among individuals within any given society with respect to the degree to which cultural meanings and customs are internalized and expressed through behaviors and the explanations or rationales behind those behaviors. Yet a cultural gestalt is portrayed and preserved through stories that are passed down to future generations either orally or through written documents. Stories symbolize the shared meanings of life and one's place in the universe, often expressed through metaphors.

A decade earlier, this essay may well have reflected a balanced attempt to argue from a stance of cultural relativism by including a caveat that it is *always* inappropriate to portray the ways of one culture as superior to those of another. Times have changed. Within the context of global climate change, endangered species, and the accelerating destruction of forests and wilderness areas, such a stance feels profoundly unethical to me as an Ojibwe scholar. I began my study from a stance of cultural relativism.

However, analysis of the findings of the study and additional reflection within a larger historical and global context have shifted my stance. As an Ojibwe researcher and scholar, I admit a biased interpretive perspective. It is important for readers to know this up front so they can determine for themselves if the soundness of the following arguments and the weight of the following evidence, gathered from as many sources as possible with no conscious agenda to substantiate a pre-study bias, withstand the scrutiny of critical readers.

Cultural emersion involved deciding where to live in the focal county, on the Ojibwe reservation or in the local county seat. Given that I am Ojibwe and lived for many years in a different Ojibwe community, it made sense to live within the county seat in order to observe a less-familiar cultural milieu on a daily basis. As sometimes happens with ethnographic research, serendipity played a role in identifying participants and a place to live. I was fortunate to find a "culture broker" within each community, that is, someone who was respected because of their knowledge and positive relationships with others in the community. They served as key participants and as links to others in their respective communities.

Within the Ojibwe community, the person who played this role was from a prominent family in the community, and took me under her wing to introduce me to tribal elders and leaders. In the Euro-American community, my "culture broker" was identified by many Euro-American community residents whom I asked about city and county history. They repeatedly mentioned the owner of a copy shop located in the county seat. Although it took many visits to the copy shop to actually meet the owner, we formed an instant connection and the evolving friendship we developed was profoundly important in many ways. A life-long resident of the area, he had stored newspaper and journal articles from the area for more than 40 years and personally knew many of the Ojibwe tribal leaders and members, past and present, as well as the Euro-American residents. He owned the storefront that housed the copy shop in the center of the small town, above which he had a number of efficiency apartments to rent. He became a study participant and my landlord, opening his collections of historical materials and refusing to allow me to pay for the thousands of pages of documents that he let me copy. From my centrally located vantage point in a second-story apartment that overlooked the major cross-section in town, I was able to learn a great deal about the community and the relationships between community residents and tribal people, especially between the local police and youth from both communities.

Participant observations included regular visits to the tribal elders' noon meal, visits to elder apartments in the county, and participation/observations of a variety of events and agencies within both communities. Most of the people I spoke with participated in ethnographic interviews. In contrast to one-time semi-structured interviews, ethnographic interviews involve meeting with the same participants periodically throughout the course of a study. Time between interviews allowed me, as the researcher, to learn more and ask clarifying questions, and also allowed participants an opportunity to reflect on the questions asked and their responses in previous interviews. Because of the timing of my study, conversations around the tables at the tribal elder center during lunch often focused on their adventures ricing and hunting. Similarly, if I stopped by the copy shop, the owner and I would sit by the large picture window at a table just inside the front door. Community members would stop by and join us, and the talk would often turn to hunting excursions.

In addition to interviews, document review became one of the key methods for understanding past and present behaviors and meanings associated with hunting and gathering within each of the cultures. As noted above, the owner of the copy shop became a key source for documents both directly as the source of many of the documents and as an ethnographic interview participant who helped explain the significance and meaning of information. He also helped indirectly through his knowledge of both the Euro-American and Ojibwe communities and suggested other people I should interview. Books, pamphlets, newspaper accounts and photos, old maps, and administrative reports all provided a rich context of information for both communities, past and present.

The following discussion highlights one dimension, the economic sphere, to describe both local cultures in terms of the past and the present and to illustrate points of cultural similarity and difference. "Economic sphere" means hunting and gathering activities. There are a number of reasons for focusing on hunting and gathering activities. First, by placing the experiences of one Ojibwe community within a more general Ojibwe historical-cultural context, specific cultural aspects of change, continuity, and complexity become more apparent. Second, given the timing of my study, the economic sphere is the most completely documented for both Ojibwe and Euro-American communities by all three research methods – interviews, observations, and documents. Third, the evidence shows the intergenerational transmission of culture within both cultural milieus in this narrowly defined dimension.

Drawing from observations, interviews, and documents, a number of important findings emerge that provide evidence of observable cultural distinctions between the Ojibwe and Euro-American communities. Hunting and gathering activities within both the Ojibwe and Euro-American communities were a frequent topic of conversation in the fall of 2001. As the following exemplars from interviews, observations, and documents show, cultural differences between local Ojibwe and Euro-American culture are evident within the narrowly defined economic dimension. There is also evidence of cultural continuity and change within both communities.

Ojibwe Community

A central aspect of the Ojibwe economic sphere was the seasonal round they followed to grow and gather food and manufacture basic necessities within the ecosystems of their habitation (Meyer, 1994; Venum, 1988). Although the specific activities and timing varied depending on the particular geographic habitats of widely scattered Ojibwe communities, the cycle generally involved a congregation of members in summer villages comprised of 100 or more people. Here, they planted family gardens (beans, corn, squash, and pumpkins). In mid and later summer, families traveled to pick berries, and in the fall to rice camps to gather and process wild rice, which for many was the major subsistence crop. They harvested, processed, and cached the produce from their gardens, ricing, berrying, and their summer and early fall fishing and hunting. In the fall, smaller family groups (20 to 25 people) prepared to move to their winter hunting areas, and in the spring, when the snow and icy waterways began to melt, families traveled to the sugarbush to gather and process the sap of maple trees.

The seasonal movements "from one place to another ..., [and] the stability in timing and locations gave the cycle great continuity" (Meyer (1994, p. 24). The seasonal pattern also represents an effective strategy for dealing with the natural climate and environment, maintaining a self-sufficient lifestyle and assuring a "diverse resource

base" in case any resource failed in a given year (Meyer, 1994, p. 27). Despite confinement on reservations in the 1850s, many of these seasonal round activities continue to be of importance for members of the focal Ojibwe community. In the fall, wild rice (Vennum, 1988) and deer hunting (Hickerson, 1988) remain particularly important.

