

Culture Shock



Gonzaga University
2010-2011

Culture Shock

A Journal of Experiences and Reflections at Gonzaga

Gonzaga University 2010-2011

Editor

Arathi Nair

Assistant Editors

April Gagugas

Catherine Van

Advisor

Michele Pajer

Cover Art

Reilley Morgan

Culture Shock is a publication of the Gonzaga Publications Board. All questions and comments regarding Culture Shock should be directed to cultureshock@zagmail.gonzaga.edu.

All work in Culture Shock is created by current students, alumni, faculty, and staff

of Gonzaga University.

All content © 2011

Table of Contents

Zambia welcoming Gonzaga Students by Seth Morrison-	3
"PODAGEE" by Ruben Yamada -	4
New York City, the Northwest, & Electricity by Nock Pangeras -	5
A Short Tale of Healing in Zambezi, Zambia by Seth Morrison -	7
Post-it [1] by Emily Nguyen -	10
Writing Shock by Yi Xiao -	11
Dracula ate the Smores Right? by Alanna Redine-	12
Post-it [2] by Larissa Fort-	15
My Heart Bleeds for Lebanon by Therese Yrani -	16
What Makes It Home by Stotts Larae -	18
Floods in Bangladesh by Arathi Nair -	20
When in Malysia, Drive like a Ma-niac by Emily Goonting-	21
Bhuddists Monks in Bhutan by Arathi Nair-	23
El Salvador by Emily Engel -	24
Shoes, Shoes, Shoes by Abby Westby-	26
Post-it [3] by Samantha Thorsness -	29
Diversity Monologue: Beautiful Words by Edwin Torres -	30
Who are You? by Joanne Shiosaki -	32
Kids playing Football barefooted in Zambia by Seth Morrison-	35
Embracing the Abyss &	
Gaining an Education by Kristin Bayudan -	36
Australienation by James Fenske -	38

A Day Lost, a World Gained by Travis Wetzel - 42

Post-it[4] by Jeffery Barnhart-45

Art of Handshake by Mike Hartman-46

Taste of Spokane by Mike Haefeli - 48

Thailand by **Merdith Noble** -49

Culture Shock by Kayla De Los Reyes - 54

Auto-Rickshaw in India by Arathi Nair-56

Zambia Welcoming Gonzaga Students



Photo by Seth Morrisson

PODAGEE

Upon arriving to campus, I remember feeling like a person who was just arriving to change. And little did I know that the change I was about to face would be a big one. I have always heard about the sensitivity people have towards culture in the Continental United States but never really thought about it before I got here. In an attempt to be funny I would tell jokes about the Portuguese, or should I say "Podagee", people because that's the kind of jokes we all laugh about in Hawai'i. "Podagee" jokes are the equivalent of Blonde jokes told around here. One of the comments I got was, "Why are you always teasing the Portuguese people? What did they ever do to you?" And I had to sit and think about it for a little while and realized that the only reason I tease the Portuguese people is because everybody else did. Here in the Continental US, I have come to the realization that people take things like that offensively and because of that, I need to think about the words that I say or the things that I do because of the very controversial racial issue that is still prevalent in today's society. Although Hawaiians joke and laugh about it, the Washingtonian ideology is different and in order to live in a balanced and welcoming society, I need to live with respect to their ways of thinking.

-Ruben Yamada

New York City, the Northwest, and Electricity

In the spring of my junior year my father and I left Portland, Oregon, to spend four days exploring New York City. I do realize this is not what many people would consider a major change of scenery, and I also realize that so many people plan trips to this destination each year, but I'd like to go as far as to say my trip was unique. If not unique, it was at least life-changing. Portland has a very active and interesting metropolis that I adore. In no way is this story about leaving my small little podunk town to visit the Big Apple. It is the culture shock that happened upon going there, experiencing the life, and returning to the northwest that has stayed with me every day since.

This all made sense to me until New York. During our trip my father and I woke up every day in one of the biggest tourism hubs in the world and asked each other, "What do we feel like doing today?" Sure, we hit some of the iconic things to do, Rockefeller Center, the Statue of Liberty, but none of it was planned. In fact my favorite moments came from small parts of the day, like a moment of peace at Washington Square Park or hearing the voices of a family singing as it echoed across the block. We went because we felt like going and we saw what we wanted to see. We just floated with the tide across this playground of a city. We felt like New Yorkers, and many times they actu-

ally confused us for them, asking us for directions and advice on the quickest way to get somewhere. It was absolutely exhilarating.

Just like that though, it was gone. It was time to go home, and all the great food and great people were just dots in the distance. It took coming home for me to realize the full power of New York City. My mother always said, "It's like you're plugged into an electrical socket", and she was right, just not in the way I had expected. Coming back home to Portland, a city I love so much, seemed uneventful. It seemed quiet and dull, as if the city was low on batteries. Still, all of this was somewhat to be expected, I just didn't expect how long it would last. I feel as if nothing compares to being captured in the energy of a New York night, and how you don't even realize it's happening until you return home. New York is built on this type of energy, and from what I can tell it's everlasting. No other city could possibly compare to its culture. It's 100% original and will stay in the back of my mind until it's experienced again.

- Nick Pangares

A Short Tale of Healing in Zambezi, Zambia



Photo by Seth Morrison

contd.



Photo by Seth Morrison

The world spins more slowly here. Time ticks not by the hands of the clock, but by the arc of the sun. Earth and sky, matter and divinity coalesce under its bright rays. The stars in the night sky shine as innumerable piercings in the floor of heaven, sharing with us fragments of its translucent celestial light.

It is a cool bright morning in Zambezi, and the hospital beckons. Townsfolk stop to greet me with a bow, a clap of the hands, and a pléasantry all in one gesture. The fine grains of sand in the road mediate the uniting of body and mind to this place. Those grains take the print of my sandal alongside the half-sized prints of the naked young feet of the children who follow beside, marking our shared path through the narrow lanes of the waking town.

A crowd of standing women and their babies asleep at their sides in slings of coarse colorful fabric are awaiting us inside the small dim room, affirming the need for such a place of healing. A warm breeze circulates through the open windows, letting in fresh air as well as great flying insects on their morning commute. The supplies are basic and few; our technical knowledge and skill are lacking, but we cycle through each and every child one-by-one administering vaccines with the utmost care. Some women journeyed sixty kilometers on foot for their child to receive this single milliliter of liquid in my needle. And they trust us without reserve to perform this vital service. Some smile at us pale-skinned foreigners as they leave with their babies now immunized and slumbering once more, but some do not. All the same, those visible releases of joy are not the reason we came. We came because it is just. Their smiles are superfluous blessings.

Despite its superficial otherness, a deep nearness prevails here. The language is exotic; the dress is colorful; and the poverty is everywhere evident. But while material wealth is nearly absent, spiritual wealth is abundant. These visible discrepancies before my eyes try to convince me that this is an alien world, but a pervasive spiritual power radiating from the people here says that it is the world I came from that is alien, distorted. Zambazi calls forth the deep stirrings in the soul that lie dormant if not cultivated. It provides a much-needed opportunity to see life through the all-clarifying lenses of faith, love, and hope. We will never be the same.

