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## My Veil

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My journey begins in the train. As many of you know, I have been a commuter these past three years of my college career. My freshmen year, I had the curse and blessing to travel to school through bus and trains. It created fatigue and also anger within me because I felt it unfair that I had to struggle more than other students at LMU. Little did I know, I would learn what tiresome was and what a struggle really meant.

The struggle is real—oh how it makes me laugh. The struggle is real when you begin to open your eyes and see what is truly there: people being pulled up by cops, mistreated; seeing mothers in tears and not knowing what to do; seeing the exhaustion of men and women and knowing that their work is not over yet—home awaits them. Through this appreciation I came to realize and truly accept my dad's work. I will be sincere; I was embarrassed of what my father was and what he did. I was embarrassed to say he works downtown as a janitor... but having the opportunity to come close to these people, whether they knew it or not, I understood their hope of finding that better life, the hope to provide for their family. Yes, my father is a janitor, but not once has he let me down.

*Be a good girl... be smart... you're so innocent... do you ever do anything wrong... aren't you the perfect child... you can never do anything wrong... I know you will never disappoint me mija...*

Many times were these words thrown out at me; many times I did everything to make sure I lived up to the expectations others had for me. But what happens when you enter a world of curiosity? When you encounter a world with the questions you have always had or the goals you have always wanted but have been so afraid to approach? While in college, you will come across knowledge that you just won't know how to explain to others. How do I explain to my parents that my professor talked about sexual pleasure—*que pena!* But there is more to that. As a college student, I have debated many things, I have asked why and never did I think I would find myself debating with my parents, or be called what others would call *a bocona*. I began to want things for my own; I wanted to decide what relationships I wanted to fight for and which ones I didn't. I wanted to decide where my future would go. I am not going to lie; it's been a challenge. It's been a challenge because all of a sudden I feel like an outsider in my own home. But every time I read and learn from my courses I become excited and find something that many refuse to take advantage of or even fear—reflection. Being alone is scary but it is a wondrous journey.

The thing is, my faith is strong. My faith is powerful—beautiful—and I cherish it every moment. Not once did I reject God, even during the many times I was angry and asked him why, never did I reject Him. I saw that God was the only one who would listen and who could understand the pain in hiding my secrets. I have been asked why I doubt myself, why, although I have been able to lead, conquer, and achieve, I doubted myself. In this reflection I tell you that this doubt comes from fear, and my fear comes from expectations. I have devoted my entire life to

exceeding people's expectations, but now I am devoted to being the person I want to believe I can be.

Through my Chicana/o class, *Guadalupe, Our Queen of the Americas*, I began to understand the veil that had been shielding me from my fears. This is a veil that I thought would hide my mistakes, my fears, my errors, my weaknesses, and my identity. My veil may be stained; my veil may want to fly off my head sometimes, but that doesn't mean I am a bad person right? I want to be able to run free with my veil away from my head, I want to run and know that being imperfect is not wrong. I want show the world that I can conquer so much. I have learned that empowerment comes with truth and communication, that empowerment is the stepping stone of finding yourself. I know that I have my weaknesses of doubt and shame, but with all that I have learned, all that I have worked for, I am more than just a disappointment. *Soy Citlaly en busca* of the truth and of myself—my faith runs through my blood, my love runs through my soul. That's where I say faith begins, in hoping for the best and believing that even when everything is lost, we continue to walk without hesitation.