Because ricing is such a deeply rooted activity, most Ojibway build harvest time into their annual schedules as a matter of course. Many urban Indians return to their home reservations for ricing; others leave regular jobs in nearby towns for the harvest, even though it can mean financial loss.... Ricing is also an activity that older people continue to participate in.... For cultural reasons alone, the Ojibway people will probably never give up ricing willingly. (Vennum, 1988, pp. 298-299)

Participant-observations, particularly during the fall of 2001, underscored the continuing importance of seasonal round activities (Meyer, 1994). Ricing, hunting, fishing, and to a more limited extent, gathering berries, were a central topic of informal conversations among Ojibwe elders during noon meals. One Ojibwe elder (Mishoomis Thomas, September 9, 2001) drew a series of cartoons about hunting and ricing – including an illustration of the experiences of the Nacomis Xina, cited below, with her head above water next to an overturned canoe with wild rice stems encircling her legs.

I'm lucky to be alive! I went out ricing with [my niece] last weekend. I let her pole while I knocked the rice into the canoe. I didn't know that she didn't know how to pole. She pushed the pole in too far and it got stuck in the mud, and when the canoe rocked and spun around, we were both thrown into the water. I was afraid I was going to drown. The rice stalks wrapped around my legs, and the more I kicked, the tighter they became. We were finally able to climb back into the canoe. I usually don't wear a jacket [life preserver] when I go out, but I had one on that day and it kept me afloat even when the rice was wrapped around my legs... I'll never go out again with someone who doesn't know what they're doing (Nacomis Xina, September 9, 2001).

Escaping danger and humor were common elements of the stories that were shared. Perhaps more central, however, were the remembered social interactions. The accounts always interwove family and community members who shared the activities, and stories of how they worked together to face challenges and danger. As elders competed for opportunities to share their stories, adding details to the stories others shared, the sound of merriment and laughter filled the room.

Although ricing remains central for these tribal elders, they observed that fewer people practice traditional gathering activities than did in the past. At the same time, however, despite inexperience, people in younger generations still do participate. Younger people are still interested in learning, although some of them, like the niece described above, may have to find other teachers. An Ojibwe community member in the next generation shared his story about the importance of ricing.

It is more important for me to be doing what I am right now, processing food as a way to practice the ways of the people. Chimokoman [White Man] has tried to make the people forget, but some of the knowledge has been retained and is now being taught to young people. Hunting is also an important way to practice culture, to harvest when the time is right rather than punching a time clock. Look around [lifting his arm he gestures toward the trees in full autumn colors – bright yellow, red, orange, and gold], this is gold ("Tyler," October 4, 2001).

Despite the continuing importance of ricing for Ojibwe community members, environmental changes pose concerns for the community.

There used to be a lot of rice on the lake – it was covered with plants – now there are only scattered patches. And there used to be as many as 140 boats out at one time – now there are maybe eight (Mishoomis Raymond, October 10, 2001).

White-tailed or Virginia deer were an important part of the Ojibwe diet in the past (Hickerson, 1988), and remain so today as exemplified by the following interview excerpt. Hunting is a skill that continues to be passed on to younger generations. A more distinctive cultural component, however, is the continuing importance of sharing. The account of Mishoomis Raymond demonstrates how critical hunting and sharing were for family and community survival in the past.

When I was a boy, there were only about twenty-eight families that lived in the village here. All of the families were poor, but we hunted and shared what we gathered. Deer were divided among all of the families, and my friend and I snared rabbits as young boys and would share what we caught with everyone (Mishoomis Raymond, September 10, 2001).

Mishoomis Raymond also discussed how he continues to practice the skills and Ojibwe ethics of hunting, and his efforts to ensure that these skills are passed on to younger generations.

There's a young non-Indian girl here who told me that she couldn't eat most kinds of meat, fish, or shrimp – it makes her sick. But she can eat venison. So I'm going to give her one of the two deer I shot yesterday. My grandson and I went out hunting with [another Ojibwe community member] and his grandson. The two boys were able to track down a deer that was shot but kept running. When we caught up with the boys, they were already gutting the deer. I was proud of them (Mishoomis Raymond, November 19, 2001).

A number of community documents underscore the meaning and importance of Ojibwe seasonal round activities in more contemporary times. Included in these documents are accounts shared by Ojibwe community elders who have demonstrated and described the steps for processing wild rice, the techniques and timing for gathering birchbark, and the techniques and timing for gathering cranberries.

... [Mishoomis Raymond] recalled his childhood days spent with his cousin ... exploring the swamp and snacking on mashkiigiminan (cranberries); the tart flavor forcing their lips to pucker... Two weeks before... [Mishoomis Raymond] and [his cousin] had revisited the footsteps of their childhood to once again gather mashkiigiminan. [Ojibwe Raymond] could not have been happier that his daughter and granddaughter [who went with them] had shown interest in gathering mashkiigiminan (Tribal Publication 1, 2001, p. 10).

The article adds that the Mishoomis Raymond, his cousin, and his friend frequently help and encourage "... youngsters to learn traditional ways. All three elders know the importance of passing their knowledge onto younger generations" (p. 10).

Ricing, one of the Ojibwe traditional practices described by Ojibwe community members, is highlighted in contemporary promotional materials developed to attract tourists. "The annual harvest of wild rice, an essential part of the Indian diet, has

altered very little in the hundreds of years that the [Ojibwe] have lived here (Tribal Publication 2, p. 18).

Euro-American Community

Stories gathered within the Ojibwe community are qualitatively different than those of the long-term Euro-American residents in the surrounding community. Hunting and fishing stories were a topic frequently raised by Euro-American men in the community. Some noted that hunting and woodsmanship are longstanding traditions for families from their Euro-ethnic identity who originally settled in the mountains of Tennessee and Kentucky before moving to the county seat several generations ago.

[People of my ancestry and geographic origin] were outdoorsmen: they could make it on the land and the area here is a lot like the land they knew. They lived off the land like the native peoples, and did almost as well... They could hunt, trap, and fish (Euro-American Community Member, October 25, 2001).

Some of the accounts focused on hunting excursions with sons, or in one case, with a wife. The emphasis of stories was typically on the challenge of the hunt. Only one community member said that hunting for him was more about the chance to be in a remote area to enjoy the natural beauty. Hunting has played an important symbolic role for Euro-American men (Haraway, 1994). The stories told by Euro-American male informants seem to fit with Haraway's (1994, p. 75) characterization as:

... the tales of a pure man whose danger in pursuit of a noble cause brings him into communion with the beasts he kills, with nature. This nature is a worthy brother of man, a worthy foil for his manhood.

