

Mothers, daughters, wives, and teachers



Stories from the "Oigan/Listen Up" writing group

Madres, hijas, esposas, y maestras

Historias del grupo de escritura "Oigan/Listen Up"

Little Village/Lawndale High School



About Real Conditions

The Community Writing Project hosts writing workshops for people who ordinarily do not consider themselves to be writers, and publishes their reflections on everyday life in Real Conditions. Because only the collective efforts of ordinary people can make a better world, we are particularly interested in the creative expressions and unique understandings of those who have been relegated to the margins of society, including the poor, the oppressed, immigrants, and those who risk their privileges to join them. Their stories are found in these pages.

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Las escritoras / The writers

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Introducción

Esta es la sexta revista de Real Conditions que incluye historias escritas por participantes en el taller de escritura "Oigan/Listen Up," el cual toma lugar en la biblioteca de la escuela secundaria Little Village Lawndale High School. A continuación encontrará las historias de un grupo de escritoras para muchos quizás personas comunes y corrientes. Pero al reflexionar en lo que escriben, usted podrá aprender grandes lecciones relacionadas con su vida diaria. En el barrio de La Villita, en donde todos los días suceden cosas importantes, podríamos decir que todos los días se escribe una página diferente. Considere las historias como la de Rosa Barrera acerca de un asesino silencioso, "El Cigarro"; o la de Irma Contreras relacionada con el parto de su primer hijo; o el consejo que ofrece Rosy Cerritos a los padres en su alegoría, "El significado de una planta." Examine estos relatos y descubra en la vida de estas mujeres verdaderos valores, tesoros para su propia vida. Mujeres, madres, hijas, esposas, y también maestras.

Introduction

This is the sixth Real Conditions magazine that includes stories written by mothers and grandmothers from the school community of Little Village/Lawndale High School. In this issue you will find stories from a group of writers who for many people will seem like ordinary, common people. But upon reflecting on what they write, you will be able to learn great lessons relating to your daily life. In the neighborhood of Little Village where important things happen every day, we could say that every day a different page is written. Consider the story of Rosa Barrera about a silent assassin, "the Cigarette"; or Irma Contreras' story about the delivery of her first child; or the counsel that Rosy Cerritos offers to parents in her allegory "The Significance of a Plant." Examine these stories and discover in the lives of these women veritable values, treasures for your own life. Women, mothers, daughters, wives, and also teachers.

El taller de escritura Me encanta la idea de participar en este taller de escritura. Me gusta escribir. En él he conocido a grandes mujeres de diferentes mundos. Entre pláticas surgen temas importantes y grandes ideas, discusiones referentes a estos temas que siempre son especiales para nosotras, del cual tomamos uno para escribir. Surge en ratos un silencio; todas pensamos en cómo empezar nuestro escrito. En ese transcurso de tiempo se escuchan borrones, susurros, silencio, y se vuelve a repetir lo mismo por un rato. Nuestras ideas nos están rondando y surgen historias o anécdotas relacionadas con el tema de las cuales todas participamos. En algunas ocasiones mi hoja está vacía o llena de borrones, por no saber cómo empezar. Observo a las otras mujeres, todas con lápiz y borrador en mano, pensando. En el transcurso del tiempo, entre borrones, hojas, lápices, y mil temas, llego a tener la idea de cómo empezar a escribir. Pero sin percatarme de que en este cuarto, donde pasamos nuestro tiempo, hay diferentes y grandes historias. Hay risas y en pocas ocasiones, llanto. Pero sobre todo existe un gran respeto a nuestras opiniones y nuestra forma de ser. Después de todo, somos mujeres.



*Martha P.
Aguilar*

The writing workshop I love participating in this writing workshop. I love writing. In the workshop I have met great women from different worlds. In our conversations important themes and great ideas emerge, discussions related to these topics that are always special for us, and from which we choose one to write about. Then it becomes silent for a time; everyone is thinking about how to start their writing. During that time you can hear erasers, murmuring, silence, and then again the same thing for another while. Our ideas get passed around and other stories and ideas emerge, all related to the topic we all discussed. On some occasions my piece of paper is empty or covered with eraser smudges because I did not know how to get started. I watch the other women; they all have pencil and eraser in hand, thinking. During all this time, between eraser marks, paper, pencils, and a thousand themes, I begin to have an idea about how to start writing, without first realizing that in this room, where we spend a bit of our time, there are different and great stories. There are laughs and, on some occasions, tears. But above all there is great respect for our opinions and our way of being. After all, we are women.

Aprecio de nada La tecnología hoy en día es esencial. Tanto que nos olvidamos de lo tradicional y más grande, el afecto. Las tiendas están llenas y hay filas largas. Ya poca gente compra y manda tarjetas, expresando en ellas esta fecha (el 14 de febrero), que para Cupido y para algunas de nosotras las mujeres, es importante. Me gusta recorrer los pasillos de las tiendas en estas fechas. Observo hombres pasando de un lado a otro, tomando y dejando el oso o el chocolate. Otros toman lo primero que ven, que piensan que le va a gustar a la persona que se lo van a dar. Total, hoy es el Día del Amor y la Amistad. Yo sólo observo y sigo caminando. Las tiendas están llenas y hay filas largas. Mientras observo, suena mi teléfono celular. Es un texto que dice: "Feliz Día de San Valentín, te amo." Sonríe y guardo mi gran regalo que no le costó nada y me hace sentir muy feliz.

