

Belicia as a parent in the brief wonderful life of oscar wao



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It is said that “ Children suffer the sins of their parents.” In a more literal sense, many people believe that it is the parents fault for any flaw possessed by the child, not literal “ sin”. People blame the child’s development whether bad or good on their parents, and immediately point a finger at the guardian of a child before blaming the child themselves. Is it really the parents fault if a child has a difficult upbringing, and does it really affect the child as a whole? This point can be further explored in Junot Diaz’ work *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*. Diaz’ novel introduces us to an immigrated Dominican family living in Patterson, New Jersey. We are introduced to the De Leon family that consists of Oscar, the overweight nerd yearning to fit in, Lola, his rebellious sister and Belicia, their immigrant mother who grew up in the Dominican Republic. All three characters face a ton of issues through there tales, and both Oscar and his sister suffer from being singled out and different in comparison to their peers. The two outcasts face an immense amount of grief in the book, but why? We question whether or not their mother, Belcia’s, upbringing, trauma, and a possible fukú, or curse, has anything to do with it. Do these children really suffer the “ sins” of their parent?

In order to examine this, we must first understand Belcia’s background and life pre-Oscar and Lola. Belicia was daughter to two hard working parents, Abelard Cabral, A doctor and Socorro, her nurse mother. Her family lived during the Trujillo dictation in the Dominican Republic which occurred February 1930 to May 1961. Nicknamed El Jefe, or “ The boss”, Rafael Trujillo was one of the most brutal dictators seen in the Americans. Trujillo molded a time of personality cult and bloodshed. He took anything he wanted from

anyone, and if there was any sign of regression, he made them pay for their disloyalty with blood. Trujillo's rule resulted in the deaths of over 50,000 individuals. Trujillo was well known for his sexual appetite, and when he wanted a woman, he took her; there was no saying no to Trujillo. This is where we see the downfall of Belicia's father Abelard. Trying to protect one of his daughters from Trujillo and having to sleep with him, he blatantly lies to him about having an attractive offspring. When Trujillo invites the family to an event including the daughter, and they do not show, Trujillo angrily takes Abelard away to punish him for his treason. He never returns home, and through further tragedy, Belicia loses both of her parents and sister and is orphaned. It is at this point of Abelard's misfortune that the Cabral family's luck diminished. They believed that through Trujillo's terror, a "Fukú" was placed on their family. A fukú is a bad luck curse. "They say it first came from Africa, carried in the screams of the enslaved; that it was the death bane of the Tainos, uttered just as one world perished and another began; that it was a demon drawn into Creation through the nightmare door that was cracked open in the Antilles. Fukú americanus, or more colloquially, fukú—generally a curse or a doom of some kind; specifically the Curse and the Doom of the New World." (1, Diaz) The Dominicans believed the the fukú arrived to the Dominican Republic due to Trujillo. From this point on, Abelard's blood line will suffer never-ending bad luck. "Most of the folks you speak to prefer the story with a super natural twist. They believe that not only did Trujillo want Abelard's daughter, but when he couldn't snatch her, out of spite he put a fukú on the family's ass. Which is why all the terrible shit that happened happened."(243, Diaz)

Knowing the parental background, we can now explore Belicia as an individual and as a parent. Belicia, still living in the Dominican Republic, was adopted by her aunt La Inca after massive abuse from her prior foster parents. It is during her time with La Inca that Belli faces the changes and pressure of growing up as a young girl in her country. Belicia faces bad luck growing up. In school she is shunned by her peers, unnoticed and friendless; her first trauma relevant to the fukú. Once hitting puberty, Belli gains enough confidence in her physical appearance to crawl out of her shell and approach the one boy she fantasized over, Jack Pujols. Jack ended up being son to a colonel for the dictator, involving Belli in a mess of her own. After they are caught having sex in school, she refuses to return back; Her second trauma relevant to the fukú. Finally, the harshest trauma Belicia faces which ends up having her cast out from the Dominican Republic is when she meets "The Gangster." The Gangster becomes one of Bellis love interests in her later years, and after a yo-yo romance with him, she later finds out after getting pregnant with his baby that he is married to Trujillo's sister. After word of the pregnancy gets out, the sister sends minions after Belli where they abduct her, beat her nearly to death in a cane field, and kill her unborn child. It is after this entire trauma that La Inca sends Belli to American for her own safety. Belli faced nothing but trauma her entire life, from her early childhood to her young adult life. She and her family believed that all of this was due to the fukú curse placed on her father. "There are still many, on and off the Island, who offer Beli's near-fatal beating as irrefutable proof that the house of Cabral was indeed victim of a high-level fukú, the local version of House Atreus. Two Truji-líos in one lifetime—what in carajo [the fuck] else could it be? But other heads question that logic, arguing that Beli's survival <https://assignbuster.com/belicia-as-a-parent-in-the-brief-wonderous-life-of-oscar-wao/>

must be evidence to the contrary. Cursed people, after all, tend not to drag themselves out of cane fields with a frightening roster of injuries and then happen to be picked up by a van of sympathetic musicians in the middle of the night who ferry them home without delay to a “mother” with mad connections in the medical community. If these serendipities signify anything, say these heads, it is that our Beli was blessed.” (152, Diaz) The bad luck Belli faced was not only misfortunate, but it also almost led to her death early on in life. After her immigration, she birthed her two children Oscar and Lola. Her relationship with the two children is extremely emotionally sporadic and can come across almost too tough and unloving. Due to the traumas she faced caused by the fukú, she has a hard time building a normal relationship with her children, and an even harder time helping them overcome their own issues. Belli’s bad luck didn’t end in the Dominican Republic either; she is also living with cancer. The trauma she faced in her country essentially molded her personality, and due to this, it has made it impossible for her to have a normal relationship with her children.

