

Dear World,

I love the holidays. It wasn't always that way.

When I was a teen, I dreaded them. I wished I could close my eyes and sleep from Thanksgiving straight through New Year's and never wake up. While all the other kids were hanging out together during winter break, I was in my room, praying the phone would ring. I was the school outcast, bullied for the same reason maybe some of you are feeling lonely this holiday season — simply for being different.

That was a long time ago. Many of those same classmates who bullied and excluded me are a part of my life now.

I learned the ability to forgive is the greatest gift you can give yourself and others. I also learned that if there's a painful memory you can't erase, instead of letting it consume you, turn your pain into purpose. Find a way to help others going through the same thing, and it will help you heal, too. I did that by sharing my story in a memoir, and with every word I wrote, I felt the bitterness dissipate and my heart opening up.

The spirit of peace during the holidays must begin with all of us making peace with our own past, searching not for the reasons why we went through what we did, but how we can use those experiences to change the world.

Peace,

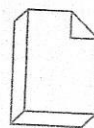
Soder Blanco

turning hate to love begin  
by putting pen to paper?

Thoughts on paper can be a powerful way to express feelings, heal and  
I asked five people whose lives have been touched by violence or  
write Letters of Peace that reflect their enduring faith in humanity.  
Authors, read their letters and learn more about the power of paper.  
[unfolds.com/lettersofpeace](http://unfolds.com/lettersofpeace) | #lettersofpeace

Donation was made on behalf of the author of this letter.

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