-Seth Morrison

Post-it [1]

“The House White”

Every language has different formats in writing. In English we would not say “The House White,” but we would say “The White House.” It is harder for second language learners to learn the writing styles and format because of their native language. Language connects people to their roots and to the people around them. Language teachers not only teach and study language, but also connect with the language they are studying, especially if they develop “a close personal relationship with a partner from another culture.” Some may identify themselves with the language they are teaching with their roots, or with where they lived. The goals of most language teachers are to get people to communicate; communication is the key to understanding other cultures.

Language and nation affects one’s cultural identity. Just because one lives in a country does not mean one connects with the rest of the region. Students learning a foreign language are more likely to understand multiple cultures and may or may not identify with more than one!

- Emily Nguyen

Writing Shock

As an international student here, I can feel the depth of the culture shock, especially from academic writing. When I was younger, my teachers in China taught me that the first paragraph of my essay should be a description about the environment or background. So everyone's essay will begin like this: "Today, the weather is good. The sky is blue and clean. There are some clouds flowing in the sky. A breeze blows over my face and makes me so happy." But here, I need to present the background of the event clearly at the beginning of the essay. Also, I'm not used to writing topic sentences in China. My teacher told me we should give the reader space for imagination; if you tell everything to your reader, then your essay will become unattractive. However, American teachers have different expectations: "Respecting the audience in the western academic context means making things so explicit and precise that they can follow the argument without any effort at all." China is country with more than 5000 years of history; we are deeply saturated by our cultures. Now, I'm here, in America and I know both my professor and I have our own expectations for each other. I also know it is not easy for us to understand each other's cultures in a short time, but at least we are trying to know that we have differences and that we respect each other's culture. For me, time is the best way to ease all the cultural differences.

-Yi Xiao

Dracula Ate S'mores, Right?

Children in different cultures are raised with different traditions. For many youth in the United States, summer represents evenings gathered around campfires, making S'mores and telling stories and jokes, spending time with friends and loved ones while consuming gooey, chocolaty, crispy morsels of goodness. Sometimes it's difficult to conceive that some people our own age have never experienced such a thing. This is exactly what I encountered in Transylvania this past summer. As a Unitarian Universalist, I traveled to Romania with my church on a pilgrimage to rediscover our heritage and to discover ourselves—in some cases, for the first time. There were nine youth who ventured out, flying from Seattle to Paris, and continuing from Paris to Budapest. We stayed in Budapest for 3 days before continuing on, by bus, to Transylvania, Romania. Our church has a sister village there, called Torockoszentgyorgy (say that three times fast, I dare you). Once we arrived in the village, we were assigned to host families and translators, who would be our guides for the next week. Our translators were young men and women who had been raised in the village, some of whom had learned English from watching American TV. In Romania, there is no television industry, and it is impossible to describe how surreal it was to see Lady Gaga and Usher on TV in rural Transylvania. Pop culture in a poor country like Romania is nearly non-existent. Over the next week, we became friends with our translators as they shared with us their way of life.

Every morning, we awoke to the sound of barking dogs and the cattle and oxen being taken out to the pasture for the day. Behind the quaint houses of the pastoral village, there were

fields, greenhouses and barns containing everything from tomatoes to pigs. For the first time, I was unafraid to eat fruit and vegetables off the vine without washing them first. Our translators told us of their personal struggles to make a living in a country with a twenty-five percent income tax and a scarcity of available work.

As the week was drawing to a close, we took a hike up to the castle at the top of a hill near the outskirts of the village. It was humid outside, and my camera felt like a brick in my small backpack. No matter how long we walked, the hike never seemed to end. Groups of three-inch-long grasshoppers jumped like tiny explosions of artillery hitting a foot-long battlefield every time we took a step. Our translators leapt and bounded up the hill as if it was paved with stone steps. But when we finally stumbled to the top, the view was astounding.

The last night in the village, we decided to have a campfire in the shadow of the castle to which we had hiked. The Unitarian minister of the village, Attila, brought his guitar, and we sat around the campfire and sang and told jokes, an experience familiar to everyone sitting there, Romanian and American alike. But then, one pilgrim wistfully said, "Man, what I wouldn't give for a roasted marshmallow right now..." Until that moment, I had assumed that knowledge of such things was universal, and had taken for granted the seemingly age-old concept of the marshmallow.

The Romanians blankly stared at her. Finally, one of them asked, "What is a marshmallow?" Now, when initially confronted with this question, one easily assumes that he or she can deftly answer it. Marshmallows are something most Americans are quite familiar with, even if they are not a staple of the aver-

age American diet. However, all of us fumbled with the answer to this question for what seemed like several uncomfortable minutes before I finally replied, "Well, a marshmallow is a candy, and it's soft, and white, and squishy." Of course, anyone hearing that description would find it a bit odd, so we searched for a better definition. Eventually, one of our translators asked what they were made of, which only made matters worse of course, marshmallows are completely synthetic marvels of confectionary wonder, but synthetic candy is not something that the average Romanian is acquainted with. When we told them that marshmallows are, in fact, made from cornstarch and sugar, our Romanian friends were clearly confused and slightly disturbed, though they did their best to hide it. Needless to say, we continued our campfire S'more-free. Traveling to Romania taught me so much about myself and the world around me—I learned things that one cannot even begin to describe with words. Most of all, I learned that the slightly cliché but true concept that people of different cultures are not so different after all. Our Romanian friends were like us in so many ways: they pursue justice and freedom, they aspire that their children will have better futures and opportunities, they seek to learn about the world around them, they want to feel empowered to find their personal truths, and they want to be happy with their lives, wherever they take them. If marshmallows are the only things we truly differed on, it makes me think: people are never truly divided by their cultures, races, religions, or dreams. Perhaps we only differ in our experiences—something that can often be solved merely by experiencing.

- Alanna Redine

Post-it [2]

Fly Post-it *Feeling of Not Belonging*

By the time I was ten years old I had lived in five different houses and attended three different schools. Some people thrive in environments that change on a regular basis; I believe they can be described as restless spirits. I most certainly am not a restless spirit. So, each time I had to move to a different school, I was in the depths of despair. I had to leave my friends, neighborhood, house, habits, teachers and classmates behind for a place that was unknown. Imagining the new place to be the worst place on earth compared to my old stomping ground was not ideal either. It took a great deal of time to make friends and feel as if I could be myself with them. That uncomfortable feeling of not quite belonging nagged at me constantly because it inhibited me from sharing my thoughts, feelings, and ideas with others.

I have never lived outside of the United States; I have never been immersed in a culture that did not resemble my own. But, I have felt culture shock. I have felt alienated from everyone else because I was different. I have felt my ideas and feelings exploding in my body because I was too shy or scared or both to share them. And, I have felt how wonderful it feels to finally feel as if you belong to a place, a community, a culture. That community is the university where I work.

