

# Dear Janie the Canadian Editor (Mostly Because That's Your Name):

One of the things that has meant the most to me as we've traveled together is a comment you left on a Supergrover entry... that every lid has its pot, and eventually I'd find mine even if Supergrover isn't it. I will never give up hope, because of this entry. I'm going to share it now in hopes of enlightening you with what I was dealing with when I met her, why my feelings were so incredibly close and fast. Why I couldn't breathe a lot of the time in the beginning of our relationship.... this is when it was ironically, the best of times. I had this reaction to emotional abuse about six months before this entry was written due to our conversations, and happened therefore because of them. I'm the author, and I'm saying that correlation equals causation. This is why you cannot separate us, even when we go long periods without talking.

**The original date of the entry is November 22nd, 2013:**

*Trying to figure out what I look like without my abuser's influence is a lost cause, in a lot of ways. The personality I have is the personality I have. The facial expressions I have are just the facial expressions I have. It can't matter anymore where I got them, because I am not as moldable as I was back then. I can't change me, but I can learn to live with me instead. Learning to live with me is a slow process, because I go through stages of anger where I want to slash and burn everything about me that reminds me of her, and there's no way to do it without destroying myself as well. Because of this, being reminded of her every day is not the blessing it once was, but I'm trying to reach that place again.*

*I have to, because the more I remind myself of her, the more I hate me.*

*It used to make me so proud that I was so young when we met that we had some of the same mannerisms and speech patterns. Now, I'll be talking to someone else and something will come out of my mouth so pitch perfect it's like she's standing behind me... usually at a time where it's inconvenient to feel that level of pain.*

*Once I know that a thought has me in a tailspin, I know I can stop it. However, I do not get to choose when the initial thought appears, or how. I know how to mitigate damage, but not how to prevent it. It is in that way that my body plays tricks on me. I can tell myself all day that I don't want to think about her, don't want to be in grief, don't want*

*to dwell... and then in a conversation something that I always say that I picked up from her comes out of my mouth in the way that she would say it and I didn't mean to but BAM!*

*It is a continual process- learning to trim branches without killing the trunk.*

The further away I've gotten from this date, the stronger I have become due to Supergrover's influence. I would not believe I was capable of being a CEO with a Girl Friday (or two if Supergrover joins us later.... as I told Bryn, "you're my girl, but she can do taxes and shit." She, like me, is part of the hustle economy no matter what she's doing. She had a book to study for an HR management exam in her Amazon Wish List that I got her one year and she joked, "I swear to God, the mafia would be easier." If you know what exam I'm talking about, you'll have to confirm if she's right. That's because everything I know about leadership is self taught by "sitting at the feet of the Master." My dad was a minister, which in the United Methodist Church is kind of a combination of two roles that in most organizations, would be two people- and sometimes it is. Sometimes, it's a brigade system in which the senior pastor is the visionary, and the associates carry out the day-to-day work... it's very much like being the chef AND the owner in a small church, or a conductor AND an executive arts director.... or in my personal case, my mother.... being a music teacher AND a church accompanist on organ and piano (who always had a trumpet player on deck and wasn't afraid to use her at any time.....). The best part of music is church music, because you can get a guaranteed job every week of your life.... while winning a stable job in a symphony chair is RIDICULOUSLY hard.

My dad is one of the few people I know who could have done it, and I sincerely mean it. He had already decided that he wanted to be a minister when he was 18 or 19, and ended up turning down 26 full-ride scholarships, including a tour of Russia with Frederick Fennel at University of Florida, and all the big ones- Juilliard, Curtis, Tanglewood, etc. The problem with being the best trumpet player in the state of Texas (this is important. TMEA is probably the hardest system to "win" in the nation) is that there's no indication you will be able to support yourself later.

One of the things that orchestra players have told me is that they are in constant fear for their jobs, because the longer they're doing concerts, the further they are from audition caliber. A fresh Juilliard student steals chairs all the time from very seasoned players during blind auditions.....

Though there are tricks. If a player knows their particular band director is behind the curtain, it will be a classical audition and they will inexplicably and "innocently" drop a

Harmon mute or something to let their conductor know it's them (mutes are rarely used at all in the symphony, and a Harmon mute is mostly for jazz). So, you get players higher ranked than they should be. To beat EVERYONE in a blind audition, you must be so flawless that no one can touch you.

My dad made the All-State band three years running, and first band every time. Twice he was 5th chair, but his senior year he was OFFICIALLY and OBJECTIVELY the best trumpet player in the state of Texas. I loved being a brass player because I'm not a girly girl and the arrogance fit me just fine (I have noticed that most female trumpet players are queer, and I think there's a connection there.... you have to have women that aren't afraid to run with the boys. It's as rough as a kitchen. Therefore, the Top Brass are generally the people that are both technically the best and also the men have deemed acceptable company.....). Susan Slaughter is at the top of my mind, and I have no idea if Alison Balsom is queer or not, but for the love of God, call me. I'm serious. We could at least correct my embouchure..... Christ ALMIGHTY. Also, the next time you're listening to opera, check out Cecilia Bartoli. She used to be a trumpet player, and you can TOTALLY TELL. Anything baroque and she sets her throat for every single note in the melisma. You have to check it out, because it's like an inside joke just for us.

I'm not a quarter of the trumpet player my dad was, but I did make it into a performing arts high school and really enjoyed the performing arts part. I did not enjoy school. I was autistic with no support, so I'd just wander off into nowhere ALL THE TIME and I have no function for math.

Ryan remembers being in my ninth-grade algebra class with Dr. Papakonstantinou, but what I bet he doesn't remember is that in the first six weeks my grade was... wait for it..... 42. Turns out that the meaning of life was dropping the class.

