

Narratives of Injustice and a Quilt of Hope 2022

Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, Germany
 Universidad Nacional de La Plata, Argentina
 University of Connecticut, USA

Intercultural Project Argentina, Germany, USA

Narratives of Injustice and a Quilt of Hope

All stories presented in this book are based on true personal experiences. In order to protect the project participants, no author names are given.

The narratives, the preface as well as the artwork included in this book were created by students.

Photos (story "Excuses"): Canvas, royalty-free

Because of different privacy policies at the universities involved in this project, this book only includes stories from the University of Munich (LMU), Germany, and the Universidad Nacional de La Plata (UNLP), Argentina.

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Preface

In the winter semester 2021/22, students based in Argentina (Universidad Nacional de La Plata), Germany (Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität), and the USA (University of Connecticut) collaboratively explored the research question of how trauma and suffering associated with experiences of injustice in higher education become a site of hope with transformative potential.

In this virtual exchange project, students met on Zoom and shared information via WhatsApp and Google Docs. The project started with each student writing a self-reflection of their own injustice experience in school, which was then shared with other classmates, so that students can engage with each other's narratives of injustice to gain a deeper understanding of the concept of injustice and its influence on students. At the research stage, students were divided into small groups to conduct research and discuss the findings to learn more about the topic. Once students had better familiarized themselves with the causes and effects of injustices, they set out to look for solutions. Solutions were later presented as a quilt of hope using various artistic forms (drawing, painting, collage, video, etc.). In the end, students took different actions (social media, presentations for pre-service teachers, website post, etc.) to spread the quilt of hope to a large audience.

The goal of the project was to shed light on the impact of injustices in higher education and taking action to address them. Students' competencies related to cultural diversity, intercultural communication, multimodality, openness and curiosity, human rights, and democratic values were greatly promoted throughout the project.

Your project team



The Daisy That Wilted

During my first year at university, I attended a demanding subject whose topics seemed complex to me as a newly undergraduate and, sometimes, I struggled to understand some theories or even to explain them with my own words.

One day, one of the professors who lectured on that subject asked me some questions about an important author's theory in front of all my classmates. Of course, I did my best to answer, having in mind everything I had learnt so far. However, by the expression on his face, I could see that I was going in the wrong direction, so I tried to clarify myself - but suddenly, he began to laugh. I didn't quite understand why since I hadn't said anything funny. He continued asking me more questions but related to topics that we hadn't worked on yet.

By that moment, even though I was feeling so nervous and anxious, I kept trying hard to respond to everything I could. But the more I tried, the harder he laughed. I felt humiliated and couldn't stop thinking that all the time I spent reading the materials and solving exercises was in vain. Then, disdainfully, he asked me to stop talking, making me feel like a small daisy that wilted. I didn't want anyone to see me cry so I swallowed my tears and not until I arrived home, I let my eyes cry out.

I haven't felt comfortable or confident enough to take part in any class since then. The fear of enduring the same situation in front of my classmates and the teacher again is palpable and making that fear disappear, it's something easier said than done.

Great enough

When I was in primary school I almost effortlessly was one of the best students in my class. This came to nobody's surprise. Everyone seemed to take it for granted, given that my mother was a primary school teacher. Until today I am not entirely sure what to make of this assumption. Clearly, parents do make a big difference when it comes to the academic performance of their children, and without a doubt doing well at school is a lot more difficult for those whose parents never read a book, never explain anything, never seem to care. Still, I feel like directly expecting a child is going to perform brilliantly at school because of their parents' profession may be a bit unfair. It almost makes it seem as if instead of an angel and a devil that child constantly had its parents sitting on its shoulder, whispering the correct answers into its ear. A rather unsettling image if you ask me, but the main problem is that it lays the entire merit at the parents' doorstep. Besides, this viewpoint completely disregards the pressure this kind of ever-present expectation puts upon the child.

Without question I was one of these children who, for one reason or another, have very high academic expectations towards themselves. At the same time I genuinely loved learning new things, which – lucky me – meant I really enjoyed going to school. This included all subjects – okay, maybe except for Physical Education. In PE I always was a bit bullied for being by far the tiniest one, which is hardly astonishing if you consider my dad's Brazilian indigenous genes. But children that age aren't exactly famous for considering questions of political correctness; to them I simply was the midget.

Things changed when I entered Gymnasium [1]. In most subjects I was still doing fine, but not so in mathematics, where in the very first test I got my very first 4 [2]. Even though at the time this was quite a shock for me, this in itself wouldn't have been a disaster. (About a year ago at uni I even found out that this is a far from unusual thing to happen at the beginning of high school; nice to know that now.)

But the real disaster was my teacher's reaction, who called my mother in to tell her that there was no way I was ever going to get my Abitur [3], given my complete lack of understanding of sciences. Mind you, at the time I was only ten years old, and by the time the abitur exams would come up I would have lived almost twice as long. Nevertheless, this teacher was both confident and careless enough to make a shattering prophecy about my academic career, after the very first test I took with him. But although I was outraged, although I knew it was an overhasty judgement to say the least, what he said still got to me. With just a few words he managed to wipe out every bit of motivation I had to try, since the idea he planted in my brain – far from any mathematical understanding – was the conviction that I was simply unable to ever perform well in sciences.

Many years later I changed to another Gymnasium and by chance I was once again one of the best students of my year level. Now it was quite the opposite once again, the way it had been back in primary school. I was the daughter of a teacher, I was interested in learning, I did well in the first few tests and somehow the teachers expected that this was simply who I was, a very good student, always well-performing. Their attitude towards me was encouraging, and I felt like I could prove again that I was smart and able to achieve good results, even in sciences. However, the fact that most of the teachers seemed to expect that I definitely knew the answer to their questions even when nobody else did, together with the expectations I had developed towards myself already at a very young age, meant that I felt an overwhelming amount of pressure weighing on my shoulders. The result was that I focused so much on school that I was barely able to concentrate on anything else at that time, let alone enjoy life. I forgot how much I loved listening to music, I forgot how it felt to be hungry, sometimes it even was as if I had forgotten how to laugh. I remember that after the Abitur exams the biology teacher, who was one of my favourite instructors at the school, walked up to me and asked what had gone wrong during the test.

What had happened was that instead of the usual, that is, the expected 15 points (4) I had reached only 13 [5] in the final exam. By that time I was so exhausted that I was beyond caring, and instead of an answer I merely shrugged. But I remember how disappointed I was that even though my Abitur was the best of the entire year level (together with three of my fellow students), even though I was visibly drained from all the effort I had put into studying in the previous two years, all he, my favourite teacher, had to comment on was a grade slightly below perfection.

The reason I wanted to tell this story here is that I think it shows how much of an effect we as teachers can have on our students. But while by now this may be a well-known fact concerning possible bad outcomes like the complete demotivation caused by my maths teacher, I would like to help us remember that very high expectations can also be harmful. Even though we want to encourage our students to do well, maybe we shouldn't push them too hard to do their very best all the time. Maybe it would be good if we, as teachers, were able to allow our students to make mistakes and still reassure them they're doing a great job. Maybe it would be good if, for however much we may love the subjects we teach, we show our students that there are other things in life far more important than sine and cosine, passé composé and Mendel's beans. Maybe it would be good if we made our students feel that they do not need to be faultless in order to be great. And neither do we.

Notes

1 German academic high school

2 This would be more or less a D in the USA.

3 A levels/high-school diploma

4 Equal to A+

5 A-

A Lesson on Equality and Empathy

Looking back to my high school experience, I realised that the needs of people with minor neurological disabilities weren't addressed as such. As they are not physically visible, neurotypicals (from now on: NT) usually can't tell some people are neurodivergent (from now on: ND) until interacting with them becomes awkward. Still, NTs treat NDs as neurotypical, and excuse the discomfort in the conversations by saying these people are just a little socially awkward.

But that is not the truth. NDs are not socially awkward in nature, nor are they "differently gifted" or "especially abled". They are disabled, and to make their experience better, NTs need to assess themselves on how to treat NDs according to their needs.

As a high school freshman, I came across this girl, Sofía, who reminded me a lot of my sister. They shared autistic traits such as losing focus easily unless they were interested in the topic developed, not being able to catch up with the class, needing extra help to solve basic tasks and activities and finding it hard to make friends. Our teachers blamed it on her laziness, not recognizing that she was biologically unable to be at the level of the rest of the group.

She was once scolded in math class after asking to be explained some exercise for the third time. The teacher was furious at Sofi, not being able to understand how she was so good at understanding theory colour and painting portraits but couldn't solve basic equations. He started grumbling about how she needed to put more effort in paying attention to class instead of doodling on her notebook, giving her a mouthful of reasons why she was a failure and discouraging her artistic talent until her tears couldn't help but stream down her face restlessly.

Birds of Passage

Having heard all those things at home from a mother who desperately tried to be of help to a neurodivergent daughter, I couldn't keep myself from standing up for Sofi. She wasn't really my friend, nevertheless, that didn't mean I could just obviate the injustice she was undergoing, specially because the one responsible for her breakdown was the one who is supposed to understand that everyone learns at their own pace.

That afternoon, we all learnt a lesson: equality is not the same as equity. One can teach everyone the same things at the same time and the same way, but that doesn't mean that everyone can learn the same, at the same time and the same way. Recognizing differences within a group of people and assessing oneself so as to satisfy different needs is a must for everyone to have a non-traumatic experience.

Looking back at my exchange year in Cologne back in 2018, some memory was just lost as time goes by, but I still remembered vividly about this specific afternoon. It was a warm winter afternoon, on a beautiful Friday, the last day of school before the long joyful Christmas break. I was on my way as usual heading towards the central canteen in the university campus where all the German courses take place. Just like always, me and a bunch of exchange students went together happily to the German course. To be honest, we were much more excited and ready that day than before to finish the German classes because of the upcoming Christmas holiday.