Martha P. Aguilar
Martha P. Aguilar

Free of charge Technology nowadays is essential. So much that we forget about what is traditional and, even more, about affection. These days few people buy and send greeting cards that express how important this date is (February 14th) for Cupid and many of us women. On these holidays I like going up and down the aisles in the stores. I see men going from one side to the other, taking and leaving the stuffed bear or the chocolate. Others take the first thing they see, whatever they think the person whom they are going to give it to might like it. After all, it's Valentine's Day. I just watch and keep on walking. The stores are full and the lines are long. While I watch, my cell phone rings. It is a text message that reads, "Happy Valentine's Day, I love you." I smile and treasure my wonderful gift that cost nothing and makes me feel so happy.

Un silbido especial Cuando tenía quince años tenía un novio muy guapo, alto, y bastante delgado. Todos los días a las 7:00 de la noche, ese muchacho llegaba y se paraba enfrente de mi casa, silbando para que yo saliera a platicar con él. Tenía un silbido tan especial que era difícil de imitar. Pero una tarde él no llegó. Al lado de mi casa, mi vecina tenía un pájaro que aprendió a silbar igual que mi novio. A las 7:00 de la tarde el pájaro comenzó a silbar. Salí corriendo, emocionada porque iba a mirar a mi novio. Pero, ah sorpresa que me llevé. El no estaba. Más me sorprendí cuando me di cuenta de que era el pájaro que estaba chiflando.

Más tarde mi novio llegó y silbó. Yo no salí, porque pensé que era el pájaro. Pero no. Era mi novio. El se fue bastante enfadado porque

pensó que yo estaba enojada. Pero motivos no había. Para hacerme sentir contenta, me llevó serenata. Era la 1:00 am cuando comenzaron a cantar unas canciones preciosas. Yo estaba tan emocionada que veía una noche hermosa, llena de estrellas. Me sentí importante, muy importante para él. Cada día que pasaba yo sentía que era más bonito nuestro noviazgo. Caminamos por la placita por las tardes, platicando de nuestras cosas y nuestros planes juntos. Así pasaron seis años de ser novios, creciendo nuestro amor cada día. Y aún seguimos disfrutando del silbido de los pájaros.

Gloria Duran



A Special Whistle When I was fifteen I had a boyfriend who was tall, handsome, and very slim. Every night at 7:00 p.m. that boy would come and stand in front of my house, whistling so that I would come out and talk with him. He had a special whistle that was difficult to imitate. One evening he did not come by. My next door neighbor had a bird, and this bird had learned to whistle exactly like my boyfriend. At 7:00 p.m. the bird started to whistle. I went running, excited because I was going to see my boyfriend. But what a surprise, he was not there. I was even more surprised when I realized that it was the bird whistling.

Later that evening my boyfriend came by and started to whistle. I didn't go outside, thinking it was the bird. But no, it was my boyfriend. He left very upset because he thought that I was angry. But there was no reason for him to think so. To make it up to me he brought me a serenade. It was 1:00 a.m. when they started to sing beautiful songs. I was so thrilled that the night seemed particularly beautiful and full of stars. I felt important, very important to him. Every day that passed I felt that our relationship became more beautiful. We would walk around the plaza in the evening, talking about our lives and our plans together. We spent six years as boyfriend and girlfriend like that, our love growing every day. And to this day we continue to enjoy hearing the birds sing.

Regalos lindos y sencillos Que lindo regalo cuando miré la cara de mis grandes amores al regresar de un largo y estresante viaje. Olvidé todo lo que pasé en ese viaje cuando vi a mis hijos y mi esposo. Aquella expresión de alegría cuando me miraron salir del aeropuerto, aquellos abrazos que recibí llenos de amor y ternura de todos mis hombres, me sentí soñada e importante. En ese momento sentí cuánta falta les había hecho y cuánto me habían extrañado. Cuando llegamos a casa mi esposo me trató con tanto amor y cariño que me sirvió la cena que me tenía preparada. Era muy sencilla, pero estaba preparada con amor. Al día siguiente estaba dormida cuando mi hijo, el más pequeño, me despertó con un desayuno preparado por él mismo. Me lo llevó a la cama y me dijo con palabras llenas de alegría y amor, "Mami, te extrañé mucho." Cómo me hubiera gustado que esos momentos nunca se terminaran.

