

Dear D,

If I told you that you transformed my life, would you believe me? When we met for our final session, you cried and told me that counseling saved you - that I was like your light and counseling had changed you.

But how you changed me might be the real miracle.

Your culture taught you that your curved and rounded body was desirable.

My culture taught me that anything other than smooth, thin lines needed to be hidden and fixed.

Yours taught you to speak, to stand for yourself, to fight back.

Mine taught me to be silent, to suppress and oppress.

I never felt like I fit.

And when we met your culture told you not to trust me. In many ways, you were right. I knew it in the way you looked at me, in your body language - back slightly turned, head down, annoyance in your voice.

So I decided to do my best to let go; of anything I thought I was supposed to be because I'm white, of anything I thought you were supposed to be because you're black, of the barriers of history and society that fight to separate us.

You know what happened? Though we retained our race we became *people*; normal, imperfect, loveable people. We discovered that though our stories were different, our experiences were shared.

Here is what I wish I could tell you:

You helped me love and accept my body.

Years upon years I spent starving it, over-exercising it, filling it in secret with peanut m&m's and brownies.

Years upon years I spent loathing my body's various parts, researching liposuction and hot wraps and detox teas.

Then you. 14 year old you.

All of a sudden, I fit.

Thank you.

You carried out an act of God and you didn't even know it. You helped me heal.

You are off at college now and you are beginning to study psychology. You are thinking about becoming a counselor yourself, or a therapeutic mentor for other young women of color, so as to help as you were helped.

It doesn't feel right - that I should be so honored to have watered and fed this desire in you. I am just a broken person helping other broken people. I can only surmise that the God of the Universe was in this with us. He was in the creation of me, He was in the creation of you, and He was in the bringing of us together.

Someday you might decide to seek Him and to determine for yourself what this whole "God" and "Christian" thing is. In the meantime, I have a little surprise for you.

You are already doing His work. I am so proud of you. No matter what you decide to do professionally, I will be taking your lessons with me for a lifetime.

I love you,

J