

# OUR VOICES

*Gonzaga's Journal of Culture and Diversity*







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# LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

This year we decided to use a photo for the cover that represents the voice of the student body and this journal's desire to share that voice with the Gonzaga Community. "Share your voice" is the message behind this photo. The Our Voices cover is meant to represent the journal as a platform for students to share stories about topics and experiences that are not typically discussed and thus have not been given a voice. This journal gives a voice to the voiceless and gives the entire Gonzaga community the opportunity to delve deeper into their classmates' lives by connecting with them through their stories. We recognize that beyond culture and race, there are issues of sexual orientation, identity, and mental health that are among the many other topics shared by the authors, and we believe that the expression of their struggle is represented by this cover.

**- *Vanessa Ingram,***  
***Editor in Chief***

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# WE ARE NOT THAT WEALTHY

*Abdullah Alanazi*

Like any country, Saudi Arabia is associated with stereotypes. They are tied to wealth, which affects the way people view the Saudi society. Having lived in the U.S. for over three years, I, as a Saudi citizen, have experienced a number of stereotypes by Americans and other people who are not Arabs. “You fly on your private jet?” a Gonzaga student assumed when I was talking about my trip home in this previous winter break and many other trips. It is true that I fly home a lot every year, but the reason I do that is because I miss my family, not because I have a private jet I can use whenever I want to. This assumption comes from the belief that Saudi Arabia has an enormous wealth from exporting oil. However, not every citizen shares the profits from the oil production. People from other countries assume that all Saudis are wealthy and make large salaries, and that we live lavish lifestyles in palaces and drive expensive cars. By discussing diverse aspects of the Saudi economy and society that are lesser known to non-Saudis, I will prove that these stereotypes are not precise.

Almost a year ago I ran into a Gonzaga student, whom I barely knew at the time, in downtown Spokane. After a long conversation about the school and our mutual friends, he said, “So why out of all schools you chose Gonzaga although you’re from the Royal Family of Saudi Arabia?” I was shocked. I stayed silent for seconds thinking about the right answer in my mind, “Should I tell him No! No! You’re totally wrong. Should I laugh and not seriously answering the question? Or should I act cool and pretend that I am?” I finally used all the options I had. With a silly smile, I told him that he was wrong, and that I was, however, one of their close relatives, but not from the family itself. The reason why I wanted to act cool was because of the high expectations he had of me.

In fact, it is true that the Royal Family of Saudi Arabia and I are from the same tribe: “Alanazi,” yet they are not close to me. After correcting his assumption, I asked him why he thought I was from the Royal Family, and his reply was even more surprising. He said, “I’ve heard friends saying that.” This reply left me with

many thoughts about my lifestyle and whether or not I had pretended I was wealthy. Perhaps the reason they thought I was a member of, the Royal Family, Al-Saud, was because I had my own big apartment and an SUV although I was a freshman just like them. In fact, what made this stereotype extremely fascinating was the fact that my parents were actually immigrants. In their teenage years, my parents emigrated from Syria, where they were born and raised, to Kuwait, where they got married. Thirty years later, they moved to Saudi Arabia, just seven years after my birth. Thus, my immediate family is not originally from Saudi Arabia, let alone are we royalty.

Talking about hometowns, a friend asked me to show him my hometown and where my family lives. So, I went to “Google Maps” to show him my house, which is about 1050 square feet. His reaction was, “Wow! Saudis are so rich.” In fact, the reason was not because Saudis are rich. With such large productions of oil and a relatively small population compared to the amount of land Saudi Arabia occupies, it is easy to assume that all Saudis are extremely wealthy and drive luxury and sports cars such as Lamborghinis and Bentleys. While Saudi gross domestic product is one the highest and people live very comfortably, like the rest of the world Saudi suffers with economic difficulties that it struggles to overcome. Since 1970, the population has quadrupled from only 6 million to now 28 million. The issue is not a result of defunct politics or lack of economic diversification but because the economy has not been able to sustain the large increase in such a short amount of time. Saudi Arabia’s population has grown so rapidly partially due to the migrant workers, now estimated at around 6 million that flood into the country seeking work because of its historical and current economic success. King Abdullah during his rule funneled billions into job creation and welfare programs that had little success because of the government’s failure to keep up with the growth rate. Although there is very little information about the country’s poverty, it is estimated that between 2 and 4 million, a quarter of the population, Saudis live on only 530 USD a month. It is true that there are Saudis with so much money that they don’t know what to do with it. They show off their wealth in western countries by driving their luxury cars, having their own jets, and spending millions of dollars on silly stuff to amuse other people from other countries. However, they neither represent nor account for those in Saudi Arabia who live on 17 USD a day.

Television and pictures on social media showing large Saudi houses with the world’s nicest cars parked in front make it easy to aspire to this lifestyle. People

assume that all Saudis live an extremely lavish lifestyle (which was accumulated from oil or that we own oil wells in our houses). The reality behind this is that yes, Saudis tend to have big houses, but it can be attributed to cultural and geographical reasons not wealth. In the United States people build large houses to showcase their wealth. In Saudi Arabia, it is rooted in cultural practice. Saudis prefer large houses because in many cases up to three generations live in the same house (different apartments). It is not uncommon for houses to be multipurpose and have separate apartments attached for children or grandparents. In my own household there are three apartments upstairs where my brothers live with their kids. This is convenient because the household children are able to save their money by not paying rent while they work, and it leaves room for interaction between grandparents and grandchildren. It is also common for houses to be so large because we have many sitting rooms. This cultural aspect is unparalleled in the United States as a majority of social interactions take place outside the house. Also, western families tend to be small. Another aspect is that of geography. As mentioned before, the Saudi population is relatively small compared to the size of land that makes up the country. When land is cheaper and less difficult to accumulate, it is logical to assume that families will build out instead of up. Unknown to most, however, is that 35% of Saudi citizens rent their homes. Increased difficulty in obtaining home loans, soon to be reformed with a new mortgage law, has made it difficult for families and young couples to acquire homes. Though most Saudis admit they would rather live in a home than an apartment, the difficulty of obtaining a loan, competition for real estate, and increasing unemployment make it hard to do so.

While it is natural for us to have assumptions of other societies and unknown places, it is unrealistic to believe that all people in one place have the same lifestyle. Just like the United States, Saudi Arabia has a diverse population comprised of people from all socioeconomic backgrounds. From what is shown in media and on social media, it is easy to assume that all Saudis are wealthy and live in mansions. But trust me, the majority of my family earns has a low household income, and they barely afford their needs. So, indeed having a private jet is nothing but a dream.

# UNDERAGE COLLEGE DRINKING

*Sophie Anton*

When preparing to leave for college my freshman year, my one major concern involved the stereotype of the prevalence of underage drinking. I believed that everyone drank in college, and I would have to participate in this culture in order to find friends. Yet, through multiple struggles and choosing not to drink, I learned that this stereotype was not necessarily true. Although finding a group of friends who all wanted to enjoy the weekends without the use of alcohol took time, it was comforting to discover so many other students held the same commitment to sobriety.

According to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, about four out of five students drink alcohol. Furthermore, from the students who drink in college, about half binge drink. These statistics are high when representing the number of college students who drink, yet they disprove the stereotype that “everybody drinks in college.” My first six weeks of college -- Halloween and New Year’s Eve — especially proved that some students do not participate in the drinking culture.

When I started school at Gonzaga, I did not know how difficult the choice to not drink would be. I felt the pressure of having to drink to make friends, yet I chose not to participate in underage drinking. According to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, “The first 6 weeks of freshman year are a vulnerable time for heavy drinking and alcohol-related consequences because of student expectations and social pressures at the start of the academic year,” (“Underage”). I heard about the crazy parties and excessive amounts of drinking students would enjoy throughout the weekend, and I felt insecure and lost. I initially did not know how I could make friends without meeting people at parties and submitting to the peer pressure.

Instead of drinking within those first 6 weeks, I spent time with my Resident Assistant going to a prayer group on Friday nights. This helped me find



an alternative method for making friends without using alcohol, along with proving that underage drinking was not the only activity during college weekends. Even though I felt like I was missing out by not going to parties, I wanted to stay true to my values and show that I was not a part of the stereotype of all college students drinking. I also did not want to suffer the consequences that can occur as a result of underage drinking, such as academic problems, health issues, injury, sexual abuse, assault or even death. I knew from experience that alcohol could be the cause of a death, because within my home community of Spokane, three teenagers from another high school died while drunk driving during my senior year of high school. These tragedies convinced me that drinking in college was ultimately not worth it. “About 1,825 college students between the ages of 18 and 24 die from alcohol-related unintentional injuries, including motor-vehicle crashes. ... Furthermore, about 696,000 students between the ages of 18 and 24 are assaulted by another student who has been drinking,” (“Underage”). These statistics helped me make the personal choice to not drink because the numbers for these terrible occurrences, like death and assault, are too high.

