

Celebrating Our Inaugural Adrián Pérez Melgosa Memorial Fellow Marian Nozaleda

We are thrilled to announce that our board of directors has begun to raise the seed money for a special fellowship to be given each year to a Stony Brook graduate student.



It is so fitting that Marian Nozaleda, our first fellow, like Adrián, came of age in Franco's Spain, bringing a deep love for Spanish literature, and healing, survival, and resilience through the arts. In her application for the fellowship Marian wrote:

It is hard for me to start this short statement of my interest in joining the team at Herstory Writers Network. Since I heard about the project, it's been haunting me, as if it were in some way the answer to several parts of me that seemed unrelated, and now they all make sense together. The little girl who grew up in Spain in a military family during Franco's dictatorship, who has been quiet and silenced, starts showing through the cracks of the university instructor. I am not sure where or when the silence settled within me, probably the world around was not ready to hear, or just because pain can get stuck in your throat, too close for us to see. I didn't remember the little girl, but she is probably the one who spoke through tears in unexpected moments, for no apparent reason. As I write these words, I feel her. She is crying now with the sweet tears of recognition, alert at the possibility of discovering herself as the writing unfolds.

My childhood could seem a good one from outside. I had a father who thought education was the best inheritance I could receive, and he was committed to opening my world to all fields of knowledge. I am a trained performance pianist. I hold several master's degrees and speak several languages. Yet, that was not all. In the midst of it, there was a very dark secret hidden in the heart of my family, so secret that it was never spoken, but we, the three girls, had to suffer it. I didn't understand any of it, maybe all families were the same, maybe nothing was really happening. I cried so many stupid tears, tears that knew nothing. And life just goes on and on.

As a natural evolution to my education, I became a lecturer in Spanish in a private university in Dallas, Southern Methodist University. During my time there, Rick Halperin created the Embrey Human Rights Program, with an interdisciplinary emphasis. In 2008, Rick Halperin asked me to create a class in Spanish focused in human rights issues in Latin America, which could count towards the Human Rights degree. The class was very successful, so I created a second class focused

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on bringing the university to the community through volunteering. I contacted several organizations focusing on women's rights, especially for immigrants. Prior to sending my students to any organization, I participated in all of them. Two institutions stood out for me: Mosaic, a haven for abused immigrant women, and a second whose name I cannot remember because my students weren't allowed to take it, which was based on helping female inmates through psychological support. I participated with the inmates in group therapy sessions, as one more person in the group. It was there that I realized there was a pattern with all of us, and the difference between me and them was just the possibility to hide behind my studies while they roamed in their neighborhoods, exposed to all sort of dangers. I realized then how important it was for me to find the thread to pull it all together. Now I need to be able to untie the knot, in my mind and my throat, and the vehicle is my voice, my words. Words, words, words... as Hamlet said.

I am writing this short statement with the hope that I can be part of your program, for my own sake and for those who can be a mirror to me, and I to them. The experience of writing can be healing, but it is implicit that writing is sharing, a sort of experience of our presence in this world. I need the help to open up in a safe space, with the guidance that Herstory provides, as much as I need to be there for other women who do not understand they have a voice, not only a voice in society but their own voice which belongs only to them. The world needs to hear them, to hear us.



Karima's Well by Gwynne Duncan