

# CULTURESHOCK.



SPRING 2013

SHOCK

SPRING2013

EDITOR • JOHN**FARLEY**

ASSISTANT EDITOR • RUBEN**YAMADA**

GRAPHIC DESIGN • KAYLA**HEYER**

ADVISOR • DR. JESSICA**MAUCIONE**

CULTURE

4	UNTITLED
8	BALSERÍA
14	BORN AGAIN
16	LGBT COMMUNITY & LOYOLA
18	STUMBLING EASTWARD
24	SLOW DOWN
26	MOJO UPENDO
28	FALIRAKI, GREECE
30	PARADOXES
32	ESTADOUNIDENSE
36	BLACK?

## CONTENTS

# SHOCK.







UNTITLED  
R.J.LIGGINS

In the minds of a lot of Americans, racism ended towards the end of the 1960's, had its moments during the 70's and 80's, flared up again in the early 90's and was completely eradicated with the election of President Barack Obama in 2008. These individuals could not be more wrong.

Since everyone seems to want to ask me almost every single goddamn day what I think about race, I've decided to finally let loose the uncensored version of what I really think. Just remember that you've been warned, and that you asked for it.

Now don't get me wrong, race relations are the best we've ever seen in American history. The black middle class is a larger percent of the population, we're starting to see more black head coaches in sports, interracial marriages and child births are at an all time high, and our president is black for crying out loud! Things are looking pretty good, right?

The truth is, racism has also evolved along with the, admittedly slow, exponential rise of black America. The dirty, ugly, truth is that we are ALL still racist. Some more than others, but all of us still hold onto to prejudices, stereotypes, or just outright hatred and anger towards different groups of people. Yes, that means you too. "But I'm reading *Culture Shock*, how could I possibly be racist?" No, trust me, you are. Chances are though you're like most of Gonzaga's population that is completely unaware that some of the things you think, do, and say are racially insensitive and sometimes just plain old fashioned racist. But hey, at least you're taking the right step in reading this. Whether you know it or not, you're also participating in a practice Americans seemed to be afraid of doing, which is an honest, self-evaluation of your beliefs.

Everyone these days is terrified of being called racist, it's almost become as bad as being accused of rape. Seriously, walk outside and call a random stranger a racist. I promise you they will either flee in terror or bend over backwards to explain why they aren't racist. And overall, that person probably isn't racist. But that's based on this ancient definition of racism as segregation, fire hoses, cross burnings, and OJ Simpson framings. And thankfully, it's become universally accepted that these actions are heinous and inhumane, minus the OJ thing. But what people don't realize is that racism has changed to become subtle and disguised due to this fear of being racist.

A lot of it starts with media and the portrayal of blacks. Without even realizing it, most people associate the word black with an image that isn't necessarily positive. I've had people, even close friends and girlfriends, ask me

why I don't do certain things that are considered black. A lot of this has to do with the "black" people they see on TV or hear in music. The reason why black is in quotes is because the blacks on television that aren't dunking or coming up with awesome touchdown dances are not representing the different types of black people around. And this isn't entirely their fault, networks know exactly what they're doing when they cast these reality shows or report on sound bites by a black celebrity. The reason for this is because a lot of people are still uncomfortable with seeing a well-spoken, non-caricature black person that isn't involved in politics.

And while I'm at it, WHAT THE HELL RAP MUSIC?! The record companies and mass media have officially transformed you from the intellectual, poetry driven, stories of struggle, oppression and revolution to 2chainz wanting big booty hoes for his birthday and Chief Keef telling me all the things He Don't Like. While the beats are catchy, the words make close to no sense with little creativity, and now that a couple guys have gotten rich this way EVERYONE wants to rap like this. One of the worst offenders is J. Cole, one of my favorite current rappers. When Cole first started he told poetic stories, yet after his debut album released he's seemed to go out of his way to paint a negative image of women and has lowered his standards to the pleasures of mainstream rap. The worst part of it is that Cole has a degree from St. John's University, 2chainz graduated college in THREE YEARS, even Lil Wayne used to be an honor student. In other words, these guys aren't stupid. In fact, a lot of them are really, really smart. And I can't place the blame entirely on them. Lupe's infamous album, "Lasers," is the perfect example of a record label taking apart a poet's album and building it to be a radio friendly, pop album. And to be honest, if someone waved 3 million dollars in my face and told me to cut a record their way, I'd probably do it too. The main problem with Rap these days, however, is how it's influenced the growing acceptance of the word "Nigga," to the point where white people find it completely fine. Now I'll be the first to tell you that I used to say that a lot and from time to time it still slips. But here are some things I started to realize. One, have you ever heard a white person you don't know say nigga? Even when they mean it to be an innocent expression, it makes your goddamn skin crawl and makes you more uncomfortable than you've ever known before. Two, I realized that when I said it around white people, I was only making it more acceptable for them to say. And here's the thing, while a lot of black people have taken to the movement of changing the meaning of the word, there are still a lot of black people that are truly offended by it and have probably been called that in a less than favorable situation before. I've been trying to cut it from my vocabulary because it's illogical. Do gay people walk around saying, "What's up my faggot?" Pretty sure Jewish people aren't saying, "I was chillin' with my Kyke the other day." These words were put in the English Language with the intent to oppress and dehumanize, not to call someone your friend.

This has become a full scale rant, not even close to a structured thesis, but I warned you. Anyways, the media has a lot to do with the subconscious expectation we place on black people in America. A lot of that has to do with America's

fascination to categorize everything, especially people. A lot of this categorization is on the surface level too based on color, appearance, clothing (which if you think about it can cause more judgment than even skin color), etc. One of the worst offenders of this is the realm of sports and something called the eye test. This is one of the few areas in American society where white people actually have a disadvantage. If a 6'6" white guy walked onto a basketball court and he was standing next to a 6'6" black guy, almost everyone in the gym would think the black kid was more athletic, faster, more raw, and better than the white guy, who is likely to be labeled a good shooter or fundamental. The only exception to this rule is for black quarterbacks in the NFL. When guys like Cam Newton and RGIII came into the league, they were celebrated for their ability to run and immediately labeled the next Michael Vick (complete with assumption of a criminal record). But what they always, ALWAYS doubt about these guys is their understanding of the game (intelligence in other words) and ability to throw the ball. That's right, the first round pick quarterback might not be able to throw the football allegedly. Never mind the fact that white quarterbacks, such as Aaron Rodgers, run just as well. The eye test completely ignores the fact that black quarterbacks such as RGIII, Russell Wilson and Colin Kaepernick had higher passer ratings than a majority of their white counterparts. Speaking of Kaepernick...