Documents gathered from a variety of community sources provide confirmation of Haraway's (1994) interpretation of Euro-American sportsmanship. Hunting has been an important part of local Euro-American culture since the days of the first non-indigenous settlers. Promotional materials originally published in the early 1900s to attract Euro-American "home-seekers and investors" to the area emphasize hunting, fishing, and recreation. These materials were reprinted in 2001 to preserve local historical accounts and cultural traditions. One of the publications includes photographs of hunters standing by their slain prey, or scores of deer carcasses hanging from racks, accompanied by the following text:

[The county seat] is the outfitting point for parties bound to the deer hunting grounds.... For several years, the hunting parties have brought back a hundred or more deer each year with now and then a bear and large number of partridges and other small game (Community document, 1906/2001).

Another publication appeals for people to settle in the area and farm "cut-over lands," or lands once occupied by the Ojibwe and other First Nations peoples that had been completely stripped of the virgin hardwood and pine forests by large outside lumber companies (Community Document). One of the enticements for new settlers was the following text:

Every season this section is visited by armies of nimrods from the southern part of the state, and from other states, who always return home with their allotted number of deer.... Ducks are killed in great numbers on the lakes, where they feed on the wild rice beds (Community Document, 1914/2001).

Hunting remains important for local Euro-American residents in contemporary times. Before deer hunting season in 2001, the editorial section of the local newspaper underscored the the importance of this gendered legacy:

THE COUNTDOWN to deer season is well underway. I can tell because of the increased number of phone calls [my husband] gets from his brothers and nephews. They all have to touch base several times in order to plan the big hunt. This annual get together is a tradition in the ... family.... (it's definitely a guy thing). (Community Newspaper, 2001, p. 2)

Deer hunting was still front page news in the local newspaper during 2001 and 2002. Under the front page headline "Gun Deer Harvest Down in County" is a photo of a successful 13-year-old Euro-American boy grasping the antlers of his kill. The accompanying story notes that only 1,200 deer were killed in the county during the opening weekend of hunting season. Yet there are indications from other sources that hunting is becoming less important than it was in the past, or that there are other recreational competitors. Proposed state legislation to extend deer hunting season was forcefully criticized by the local legislator because it would interfere "with snowmobiling activities and other winter recreation" (Community Newspaper, 2002, p. 12). Promotional materials in contemporary times are written to attract a broader selection of visitors. No longer are scores of deer carcasses hung on racks highlighted by photos. Instead, visitors are told:

The hunter, fisherman and trapper feel at home in this forest, but so do hikers, bikers, cross-county skiers, snowmobilers, birdwatchers, photographers, campers – the list is endless (Community Newspaper, 2002, p. 3).

Ojibwe/Euro-American Cultural Comparison

The stories, observations, and documents convey an important message. In the end, I am left with two contrasting metaphors, a front-page picture in the local newspaper of a young Euro-American man triumphantly holding up the head of the trophy he slaughtered, and the story shared by an Ojibwe community member.

Hunting is not a sport – it's something that you do for food. It's not a sport if you leave something for what you take. That's why we leave tobacco for something we take – we're being responsible. We are at the mercy of the Great One and the power when we're out there, but we go knowing that we have to have food to live and we have to do that.

It's work. I don't really like to kill. There's a sadness there for that deer. I don't hunt just to kill it, and I don't feel good about killing. Sometimes, the deer doesn't die right away. That's why we leave something, to ask forgiveness. That's why we take it home to feed our family and others who are hungry – out of respect. My brother-in-law and I like to hunt together and we both feel that sadness – that loss or sadness. Ojibwe people have been doing this for thousands of years. My grandmother told me that a lot of our people feel that way – feel that sadness. That's why we have to eat it all and use all of the parts – out of respect. If we don't do that, we won't have that relationship with the deer. That relationship with the deer is important. That's why we always put mocassins on when we are preparing someone who has died – so that they will have that deer skin on their feet when they take that long journey – so we can walk with deer skin on our feet.

That's why we leave something – the other society just takes and keeps everything for themselves. Chimokes [White Men] are not respecting the deer, that's why the deer are sick. The Creator is doing that to teach a lesson (Tyler, January 2, 2003).

Despite past child removal and relocation policies, Ojibwe culture has survived and for that, I am grateful. Many Ojibwe people in the community I studied, each in their own individual ways, are actively working to ensure that cultural practices and values are passed on for generations to come. This is not to say that the community is free of serious problems. Some of those problems – alcoholism, child maltreatment, juvenile delinquency, and incest – are in large measure part of a legacy of oppressive federal and state policies and practices that continue today.

All traditions are created, whether through vision, dreams or an epiphany and they are adopted because they serve some function from the perspective of those who have the power to convince others of the legitimacy of particular ways of seeing their world (Anderson, 1995). The larger ethical (and pragmatic) question is whether a given set of traditions encourages a people to "walk lightly on the earth" by taking only what they need, encourages them to leave the world a better place for their having lived, or whether the set of traditions encourages a people to deplete the earth of resources and create death and destruction in their wake, heedless of the world they will leave for future generations. This is a question to ponder. For the Ojibwe and Euro-American people studied in this small sample, the contrasts were clear, although not consciously chosen nor in most cases, deliberately articulated. Yet, from my perspective, we must learn to be mindful of the impacts our cultural ways have on those with whom we share the earth, now and in the future...

Acknowledgement: I would like to thank Carl Gawboy for granting permission to use images of his paintings for this essay. Carl is a renowned Ojibwe artist who was born in Minnesota. His paintings often portray traditional Ojibwe scenes – hunting, fishing, and harvesting – in a style that is realistic and respectful. These are the images I felt best represented what Ojibwe participants shared with me during my study. To view more of his work and long list of accomplishments, please check out some of the following links:

<http://www.d.umn.edu/unirel/homepage/11/gawboy.html>

<http://www.mnartists.org/article.do?rid=151392>

<http://www2.css.edu/app/events/centennial/blog/?cat=3&art=160>

I should also add that he is a gifted storyteller with his own memories of ricing adventures to share – guaranteed to make you laugh.

Note: In order to protect the identities of the people who shared their stories, all names have been changed and all written tribal and community publications lack specific citations.

Definitions:

Mishoomisis the Ojibwe word for grandfather and is used here to denote respect.

Nacomis means grandmother in Ojibwe, and again, is an expression used to show respect.

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- Article originally published at <http://carolahand.wordpress.com/2014/06/07/worlds-apart-the-enduring-significance-of-ojibwe-culture/>, where you will also find the graphics illustrating it.



