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Letter to My Parents

Abstract

In “Letter to My Parents,” Shirley Serrano honors her parents through her gratitude for their part in helping her graduate from Cal State Los Angeles. Throughout all her struggles and experiences in her life leading up to and through college, she recalls the sacrifices her parents have made for her as well as the inspiration and affirmation they provided to help her persevere. This piece is written in both English and Spanish to celebrate the language of her parents as well as her own first-generation multicultural identity.

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SHIRLEY SERRANO

Letter to My Parents

Hola Mamá y Papá,

Hoy les escribo una carta—algo que no he hecho desde mi niñez. Quiero volver a presentarme, pero no como la niña rebelde de 5 años, con pelo enredado y manitas pegajosas que ya conocen—sino, como mujer salvadoreña americana, estudiante de universidad de primera generación.

Throughout my 5 years as a university student, I experienced many heartbreaks, panic attacks over schoolwork, and discovered that I have ADHD. Along the way, I also made new friends and visited places I had only ever seen on screen in my childhood. I tried all kinds of new cuisines and developed an obsession with Asian food. Unfortunately, I wasn't always able to take you with me during these moments in my life.

Durante estas etapas de mi vida, muchas veces me sentí como esa niña de 5 años comenzando kindergarten. Estaba perdida y aterrorizada. Ya no podían sentarse al lado mío y ayudarme con las tareas. Los proyectos se volvieron más difíciles. Ya no podía construir casitas de palitos contigo papá. En algún momento durante esos 5 años paramos de compartir la cena juntos—cada uno tenía un horario diferente. Aunque tuve muchas experiencias nuevas y emocionantes como adulta, en secreto anhelaba volver a mi infancia.

With every tear and shout towards the sky, I was reminded of the reason I decided to pursue this ongoing struggle. It was for you. It has always been for you. For every step you took towards the U.S.A southern border; for every day you went hungry on your journey here; for every scar on your hand from the tough labor you endure daily; for every year that passed by that you were unable to visit your parents before they passed away; for all the sacrifices you've made to ensure my success. It's all for you.

I've fought the uphill battle of an untreated learning disability & clawed my way to earning my bachelor's degree against all odds that come with being first-generation, but I was only successful thanks to you both. The sandwiches you made me fueled my tiresome exam weeks. Your daily affirmations that told me I am smart

and capable gave me the confidence I needed to overcome my imposter syndrome. And beyond all, the grit and tenacity that I inherited from you both provided me with the strength to persevere.

Ahora, soy Shirley Serrano, alumna de la Cal State LA y futura maestra de literatura. Lo hice siendo valiente como ti, papá, y fuerte como ti, mamá.

Gracias por todo lo que sacrificaron para darme esta vida. Mi éxito es gracias a su esfuerzo.

Los amo con todo mi corazón,

Cherly