



Handout - *A Street Called Dolores Huerta*, Nikki Darling

Nikki Darling is a Los Angeles-based poet, novelist, essayist, activist, and visual and performance artist. Darling's music criticism and essays have appeared in the Los Angeles Times, LA Weekly, Art Book Review, Tomorrow Magazine, and Public Books.

I grew up driving down streets that had the names of great men. Men I admired. Men who inspired me to look inward and find my courage, voice and value. I grew up driving down streets named after men. Great men. Men I should seek to find. Men I should hold other men accountable to. There are great men. Your violent words and actions do not and will not find a place in my life. The names of these men showed me what men could be. What men were capable of. I grew up driving down streets named after men.

These men however, despite their greatness, I was driving down streets I could never grow into. I could never be, you see, a great man.

What then would it be to drive down a street named Dolores Huerta? What would it feel like and where would it go?

Would it cross seventeen when I hated who I saw in the mirror? Or the corner I turned when at 31 I finally had the courage to dump an emotionally abusive man?

Who would drive it? The mothers who get up at 5 am to take their children to relatives willing to watch them while they went to work to put food on a table from an employer who did not offer childcare?

Would it be tended by the hands of women bloody from years of bending over to pick strawberries? Would it cross the place my car broke down at 19 and I had to hike home covered by a blanket afraid that men might see me?

Would it cross the place other women came together to weave a wider road? My guess is it would not be tended regularly and perhaps the journey would be rough from potholes and city neglect, but it would be travelled. It would take me somewhere. What would it be like to drive down a street named Dolores Huerta? It would be like taking a journey down a road I knew was meant for me. A road I knew had been travelled before my arrival. A street that although at times difficult would lead me someplace finer and that perhaps my traffic would demand new and better roads. I have driven down streets named after great men. A street named Dolores Huerta would be a street worth seeing. It would be valuable. It is necessary and urgent. Let us come together and build it. We need desperately someplace to go.