That day went smoothly and absolutely normal like before until the teacher told us to practice speaking about what we had learned. I got quite anxious when it comes to speaking German because I did not build a solid base on the grammar system. Therefore every time I need to speak in front of people or just simply talk with someone, I will get so intimidated because I am sure that my broken grammar will definitely make myself a fool in front of everyone. This initial fear kept holding me back and making me feel like I was still an A-2 learner even though I had been taking B-2 level German class for quite a while. Suddenly, when I almost lost myself in thoughts and fear, the teacher called my name and asked me to have a conversation with her in front of all the students. We started by talking about simple things and I began to feel much more comfortable and even trying to be funny and make jokes. However, when I tried to use „heiss“ in a humorous way to describe the warmth the heating system brought to the classroom, the teacher thought I was describing the slightly sunny weather in December in Germany, she burst out laughing and after a while, she stopped and corrected me seriously about the usage of the word „heiss“. I blushed with shame and froze with embarrassment and could not even say anything in German to explain I was using the word in an exaggerated way. I feel like at that moment my German language system stopped functioning in my brain at all because I felt so humiliated.

Since then, for quite a long time, I avoided every possible situations in which I may probably use German to speak, and even when I have to speak or write in German, I never use the word „heiss“.

Until now, for me personally, I would still call it a traumatized experience even though I already found my „closure“ by writing this experience down here at this moment. So a big thank you to Petra for giving us a proper platform to rethink about a lot of things back in our education experience.

When I wrote about this experience, I was on a train alone to another city to visit a friend whom I met in Cologne at that time. The inspiration of the painting that I will show later suddenly occurred to my mind, so I started drawing it on my ipad during the rest of the journey. And here are some of my thoughts during the drawing process.

„Us, exchange students are exactly birds of passage, we come and leave just like migratory birds. We are faced with a lot more challenges than local people would have imagined. The concept that I wanted to convey in this painting is that when we feel misunderstood or even being laughed at, we are like birds trying so hard to fly from the cold dark invincible dusk to the warm bright stunning dawn. We try so hard and keep flying even if we could not even get a glimpse of the first light of the morning. Until one day we finally get so exhausted,frustrated and stop trying anymore. What can make us feel more included or even a little more confident to live and enjoy living in a foreign country is more understanding from people whom we encountered and would encounter in the future. As for me, in this scenario, language is to some extent a powerful tool for people to use and also an important factor which can somehow influence a person's life in a foreign country. In language teaching process, teachers should try to not only focus on teaching itself, they should also keep students in their mind and be aware that psycho-physiological factors can help or hinder students' learning process in a significant way.“



The Odd One Out

The introductory course was, on the whole, a rather odd experience. It was not my first time in college, as I had previously started and then stopped studying Geophysics. I was also a few years older than most of my classmates, though they all assumed I was younger based on my appearance. To top it all off, I often had to out myself as trans while introducing myself, a process I was still very new to. It all added up into a situation where I felt relatively confident, but I could see the awkwardness and tension grow every time someone began to ask questions I was not truly interested in answering.

It would have been ok, though perhaps a bit uncomfortable at the beginning, if gender hadn't also been a central topic for the course. Even when I had first seen the unit in our textbook I'd been aware that, most likely, I'd be the only trans person in the room as many others learned for the first time that people like me existed. When the time came to discuss the topic, I was both thrilled and terrified, absolutely in love with the possibility of my future classmates all learning what words like "genderqueer" and "nonbinary" meant, and frozen in fear at the mere thought of one of them (or worse, one of the teachers) deciding they'd rather deny my own explanation of who I was, and then getting offended when I did not want to talk to them any longer. It was, sadly, an experience I had gone through before.

We started reading, and I felt my hope growing as we got through basic information relatively easily. We watched a video by Amaze.org, a resource I had often recommended in the past, and the people around me seemed happy to learn new things and be able to connect them so directly to someone they were talking to.

But slowly, and then all at once, things turned for the worse. I found mistakes in terminology, and could barely explain myself in English beyond telling the teacher in front of me that the resources they used already had the explanation. The teacher correcting an exercise said "woman isn't an identity, it is biological like female" and maintained the position even after I explained the concept of sex vs. identity, the way human perceptions of gender change across cultures, and even the fact that what she was saying was quite literally the same argument people made to deny the rights of trans people all over the world. I was expected to just keep going after that, letting that teacher grade me while she misgendered me and said in front of the class that I was wrong about who I was, even if she wasn't connecting her statement directly to me.

Later that week, we also had a group exercise designed by cis (not-trans) people and for cis people. We were expected to take pieces of paper, write down our answers to questions they asked, and then use tape to stick the answers to our body and clothing. It did not sound terrible (though a friend commented on the waste of paper), but I quickly started getting upset when the questions started. We were expected to answer things like "what is the most masculine/feminine part of my body?" and stick that on ourselves for the world to see. By the time they were done with the questions, I was shaking with fury and trying to remember everything my therapist and trans friends had ever said about coping with gender dysphoria. How was pointing to all the ways my body was gendered by the world supposed to help me? What insight was I supposed to gain from two strangers asking me to bring binaries and stereotypes back onto my self-perception? I had spent years, since I was thirteen, slowly uprooting these invasive species society had planted within my mind, and here were two people asking me to bring them back so *they* could help me kill them.

I did not pay attention to the course after that. We had to write something for class about our gender, or some similarly vague prompt that at the time only brought forth the pain of that group exercise, and of a teacher misgendering me while being held up by our very relationship as a figure of authority meant to educate me on the subject of gender. I wrote something just long enough for the word limit, completely meaningless and inconsequential. I probably made up the whole thing, and only remembered it for long enough to check my spelling.

It was the last thing we had to do that week, so after handing in I stepped out of the classroom and had my first panic attack in almost a year. I sat on the floor of the restroom across the hall and shook with anxiety until it felt like maybe I could look at someone without breaking down again, and proceeded to wash my hands and face with cold water until they were numb.

We had been on an upper floor, so after I left the restroom I had to face the stairs if I ever wanted to get out of the building. I had been dealing with vertigo my whole life, and syncope since I was fifteen years old, but in that time I had gone on camping trips and hiking through mountains in a deliberate attempt to get over my fears. I could feel all my progress undoing as I stood a few meters away from the stairs, shaking again and waiting desperately for someone, anyone, to walk by so I could please ask them to hold my arm while I walked. I felt like a child, or perhaps a bit like a failure, but the biggest emotion inside me was still anger that I had been put in this position, that all it had taken was a few people with authority over me being unprepared and suddenly I was left incapable of even moving around without fear in my stomach.

A classmate eventually handed in their writing and found me, shaking and not sure how to word my request as to not sound as pathetic as I felt. What I ended up saying must have barely made sense, but she understood what I was asking for and helped me walk down, even staying around until I confirmed that someone was picking me up.

I finished the last week of the course in a bit of a daze, and feeling like the entire thing might have been a mistake, though that classmate helping me and a different one asking for my permission to talk about me in their essay for our evaluation made me reconsider it slightly. I am certain now that talking about gender during the introductory course could have been a great decision, but either no one had thought to consider trans students, or they had not realized how much harm they could cause us.

Excuses

My most memorable undergraduate course was Young Adult Literature for Secondary Educators. The content is fuzzy in my mind, but I vividly remember our instructor, who ran the class as part poet, part-drill sergeant. His aggressive way of disciplining students would have seemed ordinary for a middle school security guard, but less so as a university English professor. His was a roughness born of love for literature and he would publicly chew out anyone who didn't meet his standards. If we want to be teachers, we better act like it. Eventually these outbursts would become less frequent as he kicked more students out for tardiness or missing work; the class became calm.

That is, until one day when he directed his ire at me. It was my mistake. I should have known better. It was presentation day and I, along with some other students, failed to print handouts for the class. It was a simple fix: go upstairs to the copy machine and make copies. I've done it for other classes. But as students slinked out during the minutes before class, I noticed him getting more and more aggravated, so when I sheepishly raised my hand to excuse myself to make copies, it was as if a volcano had blown its top. I don't remember how long he yelled at me, certainly long enough for the other students to make copies and come back. I do remember what he said though: EXCUSES ARE LIKE ASSHOLES. EVERYONE HAS GOT ONE.

He later told me that he needed to "dress me down" in front of the class because I was acting unprofessional. But it didn't feel professional. At that moment, I shrank into a child again, staring at the floor in humiliation. It worked though: I was completely scrupulous with every other assignment, but I didn't do it for the sake of personal achievement. I did it out of fear. Perhaps I learned a lot about writing and literature in that class, but even if I did, the only words of wisdom I can recall are about EXCUSES. I like to think that now as an educator, I hold my students accountable, I give them responsibility. But I also give them a chance to be better without cutting them down for simple mistakes.



My Solution

I learned, as most of us, that violence was not the way of solving things. But I have to admit that I had to resort to that once.

I live in the countryside, so we know each person in the village quite well and it's not usual that new people, especially children, come here to live. That's why I had the same classmates most of my life. And most of them made sure to tease me all my school life.

When I was in kindergarten, in my classroom there were around eighteen children, and I think that only three of them treated me right. At that time, my best friend, JuanMa, and I were fat. Not too much, but we were fatter than our classmates. They used to call us "Mr. and Mss. potato", which hurt us a lot. That lasted around two years until we started elementary school, which was quite good.

But when we started secondary school, the problems came back. I don't know why, but my classmates and guys from other classes started to bully me because I'm blond and also because I used to get the best grades. They used to call me fucking blonde or stupid nerd and things like that.

At first I tried not to pay attention to them. I was the typical girl who did not respond to provocations or pay attention to people who were not from her group of friends. But even in my last year of school, they still called me like that. And not only that, one of my classmates, who I thought was my friend, cut my hair while I was doing homework and the others just laughed at it! So I couldn't take it anymore.

Until I exploded. Again, another of my classmates was bothering me while the others were just talking and looking at us. I couldn't take it anymore and, although I didn't like using violence, I kicked him with all my strength and I slapped him on the face. I could feel everyone's eyes looking at me, without being able to tell what was happening, and they all became silent.