Gloria Duran
Gloria Duran



Beautiful and simple gifts What a beautiful gift when I saw the faces of my great loves, upon returning from a long and stressful trip. I completely forgot what I had suffered on that trip as soon as I saw my husband and sons. Their happy expressions when they saw me walking out of the airport, and those hugs I got, full of tenderness and love from all my men, made me feel important and loved. In that moment I realized how they needed and missed me. When we got home my husband served me dinner with much love and care, a dinner he had prepared. It was a simple dinner, but one that had been prepared with love. The next morning I was still asleep when my youngest son woke me up with a breakfast he had fixed himself. He brought it to me in bed and said to me, "Mommy, I missed you so much." I wish those moments would have never ended.

The significance of a plant I did not know the significance of a plant until I was ready to get married and I was given a welcoming into marriage [a local tradition]. Then someone explained to us that a plant is like your child, it feels the same. For instance, if you talk to your child with love, he understands better. So does the plant. You must water the plant every day so that it gets bigger. If it starts to twist somewhat, you must help it to straighten out, and it will continue to grow big and strong. It is similar with children, although instead of watering them we feed them. Children also sometimes want to go astray. For example, they can get into gangs or into drugs. They lose respect for their elders, become rebellious with their parents, and become selfish. We must help them find the best road, the road of peace and respect, above all keeping them from losing their cultural roots and traditions.

Cuando llegué decidí no decir nada de lo que había pasado porque me daba pena que me dijeran que era cobarde. Así pasó todo el día y yo me sentía bien. Mi esposo pasó por mí para ir a la feria. Fuimos caminando. Pero de regreso a casa las molestias volvieron. Dijo mi esposo, "¿Qué tienes? Estás sudando y te pones amarilla. ¿O es sólo una molestia del embarazo?" Siguió con sus preocupaciones. "No, algo anda mal. Vamos a preguntarle a tu mamá." Llegamos a la casa. Estaban mi hermana, su esposo, y mi mamá. Antes de terminar de contarles todo lo que había pasado, otro dolor llegó. Dijo mi mamá, "Eso no es molestia, son dolores de parto." "¿Quééé?" le dije, "¿A poco son éstos?" "Claro," dijo mi mamá. "Vamos al doctor." Así que nos fuimos. Pero lo que se me hacía más chistoso era que cada vez que me daba un do-

lor, mi hermana me decía que llorara. "Claro," le decía yo, "Si con llorar se me quitara el dolor, ya hubiera llorado desde el primero."

Así entre risas y dolores llegamos al doctor. Me puso un medicamento para detener los dolores porque sólo tenía seis meses de embarazo y era peligroso que naciera mi bebé. Después de muchos cuidados y dos meses más tarde mi bebé tenía que venir al mundo, ya que todo se seguía complicando. Al final fue totalmente

diferente de lo que esperaba, ya que mi bebé nació por cesárea, sin dolores, sin complicaciones. A pesar de tener sólo ocho meses de embarazo, nació en cuarenta minutos. Todo estaba bien y todos estaban felices por el nuevo bebé que llegaba a mi casa. Y yo, ya se imaginarán, con ganas hasta de correr de tanta felicidad por tener a mi primer bebé. Y claro, cuando vi su carita, los malestares se me olvidaron.

Rosy Cerritos

Rosy Cerritos

Pains and laughter It was about nine years ago. My God! Was I nervous! My first contractions happened when I was about six months pregnant. I was living at my mother-in-law's house. It was about 5:00 a.m. My husband said he was going to work. I said, "Okay." But as soon as he left, my contractions started. I felt terrible. It was worse than what anyone had told me. But of course, being the brave woman that I am, I put up with it and said nothing to my mother-in-law. I thought it was all very normal and part of being pregnant. I felt that if I said anything to my mother-in-law, she would say, "What a coward you are. This is only normal." So I decided to just live with it. After feeling that way for about two hours and having a contraction every five minutes, I said to myself, "Good, finally this strange discomfort has passed." I decided to shower and go to my mother's house, just like I did every day. I cleaned my room, had breakfast, and left.

When I got to my mother-in-law's I decided not to say anything about what had happened because I would be embarrassed if they said I was being a coward. I felt fine throughout the day. My husband met me there so we could go to the fair. We left walking. But on our way back I felt the same thing again. My husband asked, "What's wrong? You are sweating and you look pale. Or is it only a discomfort of pregnancy?" He continued to be concerned. "No, something

is wrong. Let's ask your mom." When we got home my sister, her husband, and my mother were there. Before I could even finish telling them what had happened, I had another contraction. My mother said, "That is not just discomfort, you are having contractions." "What?" I asked her, "These are contractions?" "Of course," said my mother. "Let's go the doctor." So we left. But what I thought to be especially funny was that every time I had a contraction my sister told me to cry. "Sure," I told her. "If by crying my pain would stop, I would have been crying since the first one."

So between laughs and contractions we got to the doctor. He gave me some medication to stop the contractions since I was only six months pregnant and it was dangerous to give birth. After many precautions and two months later, my baby had to be delivered. Everything was getting worse. In the end it was completely different from what I had expected because my baby was born by Cesarean section, without pain, without complications. Even though I was only eight months pregnant, he was born in forty minutes. Everything was well and all were happy for the newborn baby that was coming home with us. And me, as you can imagine, I felt like running out of there, from the sheer happiness of having my first baby. And of course, as soon as I saw his face I forgot about all my aches and pains.

