

A letter of appreciation  
By Tin Nguyen, Dec. 1, 2017

“The Why”

Dear Teri;

I recently saw a movie, and there was a phrase that registered into my heart. It’s “Collateral Benefits.” Therefore, allow me to speak on your collateral benefits. Your donations to the Paws For Life (PFL) dogs are primary, yet, like a stone thrown in a pond, it causes ripples, and I am a beneficiary of one of those ripples.

For approximately 30 years, I had lived in anger, hate and indifference, like “whatever.” This attitude, behavior, and mentality started very young. I remember growing up was confusing. At school I had to be American, while at home I was to be Vietnamese, which consisted of the typical Asian culture including corporal punishment. I used to envy my American friends who got sent to their room and grounded, while I would receive a belt to the buttock or chopsticks to my tiny fingers. They received encouragement, “Oh babe, you do better next time,” I would get “You’re dumber than a cow,” or if I was lucky, I was called “dumb as a cow.” I was only seven or eight, tops.

School was no better. There were the constant ching-chong or dirty gook, smacks on the head, or punches to the chest. These were everyday occurrences. A vivid memory was experiencing my face in the dirt with a BMX wheel pinning me to the ground because I didn’t get out of the rider’s way fast enough. Yet, his friends had plenty of space to ride pass me. With dirt in my mouth, blood dripping from my nose, fear in my heart and humiliation in my soul, the rider continued to ride over me with one last assault, “you should have moved,” he then spit at the back of my head. However, what hurt most was as I was picking up my books with a cascade of tears, NO ONE helped, and some even laughed. Teri, I remember the anger and hate crept into my young heart as I cried on my way home, and even more that night.

The anger and hate eventually consumed me, and my life turned dark. Love was so close, just around the bend and waiting for me to make that turn. So close, and yet so far and foreign. Love would call for me, pleading and praying, yet, I refused to even acknowledge her existence, for my world was cold and dark; hate, I worshiped. Over three decades, hate tyrannously ruled my life, and even though during my incarceration, I made attempts to change my life; however, they were not out of fear of the consequence, never genuine. There was no “**Why**” to my attempts, until the dogs and PFL. Like a blind man, these dogs led me out of my cold dark world, and helped me to turn that bend where the “**Why**”, Love, was waiting with her open arms, and into her warm comforting embrace. The PFL dogs led me “Home.”

Thank you so much, your donations made it possible for me to live with purpose, live with “**Love.**”