I don't like to accept or say it, but that time violence **was** the solution. Because of that, that was the last time someone said something bad to me. Including the one that cut my hair, who didn't go to school for three or four days in order not to see me.



I chose to use this image showing the moment my friend cut my hair. It was a significant moment for me because not only did he cut my hair but also our relationship. The waves and the dark clouds represent all the feelings that I had at that moment, that came to me as a storm that no one could stop. At that moment we were close friends and he seemed to forget all that we've been through together just to make fun of me. That also made me cut my relationship with some of my other classmates, since they were looking at him but none of them warned me. Also, the sea represents freedom, and that's what I felt when they finally stopped bothering me.



Cowardly Little Lion

In the Wizard of Oz, the Cowardly Lion becomes more and more cowardly, the Tin Man more heartless and the Scarecrow even more brainless. My experience is the same as these characters in many ways, especially the case of the Cowardly Lion. In my middle school, we at last went through the final exams of previous semester, and several of the lessons have infused me with immense motivation. Yet I think one new subject that is quite unfamiliar to me, so I looked through the entire textbooks, attempting to commit all necessary concepts to my memory before the lesson started.

Science

As a matter of fact, this lesson is too tough for me to make it through since it stumped me at the beginning of the semester. In the midst of the course, the teacher brought us some questions to reflect upon, but afterwards I jumped in without any hesitation, spitting an answer out in a way to correspond to her demands. Out of great agitation, I totally ignore holding a humble attitude towards the teacher while answering her. Meanwhile, the teacher caught me off guard, speaking in an outraged tone, "Your answer is right, but you have only a superficial knowledge of this subject." She then resumed to occupy with the textbook and blackboard. What she said made everyone in class blush with embarrassment, especially me. The teacher then went on to add another indignant speech, "This subject is difficult, not all students have the brain to learn it well. "All I become just frozen as a stone and be in awe of the teacher.

I could not understand why the teacher spoke like that because no one had made her annoyed. Indeed, her words really put me down. But I could not figure out why she has set her expectation so high for us before we started to acquire knowledge at the beginning. The more deeply I took her words to heart, the more daunted I felt. From that point on, I feel the



weight of that knowledge in this lesson very much like a huge mountain which was far heavier than I expected. By that time, I buried my poor red nose and crushed emotion in my hands and arms as soon as I think I might desperately catch up with the others.

This incident sums up a few of my initial impressions on this brand new subject. I feel that this new knowledge is as heavy and difficult as a huge mountain. There is little excitement and anticipation left in my mind now, but more fear and dislike in my heart instead. "No more pressure and no more difficulties," I whisper to myself, acting like a coward. As long as I think I might not be in that bunch of advanced students that can acquire the obscure formulas, I lose my confidence in trying my best to grasp the knowledge.

English

However, other lessons have propelled me with a great passion to study. When it comes to my English learning, I obviously knew that my proficiency were not being quite well. Previously, I had little interest or knowledge about this subject. But in our first English lesson with our new English teacher, her stunning English greatly amazed us. During the lesson, whenever we discussed the English knowledge, the teacher was not willing to stop our discussion even though the discussions were pretty shallow. Once in class, one student stood up to answer a question, but she was not quite sure about her own grasp of English. Our English teacher commented, "Really not bad." What does that mean? Does it mean not good at all? "It just means good," she explained it with a smile. Although we realised that she had fairly high standards for us, she still taught us patiently, with much encouragement when we had the feelings of inferiority or inadequacy on English language. After gaining such praise from the teacher we were so hyped up that joyful smiles shone on our faces. Assuming that we were pumped and conceited, she added, "However, your English is just as good as the English students at primary school." Really? That was an interesting saying we had never thought about before, but an amiable joke made by teacher help us know our deficiency in English without hurting our feelings.

After that, under her patient instruction, we became even more fond of learning English language and in the meantime, we still know there is a huge gap need to be filled. Our English proficiency has gradually levelled up. Once we think back, we can remember and understand the good intentions made by our teachers.

Ghosts from the Past

Have you ever imagined being mistreated for who you are? Me neither. Looking back at my high school days, I have the impression that they would have been completely different if I had known what I know now.

As a fourteen-year-old girl, I used to spend my nights dreaming impossible things, creating new worlds inside my head and writing about being a pirate. These fantasies faded away every morning at school.

There was a time in which I was excited to learn and make new friends. Nevertheless, all that was replaced by fear. A fear that showed up without an invitation, and every time it was getting bigger and bigger.

I found myself every day praying that the boys in my classroom didn't mock me. They used to call me "stupid", "ugly", "fat" together with other things I wouldn't like to repeat. My appearance nor my behaviour wasn't a problem for me, so, why it has to be for the rest? All the inresults started to haunt my mind. Little by little, I believed them. I believed I was worthless, that there wasn't a good thing inside me. I didn't dare to speak about my problem with my parents and the teachers were always pretending that everything was alright. Therefore, I felt alone.

All crumble one winter morning. I was wearing a wool hat and gloves. I was chuffed because my mother said I look pretty with them. Once I put my feet inside the classroom, I was surrounded by three of my classmates. The teacher wasn't there and the rest were minding their business.

One of the boys took my hat and gloves off, using them like a ball. I tried to catch my thing but it was useless. They throw them inside the bin. Weeping, I took my dirty accessories and ran away to the bathroom, wishing to disappear.

I would love to tell you that from that moment on things changed, that I face my bullies and became a stronger girl. But it didn't happen. Everything was the same as it ever was.

Now that I'm older I see things from a different light. Although my ghost from the past didn't vanish completely, I'm still fighting. I hope this makes you feel strong, that your chains made up of fear and insecurities break you free. You are not what people say about you, you are not the insults from the classroom, neither a number nor a size. You are more than that. The books that you loved, your favourite colour or your favourite movie scene are just details of who you are. So don't hide it from the world. Just because some voices sounded louder than yours doesn't mean that you don't have choices. You'll realised how infinitive are the possibilities when we believe in ourselves and change our perspectives.

The Gray Sheep

You know how people like to talk about black sheep, the ones that don't belong to the crowd of the white sheep? Well, here's the thing: At least the black sheep form their own group. As for me, I feel more like a gray sheep.

Ever since I can remember, my friends, my schoolmates, my neighbors, my teachers – they all had one thing in common: Their names as well as their upbringings were German. I always thought that I was just like them, since I was socialized in a predominantly German environment. If anyone were to ask me, I'd tell them I'm German, of course I am. Optically, I don't really stand out either.

However, the way people perceive me changes the moment I have to introduce myself.

The thing is, both my parents came from foreign countries. Frankly, I'm quite proud of that. It even fills me with joy because from an early age I got to experience not just one different culture but two. Both sides of this cultural heritage are reflected in my name. As the years went by, though, my own perception of that name became more and more complex.

I couldn't possibly count all the times that teachers or lecturers mispronounced my surname. It's not even difficult to say it correctly. Still, the hundreds of times I had to hear ridiculous (and even hurtful) versions of it made me believe it's neither a pleasant name nor one that people could pronounce anyway. What is almost worse, though, is the collective snickering. Ha ha, what a stupid name, am I right? Yeah, better laugh with them. Don't be the butt of the joke.

Why is it that even after correcting them multiple times they can't say it right? Why is it that they don't even bother asking me for the right pronunciation? Why is it that all my friends and schoolmates never faced that issue?

What is more, why is it that I was always a straight-A student – but only once I had the chance to prove myself?

Every year, the first grades I received were rather average. I mean, what would you expect from someone with my first name anyway? My mum used to tell me that where she's from, that name is for decent and nice girls. Here in Germany, it has quite a low social prestige.

I still vividly remember my math teacher handing back our corrected exams back in tenth grade. As it turned out, I was top of the class, so he came to talk to me. He told me how surprised he was, that he hadn't expected that from me. I was so happy that he had finally recognized my potential. Only years later, however, I noticed that pattern: I was never given the benefit of the doubt. I had to work for my reputation whereas my friends didn't.

I do believe that all these moments have somehow shaped my self-image because I never seem to fully fit in – with neither the black nor the white sheep. I don't face the same injustices as the black sheep. At the same time, I'm also not a white sheep because my experience is different from theirs.

I often wonder whether I'm just too sensitive. After all, these aren't "real issues". Still, I can't help but feel that no one should have it easier or harder based on their origin and, as a matter of fact, it is a form of basic respect to at least try to pronounce someone's name correctly.

Sometimes injustice is not as blatant as one might think. It might as well just be that one teacher who negligently mispronounces your name or that one snickering schoolmate.

Sometimes injustice is not black and white, but rather gray and subtle.

Young Betrayal

Have you ever been silenced because of being young? In my second year at school, my best friend betrayed me and as a consequence, I got suspended for two days.

It all started on one of those days that my classmates and I used to complain about our teachers. We were discussing the new programme of sports which would be helpful for those people who wanted to get a college scholarship. There were different teams: you could choose volley, soccer, basket, swimming and more. To our surprise, the demanded requirements consisted of several conditions that don't allow everyone to be part of the project. The most problematic, that caught all our attention, was that you must be over slightly taller at 5 feet 7 inches. It was an issue not only for me, but it was also for all my friends who weren't tall enough.

However, an idea came to my mind: I realised that if we insisted to the authorities we would have an answer or at least they'd noticed they were wrong to add a terrible requirement. Everyone agreed so, we went to the principal officer, trying to find the words to asked him whether be possible to go to that important event. He shook his head as a response and told us It wouldn't be possible because It was out of his control. I could feel like a fire going through my stomach, my hands started to sweat. I was furious, feeling the anger penetrating my bones. It felt so frustrating, being excluded because of being 'short'. Next, I left the room and told my best friend Julia that the principal was an idiot and unfair, she laughed and hugged me. I thought for a moment that she was being kind but the only thing she was doing was planning her betrayal.