Watching the Super Bowl this year, I decided I would root for the Ravens out of respect for Ed Reed and Ray Lewis; the dudes have paid their dues and are just genuinely awesome. However, I made a comment that I should root for the 49ers because they had a black quarterback (fun fact: there's only been one black quarterback to ever win a Super Bowl). The response I got, from someone I really expected more from, was, "Yeah but he's only half." Which based on their tone translates to: "That doesn't count". For those of you that don't know, I am half black and half white, and if I had a dollar for every time I've heard something along these lines, I could pay for a semester of college. That's not an exaggeration either. While the statement was true, he is mixed and half black, the statement is insanely condescending and slightly dehumanizing, basically taking away his blackness. I'll put it to you this way. I wasn't "only half" when I was pulled out of my car by police and had my car searched for no reason. I wasn't "only half" whenever a teacher would call me out in front of the class to offer the "black perspective" on a situation. And Barack Obama wasn't "only half" when he became the first black president. So yeah, it definitely counts. But really what this issue illustrates is our need to put "blackness" to a degree. Or even worse, our need for a term like "blackness". This is a backwards way of thinking that almost everyone no matter of race is guilty of. Whether white, black, Mexican, Asian, Arabic, whatever, people love to determine race based on action and "appearance" rather than, you know, race. The way blackness is determined though is quite often very, very negative. Things such as your job, where you live, how you talk, how you dress, your criminal record, level of intelligence, etc., all determine "how black you are". This is the most prevalent form of subtle racism out there right now. African Americans are stuck in this almost no win situation. There's this expectation of the American Dream to pull yourself up and move up society's

ladder. Yet, and I know most black students at Gonzaga feel this way, they often find themselves marginalized as corny, fake, and white for pursuing education, presenting articulate thoughts, and basically not acting like some clown on BET. This is insanely frustrating considering that blackness is not defined by what you do, what percentage you are, or whatever ridiculous standards we invent next month. It's based on identity and appreciation for the culture.

There's plenty more I could write about and I'm sure if you find me at the bar on the weekends I'd be more than happy to tell you about it. However, you should move on to the other entries in this collection because others worked just as hard on their submissions. Race relations aren't perfect and perhaps they'll never be in America. It makes sense, we're social beings that are frankly more comfortable with others that think, look, and talk like us. While there really isn't a "stop racism button" we can push or even have a solid solution to the issue, the first step in the process is education and awareness. Look around your surroundings, question things, start paying attention to your own thoughts and actions, focus on personal changes before you can start shaping the society around you. And don't do it only for black people, because even though we get it pretty rough a lot of the time, women and Hispanics, in my opinion, have got quite a way to go too until they get their share of the pie (I don't want to ever get started on immigration or the douchebags running Arizona). This article probably offended you at one point, and part of me is apologetic about that. But hopefully my intent was fulfilled and at least you're thinking about the imperfect world around you and how we can potentially fix it.









## BALSERÍA

### JENNIFER ZIRBES

The six of us Peace Corps gringos were dressed in our finest Ngäbe outfits as we climbed up the hill to Cerro Iglesias, parts of which rivaled for the distinction of being the steepest path that I have ever been on. It's not easy hiking anywhere in the mountainous Indian reservation of the Comarca Ngäbe-Buglé, but this trail was a doozy. At least it was the dry season so the trail wasn't muddy and slippery. Nonetheless, after having spent the prior week in the air-conditioned Peace Corps Panama office, I was coming dangerously close to heat exhaustion. This worried me because I was only carrying one Sprite bottle full of water and one bottle of UniCola, one of the only prepackaged (and hopefully uncontaminated) liquids that is available for purchase in the Comarca. The only other liquid available at the destination of our journey would be water of extremely questionable cleanliness, and chicha fuerte, an alcoholic beverage made of fermented sprouted corn. Even if I did drink alcohol, which I don't, I doubt that chicha would have been very helpful to me if it came down to a medical emergency, nor would parasite-laced river water. Moreover, the nearest hospital was about four hours away, a fact that was always at the back of my mind when attempting anything the least bit dangerous. I started walking slower than the others; this combined with the newfound shade in the path and a few sips of cola perked me up a bit.

As we crested the hill, the din that we had been following grew from a faraway hum to an outright ruckus. We were hiking from my friend Aleah's

community of Cerro Ceniza to a nearby Balsería. A traditional Ngäbe celebration that goes on for several days. In the past it was a time when neighboring communities would come together after a plentiful harvest to share food and tell traditional stories. But most importantly, Balsería was for throwing the balsa, or krün in the Ngäbere language. Balsería involves a large stick of balsa wood that is thrown at an opponent's legs. The winner, i.e. the one who comes out of the competition without battered limbs, could win himself a new wife or two from the losing player. Traditionally, krün participants had names that were for use only during Balsería, usually nature words. It used to be a ceremonious occasion. Now it is just plain debauchery, drinking, and fighting. Since I was leaving the country in a few months it was my last chance to see what remains of the tradition; I had to go.

I had heard what Balsería was like and it sounded quite intense, and when I told my neighbors where I was going, they looked a little concerned. I got the feeling they thought I was crazy for wanting to go anywhere near such a thing, as though no respectable person would be caught near there. Aleah's neighbors (who were members of a devout Christian community there and frowned upon such behaviors) also warned us to be very careful. They told us to make sure we had a bräre; a man to watch out for us. We told them that we only had one bräre, Jack, and that we would have to share him between the five of us women. It was a dirty little double entendre that got us some laughs.

