



Louder Than Words

VOLUME 3, ISSUE 1, 2023

TEXAS  STATE
UNIVERSITY
The rising STAR of Texas

Table of Contents

About the Journal.....	iii
Acknowledgements.....	iv
Editorial Advisory Board.....	v
Letter from the Editor in Chief.....	vi

Creative Works

<i>How Does the Ugly/Fat Girl Live?</i>	1
Quintasia M. Houston	
<i>A broken system then... A broken system now</i>	4
Emilio Luna	
<i>Stultelos University</i>	7
Osiris Jaimes-Azmitia and Kimberly Jaimes-Azmitia	

About the Journal

Louder Than Words (LTW) is the official Texas State University School of Social Work Student Journal that illuminates peer-reviewed academic written and creative works. LTW will become an annual forum that incorporates students' diverse social work-related pieces.

Journal Aims

- This journal serves as a platform to illuminate Texas State University's School of Social Work students' written works. We encourage diverse academic and illustrative writing and creative pieces from undergraduate and graduate students. We are seeking works that relate to and encompass the diverse spectrum of social work values, competencies, ideas, and experiences. To promote inclusivity and diversity our journal accepts submissions in multiple languages.
- This journal's structure emphasizes the integration of undergraduate and graduate students and alumni into the peer-review process. We believe research, professional development, and constructive feedback are integral aspects of the Social Work Profession. To advance professionalism and disseminate social work professionals' voices, we want current students and alumni to engage in this process.
- This journal serves as an opportunity for student growth in professional written and creative communication—necessary skills in the Social Work Profession. We hope student involvement in this endeavor will prepare and enhance communication skills, receptiveness to constructive feedback, and further prepare them for graduate school and beyond.

Acknowledgements

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to Dr. Angela Ausbrooks (Director, School of Social Work) for her continued supportive efforts to the *Louder Than Words* Journal! We are forever grateful for the trust has in the Editorial Advisory Board. We also thank the School of Social Work faculty and staff for the direct encouragement they extended to the student authors and student peer reviewers for the Second Issue. We greatly appreciate everyone sharing this opportunity and encouraging students to participate as an author or a student peer reviewer. We hope you continue to do so for future issues. We extend endless thanks to our student authors who have enthralled themselves in the peer review process and have made the *Louder Than Words* Journal so fruitful!

We cannot say thank you enough for the efforts and leadership put forth by the three *Louder Than Words* student peer reviewers. We extend endless appreciation to Dr. Deb Balzhiser (Director, Writing Center) for leading an enthusiastic training on peer review and constructive feedback, and supporting the journal's efforts.

Editorial Advisory Board**Editor in Chief**

Kelly Lynn Clary, PhD, MSW (She/Her/Hers)

Editor

Raphael Travis, PhD, LCSW (He/Him/His)

Alumni Editors

Michelle Elliot, MSW, LMSW (She/Her/Hers)

Katrina (Kate) Fitzpatrick Thompson, MSW, LMSW (She/Her/Hers)

Copy Editor

Rachel Ortiz, BSW (She/Her/Hers)

Student Peer Reviewers

Kales Erwin

Brianna Giselda Rodriguez (she/her/hers)

Daisy Vasquez (she/her/hers)

Letter from the Editor in Chief

Dear Reader,

I am honored and delighted to introduce you to the Texas State University, School of Social Work, *Louder Than Words* (LTW) Third Issue (Volume 3, Issue 1) Journal. This initiative is a collaboration among School of Social Work faculty and staff, current undergraduate and graduate students, and School of Social Work alumni.

Our third issue includes three submissions from undergraduate and graduate social work students. They incorporate a diverse range of works. I hope that as you read through the Third Issue you immerse yourself in each authors' creativity, critical thinking, and commitment to advancing, illuminating, and sharing the Social Work Profession's values, ethics, research, practice, and service.