Spirituality and Rationality – the Liminal Space between Cultures, by Carol A. Hand

(American English; about 1,000 words)

I don't often speak about the liminal space I occupy between Euro-American and Ojibwe beliefs about religion and spirituality. It was especially challenging to live between (Euro-American) academic notions of rationality, objectivity, and individuality and Ojibwe traditions of spirituality, inter-dependency, and other ways of knowing. I don't often speak of my experiences for several crucial reasons. First, my position on the margins as a Native American has meant that people have asked me for spiritual advice because of the romantic stereotypes they held. They expected me to be wise and saintly. I'm not under the illusion that I have any advice to offer anyone on that dimension. Second, Ojibwe cultural traditions strongly discourage sharing one's spiritual experiences with others. This makes sense on a number of levels. Third, as a Native American woman who has worked in Euro-American institutions that openly pathologize other ways of knowing, I have kept my personal beliefs to myself as I carried out the professional, analytical and scientific tasks required of my positions. What I believe actually enhances how I do my work, but explaining this to people would be pointless at best.

As I was reflecting this morning, I felt a sense of urgency about sharing a portion of a dream I had almost 40 years ago. But before I do, I need to explain why this is not something that is easy for me to do beyond what I have noted above.

Traditional Ojibwe beliefs emphasize the connection each individual has to Gitche Manitou, roughly translated as the Creator. It is the responsibility of each individual to seek his or her path through meditative rituals and live according to "*pimadaziwin*," the good life (Hallowell, 1967, p. 360) or *bimaadiziwin*, "a healthy way of life" (Peacock & Wisuri, 2002, p. 9). *Pimadaziwin* represents "life in the fullest sense, life in the sense of health, longevity, and well-being, not only for oneself but for one's family" (Hallowell, 1967, p. 360). In order to achieve *pimadaziwin* in the past, individuals, particularly males, were required to seek and obtain spiritual guidance through a "dream fast" as youth. Girls were also encouraged, but not required, to go through this sacred solitary ordeal, since, as life givers, their connection with the Creator was already direct (Johnston, 1976). Especially for males, the dream fast "was the foundation of all he was to be in the future. Every special aptitude, all his successes and failures, hinged upon the blessings of his supernatural helpers, rather than upon his own native or acquired endowments, or even the help of his fellow human beings" (Hallowell, 1967, p, 361).

The details of dreams or visions one had during one's meditative ordeal were not to be shared with others (Johnston, 1976). This makes sense in small tight-knit communities where members could easily be divided by comparisons and jealousies that arose over who had visions and who did not, and competition over the most "important" or "powerful" visions. (One of my grandson's favorite videos, Brother Bear, illustrates how important this practice is — competition among three brothers about who had the best spiritual "totem" resulted in fighting and death.) Keeping one's visions silent also discourages the practice of judging others. If one does not know the details of another's path, there is really no basis to judge them and deflect one's attention away from the responsibility to follow one's own path with integrity

and fidelity for the sake of the community.

So why am I sharing this dream today, knowing I risk perpetuating stereotypes, appearing superstitious and naive, and awakening the potential for others to judge themselves as deficient because they haven't been "blessed" with powerful dreams or superior because they're more rational? Simply stated, I feel obligated given the state of the world today. And it's not a dream about my path alone.

Imagine yourself standing in a huge cavernous space urged to move forward into the darkness. With each step you take, you relive each moment of your life, each thought, each action, and each failure to act. Each step, you see the effects of your thoughts and behaviors on others. Dispassionately, you weight these thoughts and actions against a universal framework of ethics. You judge your actions on the basis of the path of life you were given to follow. For each "right" choice, you feel a sense of joy and gratitude, and for each selfish or thoughtless choice, you feel the pain of those you harmed. When you finally reach the present moment, you can choose to walk the path toward light or darkness based on what you discovered about yourself. There is no room for illusions about who you have become because of your own thoughts and deeds.

What this dream taught me about living was to not waste my time comparing myself to others or judging them. This is not always an easy lesson for me to follow. When I realize that the temptation to judge and compete with others is becoming too strong to resist, I look at the context and forces around me. Often I find that it's time for me to change course, to be honest about what is my responsibility to do, and to simplify and refocus my life on what really matters on my path. I have a responsibility to do what I can in my thoughts and actions to end and prevent harm. I have a responsibility to judge actions and their consequences, but I cannot judge or demonize others whose paths I can never know.

I am sharing the message of this dream now because so many people in the world are being oppressed and harmed and murdered for things that will not bring those who have harmed them any solace on their final self-judgment walk. It is my hope that at least some may listen and realize that the choice of how we live is ours to make. The choice can bring us peace and joy or pain and shame as we face our final life review.

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Article originally published at <http://carolahand.wordpress.com/2014/07/24/spirituality-and-rationality-the-liminal-space-between-cultures/>, where you will also find relevant links the graphics illustrating it.



Some Misconceptions about Bilingualism, by MF

(US/UK English; about 1,600 words - written for her 2014-15 C1 students)

Unfortunately, educational policies around bilingualism in the last decade in Spain have reinforced some language misconceptions. Therefore, if you allow me, I would like to clarify some ideas about bilingualism, as someone from the world of linguistics, language teaching and a bilingual myself — which does not mean what I say is conclusive evidence, for this issue is highly complex and we are just beginning to gather relevant data on mind processes — which means I am certainly open to refutations.

I am not going to analyze/analyse the case of bilinguals who use one of the languages for business purposes solely, but bilingualism as a complex mental relationship to two languages.

Bilingualism does not necessarily equal having an absolute command over two mother languages. In the same way that a native speaker of one language uses the language proficiently for his or her own needs, and this does not necessarily mean they can teach the language, or know how to speak about the language, or have informed ideas about the language (there are countless language myths spread by native speakers), a proficient speaker of two languages is not necessarily a bilingual person: one can speak two languages, one of them being a mother language and the other a foreign language (FL) that is spoken at an advanced level (in Europe labeled/labelled as C1*).

At times, it is extremely hard to know where we can draw the line between having an advanced level of a foreign language and being a bilingual. At other times it seems to be very easy. And it's always hard to explain why we know or feel we know or don't know! An idea that might be useful is the emotional relationship to the language (or the psychological). Another, that the bilingual person will learn faster due to his or her learning background as a native speaker of the two languages. Faster does not necessarily mean better in terms of "proper grammar and register", for instance. It will all depend on the degree of need and use and on the purpose or communicative aims.

A bilingual has an intimate relationship to the two languages, mostly because the two languages were part of his or her life as a child, and this has hard-wired the bilingual person for a different kind of relationship to the language. The emotional-psychological connection is there.