To my surprise, when I came back to the classroom, something unexpected happened. I felt a hand rudely touching my shoulder and then, I turn my head around and my eyes made contact with my teacher's eyes. She seemed angry, her eyebrows were upside down, her clenched jaw and baring teeth made me think that something wrong was happening. 'I called your parents, you're suspended', she articulated.

I was shocked and my soul left my body for a few seconds. Also, I noticed that the girl who was supposed to be my friend left me a draw of me and other boys pointing at me while I was crying. That image lived rent-free in my mind for a long time. After that, I ripped the paper and promised myself not to let anyone else made fun of me in that way.

No matter how many times I tried to explain that she was making a big mistake, blaming someone innocent, that it was me. Someone told her that I said bad things about the principal.

Neither my parents and my teachers wanted to hear my point of view, my own version. Only my friends trusted in my words and defended me. Sadly, I couldn't attend the sporting event and Julia confessed to me that she was the person who betrayed me. Her vagueness excuse was that she was actually jealous of me for 'being good at sports. Then, she started to sob so hard and that made me think she was sorry.

Years later, I know my best friend's reaction wasn't appropriate for a friend. Now, I understand we were too young. But, as an adult, we know It was immature for both parts: Me for being scandalous and my friend for being dishonest.

The only thing that hurts me the most is that Julia's betrayal let me think that when you are young, old people assume you know nothing, they didn't let me speak any word. Also, they made me believe that all youngs are irresponsible that we just need to be told, talked at and directed. What I dream about is wanting society not to assume a whole generation behaves the same way. The youth is the future and our next generation. I remember a quote about a woman called Mara, who is the Director of Digital Communications for global youth charity, 'One Young World' that said: 'We need to truly see the value in young people [...] we have to dismantle the idea that only older generations are worth of a voice because that's simply not true.'

A Teacher's 'Pet'? A Narrative of Injustice

Some context first

Having been raised in the Siberian city of Krasnoyarsk during the wild 1990s, I didn't have the ghost of a chance to study at a school that would provide consistent curriculum, let alone cutting-edge technologies and facilities. The worst consequence was that due to the lack of teaching staff English as a subject was simply not taught at my state school until I passed to class 6, while normally it should start at class 1 or 2 at the latest. Having considered all of this, my mother astutely decided to arrange some extra curriculum activity for me – at the age of 9 I started studying the language of Shakespeare in a private language school, thinking the world of my first English teacher and keeping my nose to grindstone in order to be top of the class. No boasting, just for the record: by class 6 I had already achieved early intermediate level.

The evolution of the conflict

In the 2000s the unemployment issue was wreaking less havoc than shortly after the dissolution of the USSR, and my school finally managed to hire a recent graduate to fill the position of an English and Geography teacher. I immediately realized that she, although giving her best shot, was no equal to my English teacher at the private school. Since it was necessary to start from scratch as most of my classmates were a tabula rasa in English, I could not help feeling rather disinterested in our school lessons. Naturally, the needs of the majority were taken into account, so I hadn't been complaining much up until the point when I began to realize that the school teacher was making more and more blatant mistakes obvious even to me, a middle school child. As I grew up into a quick-tempered teenager who would rarely feel too humble to voice an opinion, I found it particularly amusing and entertaining to point out my teacher's faults out loud in the class, which I now recollect with shame and remorse.

Hers was such an infuriation that she would regularly tell me off during the lesson, but always gave me best marks as I was way ahead of the school curriculum. In my final year at school, our conflict reached its logical peak.

It happened in April, which meant only two months before the final state exams. During a usual 'read-and-translate-this' lesson I got pretty annoyed with yet another pronunciation mistake made by the school teacher and wasn't too shy to correct her, which certainly made her hit the roof too. She had me look up that word in the dictionary only to prove herself being wrong and me being correct, which was not a fatal mistake in itself. An outburst of anger, however, was. She had had enough of it with me. She had been going on scolding me for good fifteen minutes – a jaw-dropping occurrence for the classmates! – before finally sending me out of the class. For good, as it turned out – I never returned to the lessons of English with her until the end of school. I felt reluctant to mend fences with her, so did my mother. My class teacher was busting her gut to make me apologize for my behaviour or have a serious talk with my mother, but that didn't bear any fruit. At the end of the day, however, this whole situation didn't affect my exam results or the final mark in my school certificate.

Reflection

Was it justified to send me out of the class for being a misbehaved teenager? Perhaps. Perhaps not. At that moment, 13 years ago, I felt indignant and not at all apologetic. Ironically, I myself ended up working as a teacher of English. Having had 11 years of experience in teaching I can suggest that my teacher's behaviour was simply not professional. She should have known better than just yelling at me. Then again, I could have known better than just constantly picking at my school teacher, showing off my knowledge and boasting about it. Gladly, I have changed much since then. If I met her now, I would probably say sorry after all.

A Narrative of Injustice in Osler's Terms

"What is the value in expressing concern for strangers in distant places if an individual is blind to others' experiences of injustice and their lack of rights within the same neighborhood, community, or nation?" (Osler, 2015)

The author claims that what a person's major concern should be other's experiences of injustice and their lack of rights within the same community. As students of English Language 2, we have acknowledged and been educated on Universal Human Rights belonging to everyone regardless of their gender, nationality and beliefs. I think each person, as a citizen of the world, should be aware whilst raising awareness about those individuals and communities whose rights are being taken away or limited.

Although it may go against Osler's idea of focusing our concerns on those who we share with a community or nation, I have found myself reflecting on occurrences of inequality and injustice in universities around the world from how discriminatory dress codes are for women to women's impossibility of being university students at all. Tracing back Osler's train of thought, I have identified a particular instance of inequality and injustice I witnessed in my college life that could be categorized as a narrative of injustice in Osler's terms.

University of Humanities and Education Sciences stands out among others because of how inclusive it is towards its diversity of students. Everyone has noticed that it counts with an elevator in every building and special needs friendly bathrooms on every floor to provide accessibility to anyone with a disability. However, I have witnessed how much more we could be doing to improve their place in a university that belongs to all of us.

In 2019, I met a history student called Jonathan, who had lost his vision and was now a blind person. Luckily, he could remember his way to any bathroom in any building because they had always been there, but

problems began to arise when it came to finding the classes he had to attend to. Unfortunately, there isn't any classroom with its name written on it in Braille for students like him who struggle to arrive at their lectures on time every single day. It wasn't an unusual thing to find a recently printed sign attached on a classroom door letting students know the lecture had been suspended or that it would be taking place in another classroom. Unless he received an email on his phone and listened to it, he wouldn't be able to get the same information other's had because of that note left for everyone to read. However, the problem that troubled him the most was the impossibility for him to hear the majority of texts that weren't in a Word document format that he could easily hear or print in Braille.

Anyone who is blind or near-sighted can't use their hearing devices on texts that were poorly scanned from an original copy. Jonathan had to go to the public library in the city where daily volunteers would read him out loud anything that he couldn't work on and listen on his own. From the beginning of the course until its end, I looked for him and walked him to our classroom twice a week. During class, we were reminded to read a few chapters from a novel that he couldn't listen to online because his hearing device didn't support it. It was right after that I offered to record every single chapter for him to listen whenever he wanted to. Later on, I privately asked my teacher at the time to include me in his work group so I could do as much as I could to make the course easier for him. In the end, we did an amazing job on making a magazine for our final project, which we handed both printed in regular writing and in Braille. After our course ended, I didn't see Jonathan for about two months until I came across him walking to one of his classes, being guided by another student.

"Teachers and learners can consider individual and community complicity in inequities and injustice, so permitting action for change." (Osler, 2015)

In conclusion, I was pleased to find other students out there who are willing to help those whose path in university may be much more challenging.

I believe there is still a lot of space for improvement until we can be truthfully called an inclusive university for one and all, and it starts with ourselves recognizing these instances of inequity and injustice to make a change and change the narrative, into one of hope and progress.

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Cultural Insensitivity

In 2014, I participated in a summer language exchange program in Rochester, NY, to improve my English. I was living in a house with six other students from Thailand, France, Romania and Serbia. After the initial cultural shock and a brief moment of homesickness, I was ready to enjoy the experience. However, the house seemed to be divided, there was not much interaction between Asian roommates and European roommates. This may be due to some cultural differences. One day I was reheating a leftover meal from the night before for lunch when one roommate walked in. He quickly exited and I heard him complaining to the other roommate that the food smelt so bad. I was very upset about the comment but chose to let it slide thinking that the Chinese seafood may not smell so good after being in the fridge for a night.

Later all of us went on a trip to explore the city together. We got to know more about the city and were having a good time. At the end of the trip, we took a selfie together. We took several of them, the first ones looked good, then the guys made some funny faces. In one of the pictures, one guy was pulling his eyes back to make the slant-eyes. He laughed at the picture and commented "that's what Asians look like right?". I think the behavior was very rude, but no one seemed to mind it except me. I had a sense that he was making fun of some Asian people but did not know how to call him out. I felt very bewildered and ended up doing nothing to confront him. In retrospect, I wish I had done something to make him realize how insensitive his behavior was. At that time, I had a strong feeling that he had no interest in learning about a totally different culture, which was not 'cool' for him because he only had a narrow idea of what it is. His behavior was off-putting, and I reduced my contact with him for the remaining time.

Be Sure To Taste Your Words Before You Spit Them Out

Many say **words** are gone with the wind, but I believe some words are stones in our hearts that turn into ghosts which appear sometimes in our memory.

During my years in high school, I can remember perfectly well that two of my partners dared to give their opinion about my body. The first bitter comment I received took place when I was twelve and one of those boys ruined my morning telling me "your legs look like **ham**."

At that moment, I felt so ashamed that I couldn't utter a word.