As we approached the Balsería site at the bottom of the hill, the mounting racket of whistles, horns, and shouting gave me a feeling of uneasiness. There were a lot of people, both men and women, staggering back up the hill after an eventful night, drunk and covered in dirt, and some a bit bloody. However, we could see that there were still plenty of people back at the clearing. There were fistfights and balsa games going on everywhere.

When we got to the clearing at the bottom of the hill, a woman who was a full 18 inches shorter than me grabbed my arm and shouted at me "Ari jamete!" Then, she forcefully punched the palm of her other hand. Even if I hadn't already known that ari jamete means "Let's fight," I would have known exactly what she wanted to do! So I just kept telling her, "Jamete ñakare," no, I didn't want to fight. However, she was pretty insistent as I tried to walk away. Another woman then offered to fight me, but luckily she was just joking. This brazen violence was a whole new side of Ngäbe behavior for me, since in the nearly two years I had been living there in the Comarca, I had found them to be very quiet, non-confrontational people, especially the women. It is not uncommon for the men to get intoxicated and pass out, but the only time you will see this behavior in women is at Balsería.

After my immediate fight offers, the Ngäbe men just as immediately began swarming us lady gringas like flies. I was prepared for this and was by no means surprised. When sober, the men are perfectly respectful, but anytime they get drunk they will hit on any gringa present. We had prepared a game plan in case things got out of hand, though we weren't too worried for our safety. Even so, it was still pretty overwhelming trying to shake off dozens of drunken Ngäbes who



were being just a little friendlier than was appropriate. One guy couldn't resist the temptation of quickly groping my gringa boobs hidden under my nagwa, which is the traditional dress that women wear. There was even one woman who appeared to be hitting on me a little as well. I guess lesbianism comes out at Balsería, why not? However, another woman took it upon herself to stand up for me by repeatedly whacking her brother in the arm whenever he made inappropriate comments, much to my gratitude and amusement.

The people were dressed up as colorfully Ngäbe as ever, wearing bright homemade clothes appliquéd with the traditional Ngäbe dientes pattern, lots of little triangles that are abstract representations of teeth. Many people wore face paint and adorned themselves with strange or beautiful objects found in nature, like feathers or bird nests. Many other men wore real dead stuffed animals on their backs, such as weasels or big cats. Even some little boys could be seen sporting a dead squirrel. Furthermore, men who were "dancing" the balsa sometimes wore women's nagwa dresses, supposedly to hide their legs from their opponents as they aimed the stick. Though balsa wood is very light, it can still be very painful when the stick is thrown directly at your legs, and many people come away unable to walk well for weeks.

Meanwhile, people everywhere were making as much sound as they





could out of horns and whistles. Several Ngäbes offered us *chicha fuerte*, which I politely declined, but the other volunteers drank it. We also tried blowing their horns made out of cow horns and conch shells, but none of us could get a sound out of them! One of the most interesting instruments was a turtle shell, which was played by rubbing on it in a certain way and getting a kind of low moaning resonance. I was wearing a really nice beaded *chaquira* necklace I had bought in my community. One man, who was a little less drunk than most, was watching out for us and told me that it probably was not a good idea for me to wear my *chaquira* because it made me look too rich. So I decided to take it off and put it in my *chacara*, which is a bag that the Ngäbes make from plant fibers, and everybody wears them wherever they go.

Everywhere I looked I saw people fighting or bloodied. Almost all were staggering around drunk, with hollow expressions on their faces that I would imagine finding on a ghost. The ground was strewn with those who were passed out cold. I felt dizzy and overwhelmed in this hot spectacle of noise and dust and color, so I backed out of the main clearing into the shade, where huge barrels of *chicha* were being dipped out of—the fuel tanks for the madness. I was appalled to see how many children were sitting around playing by themselves or watching

their parents behaving this way, and I pondered on the fact that in a few years it would be their turn to continue this tradition.

Despite the intensity of the whole situation, I never felt like I was in any real danger. After a while, though, I just felt completely drained. That's when we decided it was time to leave. I didn't have much water left for the return portion of my uphill-both-ways journey, but Ngäbes themselves don't usually carry water on the trails either. I looked at it as becoming more local.

This was the most intense situation that I experienced in my two years in Panama. Though I don't think I would ever go again, I was glad I had seen this traditional activity because it was a glimpse into the complex character of the Ngäbe people. They must have so much pent-up aggression due to stresses like dealing with racism and finding enough food for their families, and Balsería is a chance to purge these feelings in one colossal cathartic weekend. It was worth a look for this much, though I would have preferred to see it back in the days when it was a bit nobler. It was also worth it when I went back to my own community and had them rolling on the floor with jokes about my fight offers and the bräre that I had to share with four other women. and the bräre that I had to share with four other women.



# BORN AGAIN

AUBREY WEBER




**W**e are all born into a certain life.

Some of us, like myself, are born into families that can provide, into places that hold endless opportunities, and into the expectation that we will succeed, regardless of the dream we aim for. Some of us, unlike myself, are born into families that struggle to afford food for their next meal, into places where disease consumes, and into communities where many feel that the only way to make something of themselves is by “getting out.”

During my time here in Zambezi, the confusion that comes with thinking of these paradox worlds has invaded my mind. It is impossible not to wonder how on earth the place I come from and the place I am living in now lay under the same moon at night. The emotions I have felt and the thoughts that now fill my head have turned my life upside down (also literally, being on the other side of the planet) and I think, maybe, I am starting to learn how to adjust my eyes to this part of my life I had no idea I was missing.