- Larissa Fort

My Heart Bleeds for Lebanon

*Sitting in the crowded Church
It's standing room only.*

*They are here, the inhabitants of the
ancient mountain/newly suburban village.*

*This... this wood, these pages,
define their heartache.
The ruins that are glued together
separate brand new state-of-the-art
eyesores to the countrymen.
It was This bell or Their loud speaker prayers
This rosary or That hijab.*

*That shiny metal around their necks, glistening
As they sweat in this heaving building
On the hill that they defended
With their lives
their children.*

*And him, he's a fine. Young.
Man.
...that bestows him with a shiny metal machine gun
Hanging in his closet
with his Sunday best...just.
in. case.*

*You always have to be prepared to defend the family
--uttered with nonchalance
from his gentle, kind soul.*

*he inherited his Fear
Along with his hanging cross
And the Hate that encases the bullets
Under the bed*

In the room he shares with his baby brother.

*Uncle George sits here.
He is The Hero.*

*He opened a trunk filled with His
priest son and pious daughter in pieces...
they wanted to go to church
they were
 on their way
 to Church.*

*No one talks about the dozens Uncle George killed,
He “saved” the others from His fate
...He has a gun in His car.*

*In His house.
In His heart.*

*The village survived through
because of*

*Fear and Hate and Violence married to Family,
Religion, and Identity.*

*Will the machine gun make it to his son
at age 12 or 20 or ever?*

*It depends on whether he
 needs.
 It.*

On his way to sit here.

-Therese Yrani

What makes it Home!

I had thought of everything, except this. “Will they like me?” I had wondered. “If they cannot understand me, they will not have a good experience,” I repeatedly told myself. And “What will they look like?” and “What happens if they are silent?” and “What will I do if I accidentally offend them?” I had thought of everything, and I mean everything... but I had not thought of this.

As we sat down to a particular table, one of many in a large, bland cafeteria, I made sure to smile. “If I smile, they will know I am friendly,” I thought. So I smiled. I reached for my fork, but no one else did. I tried to play it off, like I wasn’t really reaching for my fork. No. I was reaching for... for... a sip of milk!

The last of our group of nine was seated, and each of them folded their hands. Then something happened. Something happened and this something was the very thing that I had not even bothered to think of. A string of syllables came out of each of their mouths and fell upon their folded hands, granting their fingers permission to reach for the fork.

“They will be speaking Japanese with each other, and I will not understand. I will not understand a single syllable. I had never thought of that.” In the time before I began my Resident Assistant position here at Mukogawa Fort Wright, I had never even considered that the nine of them would be speaking and laughing and gesturing, and I would have absolutely no clue as to what was going on.

Three nights of eating dinner together went by, each of them graced by a chant before reaching for the fork. I began to be very curious, so I asked Mika (one of my very talkative students) to write down this sequence so that I may learn it.

Mika: the intelligent, talkative one. Hiromi: quiet and sweet. Misaki: very outgoing and beautiful. Maki: the hugger. Shiho: the talented artist. Yuki: the one who is always smiling. Tsubasa: she makes everyone laugh constantly, and though I cannot understand her jokes, I am sure that she is the jokester.

Ayako: the very, very kind, selfless one.

At the students' Welcome Banquet, they sang "A Whole New World." What they have not realized is that they are not the only ones in a whole new world. I am a Resident Assistant at Mukogawa Fort Wright Institute. Some nights, I walk into the kitchen and seven girls are eating miso soup, stirring it occasionally with their chopsticks. Some days I swear I am right in the heart of Japan. Everyone around me is speaking Japanese, and eating Japanese food. People are laughing, and I have no clue, so I just smile. Suddenly, I realize that I am still in America. It is almost as if I am instantly transported from Japan back to America.

Although the challenges of my position are many, the benefits outweigh them. I am making so many new friends and learning every second that I am home with my students. I am driven to work hard because they are so motivated. Each and every one of them is my age, struggling to map out their dreams, and I can relate. I am so pleased to be here, and even when I am emerged in a completely different culture, I feel at home. I know that this is where I am supposed to be.

-Stotts Larae

Floods in Bangladesh



Photo by Arathi Nair

When in Malaysia, drive like a Ma-niac

I try to be a traveler who adapts to local customs as much as possible; however, on our most recent trip to Malaysia, my dad took the saying, "When in Rome, do as the Romans do" a little too much to heart.

From what I hear the driving test is pretty difficult to pass: you must use a provided car; it is not automatic; and you have to parallel park on a hill. Drivers on the road are also in various vehicles from motorcycles to "lorries" or trucks. Seat belts are officially mandatory, but the choice to actually use them is up to each individual. Illegally modifying cars also seems to be a popular past time: cars have heavily tinted windows, blindingly bright lights, and race engines installed in passenger vehicles.

Despite all this, drivers in Malaysia have the mentality that the road is theirs. If there is space, take it; if the lights are red, but there are no cars, just go cautiously. Ignoring "Berhenti" or stop signs is also the norm for cautious and aggressive drivers alike. If one-way roads prove to be a shortcut, they soon become a two-way thoroughfare. Speed bumps become a "joyride" for the children in the car who defy gravity for milli-seconds. Politeness or equality will do nothing for drivers as they will get nowhere, while angering people behind them. Honking is quite normal, but the sounds emitted from cars there do not seem to be as loud, probably so cities can have some sense of peace from the roads.

Having had most of my driving experience in suburban America, where for the most part, "right-of-way" is understood and followed, where drivers let you in if you signal, and where signaling is actually used, I am always caught of guard by the rules of the road abroad. To be mobile, we rented a car the past

few visits back to our "home" country. Due to either a lack of practice behind the wheel - my dad has been chauffeured in China since 2005 - or to a need to fit in as a local again, our travels on the road were a little more thrilling than a drive should be.

Dad would frequently inch or centimeter - Malaysians are very proudly metric - forward as we waited at traffic lights, driving me crazy, pun intended. He would tailgate cars so closely that our journeys resembled a long distance bumper car course, minus the huge rubber bumpers that prevent fatal injuries. Swinging around other vehicles and into free lanes to avoid slowing down must have given him action-star-like confidence. Lines on the road... art, not to mention a waste of government money! Drive anywhere on the road you like; create four lanes on a two lane road if you have to! Round-a-bouts, "Why are all these people stopping to wait, just GO!"

For the most part, thanks to a handy family gene of being able to fall asleep anywhere, anytime, and in any position, I achieved an unconscious state within 20 minutes and woke up just as we parked at our destination. Those first 20 minutes, however, I wished for nothing more than a traffic jam, so we would not be moving and could not decide between hurling, screaming, or stamping on a non-existent brake. I usually settled on holding my breath, gripping the seats, and squeezing my eyes shut. Somehow, we returned the car without a scratch and with all of our persons intact.

Hope your adventures on the road are a little less "adventurous."