Some years later, we were in class and I could overhear the whole conversation which one of my classmates was discussing with his friends. Dante said that it would be fantastic if the **lower part of my body** and the **upper part of another classmate's body** come together to create a

FLAWLESS WOMAN

He talked as if we were not human beings, just bodies without feelings, thinking or identity, nothing but **objects**. After hearing such an atrocity, I took a deep breath and blew it furiously in such a way that I could blow away all the autumn leaves in a forest.

I turned around and I **STARED AT HIM WITH MY EYES ON FIRE** so that the flame could consume his soul. He had no choice but to look down.



To be honest, I was waiting for an apology but that expected remorse never came back to me. Fortunately, at that moment, I had supportive friends who listened to me when I needed to release and vent my profound feeling of **injustice**

I hope one day people, and particularly men, stop talking about **women's bodies**. Our existence on this earth has nothing to do with how attractive they find us.

I won't stay silent anymore, so Dante or many others can stay comfortable. Nobody deserves other people's nonsense. Words leave permanent *traces*

For that reason, we must be thoughtful and careful when we speak.

We should never forget that how we make people feel about themselves tells a lot about who we are. Sometimes it is better to shut our mouth and avoid making a comment which is neither constructive nor appropriate.



The Cancelled School Ball

In my hometown, every year there is a nice tradition: when the winter is over, an exciting time of the year arrives, the ball season begins. Most of the high schools organise a school ball in which all high school students are welcome from the town. There are two main performances on these evenings, the first is the opening dance of the ball which is normally a waltz or something old fashioned, then at 10 pm the same group dances something modern or fun.

The whole evening has a very nice atmosphere, there is always a live band playing, teenage boys and girls are dancing, having fun so everybody is looking forward to it the whole year.

Most high schools in Hungary take students from 9th to 12th grade and the students, that are allowed to dance in these performances, are usually from the 12th grade (age 18) because they leave school the following year. These 8 boys and 8 girls are carefully selected, and they meet every single week from September to February to practice these two dances. In year 1996 (gosh it was in the previous century!) I was lucky to be selected, I felt truly privilege to be a member of this dancing group that year. We practiced extremely hard every week and looked very much forward to the beginning of March.

From one day to another something changed. An old teacher, who used to teach in our school but had been retired for a long time, died. Therefore, the school ball had to be cancelled. Not postponed, cancelled. There was nothing to look forward anymore, there was no reward of our hard work, suddenly the whole preparation, the whole work was in vain. I had never felt such injustice before. I remember talking to the schoolmaster, trying to convince him with an argument such as "I am sure she would not like us to cancel a ball because of her. It is surely not what she would want."

But of course, he did not change his mind. I was so disappointed that I even wanted to change my school. I talked to a schoolmaster of another high school and asked his permission to continue the year in his school, but luckily, he did not allow me to do it. He said it would not have been a good decision to change school a few months before the final exams. And of course, he was right. There could have been no point leaving my classmates, my friends behind with whom I had spent so much wonderful moments together.

As I am looking back to this situation now with my adult head and way of thinking, I see it in a slightly different way. I can no longer blame my schoolmaster, maybe he also did not agree with his own decision, but he had his hands tied. Perhaps it is the right way to show respect for people who can no longer be with us. Who knows.

The Mystical Forest

Have you ever wonder to be in the deepest of a forest or a complex labyrinth? It is you alone with your brain in a cramped room trying to understand and solve the situation. It would be better to feel well accompanied. If not, it would be easy for a piece of outsider information from the ambience to fall you into crisis, wrath or shame. I'll never forget since we were little, my sister Mary and I have been brought up together in the same way, going to the same schools, interested in the same issues about life. Imagining having a house with a big rose or tulip garden in the hills with stunning views, and sometimes having the same likes and dislikes in multiple issues and even having the same viewpoints about ideological or philosophical values. My sister was everything to me. I've always wanted to be like her. I was fascinated by her reading new books, learning to play the flute, and so on. We looked very similar. Although, Mary was two years older. I had always followed her example, manners and attitude. But I never imagined how it would be to start a new stage in my life separated from her.

After finishing secondary school, we made an abrupt change in our lives, deciding on different careers and new targets. I am still not sure why we made such a step. I felt I needed a transformation in my life, as well as new opportunities started to appear. I moved to a new city, then a new flat, new friends, basically a new life. All seemed going in the right direction in the beginning. Until I started attending classes at university, and a new world full of distinct harsh experiences, emotions, feelings and thoughts opened. I felt insecure about myself. I failed all the subjects in the first semester. I was unable to concentrate at all. I was draining my energies, not making something productive. I felt that all the new things happening around me weren't me at all. Because all this time I had been pretending to be like my sister. On the other hand, Mary seemed to be doing exceptional in her life career, and she was also achieving new fascinating skills. Every time I called with her, I felt down because I had not accomplished anything yet.

In the following time, things got worse since I was unmotivated and even thinking to drop off my career and all my resolutions. I remember I was in a philosophy lecture when the teacher explained something about a cave and a fire allegory, and suddenly I started to cry. I rapidly left the classroom and went out to walk for a while, trying to breathe some fresh air out of town and think clearer. I reached and got deep inside an enormous park called the forest. Walking through the trees and singing birds. I just wanted to feel comfortable and safe, then to learn how to create my ideas, which seemed impossible to imagine at that time.

All seemed so wasted to me. I thought I would never shine on my own again. Then while I was sitting on a bench looking up at the sky. It appeared that the whole environment changed in a moment. The air was moving faster, the birds stopped singing, and the sky turning blurrier and opaque. Thus the air was moving a shrivelled paper towards me. And frankly, I couldn't stand my curiosity to open it. Surprisingly, it said, "don't be afraid to be yourself". Strangely, after that moment, my thoughts truly transformed my world viewpoints. I realised that nobody ever teaches you or talk to you about being you. Instead, it deepens on how to do, make, solve or have but not how to be, and that could have helped me a lot by not letting me breaking down with outsider circumstances. Since that occurred, I learned to feel comfortable with myself. I discovered my perfect unique nature being me, not trying to be whoever else.

The 'Unsuccessful' Completion

Looking back at 2019, the year when I so to speak received everything and lost everything simultaneously gives me an unpleasant shiver through my body. So far. That was such a tough time when I was working my ass off trying so hard to receive an honours degree at my previous university, which I actually have but the 'neatest' stuff happened later.

After having received my bachelor's degree I gave it a thought and decided to apply for a master's at the very same educational institution. How naïve I was. Three programs caught my attention and I just said to myself: "Let's play in high stakes and try them all". Two of the programs chosen were in the German department, the third – in the English one.

To be honest, I totally realized that the chances of seeing my name on the lucky list of the first two options were negligible because German was my second foreign language, but my strong desire overcame my insecurities and fears to a certain extent and in some ways overcame common sense as well. Big chances are never small stakes. In one case, the game was almost worth playing: the gap between me and those who managed to reach the desired goal was not comparable to the size of The Grand Canyon (as in the case of the other list) on the contrary, just a few points short of the coveted limit.

"Well, there is something else to fight for. It isn't a bad idea to continue studying within the home department," – I heard the voice in my head. So, although I had every reason to be fearful of what was ahead and had no clue quite what was going to happen. From this point on, the brain simply refuses to reproduce a clear picture of events.

I apologize to those who are reading this narrative that it is only now that I am moving towards injustice itself. My attempt to enter the Master program was unsuccessful, not because I lacked the academic knowledge and consequently the points to join the ranks of those who were fortunate but the very fact that I “wasn’t actively involved in student life at the university” and “we decided not to call you to let you know that several necessary documents needed to be provided, taking into account your attitude to university life and realizing that you may not need to receive the letter of application”. I found out about this only after the ‘unsuccessful’ completion of a selection procedure. But now I know for sure that I am where I am supposed to be.

School Uniforms: Another Expression of Sexism

When I was at secondary school, every year we used to go to the “seminario”, a peaceful institution which was placed in a kind of farm, where priests studied to be so. Me and my classmates used to have a lot of fun, until our last visit changed everything...

I was 18 and that was my last year of secondary school, fortunately. I remember that it was a hot, sunny day. One of those days that you want to keep with you forever, because you know that an ending is coming. We were all wearing our school uniform, the one we used to wear in summer, which consisted of a white polo shirt and blue shorts. The day was running smoothly: we had had a cycling tour of the complete farm and then we decided to play football. Some teachers decided to join us and then we saw some priests had arrived. They were looking at us, but in fact then I realised that they were not looking at all of us, but at women. Although the boys decided to remove their t-shirts because it was too hot, and that was really noticeable, they looked only at us.

Zoe, a classmate, and I decided that it was time for a break and we stopped playing. Here is when things began to twist... a priest came closer and asked what we were doing. I, without expecting a hidden message in his question, answered that we were having a break because we were a bit tired, when he interrupts me and adds “no, no, what do you think you are doing dressed like that?”

My eyes opened as if they were plates. I really did not expect that and I have no answer, because I did not even understand what he was asking me. I looked at Zoe and I guess that my face must have reflected fear or confusion, because the secretary of the school, who was there and was watching us by chance, suddenly came.

“What’s going on?” she asked, confused. “what is happening - the priest started saying - is that the girls are trying to excite us”... Yes, the priest said that we wanted him to feel sexual excitement just because of the way in which we were dressed.

From the deepest of my soul, I had no words. I remember that I wanted to say an uncountable number of atrocities but I said nothing. I just couldn't. Zoe and the secretary looked at each other, waiting for an answer. None of us said anything for about one minute, we were shocked. I started trembling. I was sure about my own intentions: I just wanted to have fun on my last day of secondary school. What terrified me was his intentions: what a 40-year-old priest would like to do with an 18-year-old student? I still can feel my heart beating strongly against my chest when I think about it. I also remember Zoe's eyes, full of tears; I was sure she wanted to punch him (well, who didn't?).

And saying nothing, untouchable, the priest went inside the Seminario.

Sometimes you think you are prepared enough, trained enough, skilled enough to face certain situations and then you realise that there exists the possibility for you not to apply any of all those concepts that you have learned. No matter how much have I read about feminism or all the powerful speeches that I prepared once, that situation surprised me and I just obtained an enormous knot in my throat.