I met Friday, a fourteen year old boy, by the gate of the convent on our first full day in Zambezi. He has a kind face, a big smile when you catch him laughing, and a very relaxed way about him. His skinny arms dangle lazily over the fence, as they do every day, and he calls out my name in that perfectly smooth Zambian





accent. Something about him gets at me every time, so even when I feel tired and weary from the full day, I walk over to him to talk for a while. It amazes me now, as I have this time to reflect, how easy it is for us to just talk. We have talked about nothing and about everything, and in such a short time. I have learned about Friday's troubled life at home, how both of his parents died when he was young, and how he lives with his grandmother and uncles now. Some of the stories he has shared with me break my heart, but he tells them with such internal strength and in such a matter of fact way that the conversations we have had and the questions I never stop asking continue to flow with ease. I think what has struck me most about Friday, and what will stay in my heart for the rest of my life, is the fact that just three weeks ago, our lives were about as far apart as they could possibly be. And now, as easily as our first conversation began, we are intertwined. Like many others in this village that I have crossed paths with in the past few weeks, I feel like some part of me, somewhere deep, has known Friday my entire life. This feeling reminds me of the wise words of Piglet from Winnie the Pooh: "Don't underestimate the value of doing nothing, of just going along, listening to all the things you can't hear, and not bothering." It is in these simple moments, the moments in which we connect with a stranger, that force us to realize that we were never really strangers at all.

If I have learned anything in these past few weeks, it is that regardless of the coordinates, the latitude and longitude in which we live, we all come from the same dust. The wind carries us to the corners of the earth, leaving us at the places we call home, but our real home is in the company of each other. In the words of Miguel Ruiz, "We are the same, you and I, we are images of light." I have found this quote to hold a striking truth for me. We all love, hurt, fear, and hope. We share in our pain and rejoice in our happiness. We laugh, cry, think, and learn. We love to be silly and goofy and serious and wise. We all believe in something. But perhaps most importantly, we all shoot for the moon but merely land amongst the stars.

Getting here, to this sacred, beautiful land, is what it takes to just begin to recognize the deepest, most personal parts of ourselves within the people we meet. We must leap in order to see that the net will appear beneath us.

"You know, sometimes all you need is twenty seconds of insane courage. Just literally twenty seconds of embarrassing bravery. And I promise you, something great will come of it" (*We Bought A Zoo*).

Kisu Mwane,  
Aubrey Weber, Class of 2013

# LGBT COMMUNITY & LOYOLA JODAN LOVE



**T**oday we spent the first part of the day touring Chicago's Halstead LGBT Center. It was an extremely eye-opening experience. So many topics and issues concerning the LGBT community were not only addressed in discussion but were also addressed by actions stemming from programs and initiatives implemented within the center to offer free assistance and support. The center offered so many resources: gym facilities, computer labs, theater involvement, culinary training, a hot line, HIV/AIDS testing, art exhibits, counseling sessions, senior citizen socials and assistance, and youth involvement—it was mind boggling how much of an impact this one facility was making in the community. I was personally inspired listening to how many volunteers offered hours of time of service in order to reach out to this often times impoverished and isolated community. Society, especially politics, does not make it easy for an individual to be openly gay even in this supposedly “progressive” modern day twenty-first century. It is refreshing to know that there are organizations out there that are dedicated to providing a safe and judgment free zone in any way that they can so that the LGBT minority group not only has specific resources available to them, but also may experience



a sense of compassion and understanding. We also had the privilege of meeting for lunch with a few multicultural students from Loyola University.

Not only did we eat some delicious pizza but we also participated in open dialogue about some of the issues concerning both Gonzaga and Loyola as private Jesuit institutions. It was shocking to me that Loyola still managed to greatly lack diversity, as far as the number of students of color in attendance was concerned, even though its location is in the heart of one of the most diverse cities in the nation. The population of the city of Chicago contains 64% African Americans and Latinos. Even though the tuition is extremely high and seemingly unaffordable to the masses, the very familiar statistics (to Gonzaga's own multicultural student makeup) served as very disappointing. However, I

was also baffled by the vast differences existing between such similar institutions (having almost identical mission statements) concerning the incorporation of culture. First, Loyola has distinct cultural studies programs that are designated as an academic major (African American Studies or Latino Studies), whereas Gonzaga does not. Loyola put on a Drag Queen Fashion Show to honor their LGBT Appreciation and Awareness Month that was well received by both faculty members and students, resulting in a large number of attendees.....and for some reason I could not imagine a similar event taking place on Gonzaga's campus. Finally, the Vagina Monologues has been performed multiple times on Loyola's campus without issues or censorship. The Loyola students were shocked at the fact that Gonzaga's own desire to bring the Monologues to the stage was so controversial and all around discouraged. The director of Loyola's Multicultural Center put it best when he said that as a Jesuit institution, with a mission statement that promotes the preserving of human dignity in regards to all people.....we must do just that. It is not fair to pick and choose which human dignities we deem appropriate to respect or to support.





# STUMBLING EASTWARD

## A FOREIGNER IN JAPAN

### WILLIAM BRECKENRIDGE

A little over five months ago I boarded a United Airlines plane in a bright yellow shirt and shorts to fly to Japan. For years I desired to leave my humble abode and journey to the proverbial “Land of the Rising Sun.” With the Gonzaga Study Abroad Office’s assistance, financial help from generous scholarships, and my own dogged conviction, this dream became a reality. As I reflect back on the extraordinary number of memories I made in Japan, I reckon I



lived more in that four months than in my entire twenty-one year. I received such admirable hospitality from my Japanese family, found personal fulfillment in the cultural beating heart of Japan, Kyoto, and have begun to form a new understanding of the wider world. The transformation one experiences abroad ensures character development and does more to change an individual in ways few other methods can match.

Like any explorer enthused and infused with the traveling spirit, I was excited for my adventure. Yet even before I sat on my plane seat, kicked off my shoes, and settled in for a ten hour flight, I made a promise to myself. I promised that I would view all my experiences in Japan as opportunities for personal enrichment. I anticipated the prospect of accumulating a mental video album of joyous memories, ones which I could replay at will from time to time. Yet, I was simultaneously prepared for disagreeable experiences, unfortunate and unpreventable accidents, and the kind of inglorious mistakes that only a foreigner in a new land could make. In the time leading up to my departure, I proceeded to open wide

my heart, mind, and soul. I knew that in order to live abroad I had to be in a state of mind that was appreciative of individual growth, regardless of the experience.