- Emily Goonting

Buddhist Monks in Bhutan



Photo by: Arathi Nair

EL-SALVADOR



PHOTO BY EMILY ENGEL

A land of grave diversity blinds me, stares me in the face.
The differences are apparent, striking, and undismissible.
There are no pedestrian rights as cars speed by inches from us,
not stopping at crosswalks nor stop signs.
Roads are paved, in some places that is, others paved with dirt
and misplaced rocks, making it impossible to drive.
Volcanoes threaten neighborhoods with yet another
eruption or at least a mudslide.
Unfiltered water infects the once pure
and healthy hearts of young souls.
The privilege of electricity embodies the term privilege.
Houses made of tin roofs, clay and bamboo walls, and mattress
spring fences are called homes.
American~North American~ restaurant chains contaminate
what should be local businesses.
Family run stores exist simply to make a few dollars
for their family.
The average cost for a meal is \$3,
incomparable and incomprehensible in modern countries.
But, the truth is, reality is reality, it varies from place to place.
It doesn't have to be a shock, merely an understanding.

~ Emily Engel

Shoes Shoes Shoes

After spending my whole life in southern California, I knew that living in the Northwest was going to be a big change. I realized that I would have to trade in my bikini for a sweatshirt and give up my year-round tan for pale skin. After I settled in and started my first week of college, I noticed that compared to my Californian ways, the slang and traditions were not what was so different than what I was used to. It was their shoes! Everywhere I turned I saw brands and styles of shoes that I had never seen before. I felt like a scientist in a mysterious jungle who was discovering new species of animals, but in my case I was discovering new species of footwear.

I was in class when I suddenly dropped my pencil, and as I bent down to retrieve it something caught my eye. I would call it a cross between a loafer and a tennis shoe, but the correct terminology for this ambiguity is the boat shoe. This type of shoe has a high traction sole; a lace looped around the edges, and is made out of a water repellent material. This aspect of the shoe is what makes it so popular here--the Northwest is synonymous with heavy amounts of rain. After more research, I found that the most popular brand for this style of shoe is Sperry Topsiders and that people here call them "Spervies" for short. I noticed that these shoes come out after rainstorms and icy conditions and are most popular on women's feet.

My research continued at the Marin Center, where it was not the style of shoe people were wearing that surprised me. It was the dominance of this one brand in particular that seemed to be on everyone's feet. Never in my whole life had I seen so much Nike. Everywhere I looked I saw that signature swoosh on almost every student's foot like it was some sort of gang tattoo. Was this Nike popularity some sort of Nike cult on campus that people not from the Northwest were aware of? If you wore any other brand of shoe, perhaps Adidas or Puma, would it cause social suicide? If caught wearing anything besides Nike, would you immediately be shunned from the gym and be called degrading terms such as "lame," "un-cool," and "freak"?

Days passed, and I still had friends, so word of my Asics tennis shoes must not have gotten out. I thought I was free of any shoe discrimination until the first big rainstorm hit. With the cold rain constantly falling day and night, it seemed like a no brainer to wear rain boots. These boots are constructed with a thick rubber sole and extend to about mid-calf so they are perfect for splashing through puddles. The only problem is that since I am from sunny California, I owned no such boot. During the whole storm I walked around in sopping wet sneakers and openly admired the rain boots that passed by me. I saw them in all sorts of colors and in a variety of cool patterns. There were so many brands and styles of these boots! Rain boots to the Northwest are what sandals are to California. The rain boot was an important breakthrough to my understanding of the Northwest culture and after coming to this important conclusion, I got my own pair.

It took me a few weeks, but I finally recovered from the shock of the rain boot and was now comfortable in the presence of most Gonzaga footwear, but all that was about to change when the first snowfall hit. I was not only taken back by the weather but also by the vast varieties of shoes people wore in the snow. Seeing the snow boot was an eye-opening experience because it symbolized the fact that I was now fully immersed in an environment that I have never been in before. I had never actually lived where I had to walk through snow, so this was now a strange adventure. My friend down the hall was sporting these really cute snow boots that are called Sorrels. I noticed that not only did my friend have Sorrels, but also half the school was wearing this shoe brand. While I waited for my own snow Sorrels to arrive in the mail, I trudged across campus in my sneakers where I received some odd looks from people. However, I have a strong inclination that they were not looking at my shoes, but more out of pity towards me.


Once the snow was gone and the weather was warmer, I saw something startling on someone's foot. It was the Birkenstock sandal, otherwise known as the ugliest shoe created. It is a canvas leather sandal that comes in a dark brown color and over the top of the foot has two straps connected to two brass buckles. Pre-

vious to my run in with the Birkenstock I was open to all the new types of shoes I came across, but there is something appalling about this particular footwear. Students all over campus wear these atrocious things and for some reason are not bothered by how ugly they are. I have actually observed some people wearing these things with socks- in California this would be considered a crime. Everywhere I turned I was surrounded by the world's most hideous shoe. From that moment on I wished that it would start snowing again so I would not have to look at these sandals any longer.

Overall my time at Gonzaga so far has been filled with many cultural shocking experiences but none as shocking. Come springtime I am curious of what new types of shoes I will come across.

 -Abby Westby

Post-it [3]



Language has many applications in daily life and towards the contribution of unifying a nation, which, as I identified previously, only serves as an external framework of one's identity. Language also promotes national culture which can lead to strains between language learning policies and typical practices of teaching a language. Overall, the relationship between how the perspectives over identity and nation in regards to language are intertwined in that language plays a primary role in the development of how one perceives his or her culture as well as the culture of others !

Samantha Thormess

Diversity Monologue (featured by UMEC)

Beautiful Words

Sound. Word. Language. Sounds that create the words. Words that form the message. The message that informs the mind; the mind that interprets meaning.

Language is at the heart of communication. We are social beings who have a need to express, to confess, to possess. We describe our wants and our needs towards others through language. Our very existence is confirmed by language: I; you; us; them; we.

That is the beauty of language. Product of our souls through our tongues. To have a word for every emotion: happy; sad; funny; tired; embarrassed. All words we use to express our complicated selves.

Beautiful words that connect me to you. I say just as much with “te amo” as you too say “I love you”. Different languages may seem to separate us. What I say in Spanish won’t sound the same elsewhere. But the way I say it can be understood so well.

“Si se puede!” I yell, at the same time I stand, as the president looks at the people and says “yes we can.”

Beautiful words that connect me to you. They tell our stories and remind us who we are. As my father tells stories from his childhood, I imagine the tropics, the smell of fresh coffee, the red colored mud, the hot midday sun. Words that evoke and provoke my senses. They

reflect our lives and go back in time, reminding us what it was like when ancestors lived.

Beautiful words that connect me and you. “Tu eres mi amigo”, my friend, “mi amigo.” Through good times and bad, we share our thoughts, “sentidos y pasiones,” feelings and passions. Courageous and sure, you stick up for me, el “sentido humano” – human emotion.