But the story does not end here. When the priest left, we looked at each other and the secretary said: "You know what, girls? Nobody can tell you what to wear or how to wear it. And nobody has the right to own your bodies. It's not about the clothes. Feel protected, we are in this together." Zoe and I shared a rapid look and we decided to remove our t-shirts too, as boys have done previously. And that is how we ended up playing football in a sports bra.

Then I knew that it is not about how you react to some sort of situation, emotions can exceed us sometimes. What matters is what you learn from those events. I am the owner of my own body. I wear what I want to and what you feel about that it is not my problem, it's yours.

Tony Morrison said once: "Nobody tells me what to do. I am in control. It's my world. I am free."

Wasted Hours

When I was in school, writing my own scientific papers was always one of the things I was looking forward to the most about going to university. When I got the opportunity to write my very first seminar paper in 12th grade, I swore to myself that I would try and write one of the best papers my teacher had ever read. The topic I decided to write about was the portrayal of North Korea in contemporary literature. I have always loved reading books and analysing literature, and over the past few months, I had learned a lot about the country, its history and its problems and had become fascinated by it. Needless to say, I put my heart into this paper. I worked on it for over two months, and when it was finally finished, I spent ages reading it over and over to find every single mistake, every little blemish that was left to be polished. When I finally handed it in, I was confident that it would be worth at least 13 points out of the possible 15. A few weeks later however, I was shocked to find that my teacher had marked it at only 9 points. When I had collected myself enough to ask him what exactly he did not like about my paper, he told me that he had found "a large number of grammatical and spelling mistakes". I took another look at it and found that he had marked three minor spelling mistakes as well as a single expression which he felt "did not suit the paper". He did not comment on its content, which I was so incredibly proud of, at all.

I was heartbroken. All the hard work that I had done, all those hours of research and sleepless nights I had wasted on a paper that was deemed "average". It was not my subpar grade that I was mad about, it was how blatantly my teacher showed that he did not care about grading fairly, or his students' feelings at all.

This all happened almost four years ago, and I had almost completely forgotten about it until my sister came home from school a few weeks ago. She told me that the same teacher who had graded my seminar paper would also be grading hers. Right in that moment I could feel my heart sink, and all the disappointment and anger that I had felt that day started to creep up again. What followed, however, crushed me. Her teacher had asked my sister to bring my seminar paper to class to serve as an example, since he remembers it being "written fabulously".

Additional Stories (injustices in non-educational contexts)

Ipanema dress code

„You *do* realize you are the only girl wearing something like that, don't you?“

I can feel my heart sink. Not this issue, not again. The two of us are here to spend one weekend in Rio de Janeiro to free ourselves from a bit of the stress the dusty city atmosphere of São Paulo has covered us with for the past few months. Rio, a cidade maravilhosa, the wonderful city, the sea breeze, the green hills in the background and the statue of Christ the Redeemer overlooking the entire scenery... and still all he seems to see are my goddamn shorts. With a feeling of nausea mixed with sadness I respond that there are several girls, kids, even older women wearing the exact same type of shorts. I even start pointing, but it's pointless, he doesn't see them, can't see them, won't see them. And there we are, in the middle of the same old discussion about the appropriate clothes – that is, the type of clothes appropriate for me – only that this time he makes it clear that in his head there is a chaste girlfriend dress code even for a stroll around Ipanema.

I ask him why he hadn't said anything before we left the hostel a couple of minutes ago. Yes, I've made progress, I've started anticipating possible fights and trying to avoid them by making sure he is okay with what I wear. I have made progress, in his direction. His reply to my question is simple: He didn't say anything because the fact that shorts like these are not to be worn is common sense. It is the usual answer, and it is quite handy. Just declare your opinion about what people should do as common sense, and voilà, your opinion just turned into undebatable norm. It is the typical end-of-discussion argument which is so convenient for him, while it leaves me behind in a state I can literally feel my blood boiling. It doesn't help matters that in Portuguese, worse than 'common sense', the expression actually is 'bom senso', meaning 'good sense'. So, if you dare to deviate from this opinion, it practically means you must be an idiot.

So there we are, the macho and the idiot, finding ourselves stuck in the same old dead end. He falls silent and I fall silent, and the heat of my anger is replaced by the stale taste of self-denial when I notice I actually would have changed the outfit I like so much to spare myself this discussion. Suddenly the sea, the hills, even the sun itself seem to have turned grey.

I know I should have seen it coming. It was the same with my v-neck shirt in the shopping centre, the same on the bus with the knee-length skirt he had even claimed to like on an earlier occasion - which, now that I come to think of it, was before we got together. When I remember how he almost went berserk because apparently that one guy on the bus had been looking at my legs, I start feeling positively sick. I should have seen it coming since it is far from the first time he has some problem with my clothes, but sadly that obsession with what I wear is not even the worst bit of it. The worst bit is the fact that he just won't listen to me. He won't listen when I say that I don't care if other people look or don't look at the way I dress. He won't listen when I say I do not dress to attract any kind of attention. He doesn't listen when I say I simply wear what I wear because I myself feel good in these clothes - or at least I used to, until I got together with him. His answer always is some kind of judgement, he judges me, my insistence on personal choice, my apparently uncommon sense. Even though he should be who knows me best he indirectly accuses me of things I don't have the slightest intention of doing. At the same time he judges a whole bunch of random other people he does not know at all but who might dare to look at me. Of course here as well it's the same old argument, that the reason for hypothetical molesting male behaviour is to be found in what the girl wears. So what needs to change is my outfit, and while I'm at it, it seems to be a good idea to change my head, too, since it doesn't seem to contain any 'born senso' anyways.

And I have changed, little by little, since I am with him. It's strange, almost a bit scary, that it takes a visit to my aunt to make me see that. When she asks me if I am okay, first I don't even understand what she is talking about.

Only after a while I notice I don't even recognize myself anymore, and I feel so hollow inside when I realize this. It is nothing like in those romantic stories, where the world turns grey because the guy is not there anymore and the poor infatuated female protagonist is left alone.

Those stories have got it all wrong. In a relationship like this, in real life the world turns grey not because the guy is gone, but because he is right there. He is right there, in an overbearing manner that wipes out everything else, while he just won't accept her the way she is.

In the end we fell apart. We fell apart because I changed in some ways, but not enough. I did things I had never done before, like meeting friends without telling him because I just couldn't face the fight I knew this would entail. We fell apart because I still was too much of myself, even though it didn't feel like that anymore. I was devastated when it ended, thinking that because of my own stubborn head I had lost the most valuable thing in my life. But today I've come to realize it was quite the opposite, it was only my stubborn head that remained true to myself and ultimately saved me.

When I visit Rio today, the sun and the hills and the sea are bright and colourful again, as bright and colourful as the shorts taking a stroll around Ipanema

Bartender Action

Some time before the pandemic started, I worked as a bartender in a Bavarian bar. I was pretty new to this job and was not that experienced on making drinks and serving people. Around the third time working it happened. It all started as usual by filling up the remaining bottles and shoveling some ice cubes into a box and making some drinks before the crowd was allowed to enter. At 10 p.m. the DJ started playing his music. The vibe was alright and I was feeling pretty confident.

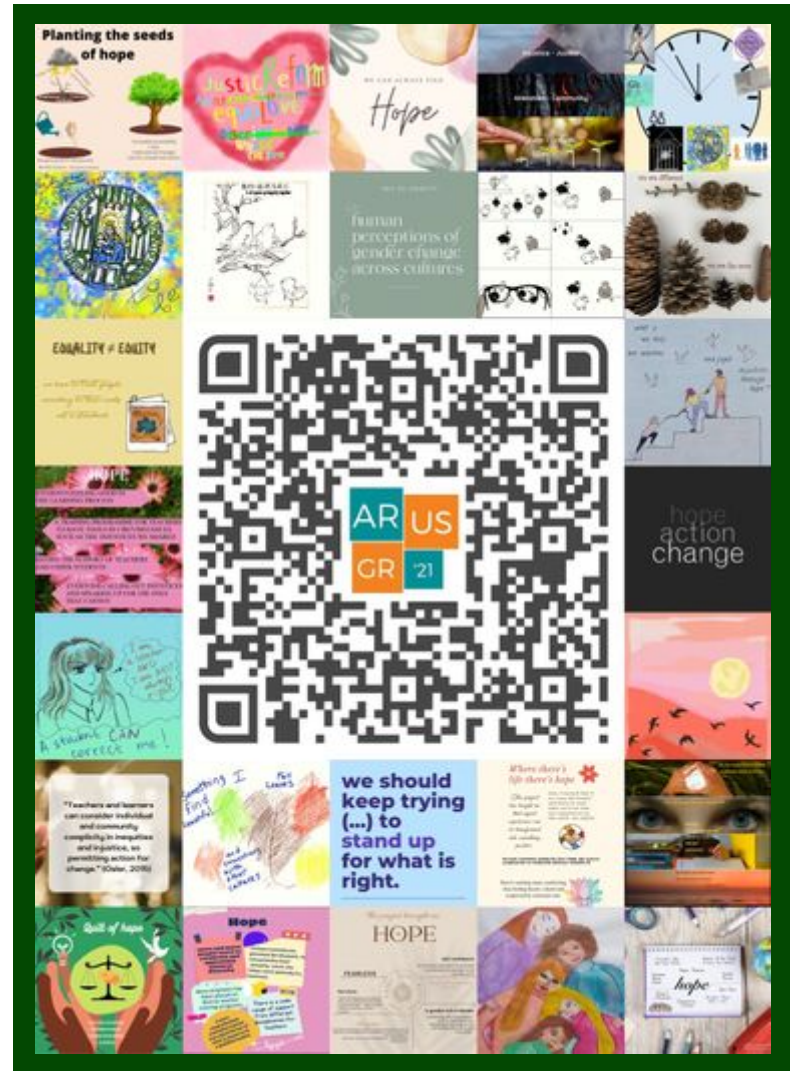
One hour later a group of 50-year-old men entered the bar. I was kinda shocked to see such old men in this bar but then they came straight at me and asked me with a Bavarian accent where my boss was. I told them that he was coming in about half an hour and asked why they wanted to speak with him. He then replied a bit angry that they were close friends and are kind of regular guests here. I never saw them before but I was alright with them staying on their regular place. After that they ordered some drinks and said that they don't have to pay for it. I was shocked again and said that without my boss' confirmation I can't let them have drinks for free. One guy started shouting at me and I struggled to understand it as my Bavarian was quite bad. He started to curse in Bavarian and the only thing I understood was that he said that I should move back to where I was born and that I'm a dumb immigrant. I felt anger and disappointment but I tried to stay calm.