Parte I. **Mi embarazo inesperado** Fue en el 1963 que me casé. Como toda mujer estaba ilusionada en ser madre. Pero pasaba el tiempo y no quedaba embarazada. Fue entonces que fui al doctor, quien me examinó. Por primera vez recibí la mala noticia de que no podía ser mamá porque tenía una matriz infantil. Me puse triste y lloré. Pero enseguida le pregunté al doctor que si había algún tratamiento que me ayudara. El me dijo que sí, pero que no me aseguraba que fuera efectivo. Yo le dije que quería someterme a ese tratamiento, no importaba si lo lograba o no. Así que cada mes me inyectaba, no recuerdo qué. Un día inesperado el doctor me dijo que estaba embarazada. La primera vez lloré porque no podía. La segunda vez lloré de alegría. Fue un embarazo que disfruté. No me importaron los malestares que nos dan a todas las mujeres: mareos, vómitos, antojos, sueño, calambres, etcétera. Me pasé preparando con tiempo todo lo que un recién nacido necesita.

Enedina Elizondo

Part I. **My Unexpected Pregnancy** It was 1963 when I got married. Like every woman, I was excited about becoming a mother. But time passed and I did not get pregnant. So I finally went to see the doctor, who examined me. For the first time I was given the bad news that I could not become a mother, because I had an underdeveloped uterus. I became sad and cried. But then I asked the doctor if there was a treatment that could help me. He said yes, but that he could not assure me it would be effective. I told him I wanted to try the treatment; it did not matter if it worked or not. So every month I got a shot, I can't remember of what. Then suddenly one day the doctor told me I was pregnant. The first time I saw my doctor, I cried because I could not get pregnant. The second time I cried out of happiness. It was a pregnancy that I enjoyed. I didn't mind the symptoms that we women all suffer: dizziness, vomiting, cravings, sleepiness, cramps, etcetera. I spent the time preparing everything that a newborn needs.



Parte II. El parto Se me hizo muy largo el tiempo de embarazo. Me sentía desesperada porque quería que llegara ese día. En mis sueños me lo imaginaba como sería, si niña o niño, y su sonrisa. El día que tanto deseaba llegó. Se me rompió la fuente, tuve dolores muy intensos. Fue un 17 de marzo de 1965. Pero para mi mala suerte, cuando iba rumbo al hospital había mucha nieve y se ponchó una llanta del carro. Era ya la hora que debía nacer y mi esposo tratando de arreglar la llanta. Ahí sí se me hizo una eternidad.

Por fin llegué al hospital. Me estaban preparando para la venida de ese ser que todavía estaba en mi vientre. Yo oía al lado a otras mujeres, como gri-

taban. Decía entre mí, "¿Qué es lo que les hacen?" Me dio miedo. Pero llegó la hora en que mi "baby" nació. Fue una emoción grande que por primera vez experimenté en mi vida y que nunca olvidaré. Cuando lloró supe que todo había salido bien. Cuando te lo enseñan por primera vez, es algo que tú no puedes explicar, todas las emociones que sientes.

Ese bebé ahora tiene 45 años. Es una hija ejemplar ahora. Doy gracias a Dios y a la vida por el don que Dios me dio de ser madre.

Enedina Elizondo
Enedina Elizondo

Part II. The delivery My pregnancy seemed to last such a long time. I felt impatient because I wanted the day to come. In my dreams I imagined whether it would be a boy or a girl, and its smile. Finally the day I was waiting for arrived. My water broke, and I started having intense pains. It was the 17th of March, 1965. But, as luck would have it, on our way to the hospital there was a lot of snow and the car had a flat tire. It was time for the baby to be born and my husband was trying to fix the flat tire. It seemed to take forever.

I finally got to the hospital. They started getting me ready for the arrival of that child who was still in my belly. I could hear other women around me scream-

ing. I asked myself, "What are they doing to them?" I felt scared. But the time came for my baby to be born. It was a huge emotion that I experienced for the first time in my life, and that I will never forget. When it started crying I knew everything had turned out alright. When they show you your baby for the first time, it's something you cannot explain, all the emotions you feel.

That baby is now 45 years old. She is an exemplary daughter. I thank God and life for the gift God gave me of becoming a mother.

El asesino de mi padre Llega a tu hogar como un buen amigo y es aceptado por todos en casa, sobre todo por los adultos, los cuales lo presentan como un amigo a los hijos a la edad de trece, catorce, quince o más. Pero los niños lo ven todos los días y a cada rato. Pues cuando entra en tu casa difícilmente se va y se convierte en el amigo inseparable del hombre, y no es precisamente el perro.

Recuerdo con tristeza como si fuera hoy, cuántas veces mi madre le decía a mi padre, "Ya sáquelo de su vida, por favor, porque tarde o temprano le va a hacer daño." Y él, o contestaba mal o no contestaba. Mi hermana mayor también le decía, "ya no por favor. No lo traiga más a la casa pues daña a toda la familia."

