

‘Dear Self: You are Enough’: Cynthia Torres, Trailblazing the Truth of Identity through Service and Self-Talk



BY: RACHEL BOOHER

In a world that needs humility and kindness, Cynthia Torres is the first person who would lend a helping hand to those in need. An advocate for mental health and an inspiration to her fellow students, Cynthia has participated in multiple types of service work. Her resilience in helping others find peace, healing, and their true identities, both spiritual and psychological, is reflected by a long list of community activism and her modest nature. Support groups, assisting clients with substance abuse, and facilitating classes in women’s prisons has enabled Cynthia to discover her true calling: to become a licensed counselor. Her involvement with service led her to the decision to return to college and pursue a career with selfless drive.

A first-generation college student, Cynthia, or “Cyndi,” attended several colleges before deciding on MTSU. After transferring to MTSU, Cyndi majors in Psychology and minors in Music and University Honors. She is the recipient of several awards, including the Honors Transfer Fellowship, the Paul Martin Scholarship, and the June Anderson full tuition scholarship, just to name a few. She has expressed extreme gratitude to the Honors College, going as far as to say she chose MTSU

because of the Honors program. Cyndi stated “I remember when Dean Vile called to offer me the Transfer Fellowship...I was so excited. It was a very special moment for me.” Attending a new university can create anxiety and concern, but Cyndi felt her worries ease because she had a clear goal and the support offered by the people in the Honors College. Mrs. Albakry, Honors advisor for transfer students, has been one of Cyndi’s strongest resources. Navigating the academic world is difficult and confusing, but Mrs. Albakry has been an oasis of solutions when the struggles became overwhelming. “Being in the honors college gave me a place to be... I was not alone among the mass of people; I had a home.”

Cyndi is also a non-traditional student and is well-respected in the classroom for her diligence. She is never afraid to speak up, ask questions, and double check that she has a clear understanding of the topics discussed. Above all, her love for people and service shines in all she has accomplished. Her gentle nature makes her an approachable person and she passes judgement on no one. As a child, Cyndi grew up dealing with various struggles, but none was more prominent than those of identity. She struggled with food, was taught to use food as a tool but was then scolded for gaining weight. Baffled and conflicted, Cyndi believed the lies about herself, molding those experiences into her identity. The clearest message she received during childhood was “Something is wrong with me.” This was the beginning of her entrance into the world of mental health, recovery, and identity lies.

Time does not heal the wounds of the mind, but therapy and hard work begin the process of reclaiming peace of mind and spirit. Where Cyndi saw a need, she sought to fill that void. One of her first service endeavors was creating a support group for people who had been affected by adultery. “Nashville did not have a group so I created one,” and Cyndi was very intentional about the materials that they would cover. She would personalize the process for each meeting, assisting members in learning to forgive and to become better versions of themselves. This led to her becoming a facilitator of theotherapy in women’s prisons. Theotherapy contains faith-based protocols for inner healing and, in 2014, after attending various sessions, Cyndi trained to become a facilitator. As a facilitator, Cyndi could bring classes into the women’s prisons in Nashville. Cyndi relayed that “Theotherapy focuses on the lies we have been given and believed about ourselves, targeting past trauma and painful experiences, affirming the truth about self and what God says about himself and who we are.” After the pandemic eases, she will resume holding meetings and conferences at various times during the year.

Cyndi’s goal to become a counselor was highly influenced

by her service in the women’s prison system. “Their stories are inspiring and motivate me to continue helping women discover their own true identities and watching them transform into different people is incredible.” These experiences, combined with her own journey of self-identity, encouraged her to research the topic of identity and self-talk. Cyndi’s thesis, directed by Dr. Thomas Brinthaupt, is called Gender Differences in Self-Talk: Content Infrequency and it emphasizes how gender affects how humans speak to themselves. Self-talk is something we do all the time, every day, and we do not always realize what we tell ourselves. Cyndi sought answers to questions like: How does gender affect self-talk and how does it influence how we speak to ourselves? Is it positive or negative? How do men and women influence each other’s self-talk? Most of the research involved gender differences across different fields and in certain environments. Depending on what women and men struggle with or how they view themselves, their perception of the world alters. Self-talk creates a lens through which we view the world outside of ourselves.

Cyndi indicated that her primary objective was to discover if gender had an influence on self-talk. In her conclusion, Cyndi detailed that “What I discovered is that men are at a disadvantage because they are mentally more compartmentalized, whereas women are more open cognitively... and are thinking about how their actions will affect others, as well as how people look at their actions.” If a couple or individual is struggling with communication, these findings can and will affect how therapy is performed. As a result of these discoveries, Cyndi feels even more motivated to help both women and men. “I want to create a new class for couples, to help them develop their sense of self, discover the truth about themselves and about each other, and even help them realize that how they view themselves influences how they communicate with each other.” Dr. Brinthaupt also holds Cyndi in high regard and had this to say concluding their research together: “I believe Cyndi has excellent academic skills, work habits, and temperament. She is an outstanding example of a ‘centered’ student who is comfortable in her own skin. She has great promise as a future productive and influential leader.”

Cynthia Torres graduates Spring 2022 and has been accepted at Regent University to attain her master’s degree.

Cyndi’s thesis research further supports her academic undertakings, as well as her desire to continue to humbly serve the community. As previously mentioned, Cyndi has a minor in Music, but a special fact is that she has already written published music. In 2017, Cyndi went to Ireland to write music with Irish singer, Justin McGurk. Together, they wrote a song called “You Are,” which was used in a commercial that featured the first Irish model with down syndrome. This song embodies how Cyndi views herself and everyone else in the world. “We are all beautiful,” and Cyndi believes that everyone deserves the chance to see this truth within their own identity.