The school bell rang as most of my friends headed off for morning break. Randy stayed behind and handed me a letter. Inside that letter, he wrote about all the things I did that bothered him. I wasn’t sure what to think of it at first but as I kept reading through the letter, it seemed like he got more comfortable voicing out all the agony he’s been bottling up.

As a generally chatty and sociable person, I’ve never really understood the concept of how a piece of writing could help someone “find their voice”. Over the 8 years that I’ve known Randy, he’s always been nervous around people. Starting a simple conversation amongst our friend group or simply ordering food delivery would get his hands to sweat shakily.

It was not until I read the letter that day, that I didn’t recognize him as the same person. The Randy in the letter was different, he was not shy and intimidated but, powerful and confident. I wanted to feel that way too, comfortable and free in my own world. So, I started writing.

It was weird at first, writing my first few paragraphs. Slowly, I was drawn to poetry and started to dive deeper into it. My Indonesian poems gave me comfort, as though my pen has a freedom my mouth never had. One of my teachers submitted my poem to the National Youth Day program competition and it was awarded the most heartfelt poem.

It was those 3 verses I wrote randomly at night which allowed me to embrace my vulnerability. Since then, from helping tutor my juniors through zoom and delivering multiple MUN workshops to potential delegates, my writings have taught me to communicate and express my ideas and myself better in front of people.

Terrified of failure, I have always built walls to not let anyone criticize me. As they called my name up that stage however, knowing that my writing had value, I felt at ease.