Sincerely,

Kelly Lynn Clary, PhD, MSW
Editor in Chief, *Louder Than Words*
Assistant Professor, School of Social Work
Email: klc385@txstate.edu

“How Does the Ugly/ Fat Girl Live?”**Quintasia M. Houston****Abstract**

Submitting this creative piece connected me to the core values of social work, which are the importance of human relationships and the dignity and worth of a person. This poem highlights how both core values are ignored and disregarded when it comes to marginalized people. The importance of human relationships can be something that not many people know about. This poem, I believe that it can be revisited and valued by more than social workers or people with similar core values. Social work values are values that I believe can be transferred to the personal life of any person. This creative piece touches on the dignity and worth of a person. This core value is ignored by the public and using this piece I decided that I want to bring awareness to the issue at hand. As I mentioned before these core values can be transferred using a “soft” approach meaning that the delivery will come in a patient manner. Criticism isn’t something that people accept and using a patience and calm approach can ease the delivery. Acknowledging identifiers is important when utilizing social work values to understand and accept others.

How Does the Ugly/ Fat Girl Live?

I don't.

Not with the swords in my back

The words striking my skin

My skin, dark, and melanin, turned into armor, weaponry

Used as protection from the swords

Harsh Words, Judgement, Hate, Insecurities, Friends, Family, Strangers, People

Swords

Turned me into someone, someone

Just me.

Destined for life

Life

As the Ugly Fat Girl

How Does the Ugly Girl Live?

Non obstante gladio pacem quaerit

A pesar de la espada ella busca la paz

Despite The Sword, She Seeks Peace

References

10 Tips for Writing the Perfect Paper (2020). Chegg Play. <https://www.chegg.com/play/student-life/10-tips-for-writing-the-perfect-paper/>

Calonia, J. (2020). How to avoid plagiarism. Grammarly. <https://www.grammarly.com/blog/5-most-effective-methods-for-avoiding-plagiarism/>

Purdue Writing Lab. (n.d.). Changes in the 7th Edition // Purdue Writing Lab. Retrieved from https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/apa_style/apa_formatting_and_style_guide/apa_changes_7th_edition.html

Woods, G. (2016, March 27). Research papers for dummies cheat sheet. dummies. <https://www.dummies.com/education/language-arts/research-papers-for-dummies-cheat-sheet/>

A broken system then... A broken system now

Emilio Luna

High school graduation is a huge milestone for a person. Now imagine, your prom night gets cancelled, and your graduation is limited to five people per graduate. When COVID first started out, I was barely 18 years old and graduated into a time of death and confinement. We were six feet apart from each other walking across the stage; the class of 2020 stepped into a world of uncertainty and masks. After graduation, I decided to take some college courses at my local community college for the first semester during COVID. Students were wanting to go to campus and learn in person. I soon realized that I couldn't just learn online. I would get too distracted by my comfy bed that provided enough security to get me through this harsh virus that killed thousands of people. I would sink into my mattress that held me just right, letting me know that no matter what was happening outside my door, my mattress was there for me. My grades dropped and I decided to not attend college. I decided for a gap semester, just until COVID died down. I applied as a nurse aide at one of my local nursing homes since I wanted to become a nurse.

Healthcare today has faced massive changes when it comes to long-term care and its facilities. I took just an 8-hour online course and a 3-day orientation on the floor; then I was ready to help take care of 150 residents in one facility. I was working alone for a lot of days; it was me against 32 residents. The residents ranged from people with Alzheimer's and dementia to individuals that needed dialysis or were blind, deaf, etc. Corners were being cut just to make ends meet; the quality of life began to decrease as COVID began to increase. Some of these cuts increased the danger for both caregivers and patients. Less people wanted to work in healthcare

and either quit or retired, leaving the younger healthcare workers to work on COVID units with limited knowledge, as well as working short staffed all the time.

This wasn't just my hall or let alone just my facility; it was all long-term care facilities in the United States. The demand for nurse aides and nurses began to skyrocket. The increase in shift bonuses began as the need for caregivers was increasing dramatically. There were so many older adults needing care but where were the caregivers, where were the people, the healthcare system that these individuals needed to fall back on? The healthcare system is on the verge of being dismantled. Long-term facilities alone are doing patch work, trying to get nurse aides and nurses, but the pay and workload don't match. COVID only showed the public a small glimpse of how the healthcare system is failing so many individuals. The lack of pay, expertise, staffing, supplies, and management is at an all-time low. Healthcare workers are overworked and underpaid for the difficulties that they experience daily on shifts.