Can an adult who has learned/learnt a second language in adulthood become a bilingual? Yes, I believe so. Achieving an advanced level of command over the language is possible through the study and the learning of the language, provided this includes the development of the listening and speaking skills — something we can do today even if we don't have the chance to go and live abroad, thanks to technology. However, achieving a bilingual mind requires full exposure to the language at least in some (prolonged) period of one's life — this can make up for the fact the language was not learned when our brains had an amazing language learning capacity, when we are one or two years old) — unless one happens to enjoy a gifted mind for language learning.

Bilingual people do not necessarily have the same knowledge of their two languages, especially if they live in a country where people are not bilingual and they have lost touch with one of them. Also, they may have a different kind of psychological relationship to each of the two languages, depending on experiences when learning them as a child. It is true that if the situation changes and they start using the language again, they remember the language and learn it fast. A similar situation occurs with people who having reached an upper intermediate level in a foreign language and then abandoned the language for years decide to go back to the use of this language. They can learn faster than people who are learning a language for the first time because as they use it they "remember."

Stories to Illustrate

When I became independent and saw myself in the need of earning a living, because I was a bilingual I thought of becoming a language teacher. However, I had become a bilingual in childhood, and during my teenage years I had just been exposed to Spanish, which resulted in me having a bilingual relationship to English but not having the language range I could have developed as a teenager living in an English-speaking environment. As a teenager in Spain my contact with English in those years was mainly with English as a school subject, and because I learned/learnt songs and I read books in English. Consequently, in order to become a language teacher, I had to study. I had to learn more and increase my use of the language. Because I was a bilingual this path was easier, I presume, than if I hadn't been. Things "sounded right or wrong" at times and that was very helpful. I knew about the language ("grammar") so I could also doublecheck with that kind of knowledge. We always know more than we think, and because learning happens also unconsciously. But I had to make the conscious effort of learning, and as a teacher, I had to prepare my lessons, like a non-bilingual. Depending on the kind of teaching/learning you foster in the classroom, being a bilingual will play a roll or won't. When we teach in a curriculum-centered/centred manner, being a bilingual is often irrelevant, and having the level you need as a teacher is something anyone with that level of command on the language can achieve. When we teach in a student-centered/centred manner, in interactive teaching, especially at advanced levels, being a bilingual is of great help. But people with an advanced level in that foreign language can certainly continue learning and be much better teachers than a bilingual who has not trained for teaching.

Nowadays, even though my life develops in a bilingual surrounding because I can actually use of the two languages every day for countless purposes, when it comes to dreaming and writing poetry I tend to do that only in Spanish. When I was living in London it is true there was a point when I was dreaming and writing poetry in English, but I have to say that my dreamworld and poetic mind is Spanish, so to put it! However, sometimes I turn to English when the idea is best expressed in that language! like when you want to say "Good timing!", "It's confusing" or "She's very reliable". This also happens to people with an advanced level of a second language.

Back to Profient Users

In practical terms, when somebody who has not learned/learnt or been exposed to a language in childhood learns the language and reaches an advanced level, and especially if that person continues to learn the language not only like a native adult does, but also consciously, there comes a point when I believe it is impossible to find differences with a native who also loves the language and learns the language

consciously. So in this way, we can speak about that person having become a bilingual.

For me, the key difference between bilinguals and people with an advanced level is the kind of mistakes they make. And this is why in language teaching at the C1 or advanced level, fluency and a rich language range does not say it all about the level. There are fossilized mistakes that are held in the non-bilingual mind due to transfer. But even here it is hard to say, because bilinguals exposed just to one of their languages in their social life can also have transfer mistakes, or imitation mistakes! (Transfer mistakes are about translating literally from the mother language, this is, copying its syntax, for instance.)

About accents, Can you be a bilingual if you have an accent not belonging to one of the languages? This is one of the trickiest questions ever! But yes, I believe you can even have a strong Spanish accent in English and be a bilingual. We always have all kinds of accents, in many ways — and this is why the CIA has such trouble finding spies! :D

To be or not to be a bilingual!

Technically speaking, the question remains, Can you say you are a bilingual when you have learned/learnt the language in your adulthood, even if that includes that you learned/learnt it as a subject in school in your teenage? Well, this could be the case, but it is not necessarily the case. It all depends. However, what you can actually say is that **you are a proficient user of the language at an advanced level**. A bilingual frame of mind, if we are speaking of the kind of bilinguals I'm speaking of now, requires a natural multipurpose emotionally-reaching relationship to the language. That is why I always try to encourage learners to love the language and use it in ways that make them feel pleasure and enjoyment and develop their curiosity. Practical targets do not explain it all about motivation. The arts would have no role in human societies!

For years, I was unable to say I was a bilingual, because I felt so ashamed of how much I ignored of the language. I blushed when my mother said that of me to people. Nowadays I understand you will never know it all of the languages in your mind, regardless how hard you study and how much you learn. I have reconciled myself with the idea, though. Still, I don't like saying it. I would just say it for feminist reasons, like when I say I'm an expert in this or that (speaking patriarchal language to simply say that I have interesting things to say about an issue, even though I'm "just a woman"), but for the case of bilingualism I find no feminist reason to say it! :D

The important thing about this issue of bilingualism is that you are able to enjoy a wholesome relationship with two languages, if that is what you are pursuing! And for work matters, well, there are certificates and job interviews, but this is only paperwork and this does not fulfill/fulfil the amazing world of being a proficient user of two languages. Certificates can lie! Language certificates with no expiry date might not reflect the person's language ability at a certain moment in their lives!

Language learning is one of the best ways we have to train our amazing minds and develop their potential, because language learning involves all kinds of skills and knowledge — both inner and of the world. And here is the treasure, the value of what you achieve!

*The C2 level is mostly connected to the kind of knowledge of a language that translators and interpreters have, which means that unless you are not going to be a translator or interpreter, if you need to certify and advanced level the C1 suffices.



Don't Buy Exams! Protect Your Intelligence & Learning, by MF

(US/UK English; about 350 words)

Do them, there's no way out. Survive them, you can! But don't give them credit! Don't let them tell you anything about how much you know or you can.

In my view, exams, the kind we've always had to bear, are useless in terms of informing about people's knowledge or skills because they're not about that – they're about obedience and selecting people. [But this doesn't mean we cannot be Survivors and make the most of having to learn to write exams, right?] Exams destroy a love for knowledge – that's an important issue to analyze/analyse people simply don't want to analyze/analyse. Everybody justifies the existence of what we call Exams.