On Halloween of 2015, I once again belied the untruth behind the stereotype of all college students drinking. I had to make a choice to not go out and drink with all of my friends. I did not want to be out around the Logan Neighborhood that night because “nighttime is always a dangerous time on the road, but during Halloween night teenagers are involved in three times as many fatal crashes as other drivers, with underage drinking as a major cause,” (2016 Quiz). I knew that most students were at some sort of party or event with alcohol. Even my friends who usually do not drink on the weekends dressed up and went to a party for the night. This was a difficult experience for me because I wanted to spend time with my friends, but I did not want to participate in drinking. Instead of going out, I stayed in my residence hall and watched a movie which made me feel sad and left out. I definitely felt like an outsider because, according to the Core Institute survey, 72 percent of college students have used alcohol at least once within the 30 days prior to their survey. This statistic shows that I am the minority within the college drinking population, especially on major party and drinking nights like Halloween. Yet I continue to disprove the stereotype of all college students drinking.

Although I was not at college for New Year’s Eve, I still felt the presence

and power that alcohol had with my friends and acquaintances at Gonzaga. Social media on New Year's Eve showed me why there is a stereotype that all college students drink; there were numerous posts of people partying. However, my actions on New Year's Eve showed why the stereotype is not accurate. A recent study shows that up to 83 percent of college students' Facebook profiles refer to alcohol, including boasts about underage and excessive drinking ("Influence"). Social media has made drinking seem even more prevalent than it truly is among minors. In my own experience, I often see alcohol on the Snapchats and Facebook posts from underage students at Gonzaga. These posts give me the view that every college student drinks, although I know this is not true. According to the Alcohol Research Current Reviews, "Young people are exposed to and display pro-alcohol messages and images through online portrayals of drinking on personal pages as well as unregulated alcohol marketing on social media sites that may reach underage people. Such online displays of alcohol behavior have been correlated with offline alcohol behavior and risky drinking," (Influence). I have found confidence in my decision to not drink underage in college, despite the numerous social media posts glorifying alcohol on nights like New Year's Eve.

Underage drinkers make up a large population of Gonzaga's students, yet I have found friends who are willing to stay in with me, watch movies or choose other activities on the weekend. The first six weeks of college, Halloween and New Year's Eve were all heavy-drinking times in my experience, yet I chose to not participate. As a result of the large percentage of students who drink underage in college, especially throughout these three heavy drinking times, I decided to become an RA so I can help with the safety of students on campus. I understand the peer pressure and the allure of drinking in order to be socially accepted and make friends. My goal is to help lessen the stereotype that all college students drink, and to reduce the statistics of assault, abuse and all of the terrible consequences that can occur from drinking. I also want to act as a model for the option of not drinking while underage for the students who do not want to participate in the alcohol culture. Although I am not a part of the statistic, I can help Gonzaga respond effectively to the challenges of underage drinking and eliminate the stereotype of all college students drinking.

# BEING NAVAJO AT GONZAGA

*Alastair Lee Bitsoi*

As I was walking through Washington Square Park on the campus of New York University the other day, the black cross marks on the foreheads of several students reminded me that it was Ash Wednesday.

Just like one of my new friends that I met here at NYU, there was a time when I had no idea what those black ash marks meant. His inquiry as to why these students' foreheads were adorned in ash reminded me of my first exposure to Catholicism.

It has been more than ten years since I first saw those same Ash Wednesday marks on students' foreheads. Gonzaga is where I learned about Catholicism and the Roman Catholic faith — and the significance of Lent and the Easter season.

Although now aware of the Roman Catholic faith as an alumnus and after years of embracing my truth, reflecting back on my Gonzaga experience, I realized all of that required some major adjustments.

After all, I was still learning about myself as a Navajo male, the Navajo culture, my lower social economic status, and my Native American community. It was not until I arrived at Gonzaga — during a late summer trip with my parents and seven younger siblings — that I realized how completely different the Navajo Nation public schools were from the predominately white, Roman Catholic institution that is Gonzaga.

Right away when classes began I knew that I did not fit in, and it took several weeks before I acclimated. But the point of this reflection is that when I left the Navajo Nation for Gonzaga at 17 years old, I became aware of my social status in the American world— a first-generation college student of low socioeconomic status. The realities and legacy of new and old money was and is pronounced at Gonzaga.

The next reality shock was a result of Gonzaga's curriculum, a Jesuit

institution. Being exposed to Navajo culture and ceremonies, as well as the Native American Church —which includes consuming peyote — is counter to the university's mission. While Catholicism is monotheistic, Navajo culture is polytheistic, with the principle of Sa'ah Naagai Bik'eh Hozhoon (SNBH) being the guiding principles to life. SNBH is basically the Old and New Testament, so to speak, to Navajos. This Navajo principle of life, translated as "living a long, harmonious life with the natural elements of life," is commonly cited in Navajo healing ceremonies, this component of my identity felt in direct contradiction with Gonzaga's mission. Practicing Navajo culture and participating in Navajo ceremonies, as well as being a member of the Native American Church ran counter to the University's Mission. I immediately felt out of place, but I still internalized how I felt and prayed that I would be just fine at Gonzaga.

While my desire to learn about my Navajo identity has grown stronger through the years, at Gonzaga it was weak. I was still learning about the Navajo cultural process and practice, which is a continuous life-learning ideology and philosophy that requires years of knowledge to master. Critical to this is Navajo language, a tongue I had recently come to understand upon my arrival on campus. The learning curve and the demands of Gonzaga were stressful, I struggled through a lingering homesickness and culture shock.

Not only that, I also suffered from academic stress; I was not on par as most other students. Being at Gonzaga revealed how poorly educated I was as a result of the limited public school system available to the Navajo Nation. For example — and this is a true story —my university advisors) assigned me the most challenging schedule, wherein I was barely passing biology and failing chemistry. In my chemistry lab, the professor paired me with a 12-year-old genius. The experience of failing those introductory science classes coupled with the presence of the pre-teen immediately derailed my dreams of being a medical doctor. I thought about how my academic journey, full of one shock right after another, was so anxiety-driven that it impacted my overall well-being. The academic confidence I had in high school, as salutatorian with a Gates Millennium Scholarship in hand, was sucked dry.

Despite the high academic expectations of the institution, I noticed I began to excel in other classes, including English. Even though my ACT test score placed me in remedial English, with Michele Pajer, I developed. Pajer pushed me



to develop my craft and prose. Her class and my performance in it restored the confidence I had lost in the science curriculum. Eventually I switched from pre-medicine to a double-major in political science and criminal justice.

Socially it took a while to come out of timidity, considering that most of my peers in high school and neighborhood were mostly Navajo; I was so used to that demographic. I was not sure how to act around non-Navajos at the mostly white university.

Despite this, it was on Gonzaga's boat cruise for freshmen orientation that I met one of my first non-Navajo friends. She was nice and came from Oregon. Her friendship was the beginning of what my experience was to be at Gonzaga; intellectually stimulating, full of personal growth, partying, basketball, budding friendships and overall fun. Although we came from different cultures, one of my first friends at Gonzaga was a beautiful, slender model-like brunette, who wore stilettos daily. When reflecting on that friendship, I realized we related to each other not only because we both liked English, but also because of our shared perception of not being typical Gonzaga students.

We both agreed that we did not fit the Gonzaga mold. She eventually transferred to an academic atmosphere that suited her weather preference and fashion sense, where students no longer taunted her, saying: "Look, there is stiletto girl!" With her departure, I felt lonely because she was one of the first individuals I met at Gonzaga that I with.

Thus, I felt the need to transfer and attend an institution that was more inclusive.

But as much as I wanted to transfer, my intuition told me to stay. I had this expectation of myself — and I still do today — to succeed and show my siblings that perseverance is key to success. I also did not want to be a stereotypical first-generation Native American student who dropped out of college and never returned to higher education. My personal mission was to grind it out and not fail, especially considering that I had all these prestigious academic scholarships that allowed me to graduate from Gonzaga debt-free.

By year two, I was integrated into the university life and had also met some of my closest friends in life. Their diverse ethnic backgrounds — African American, Haitian, Mexican, Guamanian, Indian, white, Korean, Kenyan and almost anything and everything in between — yielded some interesting questions

for me. Yes, they asked whether I lived in a tipi, if I paid taxes, if I was reliant on the federal government, if I get money from my tribe and/or tribal casinos, and if I was a drunk. I was even asked if I was the “Dot Indian or “Feather Indian.” When I answered that I was Navajo, most of my classmates did not know what a Navajo was. They also did not know my physical features were Navajo, often guessing that I was Pacific Islander, Cambodian, Nepalese or a person of some Asian-speaking descent.

Even now as a graduate student at New York University, where I am studying public health, I’ve had a similar experience as that at Gonzaga. Yes, these questions get annoying, but in hindsight it is an opportunity to educate. For instance, I have the opportunity to educate my colleagues and friends that Native Americans like me, who are Navajo, live in structures called hogans. We do not live in tipis, but we do conduct Native American Church services in a tipi. Navajos also live in accordance with the natural elements of the universe. When it comes to belief systems, Navajo is diverse with many lifeways or religions. But the core of true Navajo identity is Hozho, the principle of living in balance with nature, which is cited in many cultural prayers, songs and ceremonies. Navajos are also historical agriculturalists and hunters. Not to mention we are also good at being adaptable while maintaining our own language, customs, values and culture.