I'm not afraid of math anymore because I have AI to tutor me. It's the reason I'm willing to go back to college. I have made up my mind to go back because I think it's the only thing my mother ever wanted, and she wouldn't care if I blew the entire wad on my degree, and Lindsay would agree with me. By the end of my life, I want to be either Dr. or Rev. Dr. Leslie Lanagan, and I haven't decided. That's because I think an MDiv. at Howard would be a good plan for me just because I'm already interested in it, just like you can get a JD without taking the bar.... and many people do just to say they went to law school. It's a great degree to have in other professions, because things like law school, the military/intelligence, and the brigade

system in the kitchen are all designed to break down your mind and build you back up so that you think differently.

The best brigade system in the entire world is McDonalds and no one can touch them except maybe They Who Shall Not Be Named.... instead of going there, might I suggest *Church's*..... they seem to represent my values better than you.

Seriously, fuck off with your bullshit. Evangelicals are killing the church. If God is dying, you are helping *the most*. Why the FUCK is there such a thing as a “recovering” Christian anything? What is it about “be kind to people and love them, anyway” got twisted into “I get to legislate what everyone does?”

So, anyway, after an MDiv at Howard steeped in liberation theology- people like:

- William Barber
- Michael Curry
- James Cone
- Marcus Borg
- Dominic Crossan
- Reza Aslan
- Elaine Pagels
- Karen Armstrong
- Paul Tillich
- Anne Lamott

I've met some of them, and of all of them I'd like to meet Michael Curry the most. I thought his sermon at Harry Wales' wedding was incredible, the take home message being “what would the world be like if we set the world on fire with love.” And as I have said, I would just like the title of Rev. Dr. on my books, not the authentic experience of pastoring a church. That's because I'm not a pastor. I can social mask it. Then, I become overloaded with other people's problems and bleed out emotionally in private. For instance, it's been hard on me that Zac is in the military. My heart walks out of my body because I've never had a military boyfriend before in a day-to-day way. I know what it's like when the military happens and you're making other plans.

In other words, I need liberation theology because I think it makes me more solid as a person, more flexible with change when it is explained to me in depth, and more agile in

responding because in knowing myself, I often understand what's wrong in other people's situations. I have too much life experience not to know what people's emotional problems are, and fortunately or unfortunately I mean this genuinely. If I had taken on a congregation of my own, it would just have been a continuation of doing what I'd watched having been done for ages, and I doubt I would have learned I was autistic. This would have caused all sorts of problems because in the church, especially small ones, men are visionaries. Women are bitches. Remember, I'm from the South. I believe that Joyce Meyer is the only one of "us" that's really made it (as I would have if I hadn't turned out queer) at least in terms of being a household name. I wonder how many other women are that amazing at preaching (HATE her politics, love her delivery.... I'm from the South.) have been overlooked and thrown away. For instance, Anne Lamott is straight and cis. Everyone knows who she is. Yvette Flunder is black and queer and just as powerful a speaker/writer. Why isn't she a household name? It's almost as if there's a connection there, like bullshit racism and homophobia, but I'm just spitballing here.

The reason I want to do my MDiv at Howard and my PhD at University of Houston is that I still have to complete the second half of my junior and my senior year. I think that I'll be a better student due to AI and also due to the fact that I have enough life experience to write everyone else under the table in the few undergrad English classes I have left (a freshman cannot compete with me, I'm sorry. I make a lot of mistakes in my blog, but I've never truly gotten less than an A on a paper that I put my heart into, even when I wrote all 15 pages in one night and made up the outline in retrospect (only because it was also due for a grade..... I also made up all my sources because I could make up convincing titles and I knew all the publishers off the top of my head..... I work like everyone else who's AuDHD. *Properly*.

I mean, I would never make up sources in a graduate class. I would have AI generate it and pretend I read them. :P Kidding about that, too. I'm at a stage in life where I devour books. That was high school. Let's not get stupid..... but the fact that I managed to fool English teachers starting in fifth grade is alternately impressive and very scary. I think what happened in high school is that I was not prepared to work on that fast a schedule, making college easier. For instance, one week the outline was due. One week the research was due, etc. I took late penalties and turned in everything in one day. I think it's amazing that I never once got accused of plagiarism (because I didn't need to plagiarize) and got away with doing everything backwards..... like, no one ever said, "Leslie, why is this all in the exact same handwriting as if you wrote it in six hours?"

Funny, that.

I'd like to transfer after finishing undergrad and Howard to the Graduate School of Social Work and be a TA, hopefully to Brene Brown, but if that's not possible, at least take a class with her while I'm getting my doctorate. I think it's really funny that I didn't know she'd hit it big until I saw her on YouTube and thought, "I think that's one of my kids." I was the supervisor at the Graduate School of Social Work computer lab, so it wasn't like I would have attached recognition to her back then. She's a little bit older than I am, but not by much.... and yet, back then the power dynamic was inverted because I was technically "in charge of her," and all the other students who needed help with their papers.

They didn't know I was a writer. It was things like helping them set styles in Word, complete Excel functions, etc. What makes me happy about grad school is that I don't think oral or written exams will be hard for me because I'm not intimidated by them. People have been criticizing and taking my work personally for 25 years. Who are they except critics I already know, because they've probably been reading my work and my blog for three or four years.

It will be especially fun to get my work in front of Brene as a student and not by trying to write a better book than her. Maybe I will, maybe I won't. But I never want her to see me as competition, because she inspires me so much.

Because when push comes to shove, Brene should be on the list of theologians I love. We are both Houstonian-educated Episcopalians. We also do things.....

*Properly.*