

THE MATRIX PRESENTS



Privilege &  
RESPONSIBILITY

The Matrix

# Dear Readers,

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It's always a challenge to choose just one theme to focus on in an edition of *The Matrix*. One of our main goals this year has been to express the voice of the PLU community, rather than simply our own passions. That's why, when trying to pick a theme, we decided to focus on the conversations that were already happening on campus. Some of the prominent events that stuck out to us were: the Wang Center's Symposium on water in February, the Holocaust Conference hosted by PLU in March, and Tunnel of Oppression put on by SIL in March. Upon reflecting on these events, we saw the theme of privilege and responsibility present in every discussion, and thus we chose to highlight it in this publication.

While social justice covers a broad range of topics, one characteristic present in all social justice issues is privilege. Acknowledging that we have privilege in one way or another is the first step to change. But acknowledging that we have privilege is not enough; we must discover what we can do with that privilege, and with that discovery comes responsibility. Privilege comes in many forms, it has many faces, and it resides in many places. Some of these forms might seem obvious (being able to attend a private university like PLU is definitely a privilege!), but others are easier to overlook, such as having access to running water. While we understand that recognizing our privilege can lead to feelings of guilt, we encourage you to seek out actions you can take to address privilege and oppression.

The problem with privilege is that even the solutions get complicated. While we urge you to consider the responsibility associated with your privilege, we also want to stress that this does not mean speaking for minority groups. As Kristiana Henderson's article (page 15)



points out, if we assumed our privileged voices have more more to effect change than those of the less privileged, even our best intentions of addressing our privilege can contribute to systems of marginalization.

Putting this issue together has been truly inspirational for us and we hope it is the same for you! All of these submissions acknowledge different areas of privilege and social problems, but they also are a call to action. After reading Stena Troyer's article (page 3) we realized there were changes we could make in our own daily lives. We now have reusable cups (pictured above) and we no longer use straws or cardboard cozies when we buy coffee at OMM. As you read the following articles, we encourage you to consider what privileges you have and what responsibilities come with that privilege.

As always, if you have any comments or concerns about any of our articles please contact us at [matrix@plu.edu](mailto:matrix@plu.edu) and share your thoughts.

Sincerely,  
Kelsey Martin & Shelby Adsero  
*The Matrix* Co-Editors

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# Straws Only Suck Because You Do

Stena Troyer, Biology [Chemistry minor] '12

Looking out across a spectacular stretch of the sea, I realized that the ocean is excellent at masking the calamity beneath its surface. This epiphany took place alongside a salty old gent with lengthy gray hair, an impressive beard, and an unyielding passion for the environment during a January summer in Australia. Eco-diver Dave, as I have endearingly termed my new friend, volunteers at an environmental center near Sydney. He leads eco-diving ventures to collect rubbish from under the sea as well as to cut creatures free from the swim nets and shark nets that are supposed to protect the swimming beach-goers. I had the privilege to not only hear about eco-diver Dave's efforts, but join him in them.

Amidst the sea horses, octopi, cuttlefish, in-your-face blue groupers, sea slugs, wob-begongs (sharks!), sponges, corals, and other magnificent sea critters, there was an unfortunate amount of trash at our dive site. I had a bag the size of a typical garbage bag filled almost as soon as we started gathering trash. I was warned that our bags would fill up quickly, so we were sure to target items of high risk. These items included fishing gear like lines, lures, and rope which easily entangle creatures; plastic bags which sea turtles and other animals can mistake for a jellyfish, eat, get sick or choke, and die; and finally, clear slushy lids which an animal can unknowingly swim through creating a situation similar to a veterinary cone that you would

put on a pet, only instead of helping it heal, the creature dies. In addition to these concerning items, eco-diver Dave and I also picked up shoes, hats, sunglasses, coffee lids, plastic bottles, glass bottles, aluminum cans, grocery bags, cocktail swords, candy wrappers, cigarette butts, ziplocks, and the list goes on. Discovering this abundant mess below the sea was a powerful experience, but eco-diver Dave's next challenge, to see how many straws we could collect at the end of our dive, really drove the message home. Since our bags were packed full at this point, all we had left were our two hands. The challenge was like an Easter egg hunt designed for a two-year old, and I was winning—there were colorful straws everywhere and I easily ran out of hand-space before I ran out of straws to pick up. In a collective 15 minutes, eco-diver Dave and I had picked up 384 straws from an area equivalent to ten parking spaces. The multitude of straws was impressively revolting.

