



SHARE

YOUR

VOICE

OUR VOICES

2015

*Whatever our race, gender,
sexuality, income, or religion;
we all have a story to tell.*

~The Our Voices Creed

OUR VOICES MISSION

The purpose of the Our Voices journal is to provide a forum for students to express their ideas in an open environment, to promote awareness of varying cultures and experiences at Gonzaga and to create a text that sparks dialogue among students, administrators and faculty. When you read this journal we hope that the stories and experiences encourage awareness of all aspects of diversity within the student body while also fostering intercultural competence among the Gonzaga community.





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GAVIN IMES

AL SONG

LANE LEWIS



It was a Monday and I was in a hurry when he came in, humming the same short tune over and over again. I couldn't help but be annoyed. Why was he always so desperate for attention?

"What are you doing, Al?" I asked.

"Well, I suppose I am doing what you are doing," he said.

"Just humming while I work. Singing my inner song, I guess."

I almost scoffed. "Your inner song, huh?"

"Yes, I have one too."

"Too?"

"Like you do. We all have an inner song. It's what has kept us alive, will keep us alive, for centuries. I'm surprised you don't know this."

"Oh Alex, that's lovely. So poetic."

"Well, I don't know what poetic means, but it's true. We all have a song. I have one too."

"Yes, Al. Yes, of course you do."

VISITORS

ROSEMARY MURIUNGI

“The ornaments of your house will be the guests who frequent it!”

My journey to Gonzaga started on a hot and sunny day in my home country Kenya, and ended on a cold wintry day twenty eight hours later in Spokane, Washington. Reflecting on that journey one year later brings home the reality of the stark differences of two cultures converging in one place.

The excitement of the trip still remains with me; the anxiety of leaving the familiar territory associated with my home still lingers. Many thoughts were prevalent in my mind at the time – what would the cold weather be like; would we be accepted in the new environment? Would we fit in? Would we cope? Would we succeed? As a mother travelling with two children to pursue her PhD, some degree of apprehension was a natural reaction I guess.

My fears were allayed soon after our arrival. Most people we interacted with were very warm and welcoming. The International Students Scholars Services, staff members, and faculty were all very

1 Author unknown.

respectful and supportive in our settling in. Most people seemed to be amazed that we could speak English so fluently. A frequent question in those days was ‘how many languages do you speak?’ Coming from a society where everyone speaks at least two local dialects in addition to English and the national language, people appeared to be surprised that we could accomplish such a feat. The differences in the two cultures started to manifest themselves in those early days of our sojourn here. It soon became evident too that, as Africans, my children and I were indeed in the minority at Gonzaga and the Spokane community at large. The dynamics had shifted. What did this reality portend for us?

In the classroom, I was astounded by the ease and freedom with which peers could address professors. Coming from a culture where one has to seek permission to speak or address an audience, this was a new experience indeed. The professor/student relationship in my society is very vertical. I am sure my professors and peers found it odd that I was a person of few words in class. At some point, I had to explain that this was due to my cultural background. In many African communities, people still practice the habit “women are to be seen and not to be heard.” A lot has changed since then and I have seen the appreciation from professors and peers with respect to the different perspectives from my world that I bring to class. This has been replicated in other social spheres like the church. The

experience has been reciprocal; I have gained so much knowledge and exposure to life in America and other parts of the world.

How do I view my experience at Gonzaga in light of my cultural background? In Swahili², there is a saying that goes: “*Mgeni njoo, mwenyeji aponye.*” In English it translates as: ‘*let the guest come so that the host or hostess may benefit (get well).*’ Students who are new to Spokane are like visitors to one’s home. They represent diverse cultures that offer a rich source of well-being to the Gonzaga fraternity. How can the university tap into this richness to create a community where everyone feels a sense of belonging and gets ‘healing’ from the abundant benefits offered by a diverse community? In one of his writings, John Mbiti comments: “Hospitality and tender care are shown to visitors, strangers, and guests. In the eyes of African peoples “The visitor heals the sick” (African proverb). This means that when a visitor comes to someone’s home, family quarrels stop, the sick cheer up, peace is restored, and the home is restored to new strength. Visitors are, therefore, social healers - they are family doctors in a sense.” What lessons can be gained from this proverb?

