

Behind Closed Doors

By Estela Nicolary

I'm on zoom, struggling to not zone out, trying to keep focus. I'm so tired, sad, scared. Confused. My teacher says, "Class, let's share! How has Covid been affecting you?" I dread this question. The anticipation of all of my classmates and all of their complaints.

"I don't like zoom" "I'm so bored" "This has been the hardest year of my life"
I wish! I wish this was the worst year of my life, that quarantining is the worst thing I have ever experienced. Instead all I see is lucky people complaining, lucky people who COULD complain. While I'm dealing with things I can't even think about without having my reality fall apart. Just shut up! You are lucky! I hate you!

My name is Estela Nicolary, and you don't know ANYTHING about me.
I am 3, living in Guatemala in poverty, abuse, and insecurity, taking care of my little brother
I experienced early childhood trauma.
I am 4, being adopted, flying to a new country, learning a new language, meeting a new family.
I experienced immigration.
I am 12, 13, 14, in 6th, 7th, 8th grade, alone, trying to survive.
I experienced long-term sexual abuse
I am 15 having panic attacks, insomnia, night terrors.
I experienced post traumatic stress
I am 16, self medicating, self-destructing, kicked out of school and starting a new one, wanting to run away.
I experienced the punitive justice system
I am 17, in quarantine, exposed to my boyfriend's trauma, trying to accomplish a life-time of healing.
Is the whole world messed up?
I experienced vicarious trauma.
My name is Estela Nicolary and I have Complex Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.
I am mad. I am confused. I am alone.

"Hey mom, can we talk?" I ask.
"Of course honey, what's going on?"
"I'm so mad, I'm tired of hearing my classmates complain. I can't complain about my stuff, but I have to listen to them complain about a life I wish I could live."
She thinks for a second.
"Well, maybe, they are complaining about that stuff because they can't complain about all of their things either?
Maybe Covid is so bad for them because they are also dealing with other things on top of this."
Oh my gosh. Of course!
If I have so much hidden behind closed doors, WHY have I been thinking no one else has doors to hide things behind as well? If I have experienced so much, then why would I assume everyone else has experienced nothing?
"Thank you mom for teaching me"

My name is Estela Nicolary and now I understand.
I am 20, doing therapy, volunteering, going to college, and majoring in public health.
I experienced healing.
I am not mad. I am not confused. I am not alone.
My name is Estela Nicolary, and now I've learned that I don't know anything about YOU.