

**TRANSCRIPTION**

My name is Tianna Rodriguez.

I am 15 years old, turning 16 years old. I am Christian, a daughter, mixed—Black and white—Dominican, and Trinidadian. I have a raspy voice. My friends are connected to me by being from the same race. I know that other people have had my experience going through what I went through: feeling sad, not wanting to talk to anyone, not able to trust people.

My testimony is about how I conquered my bullies. And before I go into that, I would like people to know that if you're a teacher: please check on your students. If you see that there is something wrong: ask. Because a lot of the times, kids hide their feelings. Teachers and staff need to stop situations in the classroom because there are times when people bully and antagonize one another, and they bypass it. I also want you to learn that this story could be anyone's story.

Now my story may begin.

I finally started standing up for myself, and also I paid bullies no mind. What I learned is that the people who hurt me, don't phase me anymore. Have you ever heard of the phrase, "hurt people hurt people?" I believe it is true. Scientifically, it's proven. And if it's so true, that's not right. I didn't learn bullying from a book, and I didn't learn it alone. I'd like to stress that you shouldn't seek validation from anybody, because no one is perfect, and that we are all different, and we all have a purpose. When I say we are different, meaning we aren't meant to be like someone else. We shouldn't try to be anyone; you should just be yourself.

It's hard to remember everything that's happened to me in my life since I gave my life to God, and because I don't like to live in the past; I like to live in the present. I say this because God's given me peace, He loves me, and He also made ways so that I didn't have to deal with people that kept trying to disrespect me.

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## Hmong and LatinA/O/X Testimonios: The Pedagogical Space Between *Tianna's Testimonio*

The most important thing that has happened to me, has happened to many other people, too: my story is the story of how I was bullied growing up. My personal experience is that many people have disrespected me, and called me out on my name growing up—and still a little bit today. It would mostly be people that I call my friends. I remember how they would come into class, and I was ready to do my work. Ten to 15 minutes would go by, and they would always say my name and then start disrespecting me, calling me fat and cursing at me. In my head I would always say, “just don’t say nothing to them, just let them talk.” But the fact you made it seem as if me and you were friends? How could you do this to me, having me looking dumb? Me being a nice-hearted person? You guys took advantage of that. And it’s sad to say that you guys always make me have my guard up. I can’t trust people. I don’t open up to people anymore. The only time I can express how I feel is when I’m talking to God alone.

Some people that have bullied people couldn’t handle it. And some made people commit suicide. Sometimes bullying could also cause people to have depression. I want to tell people this about my testimonio because I want them to know that whatever they’re going through now, it’s just a trial. And what I mean by that is that it’s ok how you’re feeling. If you’re feeling overwhelmed, if you feel emotional, you’re not going to feel like that forever. If there are kids going through situations now, it’s okay. It’s gonna be over when you grow up. You are going to find how to defend yourself. You also are going to determine how to pay bullies no mind. I say this because when you grow up, your mind expands. You learn new things every day. Don’t give up, never quit, because at the end of the day you still have your own testimony.

I want people to understand that when you pay people no mind, whoever bothers you no mind, you’re going to realize that either they’re going to stop or continue. You either waste your time or not, going back and forth. The crazy thing is we have political problems and issues on “no violence,” but we have never had a political statement that bullying needs to stop? Think about it.

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But back to me and my testimonio. I was tired of always arguing. I was always annoyed when I always stood up for myself, the teachers would always shut me down but would never say anything to the other students that picked on me. And no, I'm not innocent, but why would I start problems for no reason? If you were to know me or ask someone about me, they would tell you that I am a great student, I always do my work, I do talk a lot sometimes, but I always make honor roll. I always help other students when they need it, and any teacher can count on me. This year I've had some hateful comments, but it wasn't as bad where I would tell anyone how I feel. That's just always been me. I would never tell anyone how I feel on the inside; they would always see happiness on the outside. And that just shows that they don't know nothing about me. I don't open up, so I'm opening up to you really is difficult. School now is easier for me because the kids that do say things don't affect me. They don't phase me anymore.

I was finally happy when I gave my salvation to Christ. Yes, I am Christian, but Christianity is not my religion; there's a difference. I have a relationship with God. When I realized that I can finally talk to someone who can understand me, without me having to explain, just makes it a whole lot better. I always believed in God because I saw Angels when I was younger, and that I could see demons. I thought that I was losing my mind, but I wasn't, because I knew what I was seeing, and other people had my experience.

Without God, I don't know what I would do. He is my relief. He makes me happy. Yes, I have to face struggles, but He's always by my side. And for that: I really love Him and appreciate Him.

This is my testimonio.