Lola, Belicia’s eldest child is a spunky and rebellious character. She is a unique and passionate girl whom often clashes with her mother. Lola and Beli have a conflicting relationship. We see them often butt heads throughout the novel. “You dread conversations with your mother. Those one-sided dressing-downs. You figured that she has to call you in to give you another earful about your diet.” (52, Diaz) Lola’s relationship with her mother is toxic and extremely judgmental from Beli’s end. She does not have a warm, peaceful relationship one would imagine mother and child to have.

Due to the constant argument and disapproval from Beli we see Lola rebel a lot. She takes on the persona of a “punk chick” in which she dresses in all black and shaves her head. Molding her physical appearance to appeal as someone “different”, it places her in the category of an outcast as well, resulting in her having a minimal amount of friends and abnormal relationships with men. Her mother becomes extremely disappointed in her, and lashes nothing but anger and disapproval towards Lola about her physical appearance and individual personality. In a sense, Lola does it because her mother hates it. Lola also runs away from home to Wildwood to live with a boyfriend. It seems as if Lola’s actions are done purposely to upset her mother. We see the situation between the two clearly when at the dinner table Belicia announces her cancer to her children. Instead of any sympathy, Lola literally blows off her mother’s announcement and just looks at her and says “Can you please pass the salt?” (63, Diaz) She then continues by saying “This time I hope you die from it.” (63, Diaz) Beli’s lack of affection and attention towards her daughter drove Lola to act out. In acting out she was seeking any sort of attention she could from her mother, even if it was negative. It makes you wonder if the way Beli acts towards Lola created the hatred in Lola. Is this Lola’s personality, or Belicia’s influence?

Next, we have Belicia’s son Oscar De Leon. Oscar is the text book definition of a “nerd”. He is constantly caught up in video games and fantasy worlds, dismissing himself from reality any chance he can get. Not only is Oscar a nerd, but he is severely overweight and almost completely lacking any and all social skills. “Dude wore his nerdiness like a Jedi wore his light saber or a

Lensman her lens. Couldn't have passed for Normal if he'd wanted to" (23, Diaz) we see Oscar face so much trouble when it comes to fitting in. He has two friends initially, who are barely friends, and eventually not part of his life, and no sense in how to act with women. As we follow Oscar throughout the novel, we see the torture he faces from a young age to his adult life. He is made fun of, singled out, and overall, outcasted. We see him face the same issues through high school, and college. Overall, his displacement leads him into depression, and he tries to kill himself by jumping off of a bridge. Oscar survives, and after recovery, still continues from where we left off. He even has issues as an adult in his jobs. Even as a teacher, a higher-up, kids still found ways to make fun of him. " His heart wasn't in it, and boys of all grades and dispositions shitted on him effusively. Students laughed when they spotted him in the halls. Pretended to hide their sandwiches." (264, Diaz) Oscar yearns to fit in, to be normal, to be loved. He never had any of these things his entire life, and towards the end of the work we see Oscar finally feel these things when he meets Ybon; a prostitute he falls in love with while visiting the Dominican Republic. He wants a normal life so bad, he ignores all of the issues that came with Ybon: her profession, her Trujillo inspired ex-boyfriend, and all of the drama attached to her. The hunger for a normal life is so great in Oscar that it eventually leads to his downfall. Refusing the idea of loving another other than Ybon ruins him. Though he does finally have sex with Ybon, and feel what he'd wanted to feel his whole life, he accepts it as his end. Ybon's ex ends up killing Oscar in a cane field, and Oscar welcomes death with open arms. He figured that once he felt what he'd always wanted to feel, it would be okay for his life to end. " He wrote he couldn't believe he had 7 to wait for this so god damn long! So <https://assignbuster.com/belicia-as-a-parent-in-the-brief-wonderous-life-of-oscar-wao/>

this is what everybody's been talking about! Diablo! If only I'd known, the beauty! The beauty!" (335, Diaz) Oscar sacrificed himself for the chance to finally feel "normal". Oscar's lack of any attention at all, from his peers or mother caused him to internalize his issues. He bottled everything in and lived in his own world. Perhaps if he and his mother established a stronger relationship, Oscar may have developed easier than he had.

So do children really suffer the "sins" of their parents? In the case of the Cabral family, the answer is yes. Belicia's traumas in the Dominican Republic absolutely affected the lives of her children in multiple ways. The fukú placed on the family carried down from Abelard, into Belicia, causing her a difficult upbringing, and into her children, creating issues for them as well. The fukú affected Oscar more than Lola, giving him initial bad luck from the start of his life, and leading him into facing similar circumstances as his mother, which eventually ended up killing him. In Lola's case, the fact that her mother was so traumatized from the situations she faced in the Dominican Republic, essentially made her mother irrational, and unstable. If Belicia did not experience what she had, she would not have developed the unstable traits that caused her to act "crazy" with Lola. Her treatment of Lola is what creates the issues Lola has. Children model everything a parent does and incorporate what they see in their own lives. A parent's reaction to trauma and stress affects their children. Oscar and Lola, whether affected by the fukú or not, face the issues they have in their lives because of Belicia, intentional or not.

Works Cited Diaz, Junot. *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*. New York: Riverhead, 2007. Print.
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