I occasionally made an effort to share my cultural and religious perspectives during the religion classes I took at Gonzaga, and to analyze some of the similarities between Navajo beliefs and Catholicism. I even went as far as attending mass at St. Aloysius, as well as at Greek Orthodox and Baptist churches, to get a better understanding of Christianity. To my surprise, experiencing these religious spaces enlightened me to the ways in which I have incorporated the universal values shared by the belief systems, as well as with my Navajo roots, as a part of my lifestyle. Without a Gonzaga University education and strong Navajo identity, I would not be where I am today — a former award-winning reporter with the Navajo Times and graduate student at New York University in New York City.

Back in high school, there were three reasons why I decided to attend Gonzaga: The number one reason was that I wanted to live outside the Navajo Nation, away from the Four Sacred Mountains of Dinetah (Navajo land). The other reasons were the national attention of the men’s college basketball program, and the academic opportunities provided at a private institution. Plus, Gonzaga was

and still is very generous with their scholarship funds to students like me, which I am forever grateful.

Reason two: basketball. Growing up, I was introduced to the sport by my father and uncles. Like many from the Navajo Nation, basketball serves as an outlet from the poverty, ill health, domestic violence and substance abuse that is heavily rampant in some tribal communities. Naschitti, New Mexico, where I am from, is no exception. Even so, basketball is the sport I learned to love and still do, which made applying for Gonzaga a no-brainer. After all, what basketball fan wouldn't want to attend the same school as John Stockton and stand in line for tickets as a member of the Kennel Club to witness games in the McCarthy Athletic Center or NCAA games during March Madness? In this sense, I was truly in love with Gonzaga.

Despite the rough transition at the esteemed institution that I now proudly call my alma mater, the experience is what made me who I am. In fact, I love how being at Gonzaga shaped my persona. If I stayed in my comfort zone by attending school in New Mexico or the Navajo Nation, I guarantee that I would not have grown into what Gonzaga was trying to build in its students of the mid-2000s by "Educating the People the World Needs Most." After all, "We are Gonzaga! G-O-N-Z-A-G-A!"

# I'S HAWAIIAN, BRAH

*Kristen Burgett*

Because I was born and raised in Hawai`i, coming to the continental U.S. for college was quite a culture shock for me. It took some getting used to in order to become accustomed to how things were here compared to back home—living on two different land masses with a whole ocean in between leaves a whole lot of room for discrepancies. Starting at a new school, where everyone else is new as well and trying to get to know each other means there were a lot of self-introductions made and exchanged. “What’s your name? What’s your major? Where are you from?”. “Hawai`i” seemed to be the mystic word that sent everyone in the room into a silent, eerie awe. After this silence, I knew people had already begun making assumptions about me. Whether they were good or bad, my peers had ideas painted in their heads about what Hawai`i is like and what the people from there are like. They held this picture up against me in contrast, trying to mold me to fit this idea they’d concocted using their exposure—or lack of—to Hawai`i and its characteristics through commercialized media and word of mouth. Sometimes the assumptions were implied; other times they were articulated. Either way, it is evident that certain stereotypes of and beliefs about Hawai`i are projected onto and imposed on people who come from there.

Once you say “I’m from Hawaii,” people translate that to “I’m Hawaiian”; but this is entirely inaccurate. I’ve come to realize that people here on the continental U.S. (back home we refer to it as “the mainland”) make up names using their state to say where they are from; such as “Californian,” “Oregonian,” “Washingtonian,” etc. However, this is not a universal rule. Yes, Hawai`i a state as much of a state as any of the other 49—despite how many people forget because we are disconnected from the majority)—yet contrasting to common misconceptions Hawaiian is a culture, just as Japanese, or Chinese is. To others it may seem like a trivial difference, but being “from Hawai`i” and being “Hawaiian” refer to completely different things.

Being Hawaiian means being of Hawaiian decent or ancestry, which I am not. I

am a native of Hawaiʻi, but not Native Hawaiian. People from Hawaiʻi do not call themselves “Hawaiian” unless they are actually of Hawaiian decent, out of respect for those who are. Hawaiians are a dying ethnicity with a dying culture, and it is considered very rare and special to be Hawaiian. Hawaiʻi’s population is approximately 1.4 million. Of those people, only 6% are Native Hawaiian—21% if you include those who are part-Hawaiian (Goo). So, when I introduce myself as being from Hawaiʻi, my words are intentional. I am not introducing myself as Hawaiian because the words are not synonyms.

Another common question I receive is: What part of Hawaiʻi are you from? This is often followed by a, “Where is that?” which can be translated to: “How far away from the beach are you?” Although the person may not always say it out loud, it is usually implied that I go to the beach all the time—which is not true. Hawaiʻi is idolized for its white sandy beaches and crystal clear oceans; it’s what makes being from Hawaiʻi so fascinating and enticing to others. But, not everyone lives near the beach.

In fact, Oʻahu (the island I live on) is approximately 597 square miles, but has only 112 linear miles of shoreline and beaches (Fischer). According to these numbers, the population of Hawaiʻi cannot fit along the shoreline/near the beach and most people live inland of the island. I happen to live in a little suburb called Mililani, which exists smack dab in the middle of the island about as far from any beach as you can possibly get. It is because we do not all live along the shoreline that most local people do not go to the beach every day, contrary to popular beliefs. Yes, the beach is not that far of a drive for anyone living on this small island. Many locals go to the beach only on occasion, such as a long weekend or break. What many mainlanders fail to recognize, is that we have lives as well. Life is not all beach bumming, surfing, and chilling for us locals. We have jobs, go to school, and have responsibilities just as people here on the mainland do. But, due to our commercialized trademark of being “paradise”, many overlook the fact that for some people, Hawaiʻi is their home, not their get-away vacation spot.

In Hawaiʻi, English is the most common language spoken and is the co-official language of the state alongside Hawaiian. However, there is a third hybrid language we call “Pidgin” that is spoken almost as much as the other two. It is estimated that half of the state’s population (700,000 people) are bilingual in Pidgin (Wong). Pidgin is a subtle blend of languages rooted in Hawaiian and English that

also derives some words from other languages such as Japanese, Portuguese, Filipino, Chinese, and others. It originates from the nineteenth century when Hawai'i became owned by the North Americans and plantations were established. Many people from these countries were brought in to work at the plantations alongside the Hawaiians (Department of Second Language Studies). In order to break the language barrier, a new language was created; one that intermingled words and phrases from all the cultures. This language was nicknamed "Pidgin" and passed on from generation to generation. To this day, people of Hawai'i speak Pidgin; though it is not as prominent as before. With continued interaction with the United States, Pidgin quickly became more English based, but still reaches into different cultures to express certain words or phrases. I happen to speak Pidgin; both of my parents grew up in neighborhoods where Pidgin was spoken frequently. However, where I grew up, there was more of an emphasis to speak "proper English" in schools and such. When I am at home or with my friends, we tend to weave in between proper English and Pidgin, but I rarely notice.

However, it was not until I came here that the difference in my speech was brought to my attention. There have been times here at GU when people have asked me to repeat what I'm saying, and I get confused. "Could they not hear me? Did I stutter?" Only to find out I said "something funny." Because I do not sound like I am from the Pacific North West, I have an "accent," and this surprises me. What surprises me even more is the subtle condescending remarks that I receive for the way I speak. Although people are quick to gather what I had said, they were also quick to correct me. I've been told multiple times that something I have just said wasn't "a real word," or that my grammar "doesn't make sense." Many people have assumed that because I speak differently I am speaking Hawaiian, but I'm not; I am speaking in slang. For one reason or another, there is a superiority surrounding the idea of "proper English" that leads people to assume that I am not speaking English at all when I use Pidgin. However, Pidgin is rooted in English as well as many other languages; it's just that English words are pronounced differently or with an "accent." This does not mean that I do not understand English or that I am not proficient in English. Being from Hawai'i does not mean I am handicapped in the language department. It means that I am able to transcend different variations of language, and it shifts as my audience shifts.

Growing up apart from the United States allowed me to grow up in a

different environment with different experiences and views of the world. Likewise, the people here on the mainland have their own experiences, expectations and outlooks. They only saw me as what they imagined Hawai`i to be like based on their distant view of my island across the ocean. With the limited resources they had to assume and create an idea of what I would be like, people imposed their ideas on me. It is these imposed ideas that I battled with coming to the mainland for college as I tried to integrate myself into this new culture.