The Study Abroad Office offers two Japan exchange programs: Sophia University in Tokyo and Akita International University (AIU) in Akita Prefecture. Known for its sheer size and soaring skyscrapers, its numerous attractions, and its internationalism, Tokyo is a popular destination for those who relish the “big city”. Yet I chose rural Akita known for the Akita dog, delicious rice, breathtaking scenery, and legendarily beautiful women. Akita is located in Tohoku, the northern section of the main island, Honshu. Akita is synonymous with the more naturalistic, and dare I say romantic, image of Japan: pockets of civilization amidst extensive rice paddies, dense forests, and sloping mountains. I believed the culture shock would be less extreme here and the adjustment easier compared to the humming metropolis that is Tokyo.

After adjusting to campus life I registered for the home stay/home visit program at the earliest opportunity. I wanted to experience Japanese society on its most essential level, that of the Japanese family. Not knowing whether or not my host family could speak English, I briefly doubted my ability to speak Japanese adequately. I assuaged this concern with a simple shrug and the internal conviction that this was a worthwhile experience. If I made blunders, it would keep me humble and could serve as comic relief! Soon after I emailed my application to the organization responsible for matching students with families, I was paired with a family. Before I knew it, I made my first phone call in Japan—in Japanese—and arranged my first meeting with my family: an evening of games and sushi-making for dinner!

Reflecting on the memories I shared with my family, I am certain applying for the home stay/visit program was one of the better decisions in my life. It gave me an opportunity to explore new places, such as my mother's hometown, which I would not have otherwise visited; I was also able to practice Japanese consistently with my family. AIU is an international university; thus English is the basic language of communication on campus. Professors and students alike make an effort to speak English making a foreigner's practice of Japanese difficult. It was like a crutch: reverting to English lends support in conversations yet it also inhibited my studies of Japanese. With my home stay family I could speak the language and study Japanese society, but more importantly I learned the value of hospitality.

It was truly remarkable that I, a foreigner with a rather haggard beard, was graciously welcomed into my host family's household, a family I had only briefly communicated with via cell phone. My meals were paid for before I could lodge an objection and when we ate at home, my offer to clean the kitchen, a daily chore at my own house, was kindly rejected. I was even given the honor of becoming Santa Claus for a party a week before I returned to the U.S. My family shared their lives and Japan with me. I am still so grateful for this hospitality! The only action I can take is to "pay it forward," to share in kind my hospitality and life with others as my host family so selflessly shared with me.

Visiting with my Japanese family proved to be one of many enriching experiences I had during the course of my semester. However, a trip to ancient Kyoto proved to be just as enriching in a different way. Via night bus and the shinkansen or "bullet train," I journeyed alone to the historic city. While I did meet with a Japanese friend who studied at Gonzaga, I spent significant time strolling the streets of Kyoto by myself specifically visiting "Daikaku-ji", a little known temple in the western half of the city. Compared to Kyoto's popular touristy spots, Daikaku-ji is a temple that has preserved its sacred mystique. Each shrine is connected by roofed wooden walkways; the walkways themselves surround beautiful courtyards containing manicured trees and plants. As I approached one particular shrine, I could smell incense in the air. Entering I saw people silent in prayer. I kneeled and spent moments in reflection and gratitude for being in this spiritual environment as well as for the opportunity of living in Japan. It's difficult to describe the exact range of feelings I experienced in this place but I can say that it felt right; it is as if I was supposed to visit Daikaku-ji. The serenity, peace, and wa (harmony) I felt at Daikaku-ji resonates with me to this day, months after my visit. I wouldn't be surprised if it lasted a lifetime.





Another significant experience occurred before I visited Kyoto. I went on a volunteer trip of service to Kesennuma, a city devastated by the 2011 earthquake and tsunami. Located in Miyagi Prefecture, which is just north of Fukushima, Kesennuma is a coastal port city known for processing large amounts of bonito and swordfish. When the tsunami struck, Oshima Island, which is accessible by ferry, was temporarily isolated. Oil spilt by the fishing fleet caught on fire and burned for four days. Fortunately, Kesennuma received volunteer help; among the volunteers were students from AIU who helped Kesennuma rebuild itself shortly after the earthquake and tsunami.

My arrival on the scene was more than a year after the disaster. By that point in time, based on the parts of the city I saw, Kesennuma had finished repairs. Thus I was not asked to pick up garbage, rebuild houses, etc. because it was not required; rather, I was simply asked to meet with the local residents, to sing karaoke with the older folks, play with the children, and serve snacks. Though the task seemed simple the language barrier proved difficult. I had only arrived at AIU several weeks before; thus I was trying to integrate Japanese into my conversations. Yet none of the locals could speak English and the Japanese volunteer students either knew little English or were not comfortable speaking it (I suspect the latter). The onus was on me to communicate so the conversations were not always fluid. Nonetheless it was a truly fascinating experience! It was the first time in my life where a foreign language was the predominant language spoken. At times it was a little awkward; more often than not I was confused when words

were exchanged between locals as fast as a bullet train. But I adapted and gave the day my best effort and I truly believe the students and locals saw and appreciated it. I have always respected people for learning a foreign language, but this respect increased exponentially; it was the opportunity to be in their shoes, to step out of my safe and comfortable English bubble and try to communicate in a foreign language. Of course I would continue this effort throughout the rest of my semester abroad, but Kesennuma marked the beginning.

Please travel. Take the initiative and immerse yourself in a culture. Send yourself to a foreign country for a year to study or just simply travel for several weeks. I would suggest Japan but that is my own bias. Any country can offer insights and experiences far outside of your accustomed norm. When I hear news of tensions in the Middle East or rumors of trade wars between the U.S. and China, I strongly believe that if enough people traveled abroad with the proper mindset and returned back to their country as an international witness for cultural tolerance, the problem would not be further war, trade deficits, or competition for resources—it would be an excess of love, gratitude, and understanding. We have advanced technologically creating modern industry, improved health care, faster communication, and easy global travel. But what about development of the soul? Can we promote the understanding that despite our ethnic, cultural, religious, and political differences we are all one species? This is humanity's next step and it begins with traveling and the risk of integrating oneself into the habits and lifestyle of another people. I took a chance and have returned enriched. I am already planning for my next abroad experience—perhaps Europe this time?