Having had the privilege to work in a global setting, diversity is something that has been part and parcel of my work and life for a long time. One is rarely judged by looks, speech, or origin; neither

2 National language in Kenya. It is spoken widely in the East African region.

does one judge others by the same parameters. I was taken aback the first time I experienced the nuances associated with being ‘different’ at Gonzaga. The most surprising thing is that it happened in church – where an usher bypassed my children and I during collection time at Mass. Despite signalling to the usher several times, our attempts to get attention were ignored. I can still remember the sense of bewilderment on my children’s face when this happened. How could I explain to children who had never experienced bias in their life, that this was a new experience to me also? The reality of being ‘different’ hit home then; especially coming from God’s house where such differences should not exist. I have gone on to experience similar incidents on other occasions when churchgoers would not shake hands with me at Mass. In America, I have been forced to view something I had taken for granted for so many years in a different light. While I credit many years of training and exposure to multi-culturally diverse settings to being more culturally competent than the average person, experiencing bias first-hand has been quite disconcerting. Without consciously realizing it at first, I found myself reviewing the whole community from a different lens. In which other settings was the ‘church’ experience being replicated – either consciously or unconsciously by the perpetrators? I am now more alert and sensitive to people’s words and actions.

As an international student, I have appreciated the respect



REACH
your potential
be inspired.

KATHERINE
SUMANTRI

and support accorded to me as a doctoral student; prior to my departure from my home country and upon arrival in Spokane. The support offered by the international student scholars' services in the student orientation process is exemplary. Staff and faculty in the Doctoral Program in Leadership Studies (DPLS) made adjusting to a new education system so much smoother for me. The support I continue to receive from my academic advisor has kept me focussed and on course in my studies. I can truly say that I have made true friends in the program.

Notwithstanding the above, I have often found myself reflecting on where I stand in the total scheme of things in the bigger student population and the whole university fraternity. Are my interests as an international graduate student fully represented? Is there need for more thinking with respect to the experience of the international student in a new environment, culture and its associated nuances? Using the example of my experience renting a house in Spokane might shed more light on what I am referring to. In my search for a rental house in Spokane, I had to grapple with a lack of rental history and a non-existent credit history in the USA. Every apartment or housing complex I visited needed to do a background check to ascertain my credibility as a tenant. Since I had none, I was subjected to the process of filling "endless" forms. Each time, a new requirement seemed to emerge. Not only was the

experience frustrating, but very upsetting too. At some point, I felt that my integrity and dignity had been stripped from me. Coming from a society where renting a home is a much simpler process, going through this experience was quite harrowing. I could not help but compare this experience with how we treat visitors in my home country – we go out of our way to make sure that they feel welcomed and that they settle in as smoothly as possible. I felt cheated in some way given that I have assisted so many international staff to find homes and in other settling-in formalities when they took up their assignments in Nairobi. This is just one example to provoke more reflection into what goes into supporting the international student to transition smoothly in their new environment. Most often than not, this would be their first experience in a foreign country. In advanced cultures like the west, the culture shock and adjustment can be quite intimidating. The rest of the world might not have the same privileges or be advancing at the same pace as the western world. The education system, the language used, the pedagogy, may all be “Greek” to a foreign student. What mechanisms will assure that basic assumptions made with respect to their capability, presumed knowledge, and understanding of their new learning environment do not impede their success as students? Is there more that can be done in terms of job opportunities and other forms of support to cushion the impact of coming to a country where the currency in use

is much stronger than that in their home country? More questions could be posed with respect to so many other areas. Given the mission of the university to be a more inclusive community, new ideas on how to embrace and make all students at Gonzaga get a sense of belonging are critical, especially with respect to students from minority groups. “When hospitality becomes an art, it loses its very soul” – Max Beerbohm. Admitting students from underrepresented groups should not be about ‘numbers’, but ensuring that this group of students finds a place they can feel ‘at home’ during their academic journey at Gonzaga. The “healing” they bring with them as visitors would reap immense benefits for Gonzaga. The potential resident in this student population to position Gonzaga University on the national and global arenas cannot be underestimated.