...Continued on page 20



# Blue Trees

*Rose Lioy, History [Religion & Political Science minors] '12*

These photos were taken at Westlake Square in Downtown Seattle, an area which, frequented by demonstrations and protests, is a center of social justice in Seattle. This center is also shadowed by privilege, where seven floors of Macy's haunt over the homeless and where consumerism runs rampant in the Westlake shopping center across the street. This juxtaposition sums up the conundrum of major cities across the world, where the most privileged can afford to live and the least privileged find a way to survive on the streets. The use of these trees to bring "awareness and discussion about global deforestation" (as posted on the information sign) is an attempt by the parks system of Seattle to create an eye catching, yet simple way to make Seattleites and visitors aware of the responsibility we all have to stop rapid global deforestation. Environmental issues are the most pressing issues facing our world, because no matter what privileges we have or do not have, we all have to share the same earth and what happens to it affects us all.



## 4 The Matrix

# Rules of Nature

*Rachel Mason, History [Writing & Religion minors] '14*

Tents, huts, houses, mansions, skyscrapers  
We built them all,  
steadily getting more advanced,  
and patted ourselves on the back for ingenuity.

With wood harvested from the forest,  
hide taken from the animals,  
concrete from stone and chemicals,  
barriers were erected.

When storms come through we hide,  
finding comfort in warmth, out of the wind.  
Enemy warriors can be killed, sicknesses can be cured,  
but weather cannot be halted.

The rain pours down, washing away dirt and leaves,  
and with it, our cultivated superiority.  
Cell phones, computers, and gadgets adorn our lives,  
but even they fail when wind knocks down power.

Snow blankets a city with white crystals  
of beauty and destruction.  
Roadways are shut down, schools are closed,  
and the city is silenced.

A tsunami rises, approaching a beach,  
and falls, eliminating cars, streets, and buildings.  
The angry white power of the water  
evokes in us fear and awe.

An earthquake rattles a city or an entire country,  
demolishing buildings, concrete, and stone.  
Our defenses disappear.  
Nature, despite our best attempts, triumphs.

Because of its power and unyielding strength,  
our attempts to tame it fail.  
Forests, streams, and canyons deserve  
reverence and protection, not domination.

# The H2O Project

On Wednesday, April 11th, a group of students from various campus organizations including Campus Ministry, PLU Sustainability, G.R.E.A.N., the Wang Center, and Student Involvement and Leadership launched the H2O Project. From April 11th until Earth Day on April 22nd, we took the H2O challenge of making tap water our only beverage. By doing this, we did not buy products produced by large corporations such as Coca-Cola and PepsiCO, reduced our waste, and tried to be conscious of the global injustices surrounding access to clean water.

In addition, we donated the money that we would have spent on other beverages to Sister Helen Puwein and the Bellefonte Community College in Shillong, India. One hundred percent of the money raised went directly to helping with the construction of the college where members of the community, particularly youth and women, are able to continue their education, participate in a microfinance program, and learn about ecological conservation. Sister Helen recently visited PLU in February to speak at the Wang Center Symposium and at Chapel. Through the H2O Project, we wanted to continue PLU's partnership with Sister Helen and to support her life-changing work while also challenging ourselves to be conscious of our daily habits.

We invited individuals and organizations to partner with us in the H2O Project. We were excited to sponsor a project that would challenge our PLU community to engage with our values of living conscientiously and sustainably at an individual and local level and to make the connection that our actions can have a global impact. As students, we were inspired by Maude Barlow, who visited PLU for the Water Symposium, and took to heart her message that water is the great teacher that opens the door to the many other social justice issues.

Thank you to all who participated and supported this project! Even though the event has passed, we hope that your commitment to living conscientiously will continue!

*-H2O Project Team*

"Reducing our so-called need for beverages other than water seems to me an important way to stand in solidarity with others who don't have such luxuries. Water consciousness and conservation is an important way to avoid taking this resource for granted."  
-Jenny Taylor

"I think that this project has a lot of power to bring awareness to the privilege we have to access clean, safe, drinking water from our tap here in Washington. I will miss my tea, but by no means will I go thirsty."  
-Stena Troyer

"Water is such a major issue for this day and age. We need to act and spread the word the best we can. I want to challenge myself to not drink anything from a major corporation that is doing more harm than good."  
-Saiyare Refaei

"I am taking the challenge for all of the people who lack some of the most basic human resources. Hopefully my efforts will raise awareness about the cause for others."  
-Alex Kean



# Tunnel of Oppression



Photos by Lace Smith

# Tunnel of Oppression: The Nanjing Massacre Scene

*Mikela Moore, Psychology '13, Duong Hyunh, English '12,  
and Mycal Ford, Chinese Studies & Political Science '12*