The thing is, we could easily develop ways of assessing our learning if we could simply trash exams as anachronic methods of evaluation. There's a lot of research now on this and there is no innocence in the Exam Systems.

This is why we should not buy exams, believe in them, I mean, give them credit. If we pass them, sure, we can celebrate. But we should also know this: they do not preserve anything, nor prove anything. We should be aware of what it is we've learned, what it is we know, what skills we've developed, how much passion or enjoyment or interest in fitting learning into our daily lives we've developed... all throughout the learning year. You should have assessed this before taking your exams, not just wait for the Judge's Sentence of That Unpredictable Information we call My Exam Results.

A learning year is a journey of exploration and should never leave us untouched. When this happens, you'll keep wanting to learn.

Exams represent a drop in that sea, in the sea of a learning year. Except when exams become huge obstacles and constraints in the learning year. When we fail, exams should not make us doubt what we know. If we pass, we've certainly overcome a troublesome obstacle – that's all.

We should never allow exams to ruin our relationship with knowledge, with learning, and when you don't develop the right attitude towards exams, it's because you're doing just that – ruining your (potential) love for knowledge and learning.

Intelligent ideas are less popular on the planet, but they build kinder, more knowledgable/knowledgeable and enjoyable worlds!

Get down to using your English like mad! Because of all it gives you! Train, learn, use your intelligence and your body in learning all you can.

Trash the Exam Slave Mind.

Want More? Listen to this, MF's talk to her 2013-14 students, just before the Finals: [R-evoLution: Are You Going to Survive the Exams?](#)



The Forces of Normalization, by Carol A. Hand

(American English, about 1,000 words)

"Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity or it becomes the practice of freedom, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world." — [Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed](#)

The last decades of my life as an employee were spent in academia as social work faculty. It wasn't the field of study I ever intended to follow. I chose it after observing the ways in which oppressive institutions robbed people of their human rights and dignity. It was the route I took to learn about community organizing and social policy advocacy. Yet by the time I arrived in academia, the field was well on its way to a narrower agenda – recognition as a clinical profession equal to law, medicine, and psychiatry. From my perspective, this is a repressive agenda that not only robs people of their dignity but also fails to acknowledge the forces of social control that remain unchallenged by a medicated, behaviorally-modified docile citizenry.

Despite warnings sounded by Harry Specht and Mark Courtney in 1994 (*Unfaithful angles: How social work has abandoned its mission*), the discipline of social work had continued its accelerating transmutation into a profession with an ever-narrowing focus on helping deviant individuals better adapt to their environments. Initially, I was naïve about academia. When I was first recruited to join a faculty in a department that had recently hired Black, Korean-American, and Muslim members, I paid little attention to the department's history. As I look back now, I am able to see a disturbing pattern. Unlike the university where I earned my degrees, each of the institutions where I served as faculty had recently added a new graduate program, purportedly to compliment the long-standing baccalaureate degree program.

Because tuition for graduate degrees is higher, universities saw this expansion as a way to generate more revenue. They could add a few more faculty members, not enough to cover the expansion, but the workload for new and existing faculty could be increased to accommodate the change. In the process, the quality of undergraduate programs was compromised by some institutions. Although some institutions initially tried to maintain an equal focus on the larger socio-structural forces that contributed to the challenges individuals, families, communities, and nations faced, money ultimately was not to be made by graduates who challenged structural inequality. Insurance companies, medical model standards, and state professional licensing requirements increasingly dictated which degree-holders could practice and what services they would be paid to provide. It is not in the interest of these gatekeepers to have graduates who think critically about normalizing hegemonic forces.

Photo Source: Drawing by Carol A. Hand (based on an adaptation of N. Andry (1749), *Orthopaedics or the art of preventing and correcting deformities of the body in children*, cited in Foucault)

I am saddened to say that the college I currently work for as an adjunct has followed this trend by adding a clinically-focused master's degree. In an effort to help prepare undergraduate students for an easier transition into the new graduate program,

faculty are being asked to standardize and reformulate the curriculum to focus on an enhanced clinical foundation. What this means is choosing texts and assignments that will please the gatekeeping accrediting body for social work programs, a body focused more on replicating the status quo than on challenging hegemony. I have been told that the standardized text that all undergraduate faculty will have to use to teach research is designed to prepare students to be producers and consumers of research. Once again, I face the reality that my commitment to work with students to promote liberatory praxis doesn't fit with an institutional agenda. It is of little consequence that I have more experience as a researcher across a broad range of topics, populations, and methods than those administrators who will choose the required texts. As a Native American, my view will in all likelihood be marginalized rather than accepted as a well-grounded analysis based on an understanding of how research has served as a tool to further careers of the privileged while it added new "objective" dimensions to the oppression and suffering for generations of vulnerable peoples around the globe.

Although the following observation made by Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2001) specifically mentions Indigenous Peoples, the same can be said for any "objects" of research that have less power than researchers in the prevailing social structure.

A continuing legacy of what has come to be taken for granted as a natural link between the term "indigenous" (or its substitutes) and "problems" is that many researchers, even those with the best of intentions, form their research in ways that assume that the locus of a particular problem lies with the indigenous individual or community rather than with other social or structural issues.... For indigenous communities, the issue is not just that they are blamed for their own failures but that it is also communicated to them, explicitly or implicitly, that they themselves have no solutions to their own problems. (Smith, 2001, *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, p. 92, emphasis added)

Oppression is complete when "othered" people believe they are the problem, that their differences make them deviant and their cultures are deficient – when they believe they can only make progress if outside experts take charge. From my perspective, students need to think critically and question these assumptions in published studies and those they may plan to conduct in the future.

Of course, I plan to do what I can to carve out a liberatory space as the program goes through this transition. Although I hope to be more successful this time around, experience has shown me that well-reasoned arguments don't always prevail. But sometimes, tenacity does.

Article originally published at <http://carolahand.wordpress.com/2014/02/27/the-forces-of-normalization/>, where you will also find the graphics illustrating it.



Farewell to Teaching, by Carol A. Hand

(American English, about words)

This post is a farewell to a vocation I have loved – teaching. I awoke this morning with a clear answer to a question I have been pondering for several weeks, "Should I resign from teaching, perhaps this time with no intention of ever returning?"

Yes, it's time. Although I love working with students, the context of teaching at the post high school level has increasingly provided too little space for liberatory praxis (read previous article).