Pero mientras más le hablábamos de él, más él lo buscaba. Siempre le hacíamos ver la necesidad de dejar a su amigo.

Pues todos crecimos y, gracias a Dios, nunca nosotros hicimos amistad con él, ya que conocíamos el final. Mi padre también lo conocía, pero siempre decía que él le ayudaba a calmar sus nervios, ansiedades, tristezas. Lo ayudaba a calmar el frío, el calor, etcétera. Hasta que a la edad de 60 años aproximadamente, a mi padre le diagnosticaron cáncer en la garganta. ¡Qué golpe más duro! Aquel amigo inseparable fue el causante de esta enfermedad y terminó matándolo. Fue el cigarro el asesino de mi padre, ¡el cigarro!

Rosa Barrera

Rosa Barrera

My father's assassin It arrives at your house like a good friend and is accepted by everyone in the home, especially by adults, who introduce it as a friend to their children, around the ages of thirteen, fourteen, fifteen or older. Children can see it every day and every hour. When this friend arrives at your house, it is unlikely that it will leave. It becomes man's inseparable friend, although it's not exactly a dog.

I remember with sadness, as if it was today, how many times my mother would tell my father, "It's time for you to get that out of your life, please; because sooner or later it's going to harm you." And he would either give the wrong answer or no answer at all. My oldest sister also said to him, "No more, please. Don't bring it home, because it harms the whole family," But the more we talked to him about it, the more he would seek it out. We always tried to show him the need to leave his friend.

We all grew up and, thank God, none of us ever became its friends, since we knew what the outcome would be. My father also knew it. But he would always say that it helped calm his nerves, his anxiety, and his sadness. It helped him to deal with the cold, the heat, and etcetera. Until, at the age of about 60 years old, my father was diagnosed with throat cancer. What a horrible blow! That inseparable friend, who was the cause of his illness, finally ended up killing him. The cigarette was my father's assassin. The cigarette!



Ana Velásquez

Ana Velásquez

La alegría de ser mujer Pensar en la palabra "Mujer" causa un enorme reto en mi vida. Un ser maravilloso, tan grande e indescrptible. Como con el amor, me quedo corta y el español no es suficiente. Sólo pensar en la manera que fue hecha la mujer. Es todo corazón, desde los pies a la cabeza. Porque cuando se enamora no piensa, sino parece que se le fue el cerebro hacia los pies. Pero eso no le resta inteligencia, ella es la sabiduría misma: administra, diagnostica, observa, mide el terreno, lo compra, lo planta, y cosecha grandes triunfos. Y si de colores se trata con sólo observarla de rosita sabes que es la ternura su matiz, y por supuesto que la lleva en su matriz. ¿Has visto a un hombre dar a luz a un bebé?

En mi vida personal, hace unos ocho años aprendí la maravilla de haber sido una mujer. En ese entonces sufrí una depresión muy fuerte, a raíz de que nunca tomaba el tiempo para mí. Fue como caer en un abismo. Pero ahora me tomo tiempo para mí. Tomo tiempo para mi arreglo personal, voy de compras, y cocino pensando en mis necesidades corporales. Tengo varios años viviendo en un idilio maravilloso conmigo misma. Mujercita, niña hermosa que, al crecer a diario, cada año y cada experiencia la hacen más maravillosa. ¿A dónde quiero llegar? Quiero sólo con esto acabar: siéntete afortunada de haber nacido nombrada "mujer." Porque al final del discurso no he visto, a mis cuarenta años, algo más dignificado, honrado, o valorado que el sentirte MUJER.



The joy of being a woman Just thinking about the word "Woman" presents a great challenge in my life, because of what a wonderful being she is, so great and indescribable. Just like with love, I come up short and the Spanish language is not adequate. Just think about the way woman was created. She is all heart, from top to bottom. Because when she falls in love, doesn't think. It's as if her brain has dropped to her feet. But this does not diminish her intelligence, for she is wisdom itself: by managing, diagnosing, observing, measuring the land, buying it, planting and harvesting great triumphs. And, if we think about colors, just by looking at her in pink, you know tenderness is her shade because she carries it in her womb. Have you ever seen a man giving birth?

In my personal life, it was about eight years ago that I learned the wonder of being a woman. At that time I suffered a deep depression that resulted from my never taking time for me. It was like falling into an abyss. But now I take time for myself. I take time to fix myself up, I go shopping, and I cook thinking about my personal needs. For some years now I have been living a marvelous romance with my new self. Little woman, beautiful girl who, growing daily, with each year and every experience becomes more wonderful. Where am I heading with this? I just want to end with this: you should feel fortunate to have been named "woman." Because, to complete my discourse, I have never seen, in my forty years, anything more dignified, honorable, or valuable than the feeling of being a WOMAN.

