

SETTING

Oak Klein High School

CHARACTER LIST

JAVIER	17 years old, Blaxican-American, M
MURDR	17 years old, Salvadoran-American, M
MANI	(Pronounced MAH-NEE) 17 years old Black American, W
MAMA	Late-30s, Mexican, W
MS. TOLIVAR	(Pronounced TOLIVER) Early or mid-twenties. Black American, W
STUDENT 1 and 2	Black American or Afrolatinx or Latinx W
STUDENT 3	Black American or Afrolatinx or Latinx M

**Delivery by Jelisa Jay Robinson**

**SCENE 1-September**

*Lights come up on MS. TOLIVAR's English Class. There are pictures of Black, Afrolatino and Latino icons in the walls. The students are loud as hell. The timer goes off.*

MANI

(to audience)

I better get an A in this damn class. We can't never get shit done in here. (to herself) Ms. Tolivar, I love you, but you need to control yo' damn class.

MS. TOLIVAR

(to herself) How do I get their attention? It's 8:00 in the damn morning and they already hype.

(to the students) Alright. Everyone let's get started.

*Students continue what they are doing not paying attention to Ms. Tolivar. She beats on the desk.*

MS. TOLIVAR

Everyone let's get started.

*Students continue.*

MS. TOLIVAR

I'm callin' parents.

MANI

(to herself) That's not gonna matter. Half of their parents' phones are off anyway.

STUDENT 1

With yo' ole burnt toast lookin' ass.

STUDENT 3

Ouiii get em!

STUDENT 2

With yo' ole bad built lookin ass.

STUDENT 3

Oh shit!

MS. TOLIVAR

With yo' ole bout to get a zero lookin' ass.

STUDENT 3

Damn, Ms. Tolivar got on that ass.

*The class erupts into OHHHHH!!!*

MS. TOLIVAR

It's September and y'all already acting a fool? You know what? I'm bout to make an example out of y'all.

*She starts to dial the number.*

STUDENT 1

No! Miss! Don't call my house miss, please. I'm not gonna be able to go to homecoming.

STUDENT 2

Shittt, call my momma! She ain't gon pick up anyway.

STUDENT 3

HAHA!

MS. TOLIVAR

(to STUDENT 3) Quit the laughing. I heard you being messy! I went to school with your sister. Don't make me call her.

MANI

Opp! Okay Ms. Tolivar shuttin' it down. Respect.

MS. TOLIVAR

(to audience) The principal offered me the job, the same day I applied. That should have been clue number one about what I was getting myself into. Oak Klein ain't changed much since I graduated 7 years ago. Trying to get these kids to see writing as a means of telling their stories is not as easy as that white girl in Freedom Writers made it look. Hell, I thought it would be easier because I'm from here. This is like pulling teeth sometimes.

*Students continue to be loud as hell WHILE MS. TOLIVAR is speaking.*

MS. TOLIVAR

I mean I spend most of my time teaching to the test, helping kids who are fumbling over words they should know and yelling "BE QUIET!!!!!!!" in between lessons.

*Students are quiet.*

(To the class) NOW that I finally got your attention! You guys have 10 months until you are in the real world. You need to focus. Come on! Put those pencils down. Let's get back to the prompt: I told you that you could write about whatever you wanted. But I am curious how many of y'all took this opportunity to dig deep and respond to the current state of the world? How many of y'all explored your connection to politics or religion? How many of you---

STUDENT 1

Don't nobody wanna write about politics.

STUDENT 3

My Daddy told me politics is for suckas.

STUDENT 2

Well, I wrote about my first trail ride. That shit was lit!

MS. TOLIVAR

"Don't nobody wanna write about politics." That's a poem! And even though I wanted you to get deep, your personal life is good too. It's all an archive of our current state because politics, religion, and culture is tied into all that. **This is a free write so you get to choose.** You could have written about your homelife. How stressed out you are about senior year. How much you love this class. Your ex-boyfriend or girlfriend.

STUDENT 1

How bout you tell us about your ex-boyfriend?

STUDENT 3

Or girlfriend!

STUDENT 2

Ms. Tolivar don't have no man. She lives with her cats.

STUDENT 3

Damn.

MURDR

Hey! Hey! Not too much on that one.