More than a friend, “mi hermano y hermana” sister and brother, bonded in blood. “Familia” forever, together my home, together “por siempre”. Powerful words that connect me and you; they release our strengths, our fears, and our secrets.

Palabras bellas que nos unen, tú y yo. Que liberan nuestras almas y abren los corazones. Expresan la pasión, el amor, y los sueños. Palabras que perdonan y palabras que comprenden.

Soul. Heart. Passion and Dream. Liberating the soul and opening hearts. Words that forgive and words that understand. The beauty of language is universal and true. What’s beautiful is not the word but the root of the word. The root of the word found in every heart, the root that exists til death do us part.

By: Edwin Torres

Who are You?

It was early fall of 1963, and I was on my way home from school with my best friend. As we walked along the tree covered sidewalk of our elementary school in north Spokane, we passed a small group of girls from our second grade class.

My friend and I stopped at the corner of the block to chat with a group of friends from class. We were all about seven years old, but there was a much younger girl in the group. She stared at me quite intently for a few moments, until she finally blurted out,

"What are you"?

I was at first confused by the question because it was obvious by my appearance that I was a girl. I did a quick check and verified to myself that I had shoulder length hair and wore a dress. I answered, "A girl."

The young girl still stared at me and repeated the question as if I had never answered. I was now really confused and didn't understand exactly what she wanted. Her tone wasn't angry or disrespectful; it was just inquisitive. I repeated my answer and she still continued to stare. Feeling more confused and awkward my friend and I left and walked home. I've never forgotten this event; it was not painful at the time, but I could not make sense of it for many years.

Later, as a teenager I started attending the Japanese Methodist Church across town from our home. This

was the first time I realized that I was physically different than my neighborhood friends because it was my first experience being with people who looked like me and my family members.

Growing up in north Spokane's Hillyard neighborhood, the families had surnames like Johnson, Coomer, McKenzie, Anzalone, Ellis, Wylie, Tirk, Proctor, Heinen, and Vercruyse. These were the surnames of families whose ancestors came from Europe. There were no families with surnames that sounded like mine, Shiosaki. But I identified with the kids in my neighborhood. When I looked into their faces, I saw myself because they were my friends and at that time my world.

I didn't know that my skin color, my facial features, and family culture made me different from the other neighborhood kids. We didn't talk about issues of race or culture as children because at the time they were not important to us. What was important back then was who had enough money for the ice cream cart when it drove by, what penny candy we would buy with our allowances, or what was on television. But being in a room of Asian people who looked like me was an experience that helped me see that I was different.

My family heritage is Japanese. My mother is a native from Japan, and my father is Japanese American. We

lived with my father's parents near the family business until I was 4 years old. Japanese was my first language because my grandparents didn't speak English in their home.

It was ironic that I initially felt uncomfortable in a room filled with Japanese Americans, but I had grown up in a white working class neighborhood, and that was all that I knew. This experience was a turning point in my life. Meeting others who I shared similar life experiences helped me to discern and distinguish the ways that my family was different. Everyday experiences that had seemed so normal before were really very different: my parents ate with chopsticks at every meal; my mom intertwined Japanese words into her English when she spoke; we ate rice every day; there was a small Buddhist shrine in our dining room; we ate seaweed; my mom ate fish heads; there were food offerings left out for our deceased relatives; and English was not the only language spoken at home.

I was not just a kid from a north Spokane neighborhood anymore. My childhood neighborhood had been a great place to grow up; however, it had insulated me from the outside world. Later, experiences in the outside world helped me learn about my race and culture. Learning and accepting race and culture was an important process in my journey of understanding and knowing who and what I am.

-Joanne Shiosaki

Kids playing 'football' bare-footed in Zambia



Photo by: Seth Morrison

Embracing the Abyss and Gaining an Education



As a senior, I have come to realize that the greatest culture shock I've felt has less to do with a specific event and more to do with the experience of coming to college altogether. I've never been the victim of racism or discrimination, but I've witnessed conflicts between cultures because of a lack of understanding. Sometimes people forget culture is not just an ethnicity: It's a belief system; it's a well of ideas; and it's a personal dogma of values. No matter what we identify ourselves with – a religion, an ethnic heritage, a political party – we all have our own individual "cultures." It is the conflict between these individual, personal cultures that I would like to discuss.

I think what is most shocking is that a lot of people come into college with a substantial foundation for whom they are. The greatest culture shock I've experienced concerns the clash of ideas, the unspoken conflicts

of interests, the various methods of communication, and different levels of self-assertiveness. In short, the greatest culture shock I've experienced is the way people (including myself) deal with other people. I have been shocked by the multitudes of different personalities and the interactions between them.

The friends I've made here, including the two in the picture above, have played important roles in my process of personal growth – in the forming of my individual culture. I chose the picture above because of the ideas it represents. Though they're standing within three feet of each other, there could be a mile-wide chasm between their thoughts, values, and interests. It appears as if they could be looking at the same thing, but are they really seeing it the same, thinking about it in the same way? Getting to know someone implies diving headfirst into the complex abyss of his or her individual culture.

Long story short, the greatest culture shock I've experienced is adjusting to the idea of there being more than one "correct" perspective. It's accepting and embracing the idea that diversity doesn't have to mean conflict but can mean a wholesome, meaningful, and humanistic education. The greatest benefit of culture shock is being given the opportunity to see the world differently. Put yourself in someone else's shoes and witness an entirely unique universe. As photographers of our own lives, it is to our benefit to experiment with different lenses, accepting the fact that each individual one has its own purpose and advantage.

- Kristin Bayudan

australienation

THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA IS POPULATED BY APPROXIMATELY TWENTY MILLION PEOPLE, LIVING ON AN ISLAND THE SIZE OF UNITED STATES. THEIR CURRENCY IS MADE OF A HYPER-DURABLE PLASTIC, AUSTRALIANS DRIVE ON THE WRONG SIDE OF THE ROAD, AND THEY ARE NEATLY SITUATED UNDER THE OZONE HOLE IN THE PLANET EARTH'S SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE. LIKE ANY RUN OF THE MILL CURIOSITY STRICKEN STUDY ABROAD PROSPECT, I PICTURED AUSTRALIA AS A PLACE OF DOWN UNDER OCEANIC FANCY AND EASY GOINGS, THE ISLAND LIFE COMPLETE WITH DEADLY INSECTS AND G'DAYS. BUT LIKE ANY TIDE, MY STUDY ABROAD EXPERIENCE OF AUSTRALIA SWALLOWED ME UP AND SPAT ME BACK OUT IN A TUMBLING WHIRLING CULTURAL CLASH AND CONFUSION.