# AUTISM

*Daniel Hodge*

Amir, my nephew,  
You've been blessed with this gift.  
All you see is the true happiness in life.  
Your smile lights up the world.  
They say you can't focus  
With your school work in one hand, Crayon in the other.  
Your happiness needs no extension.  
You choose to color for hours on end,  
You have no problem paying attention;  
You'd just rather do what makes you happy.  
It's a choice not a deficiency.  
That's what makes you beautiful.  
Happiness.  
Free from all that pain and suffering.  
My mind is so corrupt from their hatred teachings.  
No hate on your mind.  
I know you're confused,  
Lost but amused.  
You enjoy the little things in life,  
Things I only knew of when I was a small child.  
And you bring that happiness back into my life.  
You're even more brilliant than the ones who diagnosed you.  
You open up my mind; you allow me to see the deeper values in life  
They don't see what I see in you.  
Amir, my nephew,  
If they ever tell you that you're inferior because you have trouble focusing:  
Good, pay them no attention.

# ALASKAN NATIVES

*Brittany Horne*

Substance abuse, which often leads to domestic violence, exposes the youth within a family to negative and violent acts that can potentially affect their future. The Alaska Native culture is unfortunately known for drug and alcohol abuse, which leads countless teenagers and young adults to stray away from furthering their education. While my Alutiiq family is no exception to these unfortunate experiences, thankfully my mom rose above the negative influences around her and taught my siblings and me how to avoid self-destructive habits. Members of my extended family have experienced alcohol and drug abuse; for them a college education is uncommon. My family's mistakes have fostered in me self-discipline and a focus on disproving the stereotype that all alcoholic, addicted to drugs, and uneducated. In fact, not all of us our Eskimos.

Alaska is 586,420 square miles with five different cultural groups arranged by either cultural similarities or the geographic proximity of the indigenous communities. The groupings are Inupiaq — or Eskimo — Athabaskan, Yup'ik, Alutiiq and Tlingit. A common stereotype is that all Alaska Natives are Eskimo. Eskimos actually come only from the northwest region of Alaska. Typically, the weather in there is dry and cold, with temperatures in the winter ranging from zero to negative 20 degrees Fahrenheit. Due to the harsh climate, houses in the 1800's were built underground to trap the air. The rooves were sod blocks laid over driftwood, whalebone and walrus tusks. Jackets are typically parkas made from caribou skin with fur on the inside; these are still worn today.

While the Eskimo culture is unique, it is not who I am. I was born in Kodiak, Alaska as an Alutiiq Alaska Native. Unlike the Eskimos, the Alutiiqs originate from Prince William Sound and Aleutian Islands, which are coastal villages that experience a wet climate with an average of 77 inches of rainfall per year. As a result, 19th century houses were built above ground and made from whale bone, grass and sod. The houses had an entry through the ceiling, making

the structure suitable for a wet climate. These elements of my Alutiiq culture have shaped me into the young adult I am: I was taught to respect my elders, fish, hunt and appreciate the ways my ancestors live. During the summer, I enjoy open water halibut fishing, hiking to pick berries and camping — all of which are activities that I grew up doing alongside my grandparents, aunts and uncles. Common Alutiiq traditions include starning during Christmas, fasting during Easter and attending the Russian Orthodox church on Sunday. Although the Eskimo and Alutiiq cultures share similarities, I was never taught the Eskimo practices and traditions because we are distinct and separate.

While these cultures are different from each other in practice, belief and tradition, they often share the same stereotype that represent Alaska Natives as a whole: Alcoholism. Daily binge drinking is a usual occurrence, and prejudice is common among the Alaska Native culture. According to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, 56.64 percent of natives are heavy drinkers on a daily basis and, according to NBC News, “almost 12 percent of the deaths among Native Americans and Alaska Natives are alcohol-related — more than three times the percentage in the general population.” Unfortunately, a majority of my family is not an exception to this statistic. Three-fourths of my grandparents were once alcoholics along with several of my aunts and uncles. For instance, my great-aunt Nova died at age 27 in Hawaii as a result of an alcohol related car accident. Also, due to my grandfather’s alcoholism, my mom witnessed and experienced domestic violence in her childhood home — the effects of which serve as a continual reminder of alcoholism’s effects. Alcoholism also contributes to financial instability among Alaska Natives. Many Natives have not been out of the state or experienced different cultures. While driving in Anchorage, I witnessed homeless Natives begging for money. One sign read: “I won’t lie I like beer.” This broke my heart; I realized he had not been exposed to many positive influences. Poor lifestyle choices caused by alcohol abuse have all but controlled the lives of Alaska Natives and perpetuate negative stereotypes.

Not only is alcohol abuse common: according to the Office of National Drug Policy, 64.8 percent of Alaskan Natives have abused drugs at some point in their lives, including cocaine, crack cocaine, marijuana, heroin, methamphetamines and prescription pills. My Native family is, again, no exception to this statistic. Several of my cousins have spent time in prison for the consumption and

distribution of heroin, methamphetamines, and prescription pills, compromising their health and presence in my life. When I was 16, my third cousin, Elijah, was born addicted to heroin. His older sister, Lexis, was put up for adoption, because she was not being properly cared for by her parents. Thankfully, both children found positive and loving homes. This firsthand experience provided me with the knowledge that heroin is a strong, addictive drug that kills, not only lives, but hopes and dreams as well. Individuals don't usually begin drug habits with heroin; instead, their gateway drug or drugs are typically marijuana and alcohol. Information about such drugs has made me realize that my family's genes possess addictive tendencies that I have had to overcome. My genetics are prone to substance abuse, but positive environments and horrifying stories of substance abuse have deterred me from misusing alcohol and drugs during my high school and college years.

Throughout high school, I was a competitive swimmer, president of both the National Honors Society and the senior class, and I worked 10 to 15 hours per week. Weekends consisted of volunteer work with children, on and off island swim meets, and homework, unlike most of my peers who went to one party after another). It has been my goal to overcome my family's addiction weaknesses by filling my life with positive influences. Individuals such as my mother have inspired me to overcome negative behaviors, have helped lead me toward success, and have allowed me to find my own person and develop into a role model for other Alaska Natives.

Substance abuse is not the only factor that contributes to the trend of Alaskan Native youth not furthering their education. Higher education has been discouraged and a difficult pursuit among Alaska Natives for decades. According to authors Stephanie and Alexandra Hill, "Only 8 percent of 25-year-old Alaska Natives have college degrees." In small villages, people form a community that becomes their comfort zone. Even though many young adults desire to see more and further their education, they are often scared or discouraged. My mom went to Notre Dame on a scholarship, but before she left the 10,000 residents of Kodiak, her grandma sat her down and said: "Jana, why are you doing this? Don't leave me, all you need is here." Jana Turvey, my mom, was the first of her family to attend college. She broke the mold even more by being the first in the family to attend law school, providing herself the education to become President and CEO of Leisnoi, Inc., our Native village corporation. Young Alaska Natives often hear negativity

every day that discourages them from attending college, causing them to stray away from their goals. However, due to my mother's rebellion, I grew up expecting to attend college.

Because it's a foreign concept to our culture, only five of my extended and immediate family members have gone to college. However — since I was 5 years old — I knew that I both wanted and needed to attend college: My parents set their educational standards high, reiterating them over and over again.

"You need to reach these standards to attend college," they would tell me. Throughout grade school, I worked toward "above average" grades on my report card, and in middle school I earned straight A's to practice and develop study habits for high school. Unlike other Alaska Natives, I had my family's full support when I began filling out college applications. Each essay was edited and every acceptance letter was celebrated. Scholarships flew in from various universities, through the state of Alaska and the Kodiak community.

My long hours of hard work had paid off; I had overcome nearly every Alaska Native stereotype that was put in front of me.

Kodiak, Alaska, home of my Alutiiq culture, presented me with challenges that nearly proved many Alaska Native prejudices. Families, including my own, struggle with drugs and alcohol addiction, which keeps them from furthering their education. The presence of negative influences inspired me to live a healthier lifestyle and strive to achieve my goals. I will forever love and cherish my Native family even when they make poor choices, but I will never forget that their poor choices drive me with the passion to rise above, work hard and reach my full potential.

# STEREOTYPES ABOUT POVERTY

*Henadz Krukovich*

It is rare to find a person at Gonzaga who comes from a life of poverty. Gonzaga is a small private Jesuit college that does not attract many young people from impoverished backgrounds because of a price tag that many just cannot afford. Those who do come here are here most likely through a scholarship or by taking out enormous loans. With such a rift in demographics, it is sometimes commonplace to hear stereotypes and ignorant comments regarding poverty that are not necessarily true. Many assume that people living in poverty are lazy, don't value education, and abuse alcohol and drugs.

One of the most common stereotypes about people living in poverty is that they are lazy. It can be easy to think that the people living in poverty don't want to work hard, and, as a result, they would rather be poor and live off the government. Some people think that if people in poverty just tried hard enough, there will always be some kind of job they can find to make some money and start moving up the ladder of socioeconomic status. Donald Trump, a popular political candidate for president, often makes comments in his speeches that people who receive support from Welfare "have an incentive not to work." His belief is only the reflection of a widely spread belief that poor people are lazy and abuse the Welfare system by not searching for jobs.