# SLOW DOWN

## ANONYMOUS

Marley said One Love,  
But when push comes to shove,  
What will be your action?  
Live free of hate,  
Or step only to your own satisfaction.  
How do we change our fate?  
Respect each other and try to relate,  
To our human commonality,  
Life, love, and spirituality.  
Only way to move forward is to learn,  
See the world as one, and try to turn,  
What we have created into something better;  
Stop the eyes from getting wetter.  
Beauty is in the eye of the beholder,  
And we get wiser as we grow older,  
So, slow down and enjoy the world around you,  
Before your time on this earth is through.





LAKE TITICACA, PERU  
KATHERINECATLIN



MOJO UPENDO  
JOHN FARLEY

Why are you going to Africa?

This was a question I was frequently asked when telling friends and family about my plans to come to Zambezi with the Gonzaga group; and the truth is I still think about this question every day. Before coming, I generally answered by saying that I would be teaching computer classes. This statement is true, but is it really the reason I am here? I frequently find myself frustrated because I don't fully understand Zambezi, and from not understanding Zambezi I feel like I cannot effectively function in the community. The people here are beautiful—determined, welcoming, and strong—but it is difficult for me to know whether the relationships I am building are based on genuine affection or not. Much of the time I feel like the rich “chindele” who has come to provide something. I know that is not my intention, but it is often how I think people





view me, and us as a collective group. I have encountered this problem especially with the children. I know so many of them are just eager to be loved, but I can't help the feeling of thinking these children may just be playing with my emotions. I begin to grow close to certain children only to find out that they really just want to use the bicycles we possess or have a chance to listen to music on our computers. Is it their fault that they have never ridden a bicycle or used a computer? Of course not, but it nonetheless makes me feel like an ignorant outsider.

We are constantly reminded that our presence in Zambezi leaves a strong impact on the community. That is the thing that is so incredible about these people—just us being here is enough. Some may want things from us, but the thing that I am quickly realizing is that we all just want to be loved. One moment of my journey that I will never forget took place several days ago when returning to the convent after witnessing another beautiful Zambian sunset. I was walking alone when I bumped into a man heading the opposite direction of me. We shook hands and then

he reversed his direction and began walking with me, while at the same time wrapping his arm around my shoulder. Granted, this was a man I had never met in my life. He explained that he was from Lusaka and had come to work on a water purification problem Zambezi was facing. I thanked him for his warm welcome and expressed my appreciation for the kindness we had been shown all throughout Zambia from the moment we left the airport. He suddenly stopped, looked me in the eyes and said, "We are the same, you and me. Why would I not welcome you?"

This stranger treated me beautifully just for being a fellow human; I have never felt more loved.

## FALIRAKI, GREECE

### CORINNE GOULD

Living in Faliraki during April is like perpetually watching someone prepare for a first date. Every effort is given to buff out the imperfections, to highlight the best features, to attract interest, and then mark down the price. Dark skinned men work hard to layer paint over the chipped whitewashed store fronts. Owners hose down wire postcard wracks, pressure-wash drive ways, and drench dying lawn plants as if cool water could bring life to this long dead board walk. This isn't an off season hibernation; tourism will not return these streets to any kind of glory. Not even the billboards and blinking neon that draw in full wallets can resurrect something that was dead to begin with.

The poisonous cycle of commercialization choked this island decades ago. The sandy shore and green hillsides are bastardized by the faded walls and naked manikins, ghosts of an attempt to bottle beauty, to put the taste of sea air on a postcard, a shot glass, a t-shirt. We cannot blame this deterioration on greed alone. No one would try to distill and preserve this island in souvenirs if there was no demand. When I walk along the shore out toward the sweeping sea, I need to touch it, to swim in it, to know it. Faliraki's haunting beachfront of empty strip clubs and fading Mexican restaurants is the product of our overwhelming desire to possess, a need that lies deep in our souls. We must photograph every ancient ruin, measure it, and label it; to understand and capture our environment, we are only chasing a false feeling of control.

What we must come to understand is that taking the picture does not give us closure as we leave the shore. We can never own a bit of the sea or town or culture. It is not ours to have. The best we can do is know that with every person we meet, and place we experience, we take a bit into who we are, and in turn leave a fraction of ourselves. The slow mosaic of our souls will form without cognition, but be warned: it cannot be seen beneath commercialization, pressure washing, and yet another coat of paint.







ORINOCO, NICARAGUA  
KATHERINE CATLIN





The boy is about eight inches shorter than I am, even though he is sixteen. He hunches his thin shoulders a little; a habit that gives him a humble, distinctive look. He speaks quietly in articulate English. His button-down shirts are typically a little tight, and his pants a little baggy. His head is shaved, and his eyelashes are extra-curved. His smile is wide, perfectly straight, and ready to show itself, hovering at the corners of his lips as though he anticipates the need of it in a moment. His eyes are spaced a little apart, which draws your attention to them. As if you could miss them. He fixes them intently on you; eager, invested, sincere, mature, and dancing a little.

He sidles up to me through the group of students. I greet him warmly with a Zambian-style handshake and my best “Musana mwane!” I met him on our first visit to Chilena Basic School. I ask him about his lessons, and he draws



continents in the sand with his shoe to explain the day's geography class. He glances at the pineapple yellow mountain bikes Hikaru and I ride to school, and takes a step closer.

"Can I...can I...?" he says, not forcefully, but hopefully. How can I refuse the boy with those eyes that shine?

In my memory, I watch his short lap around the sandy schoolyard: triumphant, joyful, simple.

The moment itself is simple, that much is true. A boy rides a bicycle. Yet the boy has no father, and is the man of his household. He struggles to pay his school fees. And even if he manages to complete Grade 12, what then? Will he be given the opportunity to attend higher-level education? Perhaps his words can shed light on the "simplicity" that so many of us crave to encounter in Africa. When I asked this boy what he wanted to be when he grew up, he laughed first, and then reluctantly said, "An accountant." When I asked him why he laughed, his voice carried a dousing realism for his ebullient American interviewer: "Things are not so easy... It is a lot of school for an accountant... It is very expensive... It does not always work out that way."