THERE'S AN ASPECT OF DOUBLETHINK FROM THE VERY GET-GO SINCE AUSTRALIA IS AN ENGLISH SPEAKING NATION. IT'S ALMOST LIKE VISITING A LONG LOST COUSIN SINCE OUR MOTHER TONGUE IS THE SAME, BUT THERE'S AN ASPECT OF DISTANCE BETWEEN OUR TWO CULTURES DESPITE OUR CLOSELY RELATED VERNACULARS. I HAD SUDDENLY BECOME THE FOREIGNER IN AN ENGLISH SPEAKING LAND TO VERY MINUTE PEOPLE STARTED ASKING, "ARE YOU FROM AMERICA?" WITH THE SORT OF AWE WITH WHICH AMERICANS OFTEN TREAT EXOTIC VISITORS. FOR THE FIRST FIVE MINUTES OF A CONVERSATION I BECAME LIKE A NEW TOY WITH AN AMERICAN ACCENT, AND IT FELT GREAT TO BE ADMIRER FOR SOMETHING SMALL AS MIDWESTERN INTONATION OR A HARSH PRONUNCIATION OF THE LETTER "R". IN CLASS, THE PROFESSORS WOULD GIVE "A WARM WELCOME TO OUR AMERICAN VISITORS," WHICH WAS WELL AND GOOD, BUT SUCH WARM WELCOMES ONLY STOOD TO REINFORCE THIS SENSE OF DOUBLETHINK- okay so i'm IN AN ANGLOPHONIC COUNTRY WHICH IS COMFORTING, BUT AT THE SAME TIME I'M AN OUTSIDER! THAT'S PERHAPS THE MOST AUSTERE ASPECT OF

the culture shock, being welcomed into another global community only to be constantly reminded that at the end of the day you don't exactly belong. Your accent becomes your arm badge, and the flag for which we stand becomes your identity.

as menacing as this cultural identity spat sounds, it was all the more enjoyable being an unofficial American ambassador. I had never been so interested in American life until students and teachers asked me to talk about what it meant to be American, "Do you own a gun?" "What is snow like?" and of course, "What do you think about American foreign policy?" What was even more fun was the blank mind funk I would go into as I tried to explain such things. In lieu of these inquiries and the like, I nonetheless felt welcome in the Perth community of Western Australia, a place full of metropolitan buzz surrounded by ocean on one side desert on the other and just a few million peoples worth of civilization in between.

Wanting to immerse myself, I began to surf and it engulfed me. I myself am from South Dakota where the only notion of the ocean comes from the sea of grain fields that flood the state. For me, surfing opened up this hatch of self discovery, both physical and spiritual. There's just something liberating about trying to harness an angry and tempestuous wall of water for the purposes of gliding down it gracefully only to swim back and do it again on what some might call the world's lunar powered roller coaster. Surfing in Australia wrapped me in an oceanic seedpod of indulgent rebirth with every crash of swell. It changed me and I loved it- the new, the foreign, the dangerous, and the difficult. Surfing was the best form of therapy for me, a homesick Zag ten

thousand miles from Uncle Sam's shores. it helped me cope with the newness of a nation over which a parliament and queen ruled, but most importantly, surfing helped me deal with the atrocious university system that our beloved cousins down under have to offer.

The fact that the tertiary education system is less formal than ours-since professors prefer being called by their first names, and seem to be easy going- is a misleading one. Yes, the professors- and mind you this does not apply to all Australian universities-were quite informal, which in some respect was welcoming, but for all the informality they posited, the scholastic rigor was harshly unwelcoming. Now, of course, i am speaking in general terms in my comparison, but they do speak to the cultural divide between our nations. For example where professors at Gonzaga generally seem to encourage and want their students to succeed through genuine guidance and fosterhood, they professors down under have a harder time relating to their pupils from the heights upon which they seem to be immovable perched. A professor put it to me this way in regards to their grading system ,

"Gods gets A's, excellent students get B's, good students get C's and so forth.."

it 's a rather unforgiving system especially when it's put against the No Shirt, No Shoes, No Problem attitude of the country.

School was the hardest, most aggravating part of study abroad because of the double standard embedded in the academic cultural immersion experience. On one hand, you are expected to take the country by the horns and absorb its

cuLtuRAL and aDventuRous essence as it were; ON the other, there is the overbearing expectation that studious rigor is to be upheld. i personally Love school work,, but the sheer demand for perfection in the aussie university system was tantamount to that of the military. the university experience was unwelcoming, tormenting, stressful and dangerously off putting. i hated being a student in such a totalitarian university system.

IN all, my experience of australia- yes that weird white dominant xenophobic island nation swept under the rug of the Pacific- helped me look at myself critically as the cultural offspring and the unofficial representative of the united states. the trek took me half a world away so that i could discover what made home special. australia placed me in the nationality test tube to be poked and prodded so that others could see what america is like, which helped me to see what it is like after a return from academically sponsored exile.

-james fenske

ONE DAY LOST, A NEW WORLD GAINED



Imagine beginning the trip of a lifetime, waiting in the crowded boarding areas of an airport, to board a Boeing 747, and begin the longest flight of your life. However, the most scary part of it all wasn't the 15 hours on an airplane: it was the idea of going to a brand new place, a foreign country on top of it, by myself. I must say, though, the flight itself was one of the coolest things I have ever experienced, aside from the free drinks and complimentary food, because it allowed me to legitimately lose one day. Australia is roughly 15 hours ahead of the West Coast, and along with the 15 hour flight, I did not experience Valentine's Day in 2010. When I arrived in Sydney it was February 15th; thus the

14th ceased to exist for me. My end destination, though, was not Sydney, but a place located in Western Australia called Fremantle (Freo). Upon my arrival to the port city of Fremantle, I must have looked like a lost puppy, but with the help of the people I found my way.

In the months that followed, I learned a great many things about the culture and the people of Australia. People always say how friendly the Aussies are, but it's completely more so than I would have ever imagined. I felt that being in a smaller city, this attitude and friendliness was doubled because of the small town community. Because Freo was located on the coast, it had the feel of an old port city, stone walls, brick buildings, and beaches galore. The closest beach to me was 5 minutes away, and I could walk anywhere in the city in 10 minutes. For whatever Freo didn't have, a 30 min train ride would land me at Perth, the state capital, where I could find it. By the way, 10 min was a joke because every time we asked our RA's how far it was to a certain place in the city, they would always say 10 min, regardless of the distance.

