

# Culture Shock

A Journal of Experiences and Reflections at Gonzaga

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Culture Shock

Spring 2010



Gonzaga University  
2009-2010

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# Table of Contents

- How are you? **Bo Kyoung Park** - 2
- In Transition **Tyler Davis** - 4
- What it feels like to be GU's Oldest Bulldog **Denise Vill-Olson** - 5
- Texts from around the world **Ali Alshelali** - 8
- Snow Shock **Erik Fuentes** - 9
- Returning **Gabi Leite Soares** - 13
- A Great Challenge **Poonam Thakran** - 14
- Texts from around the world **Fahad Altoaimy** - 17
- Bring it on! **Tracy Ellis-Ward** - 18
- Alive **Kristin Bayudan** - 20
- A girl who calls the world her home **Emily Goonting** - 21
- Texts from around the world **Fawaz Al Kharashi** - 24
- Simply Alive **Abbie Nordhagen** - 25
- Discoveries **Saleh Binsaeed** - 30
- Surprising Culture **Raed Abonyan** - 31
- Culture Shock **Jacqui Mouck** - 33
- Prayercards **Emily Hyndman** - 36
- Texts from around the world **Myung Jin Kim (Sr. Rosaria)** - 37
- Have you ever left you country? **Ana Patricia Duarte** - 38
- SMART parking **Emily Goonting** - 40
- Different! **Ye Teak Lee** - 41
- Camels at Sunrise **Hubert Wenzel** - 43
- The Strength of Transparency **Dr. Molly Pepper** - 44

# How are you?

Every country has its own cultures and all of them are very unique. This is due to different climates, regions and religions. However, because of those differences, people from different cultures experience culture shock when they move to a different area. I also have experienced culture shock when I came to United States, even though I already had been to the United States before. Still, I didn't know how to respond to the greeting: "How are you?"

People in the United States ask, "How are you?" when they meet. For me, it was hard to answer that question because I didn't quite understand what the question meant. The reason for this confusion is that in Korea, people ask, "Did you have lunch/dinner?" instead of asking, "How are you?" However, the purpose of this question is not to know what they ate or if they are going to eat; they are just saying hello. So for me, the question of "How are you?" was very confusing because I didn't quite understand if they wanted to know how I actually felt or whether they were just saying that to be polite. Also, I really didn't know how to answer the question: "What's up?" Even people I didn't know very well asked me "What's up?" In Korea, we don't ask another person "How are you?" or "What's up?" unless he or she is a close friend.

The first time I was asked, "What's up?" was when I was in San Diego. I lived in San Diego for one year when I was thirteen and went to a middle school there. I had a friend in my art class, and he was a very outgoing person. After class I was waiting for my mom to pick me up when he walked by, asking me "What's up?"

I didn't know how to answer so I just stood still and did nothing, hoping that he would just give up asking me and would just go by.

However, he didn't give up and started asking me the same question again and again. What was I supposed to do? Well, now I know how to answer that question, and I can laugh at the days when I was confused about American customs.

Now I realize that one shouldn't be so nervous about answering such questions.

Greeting people with one's heart is the important thing.

Just because one doesn't know how to say "Hello!" doesn't mean that they are not happy to see you. But understanding the different expressions and cultures will help us to show our feelings better. Let's keep on trying!

Bo Kyoung Park

# In Transition



A student “caught in between” cultures during the ISU Dinner 2010.

Tyler Davis

# What it feels like to be Gonzaga's Oldest Bulldog

My story begins January 12th 2009, at Gonzaga University, my first day of college after a thirty year hiatus. I was scared and excited all at the same time. I had just left a successful career in management; having recently suffered some serious health issues which made me look at my priorities. With the support of both my wonderful husband and my beautiful seventeen year old son, it was time for me to retire from my career and to pursue my dream – a degree from Gonzaga University.

I had dreamed of this moment  
for a life time, and here I  
was walking up the stairs to  
College Hall as my  
grandfather had over a  
hundred years ago.

I opened the door to the classroom, and I looked around amazed to see nothing but young faces. There was not another person like me! Then a professor I knew from outside of school suddenly appeared, asking me, "Denise, are you teaching here now?" "No," I replied, shocked by the irony of his question. "I am a student here."

I walked into the room and took a seat in the front row. As the other students came in and saw me, puzzled looks came across their faces as they wondered, "Whose mother is she?" and "Why is she here?" I would say when the professor saw me he felt the same way. Of course, no one would sit near me, and I felt like I was a leper or invisible. Later in the day when I went to Ceramics it was a



little better. Professor Geiber had also returned to college as an adult after his years in the service, so he was sympathetic towards me. Plus, I was the only one in the class who could understand some of his dated stories. Every day as I walked around campus I never saw another student who was my age, which was hard sometimes especially when I had a simple question, and my class-mates were not all that interested in talking to me or in answering my questions. It was awkward when our class broke into groups, and obviously the students didn't want me in their groups. I tried to keep my sense of humor, but the worst was when they laughed at me; that hurt a lot.

Eventually, I always found someone who would answer my questions. Besides I was so blessed to actually be at Gonzaga, it really did not bother me. And I was living my dream. I told myself I did not return to school to make friends -- I came here to get my degree, and I already have all the friends I need. It did not hurt that I had always been somewhat of a loner anyways.

It was a difficult time getting back into studying. I went home each day with a headache and the sheer feeling that I was not smart enough or that I was failing. I worried about the financial commitment my family had made to get me here and the fact that I had given up a good job. The words that went through my head each day were:

"The country is in financial mess, and by the way, Denise, you are not smart."

Before long I was struggling with history.

After a not so satisfactory mid-term grade, the Academic Services Office suggested to me to drop the class and so I did. Afterwards I felt like a failure and began to question my ability as student. Had I really made the right decision to return to school? How was I going to tell my husband, and, most importantly, my son, that I couldn't survive a freshman level history class?

My husband was easy: he laughed and said, “Stop being so hard on yourself!” My son, Stefan, has to work very hard in school because our family has always had high expectations when it comes to education, and now I had to tell him that it got too hard for mom so she quit. I took the easy way out and chose not to tell Stefan I dropped the class just to keep my image of a role model in tact; then, I cried for a week.

After I dropped history, I worked really hard in Ceramics which was not even a class I had wanted to take. However, I have to say I learned to really enjoy it because it gave me a whole new appreciation for art and the creative process, and it gave me a different way to look at art. I had always lived in a black and white world, and I have no artistic talent: however, ceramics opened my eyes. I found out I had room for color and change.