Long-term care facilities need more funding for staffing and wages that are livable, but they also need to retain their staff. The number of times that I worked with inexperienced nurse aides just because they were "a body in the building" if the state comes in, is disgusting and disappointing. There were times where I was told "do what you can". What does that mean? Well, in long-term care nursing facilities, that means some individuals don't get showers, nails clipped, hair brushed, etc. There are times where you can only change patients every 2 hours and are only in a patient's room for five minutes because you have so many to change, get up, feed, bathe, transfer etc. Long-term care facilities put too much pressure on their staff to follow state regulations and family orders, but they forget that the staff can only do so much.

I have had family thank me more than my managers and supervisors. I also had family members say that they understand that it's normal to be short staffed. It's a sad reality that we live in today.

I have worked in the healthcare field since I was 18 and freshly out of high school. I get paid the same as a person working fast food, but I never once thought of changing my mind to become a social worker for long-term care and eventually becoming a nurse for hospice. Even though I have been kicked, bit, pinched, yelled at and even cursed at, I still love this field and its flaws.

I have had the opportunity to help individuals pass on as comfortably as possible. As of right now, I have held 16 individual's hands and told them "It's okay to let go, I'm right here until the end, I won't leave your side." I love my patients but it's disappointing to see this healthcare system failing individuals, and it's heart breaking to see uncaring people working as managers and staff. The healthcare field is breaking; it needs its foundation remodeled before the whole system crashes. Why are we temporarily fixing a broken thing?

We need individuals with healthcare experience to take control of management to better understand not only the patients but also the healthcare professionals. We need policies put into place that eradicate profits over patients. We need to understand that we are putting patches on a broken waterpipe that is soon to burst. If we don't start fixing the healthcare system, we might not have a system to lean on when we need it.

Stultelos University

Osiris Jaimes-Azmitia and Kimberly Jaimes-Azmitia

In dedication to our family pet Holland Lop that passed away recently, after four loving years. Kimberly saw him as her son/baby boy & Osiris as her loving nephew. We love you and we will miss you, Deku.

Abstract

The word “University” derives from two words: unity and diversity (Barbatis, 2010). The term was purposefully chosen to establish the vision founders had for higher education (Barbatis, 2010). Universities are a place where individuals are unified in their diverse experiences, ideas, and goals (Alfaifi et al., 2020). But U.S. higher education counters this idea by having a significant low-retention rate of students belonging to marginalized groups (Alfaifi et al., 2020). As a result, universities lost their vision, and the social work profession shares a similar fate. The NASW code of ethics obligates social workers to promote diversity, yet the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) reported 50% of BSW and MSW students are white (non-Hispanic) (CSWE, 2020; NASW, 1999). A solution exists to increase the enrollment of racial/ethnic minority groups by making college free (Robb et al., 2012).

Low socioeconomic households are overwhelmingly represented in racial minority groups, not as a fault of their own, but because social systems were in place stripping resources from predominantly racial/ethnic minority neighborhoods. In addition, past practices limit the opportunity for minorities to attain better living conditions, income, education, etc. (Vidal et al., 2022). Higher education can be the first social system in trying to change and amend for past racist behavior, by making college free. This allows not only universities, but professions to increase in diverse representation (Robb et al., 2012; Vidal et al., 2022). The current creative piece blurs the line between research and fiction. The university existing between life and death, Stultelos University. The school admits students who succeeded in failing their *Purpose in Life*.



3

My dear students...

Welcome to your first semester in the University beyond the living.

Your enrollment was accepted upon your death.

The requirements to acceptance in our university, is to be complete failures in life.

Every single one of you, failed to achieve your 'Purpose of Life.'

Vive ut Vivas...live so you may live...is the motto of the University.

This University lives, for the top ten percent to receive a second chance and achieve their Purpose of Life.