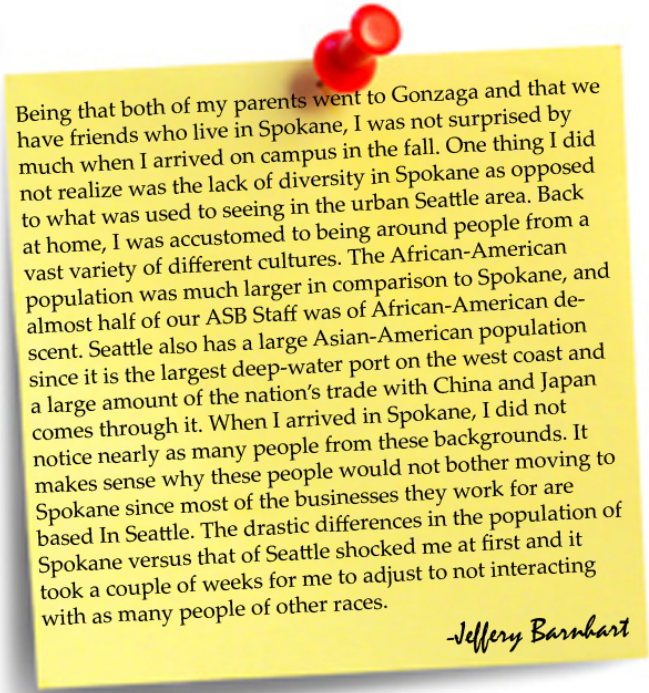
My travels lead me to Albany and Esperance, two more port cities along the southern tip of Western Australia. Esperance was known as having the whitest beaches in the world. Walking on the sand there was like walking on flour, so coarsely ground it no longer felt like sand. When it got wet, the sand squeaked like a mouse when I ran my foot across it. Albany was much like Freo, but had one central road that connected the entire city. Round-a-bouts galore! The two coolest things about Albany were its Natural Bridge, where Antarctica and Australia were once joined, and its cove beaches.



RETURNING FROM WESTERN AUSTRALIA BROUGHT ME BACK TO SYDNEY, WHERE I STAYED WITH MY FOLKS AS WE EXPLORED ALL THE LOCAL ATTRACTIONS LIKE THE OPERA HOUSE. FUN FACT ABOUT THE OPERA HOUSE IS THAT ITS TILES ARE ACTUALLY NOT WHITE; RATHER THEY ARE A TAN COLOR THAT USING THE REFLECTIONS OFF THE WATER AND THE SKY TO APPEAR TO BE WHITE. MY JOURNEY CONTINUED ALONG THE GOLD COAST, AND FINALLY ENDED IN MELBOURNE BEFORE RETURNING HOME.

CHEERS TRAVIS WETZEL

Post-it [4]



Being that both of my parents went to Gonzaga and that we have friends who live in Spokane, I was not surprised by much when I arrived on campus in the fall. One thing I did not realize was the lack of diversity in Spokane as opposed to what was used to seeing in the urban Seattle area. Back at home, I was accustomed to being around people from a vast variety of different cultures. The African-American population was much larger in comparison to Spokane, and almost half of our ASB Staff was of African-American descent. Seattle also has a large Asian-American population since it is the largest deep-water port on the west coast and a large amount of the nation's trade with China and Japan comes through it. When I arrived in Spokane, I did not notice nearly as many people from these backgrounds. It makes sense why these people would not bother moving to Spokane since most of the businesses they work for are based in Seattle. The drastic differences in the population of Spokane versus that of Seattle shocked me at first and it took a couple of weeks for me to adjust to not interacting with as many people of other races.

-Jeffery Barnhart

The Art of a Handshake

For ten years, my family has traveled to either France or Italy every summer. Language barriers do not affect our family; my mom is fluent in Italian and I took French at my high school so we have always been able to adapt to the local culture. In the summer of 2009, our family decided to travel to Turkey for its unique geography, history, culture, and people.

Once I stepped off the plane in Istanbul, I immediately sensed we were entering a different culture. Billboards displayed an unfamiliar language, prayer rooms were scattered throughout the terminal, and veiled women were everywhere. Our family toured the major sites of Istanbul such as the Hagia Sophia, the Blue Mosque, the Grand Bazaar, and the Ottoman Palaces. At midday, the minarets across the city sounded off the call to prayer. The exotic chants differed greatly from the familiar musical church bells of Europe. Our tour guide, Oz, a moderate Muslim, taught us about his culture; he gave us an insight into Turkey's struggle to westernize and stated how our peoples are more alike than different. On our last day in Istanbul, Oz took us to a private gallery to see a painting, which I think epitomizes modern Turkey. Change in Turkey comes very slowly but is still possible.

From Istanbul, our family ventured into the wind-swept mountainous region of Cappadocia, in central Turkey. We visited the early Christian cave settlements dating from the third to the tenth centuries. Inside the cave churches were beautiful frescos painted onto the walls. One fresco depicts a man in a turban shaking hands with a haloed Christian saint that

showed how friendly and tolerant Turks were of Christians in the pre-crusade era and how both cultures once lived together. This deeply impressed me because it made me wonder why our cultures can't cooperate like our ancestors did.

I learned that the welcoming and friendly people of Turkey hold high hopes for their country's future and eventual acceptance into the European Union. In the past, Turkey was the crossroads of the East and West. Today, it is up to the West to include Turkey as that bridge again. From my reading and traveling to Turkey, I've gained a broader perspective on the world, along with an appreciation of a Muslim country in transition; it gave me a unique opportunity to witness the evolution of an ancient culture trying to find its place in the modern world.

- *Mike Hartman*

Taste of Spokane

Coming from Los Angeles I saw a lot of differences when moving to Spokane. One of the first things is that people here move a lot slower. It seems like everybody back home was in a rush, and here everybody is getting things done at their own pace. This can be seen by people actually walking to get around, even when it is really cold out! This is also apparent by people driving a lot slower on the streets. Maybe this is because people have longer distances to get to where they want to go in Los Angeles, so they need to move quickly. Or maybe it is because there is so much more to do there than there is to do here and wanting to do it all Angelinos have to move fast. Whatever the reason, Spokanites don't possess the sense of urgency that I am used to.

Another big difference I noticed when I moved to Spokane was all the white. No, I'm not talking about the snow; I'm talking about the people. Los Angeles is a very multicultural city, and Spokane is quite the opposite. One of the biggest downsides to me for not living in a diverse city is the lack of different kinds of good food. I still have yet to find a decent Mexican restaurant. My burrito had most of the things that make a burrito, except for the amazing flavor that I'm used to. The same goes for the pho I had at a Vietnamese restaurant. The story is the same for many other places. Did the people running these places forget how much more delicious these foods are supposed to taste? Or do they just assume people in Spokane won't know any better?

There are many things that set Spokane apart from Los Angeles. It's definitely a culture shock having to adjust. I might just be spoiled for having lived in a city that's got it all, though. Regardless, spring break is going to be amazing, since I will be back in the city that's always on the move, and the city that's got lots of good food!

- Mike Haefeli

Thailand

Experiencing a Civil War From Within



I am here in Thailand...Bangkok specifically. I am in my friend Ohm's apartment. There are no sheets on the mattress, eight friends staying in a two-bedroom apartment and oh no they just killed a cockroach in the bathroom! Okay breathe Mere, you just need a few days to adjust. How did Ohm come to Wyoming for a whole year?

That is an excerpt from my journal in my first country abroad. I was visiting Phappim or Ohm as she is more commonly known. She is a friend from High School who was an exchange student at the time. I was yearning to travel for years but never

had the right opportunity. When Ohm proposed I come to visit, it was 10 degrees in Spokane, I was buried under endless homework, and exhausted from my responsibilities as a Resident Assistant. The images conjuring in my mind of warm beaches, incredible spicy and sweet food, and adventure was irresistible.