GAVIN IMES





SUBSTANCES REVISITED

HANNA JONES

There's no questioning that no matter who you are, when you got there, what religion you traditionally practice, or how far you stray from who you previously claimed to be, you learn things about yourself and others. I've learned not only about myself, but also about my relationships with other people. I tend to be someone who observes details rather than someone who acts spontaneously. And from what I've observed, the "typical" college lifestyle is a difficult and potentially dangerous one to achieve.

When the average teen thinks about college, they tend to think about something in the more distant future – full of freedom and parties and partaking in memorable events with new friends. In other words, college is wild and fun, period.

When I first arrived at university, I anxiously awaited such adventures and close friendships. Mine started off with a bang (as most freshmen years tend to), and before I knew it, I was drinking heavily two to three nights a week, wandering around the new neighborhood and experiencing the "true" college lifestyle. My friends and I would tease each other when one of us would feel

unmotivated to force down foul tasting liquor and venture into the cold to find a party. Should I choose to go to sober trivia rather than black out at a party with colorful rave lights, I feared being ostracized and alienated.

College is supposed to be the time where we experience new things fearlessly, without worry of judgment, right? Peer pressure isn't a real thing, because we are the ones choosing to go out and make questionable decisions. If you had asked the freshman me if she felt forced to do anything, she would have vehemently shaken her head in protest of such a question.

Sophomore year came and went with little change, except maybe more nights spent in the library, heads bent in stressed study. Then came a time of reflection after a wake up call. I decided to cut out substances completely. Nobody forced me to, or threatened punishment if I didn't choose to stop smoking and drinking; it was wholly my own decision. My thought was that I could fill the time I spent consuming substances with more attention focused on what I really loved to do. I imagined evenings filled with writing short and quirky stories, reading books that had been on my to-do list for years, having meaningful conversation with my friends and roommates, and learning that difficult jazz riff on acoustic guitar, of which I had almost given up. The week after school got out, I was completely determined to change up my routine and make myself

a better human. I was pretty proud of it too; what 20-year-old gives up zany adventures with her friends to do something completely ordinary? Despite this, I decided that the typical fear of missing out was not going to be something that affected me.

It truly amazed me what I learned about myself, and it's almost alarming how much self-reflection can occur when your evenings aren't so blurry. I learned that I have the ability and willpower to cut substances out of my life any time I choose. This is an incredibly important fact that I needed to know about myself as a person. With alcoholism so present in my own family as well as in modern-day culture, I needed to know that addiction would be avoidable in my lifespan. What I did not anticipate, however, was the shocking realization that this was not as simple for everyone else. I've noticed how certain girls are "great girls to go out with" because they're wild and always make the night fun. I have a few of these friends myself. However, once I eliminated the substance portion in a weekly routine, these friends become obsolete. I absolutely did not choose to cut certain friends out of my life – they did that themselves when I chose to make different decisions.

I would like to make it clear that I am not against substance use by any means. I love getting drunk and dancing on tables and singing at the top of my lungs with my friends as much as

your average young adult. I'm your typical college student, and I definitely am not one who condemns those who enjoy drinking and recreational drug use. But it has become increasingly clear to me that such substances, rather than actual friendships, are heavily relied upon here. I would ask friends to stay in and watch movies with me, and they would spend the night stressing out about seeing photos on social media of everyone else getting drunk. I can't tell you how many times I planned to stay in with friends, only to end up being left alone because of a party down the street, the better option immediately sought out instead of a close conversation or spending time together as friends. Initially, the feeling was lonely. Were my friends really hanging out without me? Surely the next morning I would feel completely left out because my friends would say, "Remember when...?" and I wouldn't remember because I wasn't there.

I'm not necessarily saying that the typical college lifestyle is wrong or harmful. Just skewed. Why do we rely on these things to bring us joy? I can honestly say that I would rather sit around with my friends laughing and messing around than being groped in a dark room while I attempt to keep my feet firmly planted on the floor.

What has happened here?

To be completely honest, I am grateful for this time of reflection and observation, and I almost regret that it didn't come sooner. I truly believe that this kind of thought process does not cross the minds of many college-aged kids, and I'd like to be the one to blow this out of the water. Who are my friends? Why are they my friends? Do they make me a better person?