My time in Zambia has been a patchwork of these extremes. The kaleidoscope of chitenge colors clash with the tattered clothing of the children gathered around the convent. The rich fruits that color our table every morning at breakfast are absent from the meals of many. My expectation to have electricity and running water has been disrupted, yes; but I am more moved by the realization that many families would never dream of having either in the first place.

But there is also beauty in this conflict of opposites. My private American exterior is warmed by the salutations of every person (and yes, I mean every person) I meet on the road. Despite their limited resources and supplies, the enthusiasm and tenacity of Zambian students outshines their hardships. The deeply connected community of Zambia is evident in every action and interaction, and challenges the isolation and loneliness so many of us experience in our lives.

As I continue my time in Zambezi, I will remember the boy with the bicycle. As with so many things here; joy is tainted with sorrow, life is touched by death, love with longing, and peace with restlessness. It is only within the tension between these two extremes that we will be able to find, make, and share meaning with each other and with our Zambian brothers and sisters.

And I know that somewhere within the paradox of Zambia is the beauty we are all searching for.

Peace. Love.

Erin





## ESTADOUNIDENSE KAYLA HEYER

“**E**xcuse me, where did you say you’re from?”

I stood there, tears running down my face, shaking in an odd mix of fear and anger, staring into the eyes of the bullet-proof vested police officer standing cross-armed opposite of me.

“The United States,” I answered, attempting to rein-in my emotions and respond in my least foreign-accented Spanish, “soy estadounidense.”

An American. A 21-year-old female American; one who was nearly 7000 miles from home, with only a British friend who spoke not a word of Spanish and the fiery little Argentine woman who had drug me into the station. A 21-year-old female American, recently down a wallet, identification, and any money to speak of, robbed blind minutes before as I fell prey to a Buenos Aires pickpocket scheme executed with military-precision.

“Oh,” he replied, sort of chuckling to himself as a smile crept across his face, “well obviously you have insurance for that, right?”

Of course, my “insurance”. The policy that would cover the \$200 in cash that I’d never see again. The mythical “insurance” that would pick up the tab for the hostel that I’d now have to pay for with a sob-story and the two pesos I had stuffed in my coat pocket. The “insurance” that would grant a ticket for a 17-hour cross-country bus ride back to my home-base in Mendoza. The “insurance” that would accommodate the outlandish international phone calls on my non-existent telephone to inform my bank that I had no part in my visa card’s recent extravagant tour of Buenos Aires. The “insurance” that would inform my already-skeptical mother that “Kayla’s Great Independent South-American Adventure” wasn’t quite as foolproof as we had hoped.

I sort of tilted my head to one side and gave him my best, “no, but your point is...” glare.

“Well, let’s put it this way,” he began in his arrogant Argentine Spanish, “I’m a policeman, and I could die any day, or get injured at any time. And I have no insurance, nothing. Yet I’m sure you, an American, do. Even for this. This here? This, is not my problem.” And with that he showed me the door, shifting his attention to the French couple behind us.

Shafted on account of my nationality – that was a new one.

In the month that I had already spent in Argentina, or while in Zambia, or Costa Rica, or London, or elsewhere, never have I – or more correctly never *had* I – ever encountered the slightest problem with my being an American. In fact, being an American, I had found, was one of my greatest assets.

Indeed, in the weeks that I had spent as a nursing intern in the Emergency Department of a hectic Argentine government hospital, my status as an American was far from a hinderance. I barely stepped onto the floor to be greeted by a string of doctors and nurses eager to pick my brain for the “American” way of handling any and all ailments that came our way. Our busy “guardia” was met each day with a steady stream of motorcycle accidents, gunshot wounds and stabbings, heart attacks and criminals brought handcuffed from the penitentiary down the road. We had bones sticking out of legs, gashes in scalps, strange growths to check out. It was a medical adrenaline-junkie’s dream, and I was invited to every second of it. Granted, I speak the language, and I live my life with a, “the worst they can say is no,” sort of attitude, but the opportunities available to me in that hospital, as not just a student, but an American student, were incredible. Doctors would grab me for procedures, letting me tackle tasks such as suturing that I had only ever watched before. I helped to surgically remove a tumor, because that doctor was “happy to teach [me] something new.” I scrubbed in for emergency trauma surgeries, and tried my hand at reading x-rays with the Radiologists. Never mind that I was a student - I was an American, and somehow that little detail awarded a great deal of privilege, even thousands of miles from American soil.

Certainly there were streaks of self-consciousness. I recall a time when, while greeting a patient fresh off an ambulance, the paramedic walking next to me felt the need to add, “Oh, this one is from the first world,” as he smiled



and playfully threw his arm around me. Or there were moments when standing among a team of doctors and nurses where I was teased for towering over even the men in the room, as at 5'7" I was oddly a giant among them all. And I couldn't escape the occasions, as the unit was scrambling, where someone would shout for me to grab equipment and my Spanish vocabulary fell short - landing me a lecture that eventually led to an, "oh forget it, you're foreign," glare. Yet on the whole I found the Argentine people inside the hospital and out to be welcoming beyond belief. I appreciated every moment that I spent swapping intricacies of our respective cultures, developing inside jokes with the staff, and discovering a place among the Emergency Department family.

Thus one can imagine my surprise in a moment where being an American was no longer to my advantage. As I was prematurely excused from the station, I found myself translating and re-translating in my mind, hoping the officer's response was truly much more helpful, but had been lost to me in translation. Then, I had to exercise some self-control, for though I was foreign, I surely could have given that officer a piece of my mind in his own language. And then, toughest of all, I had to stomach that I had been denied service for that over which I have no control, but am nonetheless proud of - being an American.