Abre los ojos y mira Cuando se tiene una plena convicción de que Dios quiere matrimonios, es algo muy sencillo. Porque sabes que un día tomarás esa decisión. Sabes que es para toda la vida. ...En las buenas y en las malas, y toda la letanía obligatoria. Para mí fue algo súper. Curioso, porque si les digo que Dios mismo me habló, van a pensar, ¿pues cómo? Pues sí sucedió. Un día, a mis 24 años, estábamos en mi congregación adorando a Dios, yo estaba en el tercer cielo, concentradísima. Para ese entonces había conocido a un muchacho cristiano, muy entregado. Compartíamos con él, haciendo visitas a los enfermos, en campañas. Habíamos tratado de salir como novios, pero yo en mi imprudencia, lo mandé lejos. Y digo imprudencia, porque lo traté un poco despectivamente.

Bueno pues para volver al lugar en la congregación, él estaba de invitado ese día. Ya casi al final del servicio, él estaba al frente ministrando, específicamente cantando. Yo, como narré, en el tercer cielo. Bueno, pues allí de pronto oigo una voz que decía, "Abre los ojos y mira. Ese hombre que ves al frente es el que tengo para tu esposo." Ya se los dije, difícil de creer. Yo misma no lo creí. Abrí los ojos y busqué a mi alrededor. No había nadie. Volví a cerrar los ojos y escuché lo mismo. Obedecí. Abrí los ojos y miré. Empecé, "¡Wow! Qué bien se viste, que bien se ve, que bien canta." Y... bueno, me enamoré. Después de hablar con él y narrarle mi experiencia, él dijo: "Oh, yo sabía" "¿Cómo?" Le pregunté. "Cuando usted me dijo que no, yo oré a Dios que El obrara y esta es la respuesta." Bueno, a los dos meses nos casamos.



Ana Velásquez

Open your eyes and look When we have the clear conviction that God wants marriages, it becomes very simple. Because you know one day you will decide to do just that. You know it will be for life . . . for better and for worse, and all the other parts of that required litany. For me it was something wonderful. Curious, because if I tell you that God spoke to me, you are going to wonder how. But it did happen. One day, when I was 24, we were in church praising God. I was in the third heaven, completely focused. By then, I have already met a young Christian man, very devoted. I made many visits with to the sick, working on campaigns. We had tried to date, but being as immature as I was, I chased him away. I say I was immature because I treated him with indifference.

Well, going back to the beginning of my story, when I was in my church, this young man was a

guest that day. Almost at the end of the service, he was standing in front doing his ministry, singing, to be specific. And, as I mentioned before, I was in the third heaven. Well, suddenly I hear a voice telling me, "Open your eyes and look. That man you see in front of you is the one I have chosen to be your husband." As I said, it is hard to believe. I myself could not believe it. I opened my eyes and looked around. There was no one. I closed my eyes again and heard the same thing. I obeyed. I opened my eyes and looked. I thought, "Wow, he dresses very nice, he looks good, he sings so nicely." And . . . I fell in love. After talking to him and telling him about my experience, he said, "Oh, I already knew." I asked, "How?" When you first said no to me, I prayed to God that He would do something and this is His answer." About two months later we got married.

Advertencias Tenemos muchas advertencias en la vida. Las vemos de todo tipo, pero ignorarlas es un error. Recuerdo una vez que empecé a sentirme mal, con un dolor en las piernas. Primero en una pierna. Tranquila, sólo tomé un calmante para el dolor. Pero fue arreciando. Luego fueron las dos. Así pasaron dos meses, hasta para limpiar se me dificultaba. Busqué ayuda médica pero no funcionó. Recuerdo que me inyectaron sobre el nervio inflamado y en el instante me desmayé.

Como que fuera poco, mi vida matrimonial se estaba derrumbando, pues también esto afectó la intimidad. Llegó un día, después de dos meses y medio, que ya no me pude levantar ni siquiera para ir al baño. Me tenían que llevar cargada. Para ese entonces tenía 34 años. Lloraba tanto, inconsolablemente, hasta que al fin fui a una clínica y me empezaron a tratar con acupuntura, fueron 18 secciones. \$2,800 dólares pagué y mucho tiempo, quizás hasta hoy, para recuperarme de todo.

Ana Velásquez

Warnings We receive many warnings in life. We see all kinds, but it is a mistake to ignore them. I remember once when I started feeling sick. I had a pain in my legs. First, it was one leg. Staying calm, I just took a pain killer. But the pain got worse. Later the pain was in both legs. Some months went by, until even cleaning was very difficult for me to do. I looked for medical care, but it didn't help. I remember that they gave me a shot in the inflamed nerve, and I suddenly lost consciousness.

As if that were not enough, my marriage started to fall apart, because this also affected my intimacy. Then one day, about two and a half months later, I found that I could not even get up to go to the bathroom. I had to be carried there. I was 34 years old then. I cried so much, inconsolably, until finally I went to a clinic and they started to treat me with acupuncture. It was about 18 sessions. I paid \$2,800 and spent a lot of time, perhaps until now, for me to recuperate completely.