However, being in poverty does not automatically equate to a person being lazy. In 2014, 6 percent of the U.S. population was unemployed, but 15 percent were living in poverty. That means that 9 percent of the population that had jobs were still living in poverty. Sometimes having a job is not a guarantee that you will have enough money to afford the basic necessities. For example, my mom has a severe skin condition and as a result cannot work. My dad does not speak English very well, and despite the effort he puts in to support our family, he is not able to, which is why we receive assistance from the government. My father works hard as a truck driver doing night deliveries from Spokane to Tri-cities. He leaves

our house at 9 p.m., loads his truck by himself, and drives for three hours straight. Then he unloads and loads back up for the return trip. When he comes home at 7 a.m., he's totally drained and sleeps for a couple of hours before waking up at noon. This exhausting routine is why I would not consider my father lazy — yet, he only makes a few dollars over the minimum wage, which is not enough to support a family of eleven children. The stereotype that all poor people are lazy is obviously not true. Sometimes a person needs more than hard work to escape the jaws of poverty.

In addition, some people hold the view that people living in poverty don't value education despite the fact that having an education allows people to make a life for themselves outside of poverty. Some people think that if poor people cared about higher education, they would save up money to go to college like everybody else. A person with a bachelor's degree makes on average of \$1,038 a week compared to a person with only a high school diploma who makes \$626 a week. So, they believe that if education is the best route out of poverty and there are so few people from an impoverished background who attend college, this means that poor people don't value education.

I disagree with this stereotype about poverty and education completely. One of the biggest reasons that my family emigrated from Belarus to America is because, here, we have the opportunity to get a better education. My parents only have a high school diploma, not because they didn't want to go to college, but because that was all that they could have. In Belarus, they didn't have the opportunity to go to college; if they had they would have gladly gone. And since I come from a poor background, my family cannot afford to pay for my college education. Yet, here I am at Gonzaga, studying Electrical Engineering. After coming from a place where college education was just a dream, I feel like I value my college education more than the rest of the students for whom college was always a reality.

Another common stereotype is that poor people abuse drugs and alcohol. They take drugs or alcohol to drown their problems and escape the responsibility of trying to deal with their situation. It is estimated that “3.7 million of those in poverty are in need of treatment for drug or alcohol addiction, but less than a quarter of those actually get the treatment they need” (“The Connection”). It is typically portrayed in social media that poverty and substance abuse go hand in

hand. One of the reasons that this happens is because it is easier to think that the poverty is the result of ones' bad life choices rather than the complex underlying reasons that are harder to understand — but all contribute to poverty.

This could be true for some, but it is not always the case. In my family, none of us have used drugs or drink alcohol; and, yet, we live in poverty. Perhaps there are higher chances of going down that path since everyday life is so grueling and hard for people who are poor. The Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that “about 6.5 million people were working two jobs — or more — to make ends meet,” (Linn). Some people just cannot take it anymore and try to find a way out those feelings through drugs or alcohol.

Some people take it for granted when they come from well-off families, and think that since they worked hard to be where they are, the poor people could do the same. It is sometimes hard to think that it is not always the fault of the people living in poverty for being poor. Poverty is an endless cycle that people are born into. Only a select few can escape, and most of the time they escape with the help from people who are not in poverty. The next time you are driving down the road and see a homeless person holding a sign that reads, “Why Lie I Need A Beer,” don't assume that all poor people are the same. Some of them are actually really good people that have been given a tough life to live.



# THE ROOM WHERE TIME STOOD STILL

*Matthew Moen*

I lied... When the shadows curled and danced around in my mind, I lied. When salty tears caressed my face and the pain stood as tall as mountains, I lied. I lied when I said I was fine, and I lied when I said I didn't need help.

I laid there in the darkness of my room. The bed wrapped its cold fingers around me like a loving embrace or the desperate grasps of a dying man. A bright light wafted around my head and made me nauseous. "You should get up," nagged a small voice from the door. The stuttering noise came with a gust of warm air for but a flash before it was gone. The ringing of a thousand bells reverberated in my mind as my eyes readjusted to the darkness. If I twisted my head to the right side of the coarse pillow, I could barely make out the wall a few feet before me with two plain white doors jutting from it. Everything around the doors was void of color. The door on the right side was open to reveal a rack of clothes with photos of fallen friends below them from a recent clothed war. The clothes looked colorless from wear and tear. Below was the chest that held the drawings I used to do when I was filled with a brighter light, but today the light was hiding. Shaking my cramped head, I slinked from the bed and opened the blinds. Outside the clouds churned like a wildfire being manipulated by the wind. The sun was not out today. I noticed the tinkling from a friendship bracelet on my right wrist before me.

"Get in the car," they would laugh and giggle. I would laugh and giggle, too, around my best friends. When we were together, the glee seemed to emanate from the walls of the car, through the windows and back to the warm glow of the sun. We would land in front of my best friend's house where her glorious dog would greet me by rolling on her back and begging for love. I always let the soft fur of the sweet shepherd run through my gentle fingers — I could do no other. After the fiasco, we took a five-minute drive to the store and a six-minute drive back, due to odd traffic. Ice cream was on the agenda for today because today we celebrated something big.

I had come out to my family as bi-sexual, and felt I could take on the world. My family was excited for me; they genuinely were. Excited enough for Ben and Jerry's.

Word got through. The, "No, honey you are just gay," the "Stop the nonsense" and the "Just hanging with my gay friend, Matt." comments came. The whole school believed a lie about me. She had spread lie and today it still haunts me. "Believe me." My mind wrapped around a false premise like vines around a broken, abandoned gate. I had lost who I was in a sea of others. My identity was harder to find than an actual good friend. I told myself that I could never trust another person with my secrets. I told myself I must lock them in a chest beneath my heart.

I told myself I was going to be okay and that no one could hurt me. I lied.

I lied. My wrist was bare: I had removed the friendship long ago. The wind had stopped blowing and now the clouds let down a drizzle that speckled the window. Each drop had its own spot where it landed, some higher while others lower. It seemed appalling to me that every drop of rain knew where it belonged when I did not. A bird, blue and scraggly, flew past the window seemingly with nowhere to go, unprepared for the big rain that might have come next. I stepped away from the window, each foot making contact with the scraggly carpeting beneath me. Sometimes, when my room was actually clean, I could make out a bump with my heel where the head of a nail was sticking up in an attempt to free itself. I had longed to be the nail. To have the strength and perseverance to deny the laws this world had made for me. Another ringing attacked me and my ears shrieked in protest to the voluminous pain. A strong stench circled me, and I opened the window in order to send out the cloying smell of the room. In the process of opening the window, a picture of my ex and me that was left on the window-sill caught my eye.

I had known her for three years. Since the first time we made eye-contact, a spark had lit in me that was as powerful as a forest caught on fire. In those three years, we had become better friends than any friend I had before. Our weekly trips to Shari's were coupled with strong memories and great laughs. We decorated cookies like trees for Christmas. We shared every day in school — and away from it — like a pair of real lovers. We became more, one day. The weekly runs became stronger in bond and the laughs became love. Our cookies were no longer

decorated, but were created. The first kiss ended in a silly laugh; “Wow, you suck at kissing.” Two years can do good, though,

Then came the questions: “What is going on?” “Are you okay?” and “I want to help you... I want to fix you...” FIX ME? My body crumpled before her, a damaged barn waiting for the hammer to strike down. It never came. My body retaliated relentlessly to fight back. My “best friend” looked me in the eye at night in disbelief: “How could she say that to you?” “She is awful” and “You should leave her...” My body collapsed and spread throughout the space around it, firing debris in every direction and hitting everyone within radius. “I think we should break up,” I told her.

It is hard to destroy something good, something that once brought the joy and kicked away the rain. It is impossible to tear someone from your heart like the left sleeve of every shirt you own. From that day on, I only wore sweatshirts in an attempt to hide my missing sleeves. My heart was no longer on it for everyone to see. I told myself that I had to get rid of something bad and that everything would get better from here. I lied.

I lied. The picture had long since fallen and shattered. All the memories I had before were lost to the subconscious of my weakening mind. The smell cleared from the room and fresh air raided my nostrils like exhaust spewing from a car engine. Maybe that could fix my screaming head. At least the clouds looked like they might be clear soon. I paused for a minute and stared at my clean, organized desk. The pencils were separated evenly one inch apart each. The paper on the desk was slightly crumpled in one corner, but that was okay because a little disarray was okay — Right? There were water stains on the top right of the desk filling a complex shape of many different circles. Some were sticky. Eraser shavings covered the desk. One of the pencils moved out of place. The paper was blowing across the room with a gust of wind. The shavings went everywhere. All that remained were the stains. They stared me in the eyes with disgust. The desk was never clean — it was destroyed — and it still judged me first. I turned away in anger to the point of my room where two walls met. A small pile of dirty gym clothes covered the corner residing in the shadows to the right of my door. Very likely the source of the smell from earlier.