MANI

Ms. Tolivar, with all due respect, wouldn't it be helpful for you to model what you are askin' us to do.

**MS. TOLIVAR**

**Well, I didn't have anything prepared but I guess I'll spit a little something.**

*MS. TOLIVAR pulls out her notebook and stands tall and proud. MURDR leans in.*

MURDR

I'm ready for this.

MS. TOLIVAR

Each day, when I come in this room, I see your faces  
 My hope is that you're moving forward and transcending these spaces  
 Becoming all you dream to be  
 I hope that I've planted the seed  
 The seed that you will reap when you're a little older  
 When you're standing on life's shaky shoulder  
 Maybe something I've said comes to mind  
 My hope is that I've been helpful and kind  
 That I've inspired you to think outside the box  
 To build up a well when life throws you rocks  
 To see the royalty that I see inside of you  
 Even though you tell me "Miss, it's not true."  
 I hope you know you're the key to the world moving  
 Even when you think no one cares what you're doing  
 We are all watching you speak what you deem true  
 My hope for our tomorrow and our future lies in you

*All of the class is shocked that MS. TOLIVAR can actually do what she is asking her students to do.*

STUDENT 1  
 Okay, Ms. Tolivar!

STUDENT 2  
 That was lame.

STUDENT 3  
 Ms. Tolivar got bars!

MS. TOLIVAR  
 Now, it's your turn. Let's have---

*MS. TOLIVAR looks around the classroom. She bypasses the eager students including MANI and MURDR with their hands up. She settles on the one in the back looking down at his phone.*

JAVIER  
 (to himself/audience) Don't call on me. Ms. Tolivar. Don't call on me. Don't call on me.

MS. TOLIVAR  
 Javier!

JAVIER  
 (to himself/audience) Fuck. Why you gotta call on me?

*JAVIER looks up.*

JAVIER  
 I'm not feelin' it today. I got a lot on my mind.

MS. TOLIVAR

You know what. I'm never feelin' it. But I try. All I'm askin' you to do is try.

JAVIER

Fine, Miss, but I'll try...tomorrow

MURDR

Nah, we want to hear you today.

JAVIER

Shut up Murdr.

MS. TOLIVAR

Nah, speak up Murdr. Let's hear what you got on that paper.

STUDENT 1

He ain't got shit.

STUDENT 2

He fine tho.

MURDR

Oh, you want to hear what I got?

*MURDR clears his throat.*

MURDER

Prepare your ears for the greatest shit you ever heard in your life!

MS. TOLIVAR

Francisco!

MURDR

Call me MURDR miss.

MS. TOLIVAR

Stop all that cussin'... unless it's in a poem.

MURDR

My bad.

This my poem called "On my Momma"

*Students groan. They are tired of MURDR and his antics.*

MURDR

On my Momma, I hate splinters

And cold ass winters

I hate microwave dinners

They taste like shit.  
 And arrogant winners  
 I hate music with no beat  
 And stanky ass feet  
 And teachers that give worksheets  
 On my momma, I hate things that I can't change  
 Like this fucked up world that I have no power to rearrange  
 Speak out they say, make a difference  
 But I'm sitting in a classroom learning alliteration and inference  
 I want to be out in the world spreading my wings  
 Even if it's full of dangerous things  
 I'm courageous and ready to take on the universe  
 It's "expect the best and prepare for the worst"  
 I'll speak up for what I believe in from this moment on  
 Even when my path is narrow, and I walk alone

*Some of the class snaps.  
 Some of them laugh. MURDR  
 snaps for himself.*

MS. TOLIVAR  
 Good job MURDR.

MURDR  
 She was looking at me the whole-time bro.

JAVIER  
 Who?

MURDR  
 Ms. Tolivar fine ass.

JAVIER  
 Bro! That's your teacher.

MURDR  
 And your girl Mani was checkin' me out too.

JAVIER  
 Foreal?

MS. TOLIVAR

Who else is ready to go?

*JAVIER raises his hand.*

JAVIER  
I'll go today.

MS. TOLIVAR  
Let's hear it Javier!

JAVIER  
This poem is dedicated to a girl I been feelin' for a while now.

Okay.  
This is called I love you like...