Al estar en la sala todos juntos vimos la pelea de De la Hoya y, tomando algunos tragos, compartíamos alegres unos con otros. Después bajamos al sótano igualmente bien decorado y cómodo. Había una barra, tras la cual se plantó una amiga, una chica que trabajaba para la FBI, a servirnos unas bebidas. Recuerdo que llegó mi amiga Elvia y su recién adquirido novio Frank. Cuando por fin hubimos pasado un rato muy ameno, Elvia se despidió y me preguntó: "Tere, ¿te quedas?" Yo le pregunté antes de responderle: "¿Vas a tu casa o vas a seguirla?" Me dijo que iba para su casa, entonces le dije: "Bueno, el plan era quedarme a dormir aquí, pero ya que vas por ese camino, mejor me voy a casa." Debí haberme hecho una advertencia a mí misma, porque sin sospecharlo siquiera, ésta fue la peor y más terrible equivocación tomada. Mejor me hubiera quedado a dormir allá.

Ya de regreso a casa, al ir por la carretera 90/94 camino a Indiana (veníamos desde Palatine), por la avenida North más o menos, salida 48, una camioneta SUV se nos atravesó, causando el accidente que me dejó marcada de por vida. Marcada, digo yo, porque desde ese accidente no he podido desempeñarme físicamente como lo había hecho hasta entonces. Les platicaré: Cuando cocino, tiene que ser una comida no muy elaborada, debe ser algo muy rápido; cuando voy a la tienda, debo llevar una lista de lo que pienso traer, porque si me tardo más tiempo del debido, pago un precio muy doloroso: me empieza a arder la cintura y luego una buena parte de la espalda. Si paso escribiendo en la computadora, debo levantarme a estirarme o quitar a hacer algún movimiento, usualmente después de dos horas o algo así. Una cosa que me gustaba y de la cual yo disfrutaba muchísimo, era bailar, pues desde ese dichoso accidente, ya no puedo casi bailar. Debe ser muy limitado y debo sentarme pronto, si no, el dolor me hace marearme y perder el balance. Desde a partir ese día, escucho bien las advertencias, hasta las que me hago yo en silencio. Desde entonces soy extremadamente cuidadosa y precavida con todo lo que hago.

Teresa Berumen



Teresa Berumen

Teresa Berumen

Warning!!! Six years ago, on September 15th to be exact, I remember so precisely, it was Oscar de la Hoya's boxing match. I had been invited to a party some friends were having at their house, by my friend Michelle. The idea was to see the fight in their beautiful apartment. When the fight finished we were going to continue the party. As you entered the apartment, the first thing you saw in the vestibule was the immaculate and white carpet. There was an elongated table and right above it were three symmetrically hung pictures. They gave the place a touch of elegance and sophistication. Next, as you walked into the living room, there was a set of couches, white and very cushiony. It made you feel a bit worried to sit on them, in case you might wrinkle or dirty them. On the side, there was a hallway that led to the bedrooms. These were spacious bedrooms, not at all like the ones we have in Chicago homes. They were so big that the beds, enormous beds, seemed small in those rooms.

After taking a tour of the place, while in the living room again, we watched the fight with De la Hoya. We had some drinks while socializing with each other. Afterwards, we went down to the basement which was the same, nicely decorated and very comfortable. There was a bar and my friend, a woman who worked for the FBI, appointed herself the bartender for the night. I remember my friend Elvia got to the party, along with her newly acquired boyfriend Frank. After having a pleasant time there, Elvia started saying goodbye and asked me, "Hey, Tere, are you staying?" Before giving her an answer, I asked her, "Are you going

home, or somewhere else?" She answered that she was going home. Then I said, "Fine. I was planning on spending the night here, but since you are going my way, it's best if I go home." I should have warned myself. Because, unbeknownst to me, this would turn out to be the most terrible mistake of my life.

On our way home, Elvia, who after drinking a couple of beers was driving on I-90/94 Indiana (we were coming from Palatine,) near North Avenue, exit 48, when suddenly an SUV cut in front of our car, causing the accident that scarred me for the rest of my life. I say scarred, because ever since that accident I have not been able to physically function as I had up until that moment. Let me explain. When cooking, I must cook something not too elaborate, it must be something quick; when I go shopping, I must take a list of items needed, otherwise, if I take longer than the time I can stand or walk, I pay a painful price. My waist starts burning and then my entire lower back hurts. When I am in front of my computer, I must get up and stretch or make some kind of movement, usually after about two hours. Another activity that I used to enjoy, was dancing. Well, since this accident, I am almost unable to dance. It must be done on a limited basis, and I must sit down right away, or the pain makes me dizzy and I start losing my balance. Since that day, I pay careful attention to warnings I hear, even those I make quietly to myself. Since that day I am extremely careful and cautious about everything I do.