I was still young and small, just a mere freshman in the pool of many other grades. I had my lame green cap with my shorts that were way too short

and my shirt that was much too big. “Don’t forget to wear your sunscreen dear,” my mom would say, stressing the power of the sun as I hopped from the old Odyssey mini-van. My first day with rowing was an uneventful one, but like every first it became many. I reveled in being fast and worked my way to the top boat by sophomore year. Rowing was my calling, and there was nothing that I could do better than make a boat move like hell. I would only be satisfied with the water rippling below me and shooting past like bullets from a gun. The rushing waters held me twice in the biggest competitions of my life where I rightfully took tenth in the nation, and destroyed the competitors to a weeping mass. I stood before my friends who had become part of a big family. There was nothing better than this glorious feeling.

“Coach. My back hurts. I think I should take this piece off.” The tendrils of pain shot through me and cut me like a knife to the nape. My eyes rolled up through my head as my back fought my movements and kept me solid like a rock. My body struck the floor unflinchingly and waited for someone’s hand to reach out. Anyone’s hand. No hand came. The ceiling stared down on me, bright and menacing. I wasn’t going to race today. I wasn’t going to race again. “The pain won’t go away,” I said helplessly. My mom smiled her sweet grin; “No honey, you are fine.” My body screamed at her, but my mind sat back, waiting for the moment to strike. I laid back and slid into a rumbling, loud machine. Time stood still in my cylindrical coffin. I awaited the ending in hopes of something good. I didn’t know whether I wanted to be told something bad or something good, I just wanted something to be told. “Bulging disk,” “Surgery possible,” “Can’t row.” Can’t row. Can’t live. Won’t die, but won’t live, for I have lost what I could trust most. My body was a collapsed barn demolished by the wrecking ball named life. I worked to get better and improve my strength. I said I would return to compete for all of college. I lied.

I lied. I haven’t been to the gym in months. The smell is my stench of loss and confusion. I am a lost and confused person. The car was unappealing to me at the time. The steering wheel felt too hot to hold, and maybe God had a plan on which way to turn it when I no longer could. My sheets enticed me, with the will to drain the life of any man. The knives mocked me in the kitchen. The porch beckoned me over. The street called me across. Every time I locked my eyes to the sky and looked for the sun. “Not today, not ever.” In the moments of turmoil,

my will stayed strong — even when the tears came and the world stopped. Even when time disappeared and my mind raced for a simple conclusion for why my days were washed away with the changing weather in the skies. “It wants me to die.” The vines wrapped ferociously around my brain squeezing it off of the sane serum that oxygen supplied and ravaging me of my own thoughts. My head felt like it was going to explode into loud, ugly fireworks. “It wants me to die,” I thought again. “I want to die.” The window pulled my eyes toward it once more. The clouds danced away from each other revealing a blue sky. I chased the skyline with my eyes without a single blink — Beautiful. “I want to live.”

My will is what has kept me here and is what might continue to do so. I took one last deep breath and stepped to the window as the colors returned to my room. The green and tan walls popped out at me. The floor felt warm beneath my feet like grass on a summer day. My bed looked inviting and cozy. The clothes were all hung up nicely before me in the closet with vibrant colors of blues, greens and oranges. The gym clothes were back in my corner, along with the pain of my back recently washed away. The shine at my window-sill declared the return of the photo of my ex and me posing for the camera. The cool feeling of the friendship bracelet once again wrapped around my wrist. With a smile I lay back down on my bed. Maybe today would be a good day. Maybe time does move normally in this room. The window started to sparkle as the raindrops that previously landed there caught some rays of light. Maybe everything is about to get better. Maybe I am going to feel what it is like to be happy again. The rays of light grew into the darkest corners of my room. The sun will come out today.

I lied.

# ASSUMPTIONS VS. REALITY

*Themio Pallis*

When the majority of people think of twins, they often have the impression that they must be alike in almost every way. However, what most people do not realize is that not all twins are identical. You see, identical twins come from one egg that splits, in turn making the two siblings appear almost exactly the same in nearly every regard. When I tell people I am a twin, it's assumed that I am an identical twin and must be just like my brother. In reality, my twin and I are different in nearly every way imaginable. We are each our own person. It sometimes catches people off guard when I explain this. Despite my explanation, some seem amazed that two twins could be different.

First and foremost, one way in which my brother and I are different is in our physical appearances. Most of our parents' physical features went to one child or the other, which is why we look so different. George, my twin, has a darker skin tone, darker hair and greenish hazel eyes. All of the attributes he acquired from our mother. On the other hand, I got my father's much lighter skin, lighter hair and blue eyes.

Another characteristic that most people think twins share is personality type. For George and me, this is where we differ the most. My brother is loud when around others and can sometimes come off as pretty bossy when doing a task with others. For George, it's either his way or the highway. On the other hand, I am more reserved when around others. Although I also like things done my way, I am not typically the leader when it comes to group activities. I take the back seat and prefer to listen, observe and soak things in, whereas George always leads the pack and is without a need to listen or observe. George was the first to do many things in our family and always did those things better than I did growing up. He always turned in his tests first and got A's, while I struggled to not turn my test in last. He was always on the higher select-level team than me, no matter the sport. With the exception of maybe one or two years, George has always been bigger and taller than me, which is still the case today. He even got mentioned in the "Most Likely

To ...,” senior award, which we both agreed was pretty awesome for him.

Another thing that differentiates us is that George absolutely loves television: There is not a single day in which he does not have more than one thing recorded that night, and he always kicks me off the TV when “his” shows come on. His habits are not normally a problem, however, because — unlike my brother — when I do watch TV, I just watch it aimlessly. Music taste is another difference between my twin and me whereas George loves country and pop, I have a very eclectic music taste and love Jazz, 90’s rap, and swing, as well as pretty much anything from before I was born. Yes, my brother and I are twins, but there is more to us individually and collectively than meets the eye.

The way my brother and I received our first names is also interesting. In Greek tradition, the first-born son is named after the dad’s dad and the second-born son is named after the mom’s dad. George is older than me by six minutes, so rightfully was named after my dad’s dad. On the other hand, I was named after my mom’s dad and was given the name Themio. When other people find out George and I are twins, they regularly wonder why my name is so unique compared to his — some even saying his has an inferior first name. First, I thank those who say my name is cooler than my brothers, then I tell those who ask that it’s just based on our tradition. Parents often give their twins similar names but, being based on tradition, my parents gave us pretty different names.

Even though my brother and I may be similar in some ways, I am glad we have our differences. It has been nice to establish myself personally and not having to do everything with George. I feel that if we had been identical, people would think we are synonymous with one another; I don’t want that to be the case. I embrace the differences we have with one another, and I am very glad to have a brother who respects those differences just as much as I do.

All and all, my brother is more than a brother to me because he is my twin. We have shared, and continue to share; many wonderful similarities and we have many great memories together — like winning the baseball State Championship last spring and going on great vacations with family and friends. Although my brother and I have our differences, and there are a lot of them, I think there will be fewer differences between us with time: At least, I am hoping that is the case.

# MY JOURNEY

*Manoj Prabhakaran*

## I CRIED THE MOST I CAN

“I cried in my neighborhood, when my sister was assaulted but no one listened to me.

I cried when my mother worked as a manual scavenger to feed us a meal per day.

I cried when I lost my elder sister and uncle leaving behind two children.

I cried when I lost my father.

I cried when my elder brother quit his education and started working due to extreme poverty.

I cried when my mother faced social oppression and abuse for being a Dalit woman.

I cried when I saw my mother having a brim of tears every night in her prayers.

I cried when I was oppressed for my Caste identity throughout my life.

I cried when my educational loan application was rejected for a higher education in the United States” .

I asked many people from my hometown to support me to pursue a higher education, but soon I realized that there was no boon coming to me. But not far from God’s hands, my friend Aaron Danowski came from the country that is beyond the sea my eyes could not imagine.

I thought, “What a blessing. God, I am too special in your eyes.”

Two years ago while he was leaving from Chennai, I remember the words he said, “We will meet soon.” I didn’t realize at that time that God had chosen him to create a path for me to accomplish my dream of pursuing a higher education in the United States. I finally realized what he meant when he delivered a speech at the Opus Prize ceremony.

“I met a young man in Chennai, Janodayam.” he said. “who has a dream to pursue his Doctorate in the United States.”



From that moment, as a young freshman holding the Jesuit mission of “Creating Men and Women for Others” he guided me to apply for the Organizational Leadership program at Gonzaga University so that I can train to become a vibrant social worker to serve the needy people in the world. He worked hard and connected many Gonzaga community leaders and spiritual individuals in order to mobilize support and funds for my education. As a result, after two years and a very long journey, I finally arrived at Gonzaga University on October 24th 2015.

### Pre and Post Travel Journey Experience

While looking up at the sunny blue sky, I said a prayer and then walked into the US embassy in Chennai. I looked around me. While holding onto a great hope and confidence I said to myself “Today is the day I was waiting for; everything comes down to this moment.” This two-minute interview would decide the rest of my life. When the interview counter was opened, I wrung my hands as I prepared to face the visa officer. During that moment I had an intense desire to run out of the building, but the visa officer arrived, received my passport, and didn’t look at any of my other documents. She asked couple of questions, then all of sudden she said “Your visa got approved.” In that moment, I stood there silently with tears in my eyes, suspended in a state of shock.

