



20/21 REFLECTIONS

Chapter 23 – WALL-E and Roses from Concrete

The history books are probably going to get this one wrong.

They'll say the pandemic was a time of unimaginable loss, grief, and hardship. And—to be clear—it has been. And still is.

But, this isn't the full story. Alongside every tale of loss, there have been countless tales of courage, of resilience, of hope and aspiration for a better world.

Grounded in this energy, I'm going to share a series of reflections as the school year closes about the resilience we've seen over this past year, what we've been observing as students return to campus, and what it all means for the year ahead.

Today I'll share two reflections, both talking about things that persevered when others didn't expect them to. The first reflection comes from Linda Good-Hart, a school-based psychiatric social worker in Local District Northeast. She tells a story about returning to school after 410 days and finding something remarkable in her room. The symbolism of her story, and what it represents about so many students, and families, and all of us as we emerge from the pandemic, is powerful. Here goes.

WALL-E Reflection
by Linda Good-Hart

I re-entered my middle school room on Wednesday, April 28th, 2021, for the first time since March 13th, 2020. To be honest, I was a little tentative, curious and excited about how the day would unfold at my middle school.

One of the items on my to-do list was to box up (and soon return) my 2019/2020 MSW Interns' decorative items they had bought to warm up their work areas, to provide some closure and memories of their internship time with LAUSD. As I was packing up their items, in wonder and amazement, I discovered a small potted plant that had survived 410 days unattended by any human. The plant had dropped several leaves, but unlike the other plants in the room that had perished, this tiny succulent had hung on – likely drawing bits of moisture from the air and filtered light during the day. This plant was ready to start thriving again with some gentle thoughtful attention.

I sent some pictures of the plant to the intern it belonged to, and she shared that the plant had been gifted to her at the intern termination training last spring. I told my intern that I felt a little like WALL-E when I discovered her plant. My intern has now named the plant WALL-E, an acronym she shared which means Wellness Attained, Living Life – Empathetically.

The other reflection I'm going to share today is a poem by the late, great musical artist Tupac Shakur. When I read Linda's reflection, my mind immediately connected to this poem by Tupac. I hope, like me, you are moved by this poem, and its connection to the youth who face and overcome adversities every day.

The Rose that Grew from Concrete
by Tupac Shakur

Did you hear about the rose that grew
from a crack in the concrete?
Proving nature's law is wrong it
learned to walk without having feet.
Funny it seems, but by keeping its dreams,
it learned to breathe fresh air.
Long live the rose that grew from concrete
when no one else ever cared.

Sincerely,

Pia and Linda (and Tupac)