

# Looking back and forward



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Comfortable life In my younger years I had some pretty distorted views about the world around me thanks to my parents, mostly my mother, but as I have grown up and am now an adult those views have changed immensely and made me a better person. My name is Justine Fir and I grew up in a decent sized town called Fullerton, California. Let me backtrack a second. I was born in Dallas, Texas, but raised by my adopted parents in Southern California from age 3 months until 18 years old. Fullerton was your standard definition of a town for people who were of the upper middle class to the lower upper class income classifications.

This paper is being written with the intent to describe to you how my upbringing at a very early age, my own secretly kept views, and later events in my adolescence has shaped me into who I am today. I am from a neighborhood of folks who are well off financially with decent sized houses and nice cars. My parents, Marinate and Robert Fir, were very well off. He was a Cardiovascular Surgeon, and she just left a high end nursing job to raise me and my younger sister Mary. Being the oldest of the two, although not by much, I got spoiled more and learned early on how to get what I wanted by keeping my mouth shut and staying on mom's good side.

My dad was one of the sweetest, most level headed guys one would want to know unless mom was around and then it was like a complete transformation into someone unpleasant within minutes. My mom pretty much was on the same level as the Rockefellers. Everything with her, from A-Z, had to be the very top of the line, brand labeled stuff. I pretty much grew up with a golden spoon in my mouth. Now one would think that this was the high life and a dream come true but let me tell you it was not all it was cracked up to be.

I found out very early on that my mom's way of showing love was through the all time American symbol we all cherish and aspect called the Dollar. " Here is a hundred dollars now get out of my face and I will give you \$300 for every A on your report card and \$250 for every B as long as you keep up good grades and do not tarnish our reputation, she would say. " Then when I got the A I was told " What, you couldn't get an A+? " Don't get me wrong, I loved my mom, but she was the most hateful, snobbish person that people hated crossing paths with.

If their friends or mine were not Caucasian, then they were bad people and she would make snide comments about them. So you can imagine how it sat with me that my Dad's partner, and owner of the medical practice, was from Honk Kong and wealthier than we were. Her intolerance did not stop at race alone but branched out to people of different lifestyles or religions like the Gays or Muslims. The comments she would make like " All gays should be put on an Island and blown up" really made me uncomfortable in general especially since she did not care who heard her or where we were.

This upbringing had me in a whirlwind. I was being taught that every person who was not white, catholic, and straight was an outcast but all the while struggling in my mind to fight this knowing that at age 9 I was only interested romantically in guys. Needless to say this was something that I could not divulge to anyone until I was out of the house. My dad was nothing like this unless my mother was within ear shot. At first glance anyone would think this was a complete nightmare and all around bad situation but I will explain later why this was actually a blessing in disguise and made me who I am today.

Erie Frontbencher alludes to the important people in our lives as being a part of our micro-system and I fully agree (Witt & Mossier, 2010). I bet you are wondering why I made that last comment about making me who I am today and also curious as to who among the most important people in my life back then was the top one. Surprise, the top one was my mom Marinata. It was through the way she treated people and looked at the world that I said to myself " There is no way, under any circumstances, that I will grow up being that snobby and that judgmental. I was determined to treat others equally and as I would want to be I can help people and make a difference. My dad was an amazing man. It was through watching him that I learned how to tolerate her. The simple answer to that was to ignore her or occasionally nod in agreement even though I was opposed to what she had just said or did. He also taught me that money was not everything and that treating people differently based on the size of their pocket books was wrong. I really looked up to him and valued his input more than he probably will ever know.

My neighbors truly helped me through this tough time as they were all real people just being who they were naturally, not caring 100% what others thought or my mom. I was able to vent to them and relax my guard to them although still not on the fact that I was gay. Without them in my life I probably would have exploded. So you probably saw in my outline that I listed the man at the ice rink as being an important influence in my life. I was between the ages of nine and twelve when my mom decided I should take up ice skating. She had always waved hi to this nice guy who drove the machine to clear and clean the ice.

One day I decided to wave back. She fiercely started back at me and said " I do not want that AIDS infested faggot coming over here. " This both hurt and shocked me. When she was not around I would talk with him about his life and how he was doing. He confided in me about how he was in fact gay and had AIDS. He also told me how much Marinate dated him for that and could not understand why she did the phony waves and smiles. I looked up to him for having the courage to be himself and to not let the words or actions of others influence him.

I was probably 15 when I last visited my grandma, Rose, in San Francisco with a friend of mine. We were there with my dad who was visiting his father in the hospital dying. Rose and I were discussing random things when out of the blue she said " Love is love and rare to find. " I was completely stunned and speechless at this comment. Not only had she then known he was more than a friend but was okay with it. It was at that moment that I knew once I made the decision to finally come out to my parents that I would never hide who I was meant to be. That people are people just trying to live the best life they can while on this earth.

I read an article that goes along with what I have been writing about and it states that the foundation of who we are today is influenced by the people who have input of any kind in our life, I. E. Parents, caregivers, siblings, relatives, teachers, churches, sports teams, clubs, friends, employers, employees, work mates, and so on. How we choose to interpret those experiences is unique to us (Essence Holistic, 2012). So as I kind of alluded to in the above paragraphs, I am determined one day to be in a position

where I can help people from all walks of life and let them know someone cares and is looking out for their best interests.

That is why I am choosing to go into the social science major and then further that with a counseling degree. My goal is to hold groups and help people with HIV/AIDS which is something I have since I was around 10 years old I have been dreaming of my prince charming sweeping me off my feet and growing old together while having many adventures and building a life together. A lot of people are jaded on this idea but I think this fairy tale romance can and does exist. It is just rare to find.

Although I too am leery at this happening in this stage of my life, I still hold onto that hope. I feel getting a stable career will further pave the way for this happening. In the end I just want what most of us want and that is a stable place to lay our heads with a companion at our sides to share the good and bad times and just be comfortable without too many stresses and worries. Looking back, due to my upbringing, I would never have dreamed that I'd be an openly, proud gay man with friends of all ages and from all walks of life whom I value equally.

It was because of those times and the struggles once I left home over the last 15 plus years that has landed me here today realizing that a people-oriented career is what I desire. I am looking forward to utilizing this knowledge and becoming an even better person driven to help others open their eyes. As mentioned above, I was exposed to many distorted views about society and the world around me due to the way my mother was. This was then of course furthered by my own realization of who I was. Although

our support groups may throw off active vibes and may be self centered, it does not have to be a bad thing nor predetermine our own destiny.