One moment later my boss came in and saw the interaction. He went to his „friend“ first and told him to calm down. After they settled down, he came to me and told me that they were already drunk and that I shouldn't feel bad. I still kind of felt uncomfortable. The next working day I kind of had an overall bad feeling while working, it couldn't get off of me.

Quilt of Hope

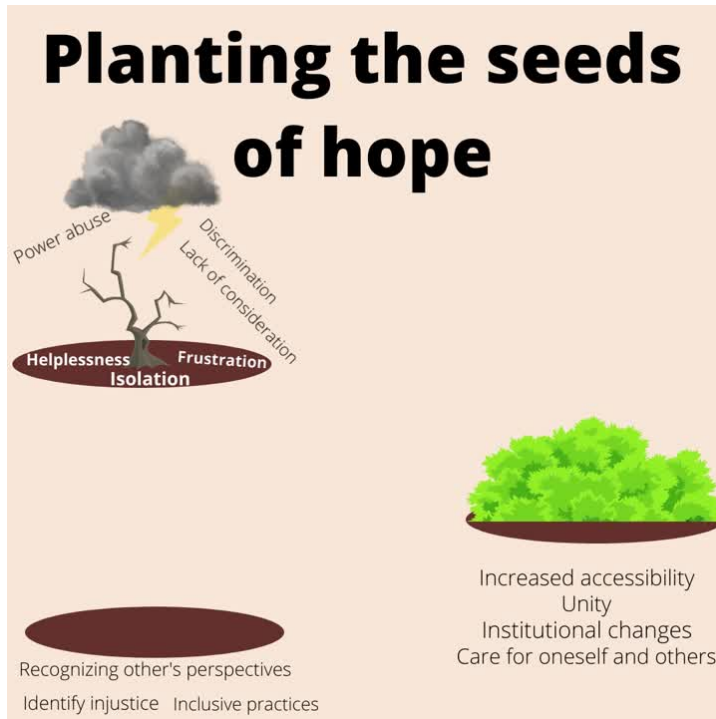
Selected artwork and statements

While the narratives reveal injustices that occurred to the project participants during their educational career, the Quilt of Hope presents solutions. The visual statements are therefore closely linked to the stories.



Our Quilt - Visual Statements of Hope

created in mixed groups (Argentina, Germany, USA)



"As we shared our different injustices within our international group, we realised that they all resulted in similar feelings such as helplessness, isolation, anger and frustration. The causes of injustices were also very similar: discrimination, lack of consideration, unconscious indifference or power abuse. In order to avoid injustices and expect changes in the future, we first need to identify injustices, plant the seeds of hope with care and with the recognition of other perspectives. We need to care for ourselves and others, only this way can the next generation enjoy a better future."



"Our square of hope does not only represent our collective hope but it is also meant to reflect our process as a group. By coming together as people from very different backgrounds we were able to collect quite a number of possible solutions. It can, thus, be said that there can be neither change nor progress unless we talk to each other. Throughout the discussions we were finally able to see things through a different lens as we were all confronted with other realities and perspectives.

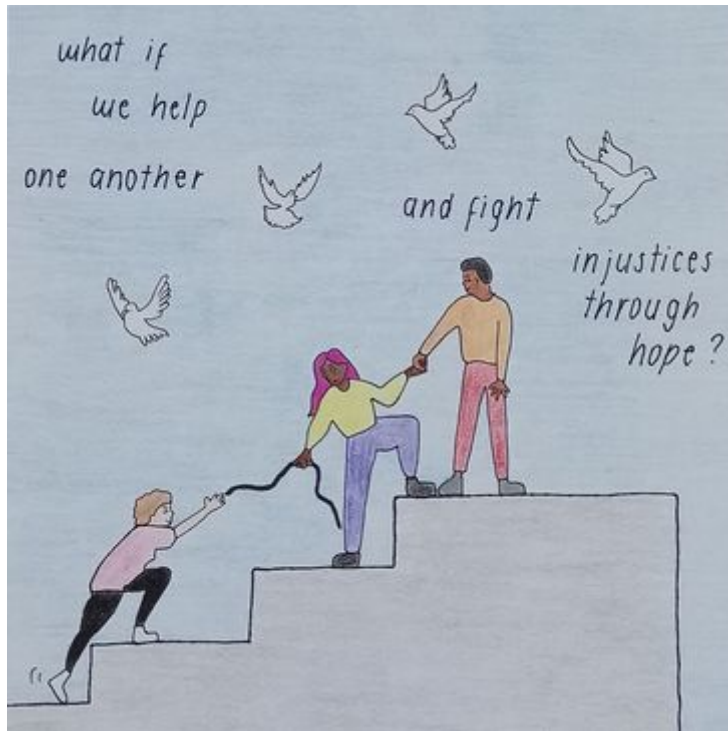
We are hopeful that if both teachers and students make good use of the resources that they have, they will be able to understand the injustices, solve them, and work together to make sure they won't happen again. Teachers can participate in more diverse teaching training programs, work with fellow experts and gain more practical experience, so that they can learn to handle different situations with students. At the same time, students can learn to use different channels to voice their concerns and speak up against injustices. It is only when we shed more light on the injustices which happened, that we can take appropriate actions to tackle them. That being said, it is also perhaps worth mentioning that the keywords are somehow separated in two parts. The aspects mentioned in the top part represent concrete actions or institutions. They could then contribute to a transformation resembling the aspects mentioned in the bottom."



"We chose the clock to be the basis of our quilt of hope because it represents the idea of completing a full circle of experiencing something unpleasant. The hour clocks, however, do not represent the stages, they are just meant to point to our individual quilts of hope."

Individual quilt blocks

with links to the personal narratives of injustice



Story: A Lesson on Equality and Equity



Story: The Daisy That Wilted



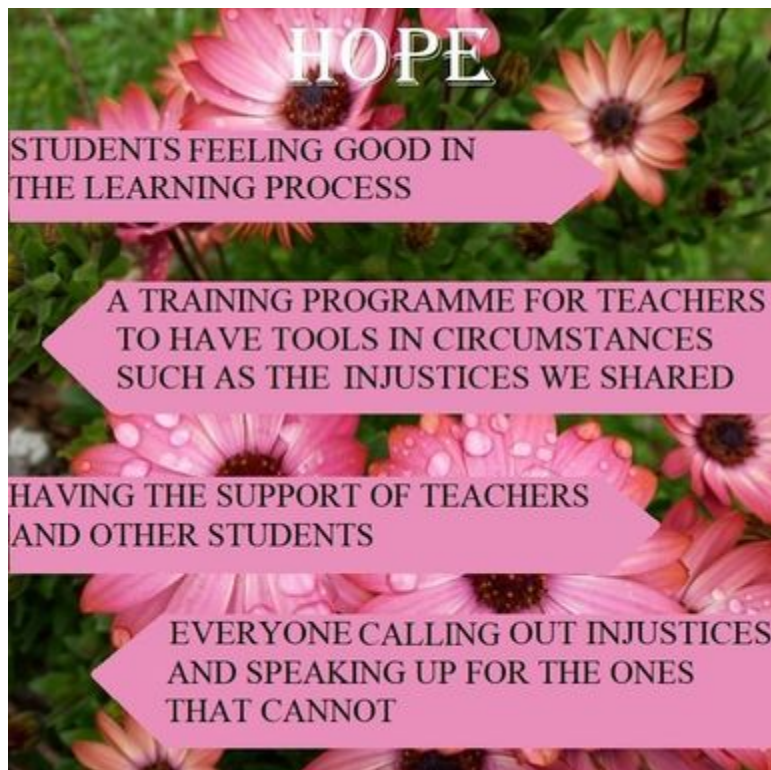
Story: Cultural Insensitivity



Story: Birds of Passage

"In my early days of learning English, it is the internet that has facilitated my language learning and more importantly, cultural learning. I was exposed to diverse cultures and were able to understand them better thanks to the modern technology. Therefore, even though cultural injustices are still very much around, there are always useful tools for people to educate themselves and seek support. Modern technology can also help teachers to understand students better, so that the age gap can be shortened, and a healthy student-teacher relationship can be developed. Nowadays, practical teaching experience has become a prerequisite for people to become a qualified teacher. That means more emphasis has been placed on how teachers deal with real-life classroom situations rather than just theoretical knowledge. Therefore, teachers will learn to respond to students' emotions, whether it is frustration, confusion or low motivation. In light of this high requirement of being a good teacher, more support has been given to teachers to make sure they can seek help and consult experts for possible solutions."

"When I first thought of creating my individual quilt of hope, the idea of a painting immediately came up to my mind. Thinking about what are the key words and what could be helpful for intercultural citizenship education, the first concept that occurred to me is A Heart Full of LOVE. Therefore I included a big shape of heart as the main part of my painting and started to brainstorm all the words that I could think about with regard to hope. From my perspective, an open-minded heart is one of the most significant prerequisite for people to accept and appreciate "differences" in their eyes. We need eradicate stereotypes and any kind of discrimination, implant the sense of justice and the awareness of being a world citizen into people's mind. Spare no effort to actively take the responsibility to promote reform for a better world."