In that state, I realized it was God who interviewed me, not the visa officer. After I had left the US embassy, I was still stunned. I kept asking myself, “Did my Visa really get approved?” I described my visa interview to a few people around me and asked “Does that really mean my Visa got approved?”. And everybody told me, “Yes it got approved. you will receive your passport in couple of days.” I couldn’t believe this.

I thought, “I’ll just wait until I have my passport in my hand before I’m certain that it was approved.” Then in a few days, I received the passport back with visa approval. Immediately, I informed Aaron. He was so happy and said that his parents would buy me a plane ticket as an advanced Christmas gift, which totally showed their generosity and love for me. In that moment I thanked God for helping me through Aaron and his family.

I informed my mother three days prior that I was going to US for higher

studies because I knew that she would worry for a long time if I would have informed her sooner. I also faced hardship purchasing necessities like a suitcase and dress clothes. At the time, I had only two good set of formals and casual dress with me. I was worrying and praying to God. Then, I received a call from my boss Mr. Malar Vannan Fernando (Vice – President – HR) at Pricol Inida pvt ltd with an offer of \$300, which was very helpful during that critical situation. Finally, I left home on the night of October, 20th 2015. Even though my brother and sister were happy, my mother was still crying since I was leaving her. I could read her mind and her denoted various things me; firstly, she was not happy with my brother's wife since she was not keen on my two orphan nephews not respecting her and making her to do the work at home.

Secondly, my sister was going to get married on Dec 14th 2015, leaving her alone at home. Further, this would affect my nephews psychologically because they both believed that my sister was their mother because they had lost their both parents in their very young age.

Thirdly, she was concerned about taking care of the family since my brother and I were supporting and managing the family expenses every month. So if I left, they would have to face financial difficulty. In addition, we had to give a dowry to the groom, which is major burden. On top of all of this, her major concern was about my health and how I was going to manage in the new place. Because in Chennai I was accustomed to my family's expectations, like going to work, attending church, and then doing research. Apart from this three things, I didn't know anything else in my life. In fact, that night I was going to see Chennai airport for the first time in my life.

Finally, her future hope is only me on uplifting my two orphan nephews and to take care of her. I understood this and through her brim of tears I told her, "Please don't worry, Mom, I am here to uplift them and take care of you" which made her to feel better and gave her greater hope and confidence, but she still cried.

Being a first time traveler, I faced each and every thing as an adventure, like the check in process, and putting seat belt in the flight. As the plane took off, I felt like vomiting, but later I felt a bit more relaxed. Still I worried about my connecting flight in Phoenix; and, as a result, I missed it. I was directed by the airline to stay at a hotel since the next flight departed the next morning at 10:30

am. That moment, I was wondering how I should inform Janine Warrington about flight changes since my mobile has only one percentage of charge. I called her and said “Missed my flight and coming tomorrow morning”; then my mobile phone got switched off, and I said, “God why did you make me to miss this flight?”

The next day, while I was waiting in the Phoenix airport, there was lady with gray hair a wearing a fancy red dress sitting next to me. She asked me “Are you from India?”

“Yes, how do you know that?” I said.

“I saw your passport.” she said “I am working for Dalit in India”.

This astonished me; then, I said “I belong to the Dalit community.” We continued talking, and I realized God had arranged for me to meet Ms. Julz Brown so that we could talk about my own community.

Finally, when I reached the Spokane Airport, I was excited to see my friend Janine Warrington (Religious Studies, Gonzaga University) at the airport. She welcomed me with a spiritual smile, and she gave a black sweater to wear since I was very cold. She helped me to find a living place at the Campus’ and she gave a small bag with some food in it. A bit later, I got a call from International Student and Scholar Services team. The Centre for Global Engagement took me on a campus tour, which was totally exciting and then she gave me a Zagcard, which had some money on it to buy food on campus. At that time, I realized International students have great support at Gonzaga University.

My two-month journey of as an ESL student in Gonzaga University helped me understand the American Education System and the Gonzaga Student Community. I was supported by Fr. Clancy and my friend Janine Warrington to a great extent to explore basic American Culture; for example, Fr. Clancy taught me to use a knife and fork, since we eat with our hands in my home land. Janine, mother of Brenda Warrington took me to grocery shopping to get me food items and clothes, I shared my pains with her, which made me to feel better. She is really awesome. Her smile and Janine’s smile always resonate in my mind. They showered their care and love to make me to feel comfortable in my new home land. Every Sunday morning Fr. Clancy took me to the Church and in the evening Janine Warrington took me to another church so Sunday was completely utilized as holy day to praise God, which is really needed for my spiritual life. Many incidents made

me to admire the campus, like the organized teaching methods and the student involvement in the different activities. Professors were guiding students to the maximum extent and I socialized with many students, professors and Jesuit priests. Jesuits priests are really amazing. They welcomed me like their son and showered me with their love and care and I celebrated my Christmas with them, which was totally the most amazing Christmas in my life. I realized growing under the shadow of Jesuit father is the greatest blessing that I received from God in this life and celebrated my new year with Aaron's family at Portland.

Then, finally, I started my Organizational Leadership Program in the Spring 2016 as mature adult following a Jesuit mission to create men and women for others, which would bring great change in my community, my country and the world at large in the near future. The God of mercy who brought me to your life is the same God who gave me this real time to say that I really thank you all for your great support.

# MONTANA STEREOTYPES

*Sarah Ramsbacher*

Born and raised in Montana, I know there are many stereotypes that come with the state. I have heard most of them, and coming to college I have seen that some are still often believed. I have never been offended by them, but instead find them funny and amusing, and in some cases even true. I personally come from a bigger city in Montana called Missoula. There, I live in a cul-de-sac in the middle of town with neighbors surrounding me. I am used to the culture of Montana so I don't often notice what people do differently from others or follow certain stereotypes. Common stereotypes include, that people from Montana are part of cowboy culture, love hunting and guns, and are overly trusting. Some of these stereotypes do actually fit me, while others do not.

One of the main stereotypes that I often hear outside of Montana is that we all fit into the cowboy culture. That is the typical image of a cowboy or cowgirl with the big belt buckle, boots, and of course, a cowboy hat. Often we are even imagined riding a horse everywhere. I have seriously been asked, "Do you ride horses for transportation?" while on vacation. I usually just laugh and say yes, but in reality I have never even owned a horse. According to an older study, "Montana has 7.1 people per horse" (Kilby). This statistic makes it easy to see why many people believe what they do about Montana. Even driving through the state, which can take endless hours, one will see many horses roaming in pastures, and yards. It is no wonder since "in Montana there are nearly 130,000 registered horses" (Montana).

Though it is true that many people in Montana actually do ride or own horses, I do not. I have ridden a horse on multiple occasions but they have all been tours or led rides. I have never felt completely comfortable riding a horse by myself or getting the massive creature to listen to me alone. Not only do I rarely ride horses, I have never even come close to owning one. I do not live on a farm, or have ranch land to keep a horse, so therefore I do not own one. They are also expensive and take time and effort in order to break the horse to ride. I see the ap-

peal in owning a horse, but I do not have the time, money, and resources to do so. Not only is seeing many horses normal, there are small restaurants, and other shops, that show off the “cowboy” image of Montana. An example is the 50,000 Silver Dollar Bar off of I-90 in Montana. It is a tourist attraction and is one of the few between Missoula and Spokane, therefore drawing in many visitors. This bar and gift shop represents the “cowboy” Montana way. When you walk in, it has all wood interior and taxidermy animals displayed randomly. In the bar of this establishment, there are a few mannequins set up around a table and are dressed in authentic cowboy gear. They have boots on, a vest and handkerchief, and are complete with a cowboy hat. They are quite strange, but are able to encapsulate the image of a cowboy.

So in addition to never owning a horse, I have never owned a cowboy hat or a big belt buckle. Not many people I know, including anyone in my family has purchased a cowboy hat, or anything that fits the typical stereotype of a Montanan cowboy.

Along with fitting the cowboy image, another stereotype is that we all hunt or have a crazy fascination with guns. While this may be true for some Montanans, it is not always the case. It is true however that “around 26% of Montanans hunt, while only 8% of Washingtonians, and only 5% of Californians” (United States). Looking at these numbers, it appears that the stereotype does ring slightly true. Even in old western movies and in smaller towns there are images of cowboys with their guns, hunters, or even dead animals up on display. Many believe that countless Montanans have a bizarre interest in guns and think it is scary and dangerous. I think the stereotype here is that Montanans have gun magazines, talk about guns, and shoot guns in their spare time. The image of little kids growing up around guns, and watching their parents’ shoot is terrifying for some, and believe this is common in Montana.