So here is my call to action, my moral of this story: experiment. Try new things. We're young and we have time ahead of us to be responsible and mature adult. But try new things that you'll remember. Try things that scare you, but things you don't need liquid courage to do. Take a look at who surrounds you. Do they reflect the best in you? I always rolled my eyes when my mom asked me that question, but I truly believe that we are a reflection of the people we spend the most time with. If your friends make you a better person, you're already a step ahead of me. If not, maybe it's time to reevaluate, before it's too late. Because honestly, I can say that without a doubt that this is one of the more difficult and simultaneously valuable lessons I've learned in college.

GAVIN IMES



MUSHROOM MANAGEMENT

WILLIAM PATRICK BROWN



Mushroom Management is supposed to be a joke. An old joke, where, as the story goes, “employees are kept in the dark by management and infrequently fed copious amounts of manure.” In this environment, the little spores are expected to sit quietly – patiently ignorant of their surroundings – until one day they burst forth full of enlivened energy, sent off on their way.

This works well for mushrooms, but maybe not so much for people.

When I arrived at Gonzaga in the summer of 2014, like many, I was full of enthusiasm, yet anxious to meet the experience of graduate school head-on. Dissimilarly, however, I was not just starting out in life, I was beginning my life anew.

You see, I’m what they call a “non-trad” student. Not only am I older than many of you, but I’m older than most of the faculty as well. I came to here not to train for a career, but to get an education.

Having recently survived a long and debilitating bout with cancer, I had a lot of time on my hands. I enrolled online at Western Governors University and received my undergraduate degree in

SAMANTHA
TAKIZAWA



marketing.

So, this is not my first rodeo. In 1964, at age 17, I left the wheat fields of Montana to travel the world and find adventure.

I found adventure, all right – and then some.

The first venture I embarked was spent four years underwater, on board a Polaris missile submarine. Every 90 days or so, we would sneak up off the coast of the former Soviet Union. As the new kid on board, I was assigned a hammock and told to sleep above a Mark 45, a fully-armed nuclear-warhead torpedo.

There, underwater, we sat ready to blow those people off the face of the earth – should they even think of attacking the United States.

The “Cold War days” were heady times, but nothing like what happened next.

I was granted an honorable discharge in Charleston, S.C. in 1968, and began what can only be described as a surreal road trip with a bunch of hippies en route to San Francisco. Six months later, we arrived at that Golden Gate.

I was no longer the naïve drug-store cowboy from Montana, but a man of the world.

Using the G.I. Bill, I enrolled at the brand-spanking-new De Anza College, in Cupertino, California. I took to student government and was elected as Member-at-Large. I also served as

student representative and voting member on the Faculty Senate.

On May 4, 1970, the Ohio National Guard killed four and wounded nine unarmed student protestors at Kent State University. I transferred to San Francisco State College just in time for the “Great Student Strike.” There, I joined forces with members of Black Student Union, Vietnam Veterans Against the War, women against everything and many others struggling to make a difference. Draft cards and bras were burned daily in Union Square; we knew we had to make our voices heard.

Eventually, the money ran out. I went to back to work and 35 years later woke up at Gonzaga University.

I still wanted to make a difference. I signed up for the Graduate Student Council (GSC). Here, I hoped to play an active role for graduate students, with their lives and careers still ahead of them.

I attended my first GSC meeting last fall. What I found was not what I expected.

Instead of participating on a student council that gave voice to student concerns and voted on important issues, we were relegated to dispensing a couple small grants to grad students so they could attend conventions, conferences and events critical to their studies.

We also voted on where to hold the Christmas party.

As the date for the 2015 Student Council meeting got closer,

I decided to call attention to the fact that we, as voting members of the GSC, had never seen our charter or constitution and had no idea what our rules, policies and procedures were.

I emailed the council and “advisors.” Suddenly, a giant mushroom cloud appeared.

The meeting was held on February 4, 2015. Only nine of the 21 graduate-student council members were present. No quorum was present, but the meeting was conducted anyway.



THERESA
SCHLEI

When asked if any member “wanted to speak on behalf of the pending grant applicants,” I stood to speak on behalf of a doctoral candidate in my department.