Story: My Solution

*Where there's
life there's hope*



*This project
has taught me
that unjust
experiences can
be transformed
into something
positive*

Also, I learned that if
we cross the "border"
and listen to each
other we'll see that
our experiences on
this earth are similar



**WE MUST CONVINCE OURSELVES THAT THERE ARE ALWAYS
ALTERNATIVES TO OVERCOME DIFFICULT MOMENTS ♥**

There's nothing more comforting
than feeling heard, valued and
respected by someone else



Story: Be Sure to Taste Your Words Before You Spit Them Out

"The statement of my individual quit of hope sounds like: what happens in your life definitely happens for a reason. Sometimes it is hard to predict what future holds for you, but it is something wonderful, something that you have never thought before. That's why 'now I know for sure that I am where I am supposed to be'."



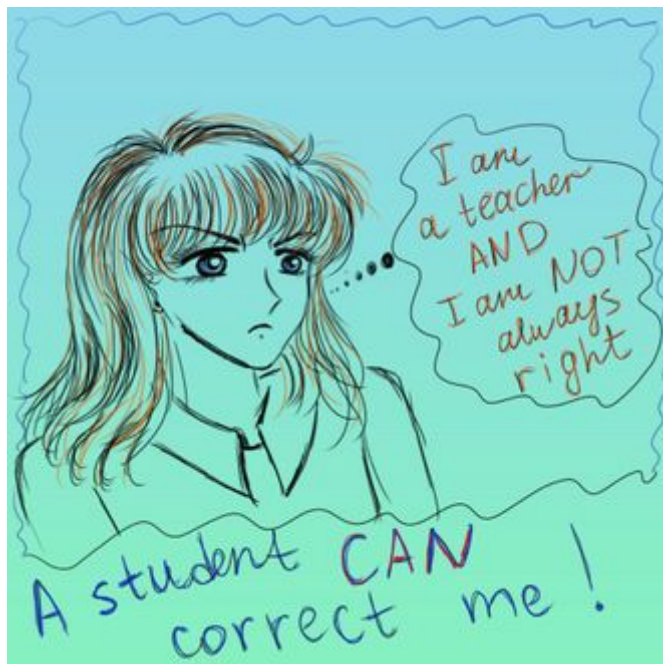
Story: The 'Unsuccessful' Completion



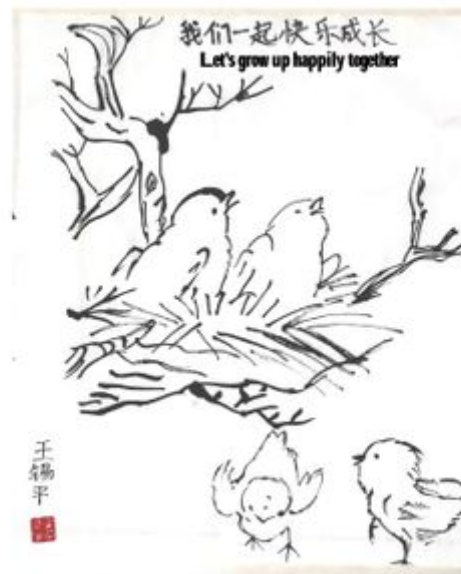
Story: The Cancelled Schoolball

"When I was going to create my individual quilt of hope, the first thing that came to my mind was that I should somehow raise awareness against stereotypes and bias. When people can accept and take pleasure in the diversity of the nature how can they act differently with human beings?"

"One thing I learned from this experience of injustice is that if you want to pursue the career of a teacher, it really does matter how you deal with yourself making a mistake and other people pointing at that, especially if it is your own student. You need to come to terms with the fact that we are not robots, but people, and regardless of our proficiency in the English language, making a mistake every once in a while is not the end of the world. It shouldn't be considered hurt pride when your student tells you that you are wrong in something."



Story: The Teacher's Pet



Story: Cowardly Little Lion

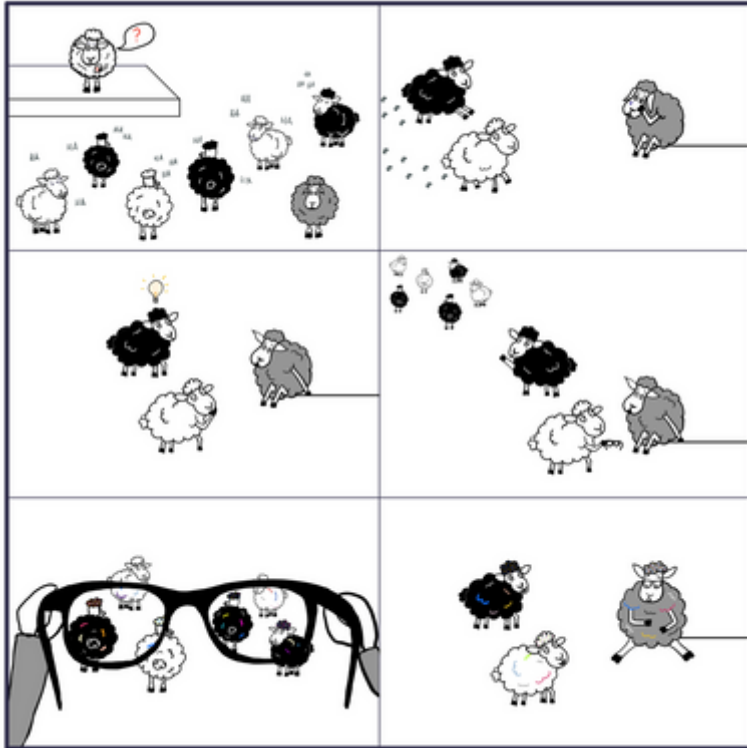
"While people reading those quilt of hope, they are inevitably encountering in stories of others lives. In other words, it can resonate our own conditions, which means something happens on others can be quite generic. Different stories functions like a mirror which helps us better understand our experiences and life.

Somehow, the flower growers is nice analogy for teacher and the flower growing is for personal growth. Grower top or cut off their plants are almost exactly in the same way that teacher or parents bring up their children. So the quilt is inspired by Nature.

The most lovely youths with all their hopeful mind in the world are quite similar to budding flowers or fledglings, showing their enthusiasm for what they pursuit early on. Thus, those lovely little birds and chickens can let us remind that those same age children.

In my quilt, those starving birds resting in their nest and the chicken pecking at rice only want to be taken care of by someone else. While I was looking at those animals, I can't help thinking about the inner child of all children. However, if children in their early life can not get the support of a trusted adult to turn to for life advice while they are young, what will they confront in their life?

So, in my mind, if those small animals are in desperate need of those care and great warm from their instructor, from learning to walk to gradually developing a good foraging habit, how could children not thirst for the care and attention from someone cared for them?"



Story: The Grey Sheep

"Just like the gray sheep I have come to realize that we are all diverse, just in very different ways – sometimes in ways that seem to be invisible on the surface. There is, luckily, another side to the coin: We all share similarities which makes it possible to relate to each other. Some can relate more to each other and some less.

At first glance, it can feel quite alone when you seemingly don't fit in with the crowd. However, if you take a good look, you will then be able to find friends in that incredibly diverse crowd. I was as lucky as the gray sheep to have a supportive environment and great friends.

We might not share all characteristics but to be honest that would be weird anyways. We do share a lot of other characteristics, though, and I know that they would always have my back.

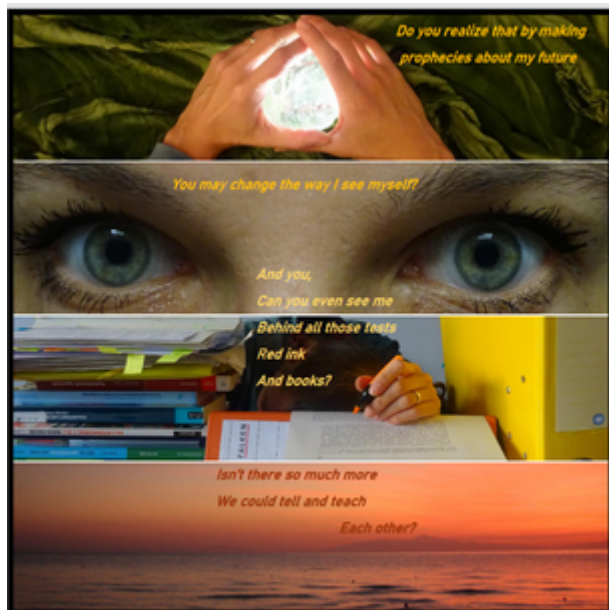
Even if they're not around, I now know that there will always be someone who can at least somehow relate. Consequently, I feel confident enough and even in a way empowered to address issues when they come up."

"Where there is injustice, there is a yearning for change. It is hope that drives victims of injustice not to accept the mistreatment they experience, but to stand in the face of the abuse and resist. Yet, resistance alone is not enough to spark change. Action must be taken for the ember that is hope to

ignite the flame that is change, for the victims of injustice to free themselves from their hardship. The progression from a dim sense of hope to bright, positive change is what inspired my contribution to the quilt of hope."



Story: Wasted Hours



Story: Great Enough

"For us as (future) teachers I think it is very important that we keep in mind how much of an impact our – sometimes not very thought-through - comments about our students may have on them. In theory, this may be a well-known fact by now. However, sometimes we forget that this can work in a third dimension, not only motivating or demotivating. For some students it can also lead to them pushing themselves too hard, to the neglect of other things in life. This is why I think it is a good idea to show our students that we, too, are human beings, with talents and weaknesses, and that there is no need to be absolutely perfect.

I am convinced that it can make an important difference if we take the time to share other things with them, from our lives and from theirs as well, beyond subject matter, tests and grades. One lesson I learned from the teaching experience I've gained up to now is that teaching and learning at school is not a one-way street. If we take that into consideration, valuing the unique contribution each and every one of our students can make, we give ourselves the chance to really grow together."



Story: Excuses