It proved to be a moment of forced perspective, a "dominator becomes the dominated" state of affairs. In that moment, I experienced prejudice on a level I had yet to know. Certainly he was just one example of an Argentinean, and in my time in the country I had luckily experienced a more than adequate sample of kind, generous, and loving Argentineans to prove him an outlier. In his defense, I have no way of knowing what pushy, egotistic, shameful examples of Americans that he had encountered that had led him to believe that I would be the same. Yet in making it perfectly clear that my nationality weighed heavily in his mind, I found myself more aware of the implications of that label than ever before. And in that moment, in counting "American" in the column of strikes against me, he unknowingly challenged me to be critical of moments where the opposite occurs - the moments where, even unintentionally, I am able to exploit the "American" aspect of my identity.

For the record, I aim to project myself as far more than some chauvinistic American supremacist. At the same time, I acknowledge that I am no Ghandi reincarnate. I make a conscious effort to fully immerse myself in wherever my travels find me, yet I understand that my culture and nationality are aspects of my being that can't be left behind. I wish to be not a tourist, but a traveler, to embrace new cultures and slowly absorb their lessons, yet with a heavy heart I accept that my own cultural lens makes a full understanding all but impossible. Even with the best of intentions and an open heart and mind, I can't escape being American, and in all honesty, I truly don't want to. When I count my blessings, I count being and American, and the freedom and opportunity that it entails twice, but I am realistic; I realize that abroad, I can't escape the good, bad, and the ugly implications that "American" entails. Nor can I escape the stature that it often places me at in the eyes of those around me.

Yet even so, I think that that realization alone is powerful beyond



measure. Perhaps it is a lack of such an awareness that opens the door for fellow Americans to perpetuate such an image of superiority abroad. And, to be fair, I believe that to some degree it's a two-way street, as we often are given little evidence to the contrary by our hosts. The reasons for that paradigm require an eternal discussion that a sociologist would salivate at, but sadly I lack the formal education, the time, the energy, and the space here for such an analysis. But what I do know, is that that self-awareness that comes from travel is unique and sacred. As the great British novelist Pico Iyer so beautifully put it, "We travel, initially, to lose ourselves; and we travel, next, to find ourselves." In that frustrating moment, in Buenos Aires, Argentina, I wholeheartedly believe that this American found a greater sense of perspective on herself and her nation.

“Wow, you’re so not like other black people I have met before!”

Of course not. Why would I be?

I am Brittney.

Yes, I am black.

But first and foremost, I am Brittney.

I am angry.

Not because I am “black”.... Because I am Brittney.

And because of where I am at.

Nothing is more difficult and challenging than being “black” at a predominately white school.

I was told I can’t make it at a “black” school. Hell, I can’t make it at a white school.

I am supposed to be “black” without being.... Black.

“Act black, look black, be black”.... But don’t, please don’t, be black.

So, what am I supposed to be?

I am a daughter, I am a friend, I am a mentor, I am a student... and I am black.

But, I am not “black.”

I do not want to be “black” and I hope I am never... “black.”

Do not define me as “black,” do not put me in a “black” category.

And please, please, do not expect me to be “black”... because I won’t.

You are here and I am here, for the same reason. To learn.

So rather than seeing me as “black,” see me as Brittney... Because I don’t see you as “white”.





INDIA  
KATHERINECATLIN

39

40

JENNIFER ZIRBES









**KATHERINE CATLIN** Katherine Catlin is a senior from Redmond, WA pursuing a B.S. in Economics. Her photos feature her travels across several continents during some serious college truancy. The adventures have inspired her to commit her life to social and sustainability causes.

**R.J. LIGGINS** is a senior from Beaverton, OR studying English writing with a minor in Women and Gender Studies. His work is an evaluation and an expression of race relations and the Black experience within America in the new millennium. He is currently working on a novel while participating in poetry open mics on campus and the Diversity Monologues.

**JENNIFER ZIRBES** is from Utah and studied Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) at Gonzaga from 2011-2012. She graduated from the program with her MA in December 2012. Her stories and photos feature some of her experiences in Panama working with the Peace Corps. After graduation she has returned to Panama to teach English at the Boquete International Academy.

**AUBREY WEBER** is a senior from Los Angeles, CA studying Journalism and Sociology. Her contribution to Culture Shock is a reflection of a blog post she wrote while living in Zambezi, Zambia with Gonzaga's Comprehensive Leadership Program in the summer of 2012.

**JORDAN LOVE** is a junior from Dupont, WA majoring in Psychology and minoring in Philosophy. Her story features her cultural experience touring the city of Chicago, IL.

**WILLIAM BRECKENRIDGE** is a Junior from Spokane, WA studying History and International Studies. His story and photos feature his fall semester abroad in Japan at Akita International University.

**JOHN FARLEY** is a junior from Portland, OR majoring in Marketing and minoring in English. His story is a reflection of his cultural experience living in Zambia last summer.

**ERIN DEMPSEY** is a junior from Denver, CO She is studying English and Secondary Education. Her story, "Paradoxes," is a glimpse into her study abroad experience in Zambezi, Zambia in the summer of 2012.

**CORINNE GOULD** is a Junior studying English Literature and Entrepreneurial Leadership. Her work highlights an amazing and challenging experience in Rhodes and Athens Greece.

**KAYLA HEYER** is a senior from Bothell, WA studying Nursing with a minor in Spanish. Her essay "Estadounidense" is a reflection on her experiences in the summer of 2012 while working and traveling in South America, specifically her time in the cities of Buenos Aires and Mendoza, Argentina.

**BRITTNEY BURT** is a junior studying Business Administration with a minor in Public Relations. Her poem features a snippet of her everyday life.

# CONTRIBUTORS



**CULTURESHOCK** is a publication of the Gonzaga University Publications Board. All questions and comments regarding Culture Shock should be directed to [cultureshock@zagmail.gonzaga.edu](mailto:cultureshock@zagmail.gonzaga.edu)

All work in Culture Shock is created and designed by current students, alumni, and faculty of Gonzaga University.

The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the view of the Culture Shock staff, the Publication Board, or the University

All content © 2013.

Cover photo by Patrick Jansa



1887 - 2012



CULTURE