

Manual for the poster.

A story by the *Pearla Geal* book club



“Quand on veut, on peut”

Inspired by La Délicatessen de David Foerkinos
Translated in Spanish, Irish and English



My story started about 20 years ago, when I entered the world as a very tiny and underweight premature. In combination with the cerebral palsy I had acquired I had to fight to make it through. My left hand and leg would be paralysed for the rest of my life and doctors said I wouldn't be able to walk and talk. / Now I'm a young woman, I graduated successfully and last year I got my bachelordiploma in French, Irish and Spanish. Currently I am living in Nîmes (France) to teach English in three different schools. I already did an exchange program in Nîmes before and I also went on Erasmus in Barcelona. My next commitment started when I was elected as Erasmus Ambassador of Ireland. / In this book you can read my story. My journey about the daily barriers I overcome and about my motivation and drive to live my life in the best way I can. This is the story of Pearla Geal known as 'Jessica Gough'.

Keywords: positive thinking – never giving up – being nice to the people around you – being thankful for what you got.



Steunpunt
Inclusief
Hoger
Onderwijs

This portrait of Jessica was created by Jessica, Delphine Callewaert and Delfien Versaevel, under the authority and guidance of SIHO.

Sidewalk



This picture shows the side walk that Jessica has to use to get to one of the schools she teaches. The image reflects the daily physical barriers that Jessica has to overcome and the determination that she has to not let them hold her back. Also, on our visit we could see how little obstacles as parked cars on the sidewalk can make her life more difficult.

“I can show you the route to one of my schools! The sidewalks are in very bad condition and I have to take them every day. I’ll take the worst side of the street so you can see how many obstacles there are. When we return I’ll take the other side, it’s also in a bad condition, but it’s a little better.”

The library



This picture shows the library in Nîmes. Jessica goes there a few times a month. The language department is her favorite department, Jessica has a passion for languages and literature but she also likes 'sociolinguistics'. For example, for her paper at university she chose to write on the sociolinguistics of 'La Langue d'oc (Occitan)', a regional language that is used in the southern part of France.

"I do not only like different languages, but also the culture that is behind those languages."

Jewelry shop



This is a photo of a jewelry shop in Nîmes. Jessica likes to stop there sometimes to look at all the sparkles and glints. She loves beautiful things. And even if she doesn't buy the jewelry - because it's so expensive - she likes it to just have a look at them.

Graduation



The picture of Jessica's graduation shows Jessica as a young, successful woman supported by two very important people in her life: her mom and her dad. Jessica's mom and dad supported their daughter through thick and thin and one of us was able to meet them when Jessica participated in a conference as Erasmus ambassador in Brussels. (Her parents came from Ireland to Brussels to help Jessica during the conference.) Jessica has a very good relationship with her parents and family.

"My parents can be protective of me (especially my dad), because they don't want anything to happen to

me. But still they gave me the freedom to go abroad, because they want me to be happy."

Jessica graduated at the faculty of languages in Spanish, Irish and English. After her undergraduate degree she wanted to take a year off to give her mind some rest, that's why she's a year in Nîmes right now. Next year she hopes she will be doing her masters in Conference Interpreting, but sometimes she's worried about it because the places are limited and she has to be accepted.

"I'm taking a year off now. I have studied very hard for four years and I wanted to take a break before I go on to the masters. I wanted a moment to clear my head and to enjoy life. I think everyone needs a break sometimes."

"I really hope that I will be accepted for the masters, because I don't want to have to resort to plan B. I want to do Conference Interpreting, because I would love to become an interpreter for the European Commission one day."

Hot chocolate



Jessica loves chocolate and when one of us visited her we discovered the place where they have the best hot chocolate in Nîmes. Jessica heard of the place but she had never been there before. We got there and the next day Jessica already wanted to go back.

"I discovered this place just now. But I should definitely come back here! If someone would help me out of the door I could come here to meet up with friends or to read a book!"

School



On this picture you can see one of the French schools where Jessica teaches English. Jessica teaches in a nursery school, a primary school and in a secondary school. The schools were appointed to her and sometimes she has the feeling that the teachers don't like the fact that she's there. She thinks the teachers don't like it that the children learn English, because they already have problems with the other subjects that are given.

"The schools where I teach include a lot of children from various different backgrounds with all kinds of problems. It's sometimes hard to see the difficult conditions in which they live. Learning another language is not their priority."

Erasmus - Barcelona



After her first international experience in Nîmes, Jessica went on Erasmus to Barcelona. She would recommend everyone to do it. She learnt a lot while she was there and she worked very hard to get good grades. Unfortunately the assistant who lived with her was not always a good help. She didn't like her job and she never took Jessica anywhere. However, Jessica considers the overall Erasmus experience as extremely positive because of the friends she made and because of the academic experience she gained as a direct result of her Erasmus. She feels that she has made connections that will sustain her personally, professionally and academically for the rest of her life. For example, her friends on Erasmus made the

experience very positive for her and she still has a good relationship with them today, two years later.

“As an Erasmus ambassador I find it important to talk about the positive aspects of going abroad. But also I want to use my position for creating opportunities for people who have a disability. For example, I think it would be useful if people could receive a list of assistants of the city that their going. The students with a disability should also be able to meet them first so that they can choose someone they like and get along with.”

“When I was on Erasmus in Barcelona I only saw the inside of my school. I didn't have the opportunity to see a lot of the city because of my assistant. That's why I travelled there with my parents afterwards, I wanted to see the beauty of Barcelona.”

Erasmus Ambassador



In the last photo we see Jessica as Erasmus student Ambassador for Ireland. She's giving a speech where she is positive about her Erasmus experience but where she also wants to give voice to students with a disability by proposing measures to improve the experience for other students who are planning to go abroad.

"I was so nervous when I had to give that speech. I was really relieved when it was over, because I was in a lot of stress at that moment."

Summary text

Under the book we used some space to give a little summary of Jessica's story. The summary starts by referring to the difficult start of her live and shows how she became the young woman she is today. A woman who uses her strength and her positive thinking to reach her goals.