Vive ut Vivas...live to the fullest without fear of consequences.

To be granted entitlement to life, with all rights, and your purpose, with all privileges, appertaining to that degree of a second opportunity.

The Faculty, Board of Regents, and University sets requirements that must be successfully completed and declares for only five students out of fifty students to graduate!

The creature, once a person, but that was long ago. Yet, he still remembers his purpose, his role, his ~~values~~ to judge the students before him, who lack purpose, who failed their role as students, and who disrespect his order. The creature before the students carries himself with such prestige that no other individual in their lifetime held. Only if they knew the anger he is holding back behind his marbled words.

.....

..... However, I disagree and detest the idea.....
Death.....and **failure!** ...are the sole requirements to the university?

what is getting on?

The creature's façade begins breaking, but only regarding his standards. The only thing some of the most observant spirits notice is the clenching of his fists. The rest of the creature's demeanor is one of complete control. He has complete control...

Where am I?

Why should a reputable university give a second glance to delinquents that neglected their first lifetime? And in that negligence, they obstructed humanity's justice, peace, and progress... Therefore, all of you students before me, are guilty of **treason against humanity!!!**

what gives you the right to judge us?

If you followed your path, you would've promoted a just world, but your selfish sentiments, fear, anger, or despair, **stripped societies** essential steps towards **equality**.

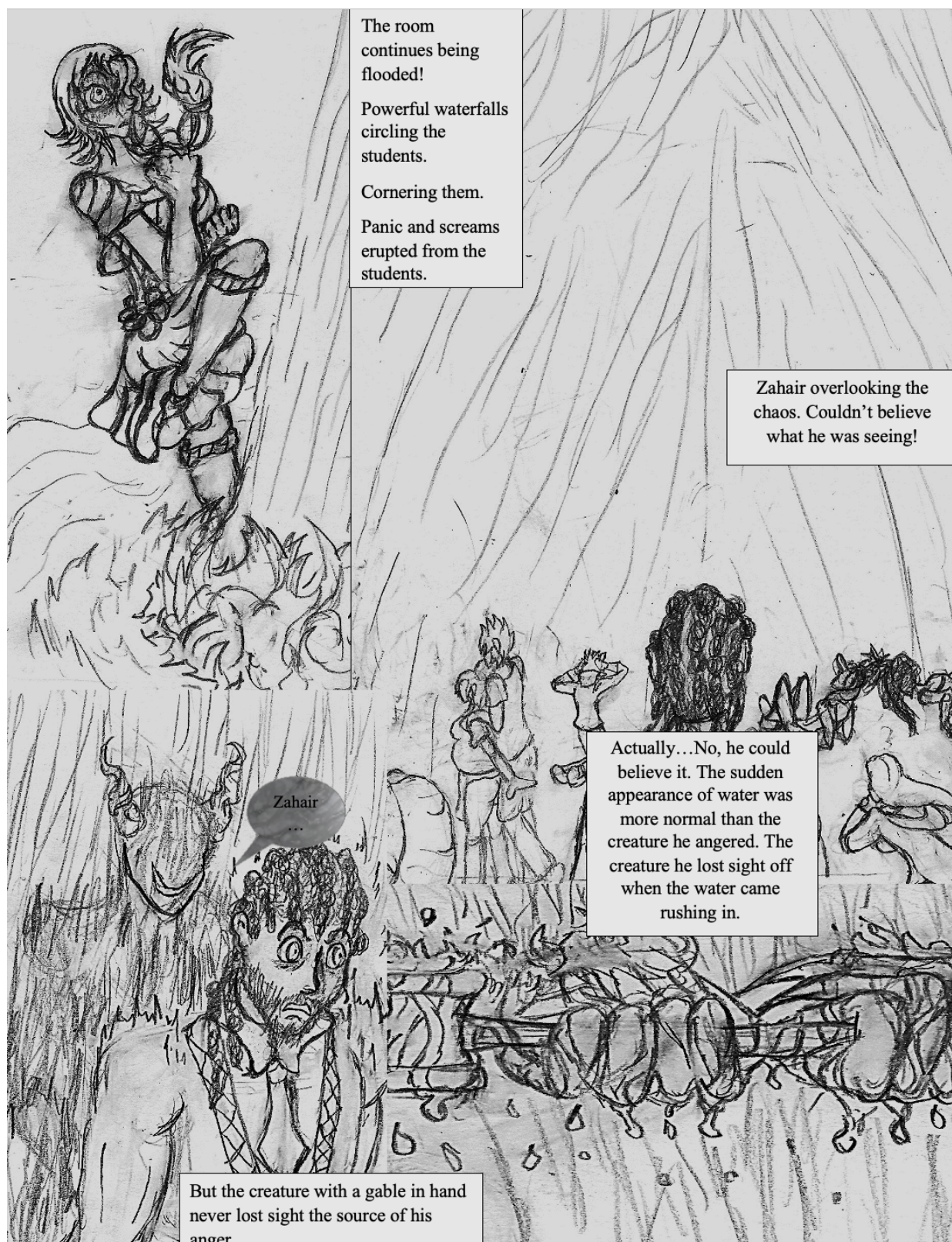
Thus, **why** should the university reward traitors? The university could focus its resources to extend other individuals lives. Citizens who **didn't** waste away their life and succeeded in making a brighter world by following their purpose, even at the cost of death. **Why** should it be the university's burden to fix society? Especially in such an insulting system by giving five, no, truly, one student, who is doomed to repeat their actions.

