

## **Personal Statement by Julie Danao-Salkin**

The reasons why I coach.

I change the molecules in the air with the energy of words that resonate with my life experiences. I affect people with my worldview and heart. I never believed I was smart and growing up, my teachers reminded me how I was hopeless. I dropped out of college, believing it impossible for me to ever accomplish. I thought I could never be a singer or actor, because the color of my skin and my gender would shut doors. There was only one teacher who stood by me, to tell me that I had talent. I still refused to hear him. So, I quit college. But then came a storm.

When Hurricane Andrew came and destroyed my family's home, I had lost my ego. I had lost my ability to judge myself. I had lost my material things, and my family's immigrated dream. It was at that moment, as I was driven by the numbness of shock, dirt, debris, flooding and a crushed home, that I had decided that I was no longer going to hear how I was hopeless, that my chances of success were limited. I had lost everything already. The simple truth of the matter was that Andrew had given me more than just devastation. It gave me love and respect for my family, and the courage to know that losing everything means gaining everything. I have nothing to lose if I give my all. I was a Broadway performer. I am currently a lecturer in a university, a lucky wife, a mom to two gorgeous children, and I am a college graduate. I finished what I thought I couldn't do. I do well when I have lost everything, because the truth is, there is never a loss, only gain. I now believe that my writing will help me gain even more. I want the opportunity to share with all who believe they are held back from limitations that they can accomplish anything, with determination.

Writing and speaking has played a huge role in my life. Growing up in a house with a strong father who could not help but express himself except with yelling, as he was always on edge, and he worked in loud airline environment, my mother taught me to write my feelings in a journal. My journal was my best friend. When I was picked on as a child, I wrote about my bullies. When I started to have crushes with boys in my pre-teens, I wrote about how we would get married and how our kids looked. When I was sexually harassed and didn't know how to talk about it, my journal kept me alive. Writing has always been my powerful tool to cope with life.

I started learning about artists and writers. I was obsessed by the book called “Siddhartha.” I loved poems by Emily Dickinson and Maya Angelou. I loved prolific political songs from the group, U2. I loved reading about Paulo Coelho and his translated Brazilian versions, from the “Alchemist” to Tony Morrison’s “Beloved.” I also learned about the Harlem Renaissance and the amazing plight and journey of black artists, musicians, and writers. My favorite book is “Their Eyes Were Watching God” by Zora Neale Hurston, set in Florida and written with such history, pain, and depth. She wrote of a hurricane. It was that book that inspired me most. I became an artist, not just a performer or actor.

I became a Broadway performer, spanning 5 shows, on Broadway and Tours. I became a poet and songwriter as well and was published in a movie and soundtracks for song cycles. I performed my cabaret, and my works in some of the most prestigious halls like Carnegie Hall and Alice Tully Hall, etc. However, it wasn’t until I became a mom that I knew my presence had a greater calling.

My aspirations are to write and speak about the moments that I have lived and are now living through Autism, motherhood, ethnic identification, love, death, etc. I know how to affect a room with performance, but I also know that words are powerful. It is the key to open the door of enlightenment for those that seek their epiphanies. I have many of them.

I’ve been able to accomplish getting my undergraduate in Interdisciplinary Studies BA degree online as well as my minor in Music during the death of my father and the diagnosis of my youngest daughter’s Autism. Since Hurricane Andrew, I have been tested even further in life with crisis on the scale that would wither most away. Art, music, writing, speaking, singing, dancing, etc. have saved me. Will I be able to balance a life working independently? I already have and will even more so if opportunities open. My biggest goal is to share my daughter’s Autism. She is the fuel to my inspiration. I am looking forward to developing my voice as I am currently working on my Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing.

I am looking forward to hearing your story.

Video submission: <https://vimeo.com/336004009>