



2020

REFLECTIONS

Chapter 37 - Houses Burnt and Built

They say necessity is the mother of invention. I say: hardship is the mother of progress.

Hardship and loss, under the right conditions, can be powerful catalysts for change. That doesn't justify the loss, or remove the pain—it's an observation of reality. Losing something precious creates a void, and sometimes, the anger and pain that occupy that void later blossom into a better day.

Steve Jobs made this point elegantly in his 2005 Stanford Commencement Address, widely considered to be one of the best commencement addresses ever given. The address can be read or viewed by clicking the image below:



Today's SHHS reflection—which comes from Julie Mathews Francis, School Nurse/Program Manager with the Nurse Family Partnership Program—drives home this point as well, through a poignant story of loss, rebuilding, and gratitude. While Julie shared it a month ago, before George Floyd's killing and the protests that ensued, it remains just as relevant today, as it speaks to the hope that we can be fueled by loss to build a better world. Thank you, Julie.

UNTITLED

I was sixteen years old when my parents moved the family from the Philippines to the United States. I was one of five children. My family had to leave a comfortable life to escape what my parents considered political persecution that blackballed my father from keeping his job or getting a new one. My family had to start again in America. My father was always the breadwinner and easily found a job as a civil engineer. My mother who used to be a stay-at-home mom in the Philippines had to work to help out. My siblings and I went to public schools since my parents could not afford to send four children to private schools in our new neighborhood. Our youngest sibling was too young to go to school then, but was able to go to a private school years later when my parents were more financially stable.

As a teenager, it was very difficult to adjust to a new life, leaving friends and relatives behind. School was a big cultural shock for me coming from an all girls' school to an integrated one. Even though I spoke the

language before my family came to America, I had to learn colloquial language then and continue now to still learn the slang. My very traditional parents, no matter how they tried, were not able to keep us, children, from assimilating into the new culture. To their dismay, all of us married spouses who are/were not from the Philippines.

My parents had ingrained in us, their children, the value of education. I wanted to be in the medical field. When I saw how my parents struggled to survive and support a family, I realized then, I can still fulfill my dream and not burden them financially. I went to a community college and earned my AA degree in Nursing. While working as an RN in the ICU, I went back to school and got my BS degree in nursing. Years later, as I learned my second passion was in education, I went back to school and earned my MS in Nursing Education. As I struggled through the demise of my 10 year marriage, and left with three wonderful sons, ages 5 years old, 16 and 2 months as a single parent, I went back to school again. I received my MA in Psychology. It was during this crisis in my life when I learned the value of mental health services.

I have been through many earthquakes while living in California. I have lived through a very ugly divorce, the Rodney King riots, a fire that burned down my home, many US presidents, different principals in the school district, various illnesses such as HIV, multiple types of the flu and now this COVID 19.

I never thought this virus was going to get out of control. It reminded me of the time when my house burned. Every year during the fire season, my house was always threatened but always outlasted the threat until the day it burned. I now have a new home. This pandemic also reminded me of my difficult journey through divorce and survival as a single parent. My sons are now all grown and successfully living their own lives. I have been remarried to a wonderful Brit whom I aspire to grow old with.

Just like any other crisis I have been through, this too will pass. Everyday I remember what I am grateful for. I have been reminded daily how we're all in this together. This time I know I will survive together with my family and my community. I am happy to see people doing their duty just by wearing masks and keeping social

distances. I appreciate people waving at me when I cannot see their smiles behind the masks. I am very thankful that people in the community are continuing to provide services to me and my family at the hospitals, grocery stores, restaurants, pharmacy, gas stations and so forth. I am blessed to be part of a working community, LAUSD, during this crisis. The district is going far and beyond, continuing to provide not only education to our school children but also basic needs at the Grab and Go. I value the opportunity for me to continue to work at home during this crisis. I appreciate my Director and Administrators, Sosse Bedrossian, Donna Horowitz and Sylvia Fischer, who continue to support us nurses and the Nurse Family Partnership (NFP) program. I am also blessed with our NFP team, Tracy Oatis, Leana Rodriguez and Christina Safranek, who works diligently to continue to provide services to our first-time pregnant and parenting teen students through telehealth. Lastly and most importantly in my journey, I am very grateful to my family, who has been my support and source of strength always in difficult times such as this.

Sincerely,

Pia and Julie

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