Now that I reflect on it I realize that, during my first semester at Gonzaga University, I was a scared cat. I did not come prepared with a plan to be successful and was too scared to ask for help. All that changed after I discovered how to use the resources available to me here at GU. After a few meetings with the staff at the Academic Services Office, I realized there are many people willing to help if you just ask.

As I start a new semester, I have a plan of action and the tools to be successful. Yes, I am still treated like a leper or invisible, and there is always one person who laughs at me, and that’s fine. My classmates still wonder what in the world someone’s mom is doing here, with the exception of my new friends: two members of the freshman men’s basketball team, who know how it feels to stick out in a crowd and who aren’t sympathetic to the notion of giving up.

Thank you, to all the people who have been so generous with their time and support.

Denise Vill-Olson

# Texts from around the world



Text message

1 / 4



From Ali Alshelali

WHEN I WAS WALKING ON  
CAMPUS TO THE CAFETERIA, I  
MET AN AMERICAN GIRL ALONG  
THE WAY. WHEN WE WERE  
TALKING ABOUT SAUDI  
ARABIA, SHE SAID SOMETHING  
VERY FUNNY AND SURPRISING  
TO ME. SHE ASKED ME: "DO  
YOU HAVE CELL PHONES IN  
SAUDI ARABIA?"

# Snow Shock

Living in West Covina, Southern California we experience a number of different things: nice weather, beaches, mountains, deserts, national forests, and earthquakes. California also gets most of the seasons if not all of them, but it's not common to see all of them in one day. We also experience winter, maybe not to the extent of some other places but to us it's pretty darn cold. California does indeed get snow; however, since I have lived there I have never been able to walk outside and stand or play in snow. I never really experienced snow until my short visit to Washington to tour the Gonzaga University Campus last winter.

After I applied to Gonzaga University and was accepted, my parents wanted me to go up and look at the campus to see if I would like it and be happy with a decision to attend Gonzaga and get an education there. My parents decided that my father would be coming along with me and that my mother would stay home and watch over my little brother. After my father and I had decided that we would be the ones going up to take a look at the campus, it was time to see which preview day would be the best to take advantage of and we picked the earliest one that Gonzaga was offering. This happened to be Valentine's weekend, which is right smack in the middle of winter. My father knew exactly what that meant, but nothing out of the ordinary was registering for me.

I can remember weeks before we even left my father told me that I better start looking for some warm clothes because it was going to be cold when we got up to Gonzaga. At first I didn't really make a big deal about it because it was still in the high seventies in California which is not cold at all, and we were only going to be there for a few days. My father, on the other hand, started buying heavy jackets and long sleeve shirts like they were going out of style, and he wasn't the only one going crazy about trying to keep us warm while we were up there; my mother was just as bad. She called up several of my relatives asking if they had any snow boots

and other snow gear that we could borrow for the two day trip. Now I love my mother a lot -- don't get me wrong, but she is one of those people who will pack two weeks of clothes for a two day trip, and she didn't fail to do the same thing for this trip as well. I had gotten all my clothes out and was getting ready to put them in my bag and pack them up when she walked in and told me that I didn't have nearly enough clothes for the trip. Finally, after much discussion, the clothes that I had chosen were up to my parents' standards and all that was left to do was wait for our flight and get ready to see a glimpse of the Spokane winter.

Our flight left from California at around six and was scheduled to land in Spokane at around twelve. As we were nearing the airport and flying over Washington, I was impressed by the snow covered evergreen trees everywhere and mounds of snow. We finally landed, and it was time to see what this Spokane winter was really about. After my father and I got our luggage and belongings together, we stepped outside into the cold harsh winter that everyone talks about. My father, who absolutely hates being cold, bundled up his jacket, put a beanie on, and put gloves on his hands. I was just wearing a long sleeve shirt, pants, and a flannel jacket. We had to call a cab to take us to the hotel because we decided that it wasn't going to be worth renting a car, and the cab driver told us to wait outside and that he'd be there in a couple of minutes. So finally it was my big chance to see how cold it actually was. The type of cold in Washington is different than the cold in California. I remember the air hitting my face, and with little delay my nose was cold and running and my hands were starting to hurt. My father had taken out the camera and told me to start taking pictures of all the snow because coming from Southern California, it's not every day you see snow everywhere you look. After about ten minutes the cab driver showed up, and we told him to take us to the hotel and then to Gonzaga University.

It was about two o'clock when we had finally arrived at the actual campus, but it felt like it was the evening because it was so dark and gloomy. It was quite a site to see! Everywhere I looked there was snow, and the only places that weren't covered with snow

were the walkways which had salt on them, which was weird to me. As we were walking around campus it was cold, dark, and cloudy making it look old and not very appealing. My dad and I were just looking around on our own because the official preview day wasn't until the following day. I'm pretty sure everyone who saw us knew we weren't from around Spokane. We were taking pictures of everything because it was so covered with snow. After a few hours of looking at the campus in the cold, we decided we wanted to eat some pizza and call it a day. Afterwards we thought it would be a good idea to walk back to the hotel because it wasn't all that far.

At that point I realized that snow can look ugly, especially all the dirty and black snow that is left on the side of the roads. This doesn't look appealing, and you don't really see it portrayed like that in the movies. It was definitely different. My father and I had made it half way back to the hotel when all of a sudden snow actually started falling. I had never been in all this snow before let alone been snowed on. It was really crazy; I can only imagine what people were thinking because I was so excited. It was definitely an experience and a good way to end our first day in another state.

Despite the first day being really dark, gloomy, and kind of depressing, the next morning I was quite excited to go on a tour of the campus. As I was walking out the door I was expecting the weather to be the same as the day before but I was mistaken. It was really clear outside without a cloud in site; it was a cool, sunny, crisp day. It was going to be beautiful. It was cold but it was a different type of cold than the day before; this time the air didn't feel like it was slapping me in the face. The previous day I had to wear a jacket to keep warm, but all I needed to wear for the clear day was a long sleeve shirt and a pair of jeans. I think the temperature was around the thirties, which is pretty cold when you're used to dealing with temperature in the low sixties. My father and I arrived at about ten and the campus looked ten times better than it did the day before. Everything looked more lively and not as dead and depressing. As I was taking the tour, I found myself liking the campus more and more. Despite it being a little chilly, it was still a

beautiful day and that second day at Gonzaga is what pretty much settled my mind on this school. After the tour we ended up going back to the hotel and getting ready for our flight back home the next day.