Criminals do not learn, unless punished.....so, **why give mercy to the underserved?**

Fuck
You...

What is that thing?

Calmate
Calmate



The creature grabs a hold of Zahair by the neck, lifting him off the ground. Zahair, holding onto the creature's arm, trying to get the creature to let go of him.

**YOU DO NOT HAVE THE
RIGHT DISRUPT THE
PROPER
ADMINISTRATION!!!**

**I AM TIRED OF GIVING FAILURES A
MINUTE MORE IN MY COURT!!
FROM MY EXPERIENCE
REASONING THE EXISTENCE OF
OFFENDERS IS A FOOL'S ERRAND!
HENCE, IN MY PRESENCE
EVERYONE REMAINS SILENT!**

The creature shouted and all Zahair can manage is gag, gasp, and...mirk. The creature noticed Zahair mouthing something. While the braver students came closer to the masked monster, the judge read Zahair's lips...

It's okay. I don't need your reasoning to continue existing.

The judge freezes the realm around him! The furious waterfalls turn to pillars of ice, the students that were approaching him were frozen in their tracks, frost developing on their clothes. The students were shocked by the temperature drop, but a worse shock was about to come. The creature at the same time he changed the environment, he swiped his hand quickly over Zahair's face and as well, in the direction of the students. Thus, when his claw pointed at frozen mirrors, it revealed a horrifying reality. Their identity, their faces were stripped of them. The features that distinguish them, their eyes, mouth, nose, etc. streaming down their skin like tears and freezing into snowflakes. They were not only stripped away from their identity, but they also couldn't even scream from horror or breathe through their nose or mouth. All of them had their rights to be human taken away so easily.

Now, the initial hours of shock are redirected to better endeavors. You have one hour to build up your defense. Your main argument being your personal a first-hand eyewitness testimony of your character. The weakest form of evidence presented in the court of law. You may use your memories and experiences as hard evidence to build your case. Rationalize to me, the Dean, in charge of order...

...Oh, I never formerly introduced myself. I am the one that watches over order. The one representing careers centered around ethics, philosophy, law, government, and religions. The **Dean of Power** and your judge. Justify why you deserve a second chance. Your time begins....

The Dean melts the ice and gathers the waters to build himself a throne above them. In the moment, the ice melted they were allowed to be human once more. They had their eyes, mouth, face, thoughts, rights, identity, and voice back. However, their voice could not reach the Dean, as he glares down on them, on his throne. So, for the next hour, some students check on classmates that lost consciousness. Such as Pavagan, a female student in her early 20s, with stripped shirt, and frail, but was closest to the Dean, before all the students were frozen in place. Also, Zahair fainted, after his face was swiped away. Leya, an older-Hispanic women, the first to snap us of her shock and begin helping other students. She allows Zahair to rest his head on her lap. until he comes to...