It's the structure of education, not the students, that has been the determining factor for my decision. During my brief time as an adjunct for a private college, I have witnessed the transformation of a program originally based on emphasizing critical thinking and experiential learning based on social justice to a "feeder" program preparing students for a clinical master's degree. The transition didn't occur overnight, but it's clear that soon textbooks and assignments will be dictated to conform to this new "mission" in order to better dressage students to accept a deficit-focused medical model designed to medicate or imprison those on the margins. It's a mission shared by an increasing number of social work programs, making me remember my reluctance to enter this discipline when I returned to college many decades ago.

How will this focus do anything to help the residents in Detroit who are without water or sewer service because of dehumanizing corporate forces outside of their control? How will it end the outrageous killing of Palestinians while the world watches from the sidelines? How will it help us address the threat of climate change and corporate domination? My answer is that for me, clinical practice represents yet another means of oppressive social control. How will my decision to stop teaching change any of these seemingly complex, insoluble, immobilizing forces at play in the world today? Maybe it won't. But betraying one's values and principles teaches something as well.

"My role in the world is not simply that of someone who registers what occurs, but of someone who has input into what happens... No one can be in the world, with the world, and with others and maintain a position of neutrality. I cannot be in the world, simply observing life.... It is not by resignation but by the capacity for indignation in the face of injustice that we are affirmed.... Transformation of the world implies a dialectic between the two actions: denouncing the process of dehumanization and announcing the dream of a new society." (Paulo Freire, 1998, *Pedagogy of Freedom: Ethics, Democracy, and Civic Courage*, pp. 73-74)

I ask "What do my colleagues love to do?" I honestly don't know because it's not a subject we speak about. But I can answer this question for myself. I love to teach because it gives me an opportunity to keep learning, and "teaching" has taught me more than all of the textbooks I have read, and I have read too many as my ever-worsening eyesight has frequently reminded me throughout the years. Yet even without teaching, I know I will have many opportunities to continue gaining knowledge, and if I continue to live by ethical principles, there is also the chance to gain wisdom.

To all of the students I have worked with, I say *miigwetch* (*Ojibwe thank you*). I have learned so much from each and everyone one of you. Maya Angelou eloquently

conveys the most important of lessons I hope we shared with each other.

"I've learned that I still have a lot to learn. I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."

Maya Angelou

Article originally published at <http://carolahand.wordpress.com/2014/07/20/farewell-to-teaching/>, where you will also find relevant links the graphics illustrating it.

About the authors / Sobre las autoras

STORIES FROM MY TEACHER. On the English Language, Lifelong Learning & Our RevoL.ution

MF

Asun Villamil Touriño

Rosa González Colilla

Ana Otto

Helena Massó

Carol A. Hand

Marta Moreno

Rosa (1955-2013): A Tribute



Autoras: MF

I started teaching English in 1980 in private language schools because I had to earn a living. In 1986 I quit to become a full time social activist in projects where I got some food and a place to stay. I could not cope with the idea of being a rolemodel for others, like all teachers actually are, and then I wanted to learn about human violence and how to answer that through nonviolent struggle. I wanted to help people who were being subjected to extreme forms of violence just because they were fighting for human rights. So I volunteered as an international observer and nonviolent escort in countries at war. Once back to Europe I volunteered in the feminist nonviolent struggle against violence. But I was earning no money and all of this work had a physical toll on my health. After ten years I came back to teaching. No home, no money, I had grown old and my health was not that good anymore. But then I realized my work as a social activist or nonviolent communicator could and should develop in the arena of public education. Where else? For seven years, I worked as a substitute teacher in public secondary education. Then I worked in non-compulsory adult language education (Spanish EOI schools), where in 2006 I finally got my permanent position as a teacher and a civil servant. In July 2013 I quit working in Madrid – policies against public education have become far too hostile and it hurts too much. I am going to start a new life!

I would like to thank all the students who inspired me to tell many of the stories included here, as well as the colleagues I found who I learned from, for their enlightening intelligence, kindness and solidarity, sense of humor, and loving commitment. The world needs you all – so badly. Take heart and enjoy the journey!



Photo Info: MF in class as seen by Miguel, an advanced EFL learner in 2007, Madrid, Spain. Below, MF's bedside table in the winter of 2014.





Autoras: Asun Villamil Touriño

After my university degree I have been lucky enough to work as an English teacher in state Language Schools since 2001. I started in Castilla La Mancha and then I moved to Madrid, working in several schools. I was born in Madrid and all my family are Spanish-speakers, but I have come to love the English language as if it was 'mine'... which is something I try to get my students to do.

Apart from meeting wonderful and hard-working students, I've met inspiring teachers that lead me into this project that I hope can show our love for languages and the teaching profession.



Photo info: Asun in Galicia, Spain. Photo taken in 2013 in Coruña, close to A virxe da Barca, a church in Muxía that was struck by lightning and burned/burnt down.



Autoras: Rosa González Colilla

When we started this ebook Project, Rosa was part of it. She already had a brain tumor and was fighting against it courageously. In October 2013 Rosa wrote this, so we wanted this to be her "About the author" presentation:

My Goodbye

Some people say goodbyes are always sad. I definitely disagree with this. Obviously, how sad a goodbye gets will depend on where the person leaving is heading. Is she going on a holiday or is it a goodbye for ever? In any case, when people know each other and share affection I would venture that the goodbye will bring about some suffering, at least on somebody's part.

Trying to avoid that kind of suffering, I would like to focus in what we have shared and learnt together in life. I suppose that the person who has enjoyed their life, has had friends, and done things, and mostly, has loved, will leave some kind of track of their existence, and it is precisely that track what is going to give some meaning to my particular life.

In this moment of my life, I need to believe that my existence has been relevant to someone. For instance, I would like to think that some of my students remember my work with them. I'm sounding arrogant but at times we need to acknowledge the value of what we did, as if we had not been as mediocre as we thought.

How would I love to be remembered for having been a good teacher and a good person.

Translated by MF from original in Spanish at
<http://rosaglezcolilla.blogspot.com.es/2013/10/despedidas.html>



Photo Info: Rosa in Senegal, our beloved mother continent Africa. Photo taken by

her partner JRT.

At the end of this page you will find a Tribute to Rosa, with pics and links.



Autoras: Ana Otto

Ana Otto has been teaching English for over fifteen years. A yoga fan and a novice runner too, she enjoys reading, shopping and being with her five-year-old son.



Photo Info: Ana in Madrid, Spain.



Autoras: Helena Massó

I was born in the year when human beings walked on the Moon, when Led Zeppelin released their first album, when The Beatles played their last live concert and when John Lennon and Yoko Ono performed their bed-in.