Once again, although there are gun fanatics dispersed throughout Montana, this is not always true. I have never hunted and do not plan on it. I am not against the type of hunting done in Montana because most people eat what they hunt or it is used to curb overpopulation, not just for sport. I have shot a gun, but I’ve only done it a few times and it is not a common occurrence like many think. In my suburban neighborhood there is nothing that would even allude to hunting or big flashy guns. No one in my family has a subscription to a gun magazine or anything of that sort. We are very civil, and safe with our weapons, just like the majority of Montanans. We keep our guns locked up and don’t just go in the backyard

and decide to shoot cans in the middle of the city. This would not be tolerated. I do realize though, that people that merely own guns are still sometimes lumped into the category with gun fanatics. My family, and most others I know do own guns but they are locked away and rarely used. Some people may mistake this with gun craziness rather than a responsible gun owner. To me, it is normal for one's family to own a gun, and it is unfortunate that gun fanatics have ruined this image to outsiders. The scary idea of having a fun and the association with it should not apply to the Montanan that means no harm and is respectful and smart. Sadly, we are often grouped in the foolish gun users that ruin it for everyone. Even though guns and hunting is important to many people in Montana and it can be done safely, I still do not fit this stereotype.

Finally, there is the stereotype that Montanans are very trusting, maybe too trusting. This one definitely applies to me. At my house I do not lock my car and I leave my keys in there, so does my family. We have never had an issue with it and I have been living in that house for 19 years. My family also keeps our door unlocked during the day, and even accidentally at night quite often. The garage door is also sometimes open when I come home and it has been like that for hours with no one home and I do not even think to check if something is stolen or someone is in my house. It is not just my family or neighborhood though; it is most the people that I know in Missoula, Montana. It is the community of the state and especially of Missoula that has made me so trusting. Growing up in a city where you can take a walk at night by yourself and not have worry is really amazing. It has made me a kinder and more open person. Some people from Montana can be too trusting and it is not good when leaving the state or even in some areas in the state. Coming to Spokane was a big change for me, and now I have to be more aware of my surrounding and be sure to lock my car. Luckily, Gonzaga creates its own community in Spokane. It creates a place where people are nice and trustworthy. In the library, students will often leave their computer to use the restroom and trust no one will take their belongings. Gonzaga and Missoula have many similarities in the way.

Stereotypes are all around us and it is important to think of that bias before judging a person. Being from Montana brings several stereotypes. Although they are not all great, I would not choose a different home state to be from. I loved growing up in Montana and am sure I will return there to live one day. I also know that I should not be quick to label someone due to where they are from, because stereotypes do not usually represent an individual accurately.

# STEREOTYPES ARE CHASMIC

*Tanner Rookard*

Perhaps without a doubt it is more important to know one's own identity than to find an identity in which to fit. Society is so easily divided into classes, races, and artificial barriers that create stereotypes. With our own identity in mind, it is necessary to consider our role in enforcing or disproving a stereotype or statistic. As a Japanese American, I am often confronted by stereotypes, and at times it seems to me that Japanese biases are more steadfast and inflexible than those of other groups or classifications. It is no secret that Asian-Americans are known as the "model minority," but what is it about this group of people that makes this seeming fact true and enduring? Through the reflection, I will see where I fit into the stereotypes and how they affect me. Even being only one-quarter Japanese, the stipulations that go with my identity continue to follow me in academics, linguistics, and appearance.

The most prevalent of all biases might be that Japanese Americans are intelligent and hardworking. There may be truth in this statement, but even so, not all Japanese are the same. Simply stating that Japanese people are smart is only a stereotype; however, by saying that someone is only smart because they are Japanese is a prejudice. According to a Pew Research Center survey, 94 percent of Americans view Japanese as hardworking and 75 percent view Japanese as inventive (Stokes). It is no secret that Americans think highly of Japanese, yet where did this perception begin? Japanese Americans, and Asian Americans in general, have been quite successful in assimilating into American culture and are held in high esteem in spite of years of subjugation, racism and internment. Their drive to be American even during times of war created a lasting impact. It is rather difficult to dissociate the adjective hardworking from Japanese and Asian Americans.

In my own experience, I have found similar assumptions. Although I only have one-quarter Japanese blood, I strongly identify as Japanese and am often subjected to Asian-American double standards. I held myself to a high standard



in academics growing up; however, my peers were more than willing to point out that I did well in school. My parents taught me to always do my best and be proud of my work. I have never associated my own work ethic with being Japanese — it is simply who I am. The stories that my grandmother would tell me about the difficulties that she faced immigrating to the United States and assimilating into American culture is a testament to the mettle of the culture.

Yet another instance of stereotyping is evident in an assumption that all Japanese look the same and act the same. In fact, this frequently goes so far as to generalize all Asians into a single-language, single-characteristic category. Cultural insensitivity and ignorance has only perpetuated this. Decades of media and propaganda assert that the Japanese are a “monolithic people.” Wartime efforts to ostracize Japanese Americans and unite them as one entity continues to have repercussions today. Japanese interracial marriage is increasing and, with that, the diversity among Japanese Americans. Between the years of 2008 and 2010, 55 percent of Japanese married someone non-Asian (Pew Research Center). Japanese Americans are a very diverse group and diversity is only increasing.

In my personal experience, another preconception of homogenization is that all Japanese Americans speak Japanese. Even a surface-level evaluation reveals that Japanese people are diverse and unique individuals. I am no exception. I am often asked if I speak Japanese. I respond no. Then I am asked if my parents speak Japanese, and I again I respond no. The emotion I often receive is disappointment. I think as Americans, for some odd reason, we are fascinated and drawn toward our differences. Speech is so different from person to person; it is something that truly sets groups apart. In the monotony of life, we want to hear something different. Languages such as Spanish surround us, but Japanese and other “exotic” languages attract our attention. On one occasion, upon being asked what my ethnicity is, my questioner proceeded to speak to me in Japanese. I was quite flabbergasted and slightly offended. I try my best not to be too easily offended, but sometimes I cannot tolerate ignorance. Although I speak some conversational Japanese, I do not appreciate being spoken to with the assumption already in place. In fact, I speak Spanish, though it is not something that one would know by simply looking at me.

A more surprising stereotype of Japanese men may be that they are feminine, but in the case of Japanese American culture, masculinity is still valued. Just as in any culture, some Japanese men choose to dress in more feminine

fashion, but a generally people assume that a small-framed body accentuates a “feminine figure.” Even a New York Times article highlights that Japanese men are becoming increasingly obsessed with clothing and body image (Shoji). This has become associated with Japanese Americans as well. This is just one of many bodily stereotypes that have surrounded the Japanese culture.

Though well assimilated into American culture, Japanese-American men — in my experience — do not see themselves as feminine, nor do they value beauty or emphasize body image, yet are still subjected to the same generalizations made about all Japanese men. I myself am small, but I am not just small for a “typical” American, I am also below average height for Japanese males. My Japanese father is taller than me and my Caucasian mother is shorter than me; it is only reasonable for me to be somewhere in the middle, regardless of my ethnic background. In fact, my two older brothers are both taller than me.

I hope that I have given sufficient evidence that not all Japanese Americans occupy a single set of characteristics. I like to think that I am unique because of my Japanese heritage, not in spite of it. I am very proud to be Japanese, and to have the opportunity to explore my roots and acquaint myself my relatives in Japan. It is my identity — although it always seems that I am either “not Japanese enough” or “too Japanese.” These classifying labels only enlarge the chasms that separate groups and individuals.

# THE REALITY OF MEXICO

*Graciela Rosas*

“Mexicans are drug dealers, illegal immigrants and rapists.” One of the most popular people in the United States, Donald Trump, claims this. I was born and raised in Mexicali, Mexico. I share values and ideas with both cultures — the American culture and the Mexican culture. A life in both cultures has led me to notice that Mexicans, as a minority, have been mistreated and misjudged by the American media. This has led to an increasing level of ignorance in the American society, resulting in acts of violence against minorities like Mexicans.

Over the years, American society has created various stereotypes against Mexicans. It is sad and disheartening to see how people believe we are lazy, alcoholics and that all we eat are tacos, guacamole and burritos. American society also thinks that there is no middle class in Mexico, assuming you are either very rich or very poor. These are judgmental stereotypes that are offensive to me and the Mexican culture.

America’s popular candidate for presidency, Donald Trump, has expressed many outlandish rumors and exaggerations about how Mexico only sends rapists to the U.S, while ignoring the fact that all the immigrants aim to do is work for U.S citizens by providing astonishing buildings and agricultural goods. The last thing an immigrant wants to do is harm this country. Instead, they want to give their family a better quality of life.

Throughout my lifetime in Mexico, I have never witnessed or been affected by theft or any other criminal activity. I have always been able to walk around without any threats or concerns. People have a tendency to judge a country from the way it is portrayed in media. You should ask yourself, why would the media portray any positive aspects of a country when it is not something that grabs society’s attention? Is it the individual’s fault that all they know about Mexico is based on what they watch on TV, when the only facts depicted are how “El Chapo,” one of the world’s most wanted drug dealers, escaped prison?

So, oftentimes the negative aspects of Mexico are emphasized while the positive characteristics are forgotten. Without personal experience, it can be difficult for others to see that the stereotypes placed on Mexicans are not fully true.

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

***- The Our Voices Creed***

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