The Empty Chair
Laura Bestler

Many years
An empty chair
Sitting
From my childhood kitchen
Sitting at the kitchen table
Dark walnut wood
Wooden dowels woven with rattan
Unravelling
Peas on my plate
Timer running
Ding
Mom moved out
The chair stayed
Empty
House lost
Bankruptcy
Moving out
My father gave me the chair
The empty chair
Brought to college
Art student
Pell Grant
The chair sat
Sad
Worked four jobs
Over-involved
Over-achiever
Chalking
Oppression
War of words
War of necessity?
Recession
Graduation
Jobless
Minnesota
Furniture sales
American dream during a recession
Overpriced suburban living room apartment
Voiceless
An option
Graduate school
No clue
Paid to work with students
Chair packed in a Ryder truck
Michigan
60 minute drive
10 to 20 inches of lake effect snow
70 hours of work a week
Hours of reading
Writing
Designing
Late night programs
Comfortable setting
The chair held a book bag
Vigor
Iowa
Small private college
Old musty residence hall
Dispensable people
Disposable ideas
Voiceless
Gone
Big 12
Infinite hours
Worked
Learned
Knew
Oppression
Anxiety
Emergency dean calls
Accidents
Suicides
Tragedies
Sad news
Families
Friends
Tears
Mourned
Depression
Fatigue
Chair
No voice
Empty
Left campus
Left dreams
Left comfort
The right reason
The chair stood
Breathe
Took the bus
Empty faces
Empty houses
Empty chairs
My job
My school
My relationship
Disconnected
I chose to return to school
I chose to come back to campus
I chose to leave my husband
He left
Empty house
Chair transformed to a nightstand
Dream
Write
Design
Create
Collaborate
Connected
My chair is filled
Voice