- ❖ *The Judge gave them 1 hour to build their case.*
- ❖ *The next hour is used for fifty students presenting their defense.*
- ❖ *The Judge gives 1 minute to each student to present their case.*
- ❖ *The Judge uses the last 10 minutes throughout the cases to cast final verdicts. In other words, the Judge casts 50 verdicts in 10 minutes.*
- ❖ *The Judge ends the testimony prematurely if presented with a weak defense.*
- ❖ *If witness lies on the stand, the Judge is allowed to utilize any evidence the defense presents in their memory, to shut down their argument and cast a guilty verdict.*
- ❖ *If the Judge declares the defendant guilty, they are charged with- and found guilty of- obstructing humanity's justice, peace, and progress. In addition to the sentencing, the defendant is also found guilty of treason against humanity.*
- ❖ *The penalty for a guilty verdict is the death of their hope and second opportunity.*



Dean: "Pavagan, you have a minute to defend yourself, why should you remain in this university and deserve a second chance?"

Pavagan: "I came from a nation scarce of medical resources. So, I understand the great opportunity I was given when continuing my medical degree in the United States. I hoped to bring back my medical knowledge as a resource to progress my nation forward.

I was infected by a disease...likely stemming from the toxins that my home experienced when other nations stripped us from powerful resources. I didn't fault them. I continued to fight. When the doctors dismissed my concerns and couldn't understand me because of language barriers...I didn't give into silence...I continued to speak.

When I was dying, I was crying because I was frustrated with the whole system...I was angry with my body that failed me...and I was furious, my nation having to wait a little longer for equality to be achieved....



Pavagan: "No...I don't believe I am the first one to change my nation for the better, people before me have already started.... No...I don't believe I can do it all on my own.... But if you are questioning my drive...

How dare you?!

I continued to push myself against forces I knew I couldn't change in hopes of changing it one day! You are just another uncontrollable force; I can push through!

...Tell me, judge...

if you care so much about justice in the world, what are you doing to make it an even plain field?! How are you okay with a system that continues to stop minorities from succeeding!?!.... If I got a doctor.... who understood my cultural background sooner... Dammit, at least spoke my language then maybe I wouldn't have died!!! So, you're telling me, your justice and profession is built on privilege?!?!..."

Dean: "It was out of your control, but you proved you tried to bring order down anyhow.... The judge has found the defendant not guilty!"

Dean: "Zahair, you have a minute to defend yourself, why should you remain in this university and deserve a second chance?"



Zahair: "When I was young, one of the first lessons my dad taught me was because the color of my skin, just like my ancestors, we need to do things to survive. But the things we do, even if we don't have a choice, will be looked down on, go unnoticed, and when we ask for better, we will be seen asking too much.... My dad was a drug dealer, just like his father beforehand, and my parents ran the business to support me and my brother's dreams.... I badly wanted to become a respected architect, I wished to rebuild my neighborhood stricken by poverty, where most residents felt they had to become narcotic traffickers to support their families..... Rebuild the neighborhood, so outsiders can respect us and see us beyond our long history of violence.... but I forgot what my father said...we will not be noticed...and it pissed me off!

It made me angry knowing my best friend's death done by gang violence, would be forgotten, or misremembered as another junkie or criminal that got what he deserved! I couldn't wait to help my neighborhood.... While I am trying to achieve a degree, so people in power can finally listen to someone with my tone of skin.... my home continues to bleed....

I dropped out and went back to begin helping my community.... I told my brother to stay in college, because one day we will need that degree to access funds and respect.... But my home needs me now! I need to help them now!! And you are telling me, I was wrong for doing that?... That it was a crime to help those youth to not kill each other in the streets?! ... That it was illegal to help a family to find other means in protecting and supporting themselves? Telling them they don't have to put crack next to the food on the table!? ... That it was an injustice going back home.... My childhood home... was getting flooded.... because a dam constructed a long-time ago, change the currents of poverty...and was drowning us!!! Then, fine... I am guilty.... I am guilty of not following laws against my people."