After I bought my plane ticket, I had little time to process the realness of my trip. In congruency with a typical college schedule, I was busy at all hours of the day. I was, however, finding time to read the New York Time's coverage of the increasing violence in Thailand between the Red Shirts and Government as I had breakfast at the school cafeteria.

The TV is playing a local channel and it is pretty interesting. They did an update on the Red Shirt protests and I saw someone getting carried away that looked pretty dead. This scares me because we drove through downtown last night and I think Ohm wants to site-see tomorrow. She says, 'It is not dangerous.'

The protests were organized by the National United Front of Democracy against Dictatorship (also known as the Red Shirts). The Red Shirts called for Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva to dissolve parliament and determine new, justly elected officials through a formal election. After repeated negotiations failed to set an election date, the protests escalated into violent confrontations between the protestors and the military.

During this political turmoil, I had left Bangkok with Ohm's family to visit some of the other provinces. Despite the terrifying news and Twitter updates Ohm was receiving on her phone, I was becoming more comfortable in this new and exotic environment. The locals were so welcoming of me in their efforts to speak English and constantly feed me delicious Thai food.

I had a realization last night. Yes the cock roaches and hairy, nasty mattress and walls are gross, but that is part of the experience. It allows me to open my eyes. I may have a few more moments on this trip where I miss basic amenities that US residents don't think twice about, but I will learn to love this way of life.

On the 16th of May, I was staying with Ohm's relatives in a beautifully architected home close to a water market that is popular for Thai citizens to visit. On this same day, a state of emergency was declared in five Northeastern provinces. I was unaware of this, however, as Ohm and I were busy enjoying the fresh fruit that we purchased from small boats and as I received a real Thai massage! I bought some beautiful wooden chopsticks for my mother and in the process I learned how to negotiate prices in Thai.

That evening we traveled to yet another province to visit members of Ohm's family that live on the ocean coast. Many people said to me, "You are brave to come here...what do your parents think?"

Projector screen was set up for restaurant diners to stay informed with the developing violence in Bangkok. On the screen, a five-year-old boy throws a handmade grenade.

After another impossible-to-articulated dinner that included new foods and incredible flavors, I got the chance to check my email. My parents and boyfriend were panicking about the escalating violence and asked me to consider coming home early.

I am totally safe here in the rural areas but my main concern is that some violence will be directed towards the Bangkok Airport and I wouldn't be able to fly out. Tomorrow I will call the US Embassy and ask them what they suggest I do....wow interesting! The John Lennon song, 'Imagine All the People' is playing as

the Bangkok news replays the most recent protest images.

The next day, I finally decided to leave early and changed my flight. During my last day in Thailand, we went to Pattaya, where for the first time, I saw tourists. Ohm took me to this mall that was so overwhelming with major US brands that I begged her to take me somewhere else. We went to the beach where for 50 cents, you could pay to rest under shade in a comfortable beach chair. Every other minute, a vendor would walk by trying to sell cold drinks, ice-cream, water toys, necklaces, or any other small item. I learned how to say 'no thank you' in Thai. Later in the night, we went to this night market where I witnessed first hand, the sex industry. I saw one girl selling her self for 55 baht, which is barely one US dollar! I was speechless much of the night.

Hours later I was on the airplane heading home. After a surprisingly clear 55 hours of being awake, I arrived in Spokane. Thirty minutes upon landing, I received a phone call from local newspapers, the Pinedale Roundup and Sublette Examiner in my hometown Pinedale, Wyoming. They had heard all of the hype among the community of roughly 300 people who were worried about my safety. My family says the phone did not stop ringing, my mom's email inbox was full, and I was on every congregation's prayer chain.

There may have been something in receiving all of that hopeful energy. Hours after I left Bangkok, a mandatory curfew prohibited anyone from leaving their home between nine pm and six am. This would have caused difficulties in flying home and from enjoying much of Thailand's culture, which largely takes place during the night.

For a first trip abroad, entering a civil war in Thailand was quite a memorable experience.

At the time, I didn't understand the magnitude of what was happening. My family and friends at home were all worried as the American media



Painted a grave picture. From my internal perspective, however, I always felt safe. The looming issue for me was the unknown of such a volatile political scene.

Experiencing Thailand's culture was where I first felt the magnitude of what culture shock encompasses. At times, I experienced lows that were challenging to overcome, but when I reflect on the experience as a whole, I am filled with warmth and positive emotions. This phenomenon reflects how beautiful experiences and personal growth

Culture Shock

Five days before I first arrived on campus, a noose was found around the neck of a Native American statue in front of Schoenberg. The only response I know of was from a sophomore who gathered about twenty people to have an ad hoc vigil a few days later. Once school started, the lack of publicity was as if the incident had never happened. Maybe I was too lazy to transfer, or maybe I was curious to learn of more absurd campus events to prove that this one really happened. Either way, I stayed for four years and graduated. I am grateful for what I learned at Gonzaga because intentionally or not, it helped me find my passion: helping build true community.

Let's face it: I did not "belong" at a snowbound, basketball-crazed, traditional, heteronormative, predominantly white institution. I'm not saying those things are bad or that they wouldn't be the perfect conditions for a great college experience for many students. I just know that most of the time, I was completely distracted by them. I come from a land known for its perennially warm weather, fresh fruit, and diversity of diversity. No place is free of its problems, but there's a big difference between acknowledging uncomfortable social topics and pretending they'll go away if we ignore them. Early on my curiosity led me to embed myself into the former Department of Intercultural Relations and develop a unique inside view of the state of affairs on and around campus. There are no words to express the depth of my appreciation for the support of a small, courageous group of teachers and professionals that continue to dare the community to grow in understanding.

I never actually spoke out much about Gonzaga's dirty laundry. I preferred rather to add quarters to the washing machine and clean out the lint drawer, so to speak. I participated in orientation programming for incoming freshmen of color, reached out to cultural clubs and international students, and worked with administrators to create an online system of hate and bias incident reporting. I coordinated bringing hundreds of non-GU students of color to campus on two separate occasions--one for a high school college and career day and the other for a Filipino American student conference. I mention these activities purely as examples of the ways I chose to deal with my own culture shock. Some said what I did was divisive, but I enjoyed opening up spaces for asking WHY they felt uncomfortable. Everyone is entitled to their opinion, of course; however, I stand firm in my belief that if we want to enjoy a healthy, supportive community, we must collectively step out of our comfort zones and face fear with trust.

Current Gonzaga students, hang in there. We're in for more rocky times ahead. Keep asking questions, building relationships, and challenging yourselves to engage the world, even if people around you shut themselves off. Cheesy as it is, we need each other! As Fr. Baraza says about Ubuntu, "I am because we are." Even after your time as a student, please get involved in whatever community you join. Also, as Fr. Kuder says, "Live in the now."

-Kayla De Los Reyes

Auto Rickshaw in India



Photo by Arathi Nair

Submit for
the next issue:

cultureshock@zagmail.gonzaga.edu