Crouching through a doorway, as a sign blocks the general entrance, one is greeted with the sounds of gunshots. Upon entering a bedroom that has been torn apart, with all of its belongings violated, one finds garbage, clothing, and ripped books on the floor. Among the trash, a bed lay in the middle of the room. A large man leans over a woman's body. She looks as though she is sleeping until the man stands up and aggressively addresses the audience, "She is dead already; you can do whatever you want." As he exits, an excerpt of *The Rape of Nanking* plays in the background. It is a post-rape scene. Moments later, a different man rushes in, breaking through the crowd, and runs to the aid of his now deceased wife. He embraces her, not realizing what has happened until he notices her removed undergarments. Sobbing and embracing his wife helplessly, the husband mourns. As the reading comes to a halt, the gentleman stands wiping his tears and faces the crowd. He is accompanied by another woman, the spirit of China. Together, they echo in both Chinese and English, "This is what they did to China. This is what they did to us. Now, tell the world our story." Most young students raised in the U.S learn of the Holocaust, but much less is known about the Nanjing Massacre. The Massacre of Nanjing, a city in China, is one of the world's most horrific events that is neglected by history. Over 300,000 Chinese citizens were slaughtered and raped. Yet, even today the Japanese government, those responsible for deploying the Japanese military to invade the city of Nanjing, hesitates to acknowledge that the event happened. Similarly, even the United States does not include the event in many textbooks, resulting in less informed citizens. How then does this construct nationalism or collective identity when your own history is denied?

The Tunnel of Oppression strives to share the narratives of those voices dwelling in the margins.

*Set up Staff: Torhild Skillingstad, Mikela Moore, Andrew Larsen*

*Acting Staff: Duong Hyunh, Mikela Moore, Alex Peterson, Jane Hu, XiaoKe Liu, Lu Jie, Sophia Ro*

Tunnel forces its audience to reflect, unpack, and wrestle with uncomfortable issues. More importantly, Tunnel of Oppression encourages its audience to take action. Upon exiting the Tunnel, the audience is ushered into a room where they have the freedom to express and unpack any questions, concerns, feelings, and ideas that any of the scenes evoked. This unpacking session challenges its audience to think of ways to get involved, through the Women's Center, the Diversity Center, or the many other pockets on-campus/off-campus that do extraordinary social justice work.

Too often are the victims of violence forgotten, overshadowed by the falsehoods of politics and ignorance. However, our scene in the Tunnel of Oppression served as the very microphone through which the Nanjing war-crimes could sound profoundly. Our staff decided to depict the scene in an appropriate manner that addressed the event head on. Portraying the Rape of Nanjing in such a fashion remembers those who were lost to the tragedy and also acknowledges all of the variations of people who continue to be victims of sexual violence and war crimes today. Moreover, our scene encouraged students to question *who* controls history. And *how* does our conception of history shape our current reality? *How* do we know what we see or what we are told is even real? The scene was a small room where everyone was forced to stand shoulder-to-shoulder, while the victim lay helplessly, and the husband cried inches away from their shoes. Issues relating to rape, victimization, and history are not issues over there in some far distant plain; rather, it is here on the soil on which we stand. *How* does this nation weave its own history? *How* does that woven history construct your perception of your experience, my experience, and our experience? Hopefully, when we ask ourselves these questions, we can not only understand ourselves and those around us, but tear down the thick curtain that we are told is normal and real.

# Acknowledging My Minority Privilege

*Mamie Howard, Sociology '14*

Tunnel of Oppression is a very important event not only to me, but to the PLU community as a whole. When I first got involved in Tunnel last year as an actress and a viewer, I thought it would be cool to go from being an African-American woman to the person with privilege for a day, but I soon found out that Tunnel was much more than that. It was because of my experience last year that I was so eager to become involved again this year. During this year's Tunnel, I played a role in two different scenes. The first scene, the Black Student Union or BSU scene, depicted race presumptions based on whether or not names sounded "white" or "black." When participants entered the scene, they were asked to sit and wait to be called for an interview. Once the interviewer was ready, he or she would call a name, for example "Miranda," expecting the interviewee to be a Caucasian woman. When the interviewer saw that the woman was of African-American decent, the interviewer looked very surprised and told the woman she was so well-spoken and insisted that she must be from a good neighborhood. When the scene came to a close, the actor/actress proceeded to read statistics showing that it was less common for people with "black" sounding names such as Bonquisha or Tasha to receive callbacks for interviews than for people with "white" names such as "Brittany," "Rachel" or "Miranda."