Dean: "The defendant provided a guilty confession....

However due to corpus delicti rule, only a confession is not enough evidence for a guilty conviction or verdict.... In consideration of all the other evidence provided to the courtroom, the judge finds the defendant not guilty."

Dean: "Leya, you have a minute to defend yourself, why should you remain in this university and deserve a second chance?"

Leya: "... I hope you have eyes... behind your mask... to see my makeup running down... my tears wouldn't stop pouring out... when I got to married to my college sweetheart..."

Leya: "I hope you can hear... the tired sobbing cries from my voice... after I went through 8... 6... 12... and 5... hours of intense labor... to have four amazing children!"

Leya: "... I hope you can smell ... and taste! ... the Mexican food that my whole family got used to making... when my daughters turned 15... when my sons invited me to their college dorms... when my children got married... and when my grandchildren were having their 1st birthdays..."

Leya: "... I hope as the last piece of evidence comes to you... you can feel the somber... delicate nature of that memory... I am on my deathbed... and all the memories beforehand, are memories I remembered... before I came here... notice not a single one of those memories are ones that I regretted... I would never regret my family!"

Leya: "... If I continued pursuing my doctorate... I was going to sacrifice them... If I did that, I wouldn't make it far ... They are my drive! The reason I even went back!!"

Leya: "... But if you make a deal with me... Right here, a place that exists between life and death... I guess a courtroom is a perfect place for limbo to exist... where a line can be drawn between an innocent and guilty verdict..."

Leya: "... If you promise me that following my purpose and agreeing to your proposal guarantees even more beautiful memories with my family, then I'll sign any contract! They are my life!!! If I can spend more time being happy with them... helping them... then give me the pen and I'll give you, my work! I won't let you refuse or reject this deal!!"

Dean: "... (Chuckle and slowly claps) Deal! The judge has made a plea deal with the defendant. In exchange for her perseverance against the university's trials, the judge grants her legal immunity of a guilty verdict!"
(Applause stops and stands)

Dean: "In spite of that... Be it known that... Leya... the judge sentences you, along with your peers, whose testimony headed them a non-guilty seal, to the university's service and compiled tribulations. To be granted entitlement to life, with all rights, and your purpose, with all privileges, appertaining to that degree of a second opportunity ... ~~Vive ut Vivas~~... live so you may live... is the motto of the University... Welcome! to the University beyond the living..."

The End...

References

- Alfaifi, M. S., AbuZayyad-Nuseibeh, H., Awaida, N., & James, W. W. (2020). Graduate Students Perceptions of Success in United States Colleges. *Arab World English Journal*, 11(2), 202–213.
- Barbatis, P. (2010). Underprepared, Ethnically Diverse Community College Students: Factors Contributing to Persistence. *Journal of Developmental Education*, 33(3), 14–24.
- Council on Social Work Education (CSWE). (2020). Annual Statistics on Social Work Education in the United States. Retrieved February 2023, from <https://www.cswe.org/getattachment/726b15ce-6e63-4dcd-abd1-35d2ea9d9d40/2020-Annual-Statistics-On-Social-Work-Education-in-the-United-States.pdf?lang=en-US>
- National Association of Social Workers, National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics. NASW Delegate Assembly (1996) (Eds.). NASW Delegate Assembly (1999) (Eds.). (1999). *NASW Code of Ethics*. Retrieved from www.naswdc.org.
- Robb, C. A., Moody, B., & Abdel-Ghany, M. (2012). College Student Persistence to Degree: The Burden of Debt. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice*, 13(4), 431–456.
- Vidal, J., Gilar-Corbi, R., Pozo-Rico, T., Castejón, J.-L., & Sánchez-Almeida, T. (2022). Predictors of University Attrition: Looking for an Equitable and Sustainable Higher Education. *Sustainability* (2071-1050), 14(17), 10994. <https://doi-org.libproxy.txstate.edu/10.3390/su141710994>