



INSCAPE **2013**

Learning How To Ride A Bike — Evelyn Vasquez



When I get on the bike, I notice my niece's twelve-year old body doesn't have the strength to balance my twenty-year old body steady. My niece says, "Okay, I am going to hold the bike and push you. When I let go, you start to pedal." I begin to pedal and she lets go of the bike. She then yells, "Evelyn, don't look down!" I lose balance, and my body hits the pavement floor. She runs to me and makes sure that I am okay. Even though my niece was younger, I felt protected. I was rusty on balance, and I fell a lot. But, that didn't matter because I had learned how to ride a bike.

At PCC, from the R building, I saw people with bikes, skateboards; I could see students swimming in the pool. All kinds of activities surrounded me, and I would get a frustrated urge to want to know how to do these activities. I wondered how people learned, and who taught them. I thought perhaps they were talented for knowing how to swim, ride a bike, or ride a skateboard.

Once, I was extremely amazed by a girl who was in my class, who asked the professor for permission to leave her bike in the classroom. I figured she didn't want to leave her bike outside because it was raining that day. The professor allowed her to bring the bike in, and all I could think about was how cool she was for knowing how to ride a bike with thin tires and horn-looking handles. I imagined it would be impossible for me to learn how to ride a bike, especially one that looked like hers.

Time passed, and I continued to be reminded that I didn't know how to ride. People in the train, on the streets, in bike lanes were constantly haunting me, and somehow telling me that I had to learn. So, I decided to buy a bike, without knowing how to ride one. I didn't buy my bike at a typical local store. Instead, I bought my bike at this large parking lot with a man who sold used bikes. Next to him was a canopy; inside, there was chairs facing a Virgin Mary altar. I thought it was creepy and funny at the same time to see a church next to a bike shop, but what mattered was that my bike cost a hundred bucks, which I thought was a good deal.

My schedule at the swap meet was consistent until my senior year in high school. I was at the swap meet holidays, weekends, and vacations. On special occasions, I was absent from school to go to the swap meet and help my mom. On occasions, such as Mexico making it to the soccer play-offs, my sister and I would go outside the swap-meet building and sell Mexican flags to the parade of honking cars.

It's not that my mother didn't care about education, or my childhood. She was raising me, and the process didn't include a bike. She came from a place where having shoes was a luxury and having food on the table was a relief. A bike never crossed her mind, and it hasn't. To some degree, I was angry because my mom couldn't, or didn't, know how to introduce me to much other than what she knew, such as the differences between retail and wholesale, which made me different from other children. For instance, I knew how to count money at the age of four because my mom taught me how to give change to customers. My mentality was matured, but my childhood was somehow lost. Now I want to experience what I didn't do as a child. On occasions, I don't want to do my homework because I want to play "teacher", or make-believe monsters with my two-year old niece. I want to read Dr. Suess books, instead of my selected reading from anthologies.

When I am on my bike, I assume this is how I would have felt as a child, and I smile because I am the "cool" girl who was in my class. I am finally a "talented" girl because I accomplished to learn something only talented people do. Because I am twenty, it is not a big deal for someone to see me ride a bike. That's why I wish I were younger, so my mom could watch me, and congratulate me. But, she doesn't because it would be weird to congratulate a twenty year-old who just learned how to ride a bike.

At PCC, I don't just see students practice physical activities, but I also see them involved in campus activities, and I see the way they carry their pile of books and heavy backpacks. I want to emulate that image, as well. Then in classrooms, I hear the English language, but I can't make sense of it. All I know is that I hear so many words I have never heard. And, I don't know the