Since I was a little girl, I've always been concerned with equality between sexes.

First I decided that I wanted to study something related to English at University, so I got a degree on English Philology.

Then I decided that I wanted to become a teacher, so in 1996 I applied for a position as teacher of English in public Secondary Education.

My elder son was born in 2001.

After some years working in many different schools in the Region of Madrid as a substitute teacher, I got a permanent position in 2002.

2004 was the worst year in my life.

My youngest son was born in 2006 against all odds and after dire straits.



Photo Info: Helena in Vancouver, Canada, in 2013.



Autoras: Carol A. Hand

Am I Catfish Clan or Eagle Clan?

This is a question I may never be able to answer definitively. My mother was Ojibwe, born and raised on the Lac du Flambeau reservation in the north of what is now Wisconsin, and my father was descended from English immigrants, the second generation to be born in the U.S. Because my mother was raised by her aunt and spent pivotal childhood years in a Catholic boarding school, she was denied access to her father who could have answered this question for her. She never mentioned this topic until her later years, when she took me to an Ojibwe elder who had documents pertaining to my ancestry.

Over the years since that conversation, I have pondered the meaning of clan membership and done a little research in my spare time. The question is significant, not because I believe that our life path is set by our birth in a certain time, place, culture or clan, but because the question itself is a reminder to periodically reflect on the directions our life takes and what our actions say about who we really are.

I have realized that the distinction between the Catfish Clan, the scholars, and the Eagle Clan, leaders whose fathers were not Ojibwe, has been a central tension during my life. By nature, I am a scholar who prefers to stand on the margins "to watch, listen and consider" so my deeds will be prudent, a tenet of the Ojibwe Midewewin Code or path of life. My life's path provided me with opportunities to develop those propensities through education and employment. Yet growing up between cultures and becoming increasingly aware of past and continuing colonial oppression, standing on the sidelines without action felt profoundly unethical. Even as a little child, I felt a sense of responsibility for those who were oppressed. I had to take on leadership and advocacy roles that were extremely uncomfortable for an introverted scholar without the support of a clan structure to guide the way. My light skin tone, education, and ability to communicate across cultures were gifts that I felt obligated to use on behalf of others whose lives were not a privileged as mine.

Because leadership positions are almost always nested within colonial structures of individualistic competition and socially-constructed status distinctions, they have proven dangerous for me on many levels. Even though power is an illusion, it is seductive. It's easy to lose the clarity of one's perspective, values, and purpose, to believe that one is special and somehow superior, to forget what is really important in life. It also invites understandable reprisal from people who feel belittled, and the response is sometimes virulently destructive on professional and personal levels.



Photo Info: Carol in 2010, standing on the southwestern shore of Lake Superior, in Duluth, Minnesota, USA. Photo taken by her daughter, Jnana Hand.



Autoras: Marta Moreno

I have been teaching English as far as I remember. I started with my brothers, sisters and neighbours using an old little blackboard in the terrace of our family home, facing the Mediterranean. I also used to kill mosquitoes using a ruler while studying for my exams in the long summer nights. But this is just another story. I studied Arabic and then Translation and Interpreting. Finally, I passed my test to become a teacher at the Official School of Languages in 1992. In September 2013 I moved to London with my husband. Now I am working for Pam Schweitzer – one of the world authorities in reminiscence – at the European Reminiscence Network, an association that promotes the value of memories. Our work is currently focused on working with people with dementia and their carers in a project called *Remembering Yesterday Caring Today*. I am also helping to organise the Reminiscence Theatre Archive at the University of Greenwich. My latest project is a blog, <http://rememberinginlondon.blogspot.co.uk>, in which I am trying to reflect this experience, illustrated by Lorenzo's wonderful photographs.



Photo Info: 2014. Marta in London, Britain. Photo taken by her husband Lorenzo Hernández, a professional photographer.

★ Rosa (1955-2013): A Tribute

Rosa died on November 5, 2013. We carry her inside of us... Her two pieces for this ebook, written in her mother language because of her illness, were translated by MF when she learned about Rosa's death. So "A Little of My Life: High School, a New World" comes from the original in Spanish at <http://rosaglezcolilla.blogspot.com.es/2013/09/un-poco-de-mi-historia-el-instituto-un.html> and "Why I travelled to London" comes from the original in Spanish at <http://rosaglezcolilla.blogspot.com.es/2013/09/por-que-me-marche-londres.html>. Apart from this blog she posted on, she had a very useful website for her students. **Fun & Roses**, <http://ficus.pntic.mec.es/rgoc0026/>.

Un músculo que yo tengo viene de algo que me dijo Rosa una vez. Me dolía de que la gente no tuviera límite con quienes daban, y le pregunté por qué. "¿Por qué piden y piden a quienes más dan?" Y Rosa respondió: "Porque son las únicas personas que dan".

Dentro de lo malo de saber que la generosidad o la solidaridad no son tan comunes en la especie (al menos en el contexto hostil de culturas de violencia como las patriarcales), esta frase fue un consuelo y una razón motor para seguir defendiendo, nutriendo la generosidad y la solidaridad porque decía, Rosa me dijo, que la gente quizá no sólo respondía así por maldad, o por su sucedáneo, la mezquindad, sino también quizá por una razón comprensible.

Ahora que Rosa no está, quería compartir esto porque la echo de menos y con esto que yo tengo de ella, de alguna manera, podría ella estar aquí un rato.



Photo Info: Rosa in the 1980s



Photo Info: Rosa in love, 1981



Photo Info: Rosa traveling in Senegal, 2010

A Tribute by JRT, her partner.

Stories and pics at <http://devezencuento-odas.webs.com/rosa.htm>

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- This ebook has been published in January 2015 at *eBooks!* - *talkingpeople.net*: <http://www.talkingpeople.net/tp/ebooks.htm>
- Este eBook ha sido publicado en enero del 2015 en la sección *eBooks!* del sitio web Talking People, vínculo directo: <http://www.talkingpeople.net/tp/ebooks.htm>

Cómo citar este eBook / Citing this eBook: *Stories from My Teacher. On the English Language, Lifelong Learning & Our R-evoL.ution*, de Michelle Ford, Asun Villamil Touriño, Rosa González Colilla, Ana Otto, Helena Massó, Carol A. Hand y/and Marta Moreno López de Uralde, publicado en/published at talkingpeople.net

Este ebook ha sido creado
por Atticus & Scout
en enero del 2005
en el ciberespacio
y publicado en Talking People
en la sección eBooks!
localizada en
talkingpeople.net/tp/ebooks.htm

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