

Remembering Tori

Brian Hanson-Harding, October 4, 2017

I had the privilege of having Tori in my high school English classes two years in a row: in junior honors English and in senior AP English. Tori was the kind of student who made me love teaching, who kept me happy and fulfilled in the classroom after (at the time) 25 years, who made me look forward to going to work every day. She was full of opinions, wit, ideas. She had a lot to say in class, and even more to say in her writing. Even now that I have been retired from teaching for over two years, I still have several of her papers in my "model papers" folders on my computer. I chuckle to think I called them model papers, because the thinking was so sophisticated, the language so artful and quirky, that any student I showed them to must have been immediately daunted, wondering, "How can I live up to this?" But Tori was so original, so honest in her use of language. It was a joy to read what she wrote. She was very serious about poetry and she had very high standards. A student like Tori would make me sit up and pay attention and really think about what I was giving my students. So much of Tori's writing is dense and complex and beautiful, but I give you here just a snippet of the beginning of her college essay, that I think says a lot about her: "I am a 'poet with a vengeance.' I can describe the scent of spring, the weightlessness of fledgling love, and the colors brought forth by moonlight." She was indeed a poet with a vengeance, and I will always remember her.