I LOVE YOU LIKE...

I love you like the sky loves the sun

Dependent on your warm touch, girl you're the only one

Like a burning star, I feel your heat when you come too close

I can't hide what I'm feeling inside; you are what I need the  
most

I love you like the night sky loves the stars

Like the people that design jails love the sound of slamming  
bars

Like young adventurous kids love collecting scars

Like bullshit rappers love bragging about clothes, hoes and cars

I'm just getting warmed up because now I'm spitting bars

I love you like cake loves batter

Like activists love #Blacklivesmatter

Like borrachitos love tequila

Like white girls love kale, humus, Black athletes and pita

I love you like retired teachers love their pension

Like Trump loves attention

Bae, did I forget to mention that I love you?

If I did forget, I'll tell you again until your heart believes me



I'll grant all your wishes, rub the lamp, I'm your genie  
 I love you like my Mama loved...still loves my Dad  
 That real love when you know that it's the best you've  
 ever had

And I'll keep searching until I find someone who loves me too  
 But I was hoping that that person would be you

*STUDENTS clap. They might say Awww in response to his piece.*

MURDR  
 That was alright.

JAVIER  
 Now they lookin' at me. How you like deez nuts?

MS. TOLIVAR  
 Okay boys! Okay! We got time for one more.

MANI  
 I'll go.

MS. TOLIVAR  
 Okay Mani!

*MANI walks up to the front of the classroom. MURDR and JAVIER hang on her every move. It's like she is moving in slow motion.*

MANI  
 This is to all those people who do any damn thing for attention!

You like the spotlight, you live for the fame  
 But what would happen if no one ever knew your name?  
 No 'Attaboys' 'Attagirls' or admiring eyes  
 You'd be left with only you and your lies  
 Your hidden truths that sit deep inside your soul  
 The truths are the only things that make you whole

It's what you rely on to keep you sane

But is approval all you seek to gain?  
You live your life for others and their thoughts  
A slave to their reactions, sold and bought  
Claiming to be a leader but you're following their lead  
I'm hoping this poem will plant a seed  
Stop depending on the media, your fake friends and peers  
Instagram likes, approval and cheers  
Take the time to focus on the deeper truth you hide  
Because it's not about what's out here, but it's what's on the inside

STUDENTS 1, 2, and 3  
YASS QUEEN!!!

MANI  
THANK YOU.

MS. TOLIVAR  
(to the class) That girl is the truth.

*Lights shift.*

MS. TOLIVAR  
(audience) Finally something I can work with. I think that every one of my kids is a gem, but this girl. Mani is going to win. I just know it. She reminds me of me in high school. I'm preparing these students for the annual SENIOR SLAM POETRY Competition. This year the prize money is 1000 dollars for one individual poet and one group. It's somethin' to keep them motivated during Senior Year!

*The bell rings. Students begin to walk out of the class. Javier is a bit silent as he walks out. MS. TOLIVAR taps him on the shoulder.*

MS. TOLIVAR  
You could really be a poet Javier.

JAVIER  
I'm not that good. Mani's the good one.

MS. TOLIVAR

Javier you're brilliant. Just as good as her.

JAVIER

Damn. Really?

MS. TOLIVAR

What?

JAVIER

I mean darn, really?

MS. TOLIVAR

You should think about it.

JAVIER

My Dad wrote these beautiful poems for my mom. Used to perform it for her and everything.

MS. TOLIVAR

You're following in his footsteps.

*MURDR steps back into the room.*

MURDR

Javier! Come on!

JAVIER

She tellin' me about the competition!

MURDR

You didn't ask me if I wanted to be in the competition!

MS. TOLIVAR

That's because you signed up the first day, I mentioned it, Murdr. Have you been working on your poetry?

MURDR

What I need to do that for? I'm a natural.

JAVIER

Because you suck nigga.

MS. TOLIVAR

Javier!

JAVIER

Sorry.

MS. TOLIVAR

All I know is Mani is gonna tear yall asses up in this slam.

MURDR

Ms. Tolivar!

MS. TOLIVAR

What? Class has ended. I can say what I want.

*MS. TOLIVAR EXITS.*

MURDR

Ah, fuck. That girl is gonna murder us. Javier, we need to get her on our team!