Camino a la Independencia El otro día, para ser exacto el 6 de febrero pasado, mi bebé Sergio, el cuarto de mis hijos, cumplía 18 años. Oficialmente la mayoría de edad. Pasaron un par de días y me dice, "Má, ¿tú sabes que ya no tienes que firmar por mí para poder salirme de la escuela cuando yo no quiera estar allí algún día? Ya puedo yo firmar por mí mismo y salirme temprano si quiero." Recuerdo que me le quedé viendo como si me acabara de dar la noticia más grande de su vida. Casi como si yo no supiera o no me hubiera dado cuenta de que mi bebé ya había cumplido los 18 años. Como si yo no fuera su mamá, la que lo sintió en su vientre, la que lo vio nacer pequeñito, chiquitito de escasas tres libras y media, la que estuvo pendiente de que no se olvidara respirar cada noche, cuando después de un mes y medio me lo entregaron del hospital. Aquella que le celebra su cumpleaños, año con año, por 18 años ya, hacié-

ndole entomatadas y arroz puertorriqueño, su platillo favorito. Y le respondo: "Ah! Sí m'hijo tienes toda la razón. Ya tienes 18 años. Ya te puedes salir de la escuela sin mi autorización. Pero ¿Sabes qué, m'hijo? También te puedes buscar ya un trabajo y empezar a ayudar en la economía de la casa." Al decirle esto, se quedó con la boca abierta y no me contestó nada, absolutamente nada. Y dio por terminada nuestra conversación, por lo menos por ese día.

Teresa Berumen



On the road to independence The other day, February 6th to be exact, my baby Sergio, my fourth child, turned 18. This officially made him an adult. A couple of days later, he came up to me and said, "Ma, did you know you don't have to sign me out of school any more? Did you know that I can sign for myself and leave early whenever I want to?" I remember looking at him as if I had heard the most outrageous news of his life. I looked at him as if I did not know this or as if I had not realized that my baby had just turned 18 years of age. Almost as if I was not his mother, the one who felt him in her womb 18 years before, the one who saw him when he was born being such a tiny baby, barely weighing a mere three and a half pounds, the one who was up every night making

sure he didn't forget to breath, about a month and a half later when he came out of the hospital. The one who celebrates his birthday every year, and who for 18 years has been cooking entomatadas and Puerto Rican Rice for him, his favorite dish. So, I answered, "Oh, yes my son you are so right. You are 18. You can leave the school without my authorization. But you know what, my son? You can also find a job and start helping with finances at home." When I said this to him, he just looked at me with his mouth wide open and said nothing in response, nothing at all. Our conversation ended right then and there, at least for that day.

Irma Contreras

Irma Contreras

El día más maravilloso El día más maravilloso de mi vida fue cuando nació Angel Juzet. Mi mamá y mis hermanas habían llegado a mi casa de visita. Hicimos de comer Mole de Olla. Es un guisado con verduras y chile guajillo. Comimos todos juntos. Aunque llegó mi hermano que no se lleva bien con mi mamá no se me opacó el día. Yo seguía feliz. Pero *surprise*, que se me rompe la fuente. Yo pensé que era pipí porque no sabía que eso era así. Le dije a mi mamá: "Ay, creo que me ganó." Me metí a cambiarme y seguimos platicando, pero esa salida de agua era muy seguida. Le dije a mi mamá, "Se me sale sola." Ella le habló en ese momento a mi hermana mayor -- ella es enfermera. Enseguida llegó mi hermana y me dijo, "No Irma, no es pipí, es la fuente. ¿No te sientes mal, no te duele?" Yo le dije que no. Enseguida nos fuimos al hospital. Para eso yo le dije, "Vámonos caminando para que no me regresen. Después que le avisen a mi esposo."

Cuando llegué al hospital inmediatamente me metieron. Me regañó el doctor porque no tenía que haber caminado. Enseguida me provocaron el parto. Mi hijo nació a las 3:15 de la mañana. Fue un niño muy grande. Todos estaban afuera esperando: mi esposo, mis hermanas y mi mamá, todos contentos por la llegada de mi hijo, el primer nieto de mi mamá y sobrino de mis hermanas.



The Most Wonderful Day The most wonderful day of my life was when Angel Juzet was born. My mother and sisters had come home to visit. We had Mole de Olla. It is a dish made with vegetables and red guajillo chilies. We all ate together. Although my brother arrived, the one who doesn't get along with my mom, it didn't ruin the day for me. I still felt happy. But, surprise, my water broke. I thought that it was urine, since I did not know that it was like this. I told my mother, "Oops, I think I peed." I went to change and we kept on talking, but the water continued to leak. I told my mother, "I can't hold it." She then called my older sister, who is a nurse in Mexico. She came back and told me, "No, Irma, it's not pee; it's your water bag. Do you feel badly? Does it hurt?" I said no. We left

immediately for the hospital. Then I suggested, "Let's walk. That way they won't tell me to go back home. Someone can then let my husband know."

When I got to the hospital, they took me in immediately. The doctor scolded me because I shouldn't have walked. Right after that they induced the labor. My son was born at 3:15 a.m. He was a big boy. Everyone was outside waiting: my husband, my sisters and my mother, all of them delighted by my son's arrival, my mother's first grandson and my sisters' first nephew.

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