As we were sitting in the airport waiting for our flight to get ready to board it started snowing again. This time it looked like it was snowing a lot harder than two days before. I was actually getting concerned because I didn't know if our flight was going to be able to take off with all the snow, but the stranger next to me told me not to worry about that because weather like that happens all the time and that it would stop in a minute or two, and to my surprise he was right. Our flight continued as planned and we were home in no time.

Spending two days in Spokane was definitely different than anything I've experienced in Southern California. I was just able to get a small little glimpse of what life is like here in Spokane during the winter. There's a part of me that is kind of excited for the upcoming winter. I want to see what all the fuss is about but there is also a part of me that would be perfectly content with the weather remaining the same way as it is right now. My parents and family keep telling me they are going to be sending up beanies and warm stuff all winter, and I'm not really sure if I want to wear that stuff. I guess over all I kind of want winter to be here. My roommate, he's a sophomore, told me the other day, "There's going to be days when you are hungry and you are going to ask yourself if it is worth walking in the cold to get something to eat at the Cog or if you would just be better off eating a piece of bread and staying warm." I guess we're just going to have to wait and see if I'm ready for that.

Erik Fuentes

# Returning



After Graduation I returned to Timor Leste and I left potholes and traffic on Division behind me.

Gabi Leite Soares



# A Great Challenge

I am from India where people have a short-term orientation, so they are concerned with values such as fulfilling social obligations and having high regards for elders. In India, people are tied up in emotional commitments rather than practical ones. Indian culture treats and serves guests as God. In the same way, each country has its own culture that is deeply rooted in their hearts and mind. When people are unfamiliar with another culture and have to experience it, then they tend to face culture shock. Culture shock is a way to describe the confusing and nervous feelings after leaving the familiar culture to live in a new and different culture.

A different culture might be exciting and might be heart breaking.

I have also experienced culture shock with a feeling of anxiety and excitement. My culture shock came from the following differences: how to interact with people, time-orientation, the education system, lifestyle, food and my efforts to overcome the challenges posed by a new culture.

Coming to America was a great challenge. When I landed in Spokane, I found everything to be the opposite of what I had experienced in my country, and encountered many drastic changes. Some changes were good while others were shocking. For example, in my country, I have to walk on the left side of the road and here I am supposed to do the exact opposite of that and walk on the right side of the road.

In another instance I went to a bank to open an account. When I started the conversation with one of the bankers, he appeared shocked by something I had said and started looking at me. There was a pause and it forced me to think about what I uttered. I pressed the replay button in my mind without giving him a hint. But

I couldn't identify anything that might have seemed to be doubtful and could have raised his eyebrows. Ultimately, he broke his silence and told me about something that was a discovery for me. He asked me to address him by his name not by any pronoun like 'Sir'. This was surprising to me because in my country we are not supposed to address people by their names. If one does, it is considered disrespectful. So initially I was not aware of the appropriate way to greet people in the United States.

There were other factors that brought surprise to me like public transportation, the absence of stray animals on roads, the culture of being on time, and the extent to which government takes care of its citizens. In the United States, the transportation system is much more efficient than in India where the buses are always late. Buses here are neither late nor early, they are always on time. I came to know about it after missing the buses a number of times during my early days in Spokane. It was also surprising not to find any stray dogs or cows roaming on the streets. The traffic here is well managed while the same is chaotic in my country. These were some of the pleasant surprises I received when coming to the United States which helped me form a good image.

However, my honeymoon stage ended when the studies began due to the totally different education system. I had to take only one annual exam to pass a course in India.

*I was overwhelmed by the frequency and volume of assignments and tests here.*

Moreover, the professors were always quoting examples from life in the United States which were very difficult for me to understand. I was very frustrated and spoke to my parents about coming back home. They consoled me and asked me to hang in here. My dad advised me that I would feel better after a few days. Then I started working hard on my studies and tried to adapt to the new teaching

methodology.

I used to have home made food on a daily basis with my family in India. The food in my home is spicy and all my family members join to have dinner at the same time. The food that is available here is not spicy at all and most of it is of the ready to eat and fast food variety. Moreover, very few options are available for pure vegetarians.

In conclusion, culture shock may cause both good and bad feelings.

The strategies for dealing with culture shock vary from person to person depending on their background.

The best strategy that can be applied to deal with culture shock is the adaptation of the new culture instead of running away from it. I have started to learn more about the American way of life so that I can be a part of it and enrich my knowledge and enjoy my stay in the United States.

Poonam Thakran

# Texts from around the world



Text message

2 / 4



## From Fahad Altoaimy

ONE DAY I WENT TO STARBUCKS AND I SAW MY FRIEND WHO IS SAUDI. HE WAS SITTING WITH SOMEONE WHO IS AMERICAN. I GREETED MY FRIEND IN THE SAUDI WAY, WHICH IS KISSING EACH OTHER, CHEEK TO CHEEK. THEN WHEN I SAT DOWN WITH THEM, THE AMERICAN GUY WAS VERY QUIET AND LOOKED SURPRISED. FIVE MINUTES LATER, HE ASKED US IF WE WERE GAY. WE EXPLAINED TO HIM THAT KISSING CHEEK TO CHEEK IS THE NORMAL GREETING BACK HOME.

# Bring It On!

I have been perplexed by the phenomenon that Gonzaga students of the majority culture on campus have never been to the Unity Multicultural Education Center (UMEC). Perhaps even more dismal than this reality is the hard fact that many students do not even realize UMEC exists. Yes we are strategically placed slightly across from the COG where 90% of the students eat during their freshman and sophomore year. However, regardless of the convenient location, not nearly enough students embrace the cozy house. From dialoging with undergraduates throughout my first year as UMEC Director, it has become increasingly clear that most students are experiencing an identity crisis. The word "Multicultural" entrenched in the UMEC acronym has somehow created a mystifying illusion for white students at GU that leads to the following supposition: "I'm white, hence I have no culture." Obviously, the next logical conclusion for that particular student is that UMEC is "not a place for me". This crisis appears to be endemic amongst the majority culture, and as a result one of my biggest challenges!

The question of "Who am I?"  
is something that  
students naturally grapple  
with throughout their college  
experience.

