

To Whom It May Concern...

Teacher Inspires Student to Write Novel

by **Ericka Wellner**



There was a time in Nadia Dunlap's life that was rooted in depression. She was unable to afford textbooks and was mustering through financial strife, a life-saving surgery and the death of her grandmother all at once.

But relief came in 2009, when she met her criminal justice instructor Kim Karlberg.

"I needed something good to happen," says Dunlap. "And that good thing was walking into Mrs. Karlberg's office."

She was taking an online course with Karlberg and as midterms approached, she needed to borrow a textbook. The two had never met so it was a surprise to Dunlap when—while introducing herself—Karlberg recognized her name from the class's message board.

Like each of the students taking the course, Dunlap had been responding to questions posed on message boards, but unlike the other students she was answering short essay questions with elaborate scenarios, characters and plots.

And so Karlberg suggested Dunlap write a novel, based on her class writings.

"I felt as though she could help so many people ... she has over come so much adversity in her life that her stories must be shared for others to learn how to overcome the same," Karlberg says.

That following summer, Dunlap began her writing "To Whom it May Concern ... In the Struggle"—a compilation of stories about personal strife.

Though Dunlap was struggling through personal anguish of her own, her stories are fictitious. Writing them, she says, was therapeutic.

"The hardest part of beginning the process was learning to believe in myself," she says. "I had totally given up but Mrs. Karlberg gave me a reason to believe again. I needed something good to happen and that good thing was walking into her office."

Dunlap spent the next year and a half writing, editing and publishing her novel.

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- Kim Karlberg
Criminal Justice Instructor

"I was shocked when reading her discussion boards. They were such powerful and fulfilling writings," Karlberg says. "Her writing style is unlike any ... I have ever read. It shouted, 'I'm going to be a great writer!'"

"You can let pain do one of two things, bring you down or be your motivation and it has made me want to help people," says Dunlap. "I've been blessed with the opportunity to write this book. I've always wanted a "Cinderella" story of my own and this has been it."