Two minutes into my presentation, I was rudely interrupted by a council advisor, who implied that we already had the students’ applications and further discussion was unnecessary.

When I had the floor again, I announced: “I resign from the Graduate Student Council.”

Thus began my one-man boycott of, what I deem, an ineffective organization.

During the 2014-15 school year, exactly \$2,000 was made available as grants to graduate students needing to attend conventions, conferences and events. For some, attendance at the various events is mandatory for their degree.

This represents an allocation of less than \$1 per graduate student. Where is the money going? Is the graduate class of 2016 paying a disproportionate share for the new student activity center? The GSC can afford free Froyo events and socials, but they can’t seem to find any money for decent-sized grants?

I’m an online student, but you will start to see me around campus more. I will be the old guy holding the small “BOYCOTT Graduate Student Council” sign. Say “Hi,” and if we have the time, maybe we can share a story.



MORE THAN WHAT YOU SEE

SAMANTHA TAKIZAWA

As a child, whenever I would fill out a form, I would always get so confused at the section that asked me to check off my race.

“Mommy,” I would ask, “Do I put white or Asian?”

With an actual breakdown of my heritage, I am 75 percent white and 25 percent Asian. But with the last name Takizawa, it was hard to say I was anything but Asian.

My grandfather is from Japan. He moved to America in 1964 when he was 28, making my father half Japanese, and my brother and me a quarter Japanese. Having a direct link to Japan, it is hard for me to avoid my Japanese heritage even though it is not a huge part of who I am genetically.

My mother, on the other hand, is half Italian, 40 percent Irish, and the rest is a mix of Slovenian and Croatian. With my Japanese family existing mostly in Japan, my mother’s family is who helped shape who I am characteristically.

When I was born, my family in Japan was so excited that they had my family and me flown out to Japan to visit my great grandmother before she died. Before I even turned 2, I had already visited my first country.

When I was five, I knew how to use chopsticks and would take bento boxes to lunch with me in elementary school. However, looking more Caucasian than Asian was odd. But that didn't stop me from enjoying bowls of udon and yakisoba. Ever since I was little, at New Year I went to my grandparents' house to celebrate Japanese New Year with food and money.

One day I stunned my fellow classmates in sixth grade when I presented my country report on Japan and had my Grandfather stand up and sing the national anthem for them. I'm pretty sure they were convinced that I was one of those white girls who was obsessed with Japanese culture and anime. However, this wasn't an obsession. It was part of my life.

But just because my Japanese culture appears more in my life in practice, that doesn't mean that my other 75 percent is cast aside. My physical appearance is more Caucasian, with hints of Japanese thrown in, and my personality is more boisterous and outgoing rather than quiet and self-aware like my Japanese relatives. Being around my mother's Italian family has shaped who I am as a person rather than who I am culturally. If I lost any one of those two sides of me, then I would not be the same person who is writing this right now.

I may be more Caucasian in being, but in my mind I am equal parts of both. I am a combination of more than just nationalities. I am a combination of culture and family.

HUES OF BEAUTY

GAVIN IMES

I took these photos because I have a passion for photography, and the beauty in nature. Nature is very special to me. My family owns a small farm, so I learned from a young age to appreciate what nature has to offer. It never ceases to amaze me how intricate nature can be, with so many shapes, colors, sizes, and functions.







THE LOST CHILDREN



BRITTA SMITH



When I visited Japan and the area affected by the earthquake, I was impacted by the statue which represents children lost to the earthquake and tsunami. I wanted to take a photo that captured the tragedy of the 2011 Tohoku earthquake, while also showing the strength of the people there and the hope they believe in.

This photo symbolizes hope to me. It also reminds me of the hospitality the people of Ishinomaki showed us, even when some of them had no home to welcome us into, *per se*.

My trip to Japan really opened my eyes to other cultures and how they deal with tragedy. It makes me very grateful for the life I've lived and all the opportunities I've had since few things, such as a natural disaster, have held me back from my goals. The people I met on this trip and both the American and Japanese friends I made will always be in my heart. I will never be able to repay the people of Japan and most specifically Tohoku for everything they taught me.







GAVIN
IMES



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