However, when you layer the complexities of an individual's overall identity formation and ask a more poignant question: "Who am I culturally?" responses are often steeped in something lukewarm that translates to a cupful of unawareness topped with a generous dollop of genuine confusion. Some days it seems unfathomable that being so uninformed about anything other than one's own whiteness is even possible in 2010. However, when school text books relegate only a few pages to give voice to the historical contributions of Native Americans, African Americans, and other ethnic and racial

groups, one can grow up with a very narrow view about diversity that rarely transcends beyond race.

There are inherent privileges for the majority population at Gonzaga which have power associated with them. Most students are oblivious to this invisible power and privilege based on the amount of melanin they embody, and even deny its existence when confronted with tangible evidence. One can't deny that it was effortless for heterosexuals to participate in the online match-making G-Harmony. And for the nearly fifty percent of non-Catholics on the campus who were asking "Where's the meat?" on Ash Wednesday – plan ahead next year. These are just a few relevant examples of cultural bumps that people experience on our campus. Some students experience more bumps than others that eventually lead to being derailed to the point of not feeling respected, accepted and/or validated as a member of the GU community.

The vastness of the work that needs to be done can seem daunting on the face. When one carefully begins to scrutinize the level of support that is needed to galvanize institutional transformation, however, I welcome the challenge. The competitor in me screams, "BRING IT ON!" I am excited to be a part of Gonzaga where I have the opportunity to create forums that will assist with increasing the capacity for us to respect one another, as well as educate others, build authentic relationships, challenge assumptions, and actively engage in courageous conversations that cultivate individuals' ability to be more culturally competent about everything from religion to sexual orientation. Creating an inclusive environment with God's love as the foundation and Cura Personalis as the cornerstones means I have my work cut out for me here, and I welcome all the help I can get with open arms!

Tracy Ellis-Ward

# Alive



I came to Gonzaga University looking for new experiences. Coming from a tropical area, where we basically have two seasons - summer and rainy season, having four seasons was fascinating. Over the past three years, I've fallen in love with the autumn and winter seasons. Then, everything comes back brighter than ever in spring. The best thing is when the sun comes out to shine on everything that appears dead. I never knew anything could appear so dead yet still be so alive.

Kristin Bayudan

# A Girl Who Calls the World Her Home

In February of 2008, I had my first true cultural identity breakdown; two years later I am contemplating similar sentiments.

My first breakdown came about after a staff member brought up the idea of “normal international students.” What this person meant was an international student who had acclimated to life in the United States and was as actively involved as American students on campus. It got me wondering what “normal” meant and whether or not I even wanted to be “normal” – my response was “HELL NO!” Despite that, I simply did not and still do not know where or which culture I belong to.

I am Malaysian, meaning I was born there and currently hold Malaysian citizenship, but my father is actually Portuguese-Dutch and my mother is Chinese. Nearly all my extended family lives in Malaysia. I absolutely love the food, culture, and diversity there, but I really do not think of myself as Malaysian. At four years old, I made my first international move. I moved to Indonesia where I lived for six years and attended Australian and British International Schools and made friends from around the world. I actually had a lot of issues in the Philippines where I lived for a year, but when I came to Gonzaga, I became active in the Filipino American Student Union (FASU) and challenged myself to get over the problems I encountered when living there.

After the Philippines, I moved to Beaverton, Oregon. This is where I did a lot of my growing up. Oregon is the place that I consider my “home” in the US. It is the place I miss the most when I travel or am away. I miss my friends, my neighborhood, my school, and my mall in Beaverton. All of those aspects of my life there shaped me in ways I might never know. Currently, my family lives in Guangzhou, China. Despite being surrounded by amazing friends



physically and via technology – Facebook, Skype, etc. – I still feel lonely and lost sometimes here at Gonzaga.

I feel that way because I cannot claim I am American because then it seems as if I am ashamed or embarrassed of my Asian heritage. But at the same time I cannot deny that many of my beliefs, ideals, and parts of my personality are western. Balancing this culture clash is difficult at home as well. If I question authority or complain about the inefficiencies – e.g. slowness – of Asian culture, my parents criticize my western opinions. But at the same time they believe in western education and want me to adopt western ideals of independence. I do not want this to seem as if I am complaining, or projecting a “woe is me” attitude, but I do think there is a difference in my experiences versus most of my friends.

That was my cultural background, but recently racism has crept its way back into my thoughts. When I was younger, one of my friends who had mixed parents was told not to sit next to me or my sister at a school assembly.

Several years ago in Australia, my father and a white Australian colleague were denied entry into a restaurant.

The colleague was extremely angry and embarrassed, but my father told him that they should just leave and not cause a scene. One of my first racial incidents at Gonzaga occurred when a group of friends and I were moving into dorms our freshman year. A group of white males, saw us and yelled “F\*\*\* the Hawaiians” and walked off. I am not even Hawaiian, but that hurt me and made me angry. Most recently, some “friends” of mine thought it would be funny to jokingly say “We don’t like orange people; orange people go home,” and throw an orange at me. They said it was in good fun, and yes, to a certain extent cultural jokes and teasing can help alleviate the pressure of talking about racism, but as university stu-

dents, is there really no other way to address this issue? I cannot say I have never made fun of American culture, but I make fun of the culture as a whole and try not to focus direct my comments at one particular person. Stereotypes have their basis in facts, but it is still important for everyone to challenge those racial, sexual, political, or religious stereotypes.

Many of my Caucasian friends are idealistic and generally feel like racism does not exist anymore. It is even a general sentiment around campus that the ethnic clubs are exclusive and segregating themselves from the general student body, but that is the exact opposite of what we want. FASU for example, has several active Caucasian members, and nearly half the officers are not Filipino. We encourage our friends to join, but understandably they may feel intimidated to get involved. The purpose of these organizations is to educate the campus community about each club's respective cultures. So my advice would just be to get involved, you never know where you will find your family on campus!

I consider the most unique and interesting thing about me that I can call the world my home. Yes, it is a huge "place" and it would be nice to be able to have had a hometown and lifelong friends, but there are alternatives. I have been lucky to be "adopted" by several families around the world when I cannot go home to my own, and also by the friends and clubs I choose to spend time with. It is another kind of connection and bond, but perspectives just need to be widened to see that. With the experiences I have had it is hard to imagine that I can still get culture shocked, but it is something I hope to encounter for the rest of my life. The highs – moving, travelling, and interacting – and lows – prejudice and racism – of these encounters have taught me things that are impossible to teach in a classroom. I have learned; who I am, how I can deal with situations, what I stand for, and last but not most importantly, I have learned to keep broadening my perspective so I can continue absorbing every encounter possible.

Emily Goonting

# Texts from around the world



Text message

3 / 4



From Fawaz Al Kharashi

I WAS EATING IN CROSBY AND  
SOMEONE ASKED IF HE COULD  
SIT WITH ME. THEN HE  
STARTED TO TALK. HE ASKED  
ME WHERE I WAS FROM. I  
SAID, "FROM SAUDI ARABIA."  
THEN HE SAID, "ARE YOU A  
TERRORIST?"

# Simply Alive

It was a centipede crawling through my veins. It was a cloud of butterflies beating their wings in my stomach. It was the frogs bouncing on my toes. It was the birds singing their melody in my ears. “It” was passion: “It” was dance. What happened when that melody went sour? What happened when the butterfly wings became immobile and eventually were silenced altogether? What happened? What happened was the discovery of who I am without the twinkling lights and brilliant ornaments. What happened was discovering the song and tap in my toes that came from deep within. Do I know who I am without using what I do as the definition of my worth?

The journey to this realization started in Small Town, Montana. Life here was lemonade and the smell of the wind off of the mountains. Stars twinkled nightly in our big sky, their reflective aura sparkling in my innocent eyes. The sound of trees rustling and birds chirping combined to form a perfect silence. In Butte, my mom’s and my hometown, everyone is related. Pork Chop John’s is the local greasy spoon from which emanated boisterous talk and laughter. The town thrived on the gossip-like news published in the newspaper. God is our rock. No one cares about designer clothes as long as there’s food on the table and a warm fire in the hearth. Wow, my young formative years resemble a country song.

These values and the small town atmosphere were manifested in my life. I went to church every Sunday and ate a pork chop sandwich a couple days a week (and enjoyed all two thousand calories of it). My smile was gratified and answered on the faces of strangers even though no one was strange. When the fresh, crisp air filled my lungs, I was happy. When I became involved in dance classes at the local dance studio, effervescent joy overflowed through involvement in this art form. In my sweet naive way, I came to believe that dance is life! My work ethic was no nonsense. As I matured, my dance ability followed suit. Suddenly I had a name in

town, and my self-esteem was bolstered by titles and small scholarships I would win. My closest friends stood next to me at the barre in ballet class. We giggled, gossiped about boys, and dreamed about prom dresses. We wanted nothing more than to see each other succeed. The sense of community and support was staggering and almost brings tears to my eyes as I reminisce. My ignorant belief that life elsewhere was a photocopy of Montana led me to believe I could conquer the world. I could be whoever I wanted wherever the lemongrass wind blew me! I purposed to discover these possibilities, so I packed up my belongings and moved them into a small apartment in Seattle, intent on pursuing dance education at Cornish College of the Arts.

Smack! My cheek is still stinging from the impact. Seattle backhanded me mercilessly. No one knew my name in Seattle or seemed to care to know it. Suddenly I was just another worker ant marching hurriedly to and fro in the madness of the ant hill of Seattle. Honking horns constantly reminded me that I wasn't welcome. The artificial lights from the skyscrapers overwhelmed the glow from the heavens. I was surrounded by blank faces never warmed by the lines of laughter. I was isolated in a sea of people.

Every day I spent over a half-hour navigating my car four short miles through the labyrinth of downtown Seattle to Capitol Hill. As I neared this infamous hill, more and more rainbow flags were proudly hung from buildings. Capitol Hill is the most liberal part of Seattle with an abundance of trendy coffee shops filled with trimmed and quaffed young men in berets. Hardy, God-fearing, deer-hunting potential boyfriends were not only extinct here, they hadn't existed since the 1880's; however, if I was desperate for a shopping buddy, there was an endless supply of willing, fashionable men.

This culture poured into the school (or did the art school pour out into the culture?). Over half the faculty and student body were gay. They spent their weekends dancing to disco-esque music in the counter-cultural clubs. My homosexual and heterosexual friends voted Obama. On the weekends, they slept wherever their heads landed. The coffee on the breath of my classmates mixed with the

skunky aroma of “Mary Jane” that clung to their leotards. At lunch, we would enter one of the bistros around school that served only organic and local fare, and we decided between spinach leaves or the complimentary mints near the door. My peers were starving artists and made sure everyone knew it. “Why excuse me, I see you have pointe shoes tied to your backpack. Are you by chance a devoted, dramatic, starving dancer?”

My familiar life pillars had crumbled and been shoved away, but at least I had dancing, the love of my life... or did I? I began to observe the lives of the seniors at school and perceived a glint of weariness and fear always present in their eyes. The realization of truth sent a terrifying electric shock through my blood stream: if a casting director thinks I am too blonde, fat, skinny, or short to employ, then I will have to choose between eating and paying the rent. The minutes slowed painfully through barre and center; through tendu and rond de jambe; through plie and grand allegro. Auditions were no longer the playful competition I was so accustomed to back home. Instead, girls would push me out of the way and stab me with their gaze, leaving me scratched and bruised. I would catch close “friends” glaring at me from the corner of their eyes, devising plans to break my ankle, or at least my spirit. I found myself becoming more and more like the people I was surrounding myself with and less like the girl with stars in her eyes. I would critique other girls, guessing what size pants they wore. I began to think coffee was a sufficient breakfast. When the teacher turned her back, I would stop trying hard and only perform minimally. I was numb.

The butterflies had stopped fluttering. The frogs had stopped hopping. Even school was different. We were assigned letter grades for ballet and modern, and our English classes were pass-fail. My “English” class was taught by a horse-tattoo-covered art teacher, who, in his free time, cut up thousands of paper snowflakes, hung them in a studio, grinned, and proclaimed, “Art!” To him writing wasn’t so much about the final product as it was about being true to yourself and enjoying the process... blah, blah, blah.

Seattle’s gray skies were mellowing my soul. I discovered

that even though my dancing was improving, my pristine joy was clouded. I couldn't do it anymore. I couldn't! The life of a dancer is too unstable and lonely. For my sanity, I dropped dancing cold turkey, despite my ballet teacher's plea to see the school psychologist and "return to the light."

Off I scurried to Gonzaga, my heart encouraged by the opportunities for success and new adventures. I had talked myself into believing that Seattle was a fluke: the city existed in a vacuum of "different" and must be the exception in the world. Wrong again. First of all, Mama always told me to only shop sales, and if this is Mother's Common Sense, then the world must see eye-to-eye. Instead, I discovered girls pay \$250 for designer jeans from Nordstrom's and Saks. Each brand has its own recognizable back pocket and these are displayed proudly, proving status. I've become an expert at identifying the difference between a pair of True Religion's and a pair of Hudson's.

As I walk to class in College Hall, I sense the gravity of the ground I tread on. These buildings are built on knowledge. I hear the voices of other young adults stressing about tests and discussing weekend plans. I look to my left and examine the pictures of students from decades past. The kids that swarm past me in the hall are mirrored in these pictures of days gone by. Sure styles change, but one thing is constant: they always look good. I feel claustrophobic in these close quarters, but there's nothing I can do about it. I'm not the first to live like this, though. There's a sense of permanence on this campus. We are students in a long line of others who have gathered and engaged in the exact same activities we do now. We are a continuing tradition.

I find my way to my classroom on the common track carved in time. The classroom is the ultimate equalizer: my ingenuity and resourcefulness against everyone else's. Just when I try to put the financial gap behind me, the sickening aroma of gardenias, artificial lemongrass, and wads of cash wafts from the girl in front of me, breaking my concentration.

Money has the power to lift some people up and minimize

others. People really know people who own private jets? People really go to Europe for summer vacations? Most of my classmates graduated from private high schools and were positively shocked that in Montana, public schools are the ones with the most to offer. Some drive cars I've never heard of. You know what they say, "If you haven't heard of the car model, that means you don't have enough money to buy it."

As awed as I am by my peers' lifestyles, I'm struggling to find my way in a danceless world. Dance has been my air for so many years, so what do I do when I stop dancing? Stop breathing? Not only am I not dancing, but I'm surrounded with people who couldn't recognize the difference between Graham and Horton modern. What do I do when my perceived identity is stripped from my life? Who does that leave me to be? Well, at least for now, it leaves me to be a cheerleader. After all, I need something to quiet my hyperactive body while I search for truth. I am finding, though, that the oxygen is still flowing. The world hasn't been swallowed up into a black hole and pigs aren't flying. Maybe there's more to me than an activity. Life is discovering who I am free from adornments.

Butte, Seattle, and Spokane fashion three distinct chapters in the book of my life. Our world sometimes crumbles to the ground. We must learn to brush away the debris from our feet and find our foundation. Simple happiness is fine, but joy that has been drenched in water and thrown into a fire is more lasting and gratifying. How can I be sure of myself if I'm not challenged? Now sometimes I have the overwhelming desire to put on my favorite song and just dance to it. And not because I'm required to. And not because someone will judge my performance. And not because it's expected of me. But because I want to. Because that bird on my shoulder is singing a melody, too beautiful to ignore. Because those frogs on my toes want to jump. Because the butterflies in my stomach refuse to be stilled. Because those centipedes find life, and joy, in simply being alive.

Abbie Nordhagen



# Discoveries



Exchanging cultures - ESL students teaching American students at Adam's Elementary School.

Saleh Binsaeed

# Surprising Culture

Living in a new culture can be exciting at the beginning but when you start realizing the fact of being in a new place for any amount of time, you will think about many things in your life. For example, I came to the US and at the beginning I was so excited but when I recognized that I wouldn't see my family and friends, I got exhausted and I started thinking about my family, my house and even my bed. However, I have gone through all the culture shock stages, which everyone must go through.

When I came to the US, I was so excited and wanted to see the facts of this culture.

So I always went outside to see the people at the mall, the coffee shops, restaurant, and even the parks.

I always smiled at everyone and said hi to everyone. For example, one time I went to Starbucks and at that time my English wasn't that good. I saw an old man was standing in line, said hi to him, and smiled. He started talking to me about the weather, and I answered him clearly but the conversation expanded and the subjects started to get harder. At that point, I immediately started to laugh at everything he said because I didn't understand and also because I didn't want him to realize that I did not understand what he said. Everything was ok and we ended the conversation in harmony. That is what happened to me in this cheerful stage.

The next stage was the most difficult stage in this experience because that was when I experienced suffering. When I realized that I was not in Spokane just for a vacation, I began to hate everything and didn't want to do any activities, I just wanted to stay at

home and I didn't want to see anybody – not even my close friends. Furthermore, I didn't want to make any friends because they only spoke English.

One day, I went with my friend to a restaurant after having a conversation for about half an hour to go with him. So we got there and I didn't want to speak in English. The waiter came to take our orders but I didn't say anything. My friend got mad because I didn't want to say anything so he ordered for me. After the waiter was gone, he asked me why I didn't want to say anything, and he realized that I was having culture shock so he didn't say anything. However, at that time, I started to think about going back to Saudi Arabia and see my family and to forget about studying abroad.

Before I make a decision, I usually call my oldest brother and ask him his opinion because his opinions affect and persuade me. So I called him and asked him about going back; his answer was clearly true. He told me that I had to persevere in order to achieve my potential, which is studying in America. Also, I'm not the only one who has experienced this situation and I have to compete with myself by staying and not going back. His opinion was not only really true but also convinced me. So I began to stay alive and survive from this stage.

The last stage of culture shock is when you feel like you are at home, which doesn't mean that you are an American. It does mean that you are getting used to living here. Now I feel like I am home when I get to my apartment. When you feel like you are home, you know how to manage your time and know what to do. Culture shock is not only a normal experience that happens to everyone but it is also a way to show how strong you are and to understand the culture that you are in.

Raed Abonyan

# Culture Shock

Silly me – it was my first trip home from college, and I thought I'd made it through the first semester of freshman year unscathed by culture shock. Up until this point my suitemates and I got along extremely well, I had managed to keep up with my laundry enough that I didn't have to wear dirty socks to class, and I was really starting to feel like a Zag.

I guess I was just a late bloomer, because one quiet evening during this trip home for Christmas break, the culture shock finally hit me. It was snowing outside and I was extremely comfortable sitting by the fire, cuddling with my two dogs. My dad came home from work, carrying in the mail as usual, and said, "Jacqui, you have something here from Gonzaga." That one, simple statement put my life (and the lives of my parents) into a state of utter upset and confusion until literally the night before I had to fly back to school. Those seven words were about to completely change the course of the life that I'd aspired to for as long as I can remember.

When I was about four years old, my mother became pregnant with my little brother. I always tagged along with her to check-ups, and I absolutely adored her doctor. She was kind, beautiful, smart...and she wore really pretty dresses.

*It was at this point that I decided I was going to become an obstetrician.*

I spent my entire life striving for this goal. There were medical forums, operation observations, and volunteer opportunities at hospitals and assisted-living homes. I took every AP science class that my high school had to offer. I even shadowed an obstetrician at UCLA for a week as part of a summer program. Everything seemed to be going well. I had already known that I wanted to attend Gonzaga University, but once I found out that their acceptance rate into medi-

cal school was one of the highest in the country – well, that was just icing on the cake.

Up until this point I had only gotten one B in my entire life, and that was freshman year of high school (everything else were A's).

Now, I was shaking uncontrollably as I started opening my first report card of college.

I knew that I was in between a B- and a C+ in Biology 101, and I was certainly hoping for the former. My whole world came crashing down on me when I saw that it was a C+. All I could think about was the fact that there was no way I was going to get into medical school with a C+ in Biology. It was rather embarrassing telling my friends, but they were all so encouraging, saying things like, "It's no big deal, it's just one C," and, "You do know you can retake the class over the summer, right?" It was all so foreign to me, and I started seriously questioning my life plan, wondering if it was just a foolish childhood dream (after all, I was only four when I made the decision). It was extremely painful entertaining this thought, but I tried to be honest with myself and decide what would be best for me in the long run.

My parents had always wanted me to go into mathematics. They actually tried to get me to change my major from Biochemistry to Mathematics several times. My mother explained, "Honey, remember in AP Calculus when you were doing that big, long problem that took 15 minutes, and when you were done you had a big smile on your face and said, 'Phew, that was a fun one!?' That's not normal; people like that should go into mathematics." My father's main argument was, "The rest of your life will be a whole lot easier if you do something that comes naturally to you. And you've always been great at math. Plus, actuaries can make quite a bit of money."

After agonizing for days, I finally got the nerve to tell my parents that maybe they were right and I was wrong. They were thrilled that I was even considering something else, so we spent the next few days discussing other options and doing research on the internet. Finally, on the day before I was to fly back to school I made up my mind to change my major to Math and Economics. I'd already had my schedule all set up for the next semester, but all I had to do was drop organic chemistry and add an economics class. Pushing the enter button once I had changed the schedule was one of the hardest things I've ever had to do, as lame as it sounds. I kept questioning myself, hoping that I was making the right decision, but when I finally let go of the key it actually felt really good. I felt like I had finally given up an impulsive childhood decision and replaced it with mature thoughtfulness.

Jacqui Mouck

# Prayercards



Prayer Cards tied to a bridge at the Confucian Temple  
in Beijing, China.

Emily Hyndman

# Texts from around the world



Text message

4 / 4



From Sr. Rosaria

WHEN KOREANS WANT TO CALL  
SOMEONE OVER, THEY USE  
THEIR HAND WITH THEIR  
FINGERS POINTING DOWN.  
IN THE US, AMERICANS HAVE  
THEIR FINGERS POINTING UP.  
IF SOMEONE BECKONS YOU  
WITH THEIR FINGERS  
POINTING UP IN KOREA, IT  
IS VERY RUDE.



# Have you ever left your country?

The first time in my whole life that I experienced culture shock was in the United States of America and that was for several reasons. Have you ever left your country? Well, I have and at the beginning of this adventure everything was “perfect” - like the American dream. But not everything is happiness in life. I experienced culture shock and maybe you will take my experience as advice.

I arrived in the USA from Lima – Peru (my birth country) on August 23rd, 2009 and that was an amazing experience. I was really excited because I was going to meet new people and also because, as you know, many people think that America is a country on another planet that can best be described in two words: “American dream.” Everything seems so different.

I was hypnotized the first time I tried the American hamburgers, cheesecakes, and pizzas.

Yet, at first everything was happiness. Then I started feeling so lonely, without my family, my friends, and my customs. Everything was confusing because I was used to acting differently than the way I had to act here. For example, in my country I could go to parties and drink for fun with my friends, but while I’m here I can’t because I’m under 21. Another thing is that people here appear colder than in my country. For example, in Peru people say “hi” with a kiss and a hug, but here they just shake hands.

People always say, “After the storm comes the sun” and that’s what I have experienced. After classes began, I started to feel better

and more than that, I was really happy with more energy to laugh all the time. If you don't believe me ask Ceci; she is one of my really good friends that I've made here in the USA.

Finally, I can't say that I'm in the home stage because I still want to go home, but everything comes by its own, so I'm not worried about that.

I can only say that when I read about culture shock, I did not believe that it was true.

But now I'm sure everyone has to experience those stages until finally they can feel at home. I hope this short explanation can help you to understand that "after the storm always comes the sun", and when you arrive at another place, you're going to experience changes in the way you live.

Ana Patricia Duarte

# SMART Parking?!



Cars that are saving gas AND space.

Emily Goonting

# Different!

Each country has different cultures such as different food, different clothes, and different houses. And when somebody goes abroad for travel, study, or immigrations, he will absolutely have a big culture shock. I experienced culture shock when I came to America for the first time. And I am still experiencing one now. Personally, I think that food is the most important thing for a human life, and that's why people suffer from food problems when they go abroad. I really had a problem with meals because food and the food culture here is so different from the one in Korea. It caused me to misunderstand my host families and made me believe that they are bad people. But now I am getting over this because I realize that there are differences between the American and Korean food culture in terms of taste, habits, and so on.

*I have to say, the American food culture really shocked me, and I am still trying to overcome this problem.*

I think that Americans tend to eat a big meal only at dinner time, and this is very different from Koreans. Usually, Koreans eat meals three times a day, and each meal is the almost same size. The side dishes are always the same type of food, but the main dish changes for each meal. So, Koreans can enjoy eating a diversity of food in a day. On the other hand, Americans have a big meal only in the evening, and breakfast and lunch consist of simple types of food. Indeed, they are almost the same every day. For example, the breakfast is cereal or food that is left over from the day before. Lunch is a sandwich and milk, almost every day. These meals are boring to me, and it makes me hungry so much more quickly. Americans like very simple food.

Generally, Americans eat breads, meats, soups, and salad.

These kinds of food are often sweet and bland. But Koreans usually eat rice and a side dish, banchan, which is made up of vegetables, fish, and so on. The main dish is a special food such as grilled pork, smoked beef, and fried fish. These foods are salty, spicy, and pungent. So, each food has a totally different taste, and this makes it much harder for me to adapt to American foods. When I eat American food, I feel like I am eating snacks not meals. Maybe I can't help it, because American food usually doesn't have any rice.

Lastly, Americans have a special habit which Koreans don't have it. Americans like to have a dessert after they finish dinner. Usually the dessert is very sweet such as pies, chocolates, cookies and ice creams. This stuff makes me fat. However, Koreans usually just eat breakfast, lunch, and dinner. That's it. We don't have any dessert. If we have some desserts, it might just be fruits or a cup of tea. And also Koreans usually don't have snacks. Americans eat often and each serving is not very much whereas Koreans eat only three larger dishes.

Considering all this, American food and Korean food are very different in regards to taste, habit, and type.

I want to go as far as saying,  
"They are completely  
different!"

This is no exaggeration. This is real. So, if you are Korean, and you want to live in America, you will need a pretty long time to adapt to American foods. But don't give up! You can overcome the problem just as I am.

Ye Teak Lee

# Camels at Sunrise



Taklamakan Desert near Dunhuang, Gansu Province, China.

Hubert Wenzel

# The Strength of Transparency

Once while teaching in the Gonzaga In Florence program in 2008, I was going over the day with my children. Naomi (10) commented on how all the art in Florence had naked people in it and suggested Italy should carry a PG-13 or R rating. The state of undress in the paintings and sculptures bothered her so much that she tried to shield her brother's eyes from the images. Oddly, Sam (7) didn't appreciate the attempt to protect his innocence. Imagine a quiet art gallery and a 7-year-old boy shouting NAY OH ME (Naomi) and you're there.

I explained to them that in art, people are NUDE, not naked. It's an important difference (I know nothing about art, but they did make the distinction in the movie "Calendar Girls", so take that for what you will).

By the time their teenage cousins arrived a few months later, my kids could discuss nudity at great length. The new young sophisticates spent a great deal of time chastising their older relatives for using the word "naked" when talking about art.

Research on the topic led me to Kenneth Clark, who opens *The Nude: A Study in Ideal Form*, by saying "The English language, with its elaborate generosity, distinguishes between the naked and the nude. To be naked is to be deprived of our clothes, and the word implies some of the embarrassment most of us feel in that condition. The word "nude," on the other hand, carries, in educated usage, no uncomfortable overtone. The vague image it projects into the mind is not of a huddled and defenseless body, but of a balanced, prosperous, and confident body: the body re-formed."<sup>1</sup>

I emailed the passage to my friend and colleague Linda Tredennick, a professor of English and tireless advocate for diversity-related issues, back at the main campus. We'd been working

for several months on a committee to create an electronic campus climate log that would track diversity-related incidents, both positive and negative, at Gonzaga. A main concern was that there were many issues of privacy and confidentiality to consider. The Campus log seeks to protect the human and legal rights of all involved in negative incidents.

The distinction between nakedness and nudity helps get into the philosophy behind the site. In this age of social networking, instant messaging, email and other forms of instant but distant communication, organizations are finding it tougher to keep secrets. Forced transparency is on the rise. It occurs when organization members reveal secrets and other sensitive information about the organization's inner workings. In our art metaphor, this would be nakedness. To avoid forced transparency, many organizations (including universities) are engaging in active transparency, which occurs when organizations consciously make their decision-making and actions open and available for public scrutiny, our metaphorical nudity in which the organization reveals its confidence and strength.

Gonzaga's log joins a trend toward active transparency at universities and other organizations.

Linda and I discovered the extent of active transparency at other universities while attending a conference where we learned about the campus log at Wesleyan University, a leader in transparency. We were particularly inspired by a story about the Wesleyan campus climate log, told to us by the Vice President of Diversity at Wesleyan. He presented the campus log to a group of prospective students and their parents. After the presentation, he was hugged by an African American family who said they'd looked at many colleges which had all painted beautiful pictures of happy multicultural environments where everyone got along. The family saw right through the sunshine. Wesleyan was the first college they had visited that was willing to admit bias-related incidents happen. The parents



were thrilled by the transparency and said they felt safer having their child attend that university than any other they'd visited.

The story reinforced what we believed: Having a campus climate log is an asset to our university's image, not a liability. It makes us nude, rather than leaving us vulnerable to being naked.

In creating the Gonzaga's log, we both followed Wesleyan's model and adapted it to Gonzaga. Such a log has three purposes: to let students, faculty and staff know about diversity-related events and bias prevention efforts; to inform the campus community about bias-related incidents; and to create dialogues for students, faculty and staff to work together to create a bias-free campus.

The log is a record of diversity-related events on and around the Gonzaga campus. It reports on positive things happening on campus -- like the "End of Racism" speech by Preacher Moss and campus celebrations of the Chinese New Year -- and also reports on the negatives, such as racist graffiti on residence hall white boards or inappropriate chants at basketball games.

*Why report the negative things? For several reasons.*

First, the university has nothing to hide. Things like this happen on campuses around the country. To pretend they didn't happen here would be deceitful and inconsistent with our mission. Talking about the incidents shows we care, are trying to change and will (hopefully) make good decisions in the face of adversity.

Second, we can learn from these incidents. As our webpage explains: "We are strongly committed to the truth that the only moral response to these incidents is to honestly acknowledge their existence so that all members of the community can understand the causes, reflect on the implications, and strive to turn these unacceptable incidents into opportunities for learning and growth for us all."

Learning from these incidents extends beyond what each incident teaches. Learning how to respond to them is an important

part of the Gonzaga experience. We hope that when students encounter problems in their lives after they leave GU, the log will have given them an understanding of good ways to handle those incidents.

Third, we are committed to developing the whole person.

A well-rounded education involves not just students' academic achievement, but also giving them tools that will help them grow as members of society beyond their achievements in their field of study.

Only through transparency can we have the honest conversations necessary for that growth.

Being naked is scary and uncomfortable. Being nude reveals confidence and strength. We are confident that we are a community that genuinely cares for all its members. We are strong in our resolve to stand together for justice. The log is part of our confidence and strength.

The log, dubbed "The Clog," is now available on the university website at [www.gonzaga.edu/clog](http://www.gonzaga.edu/clog).

Dr. Molly Pepper

<sup>1</sup> Clark, Kenneth. *The Nude: A Study In Ideal Form*. Eighth Printing Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1956: 3.



Picture provided by  
Dr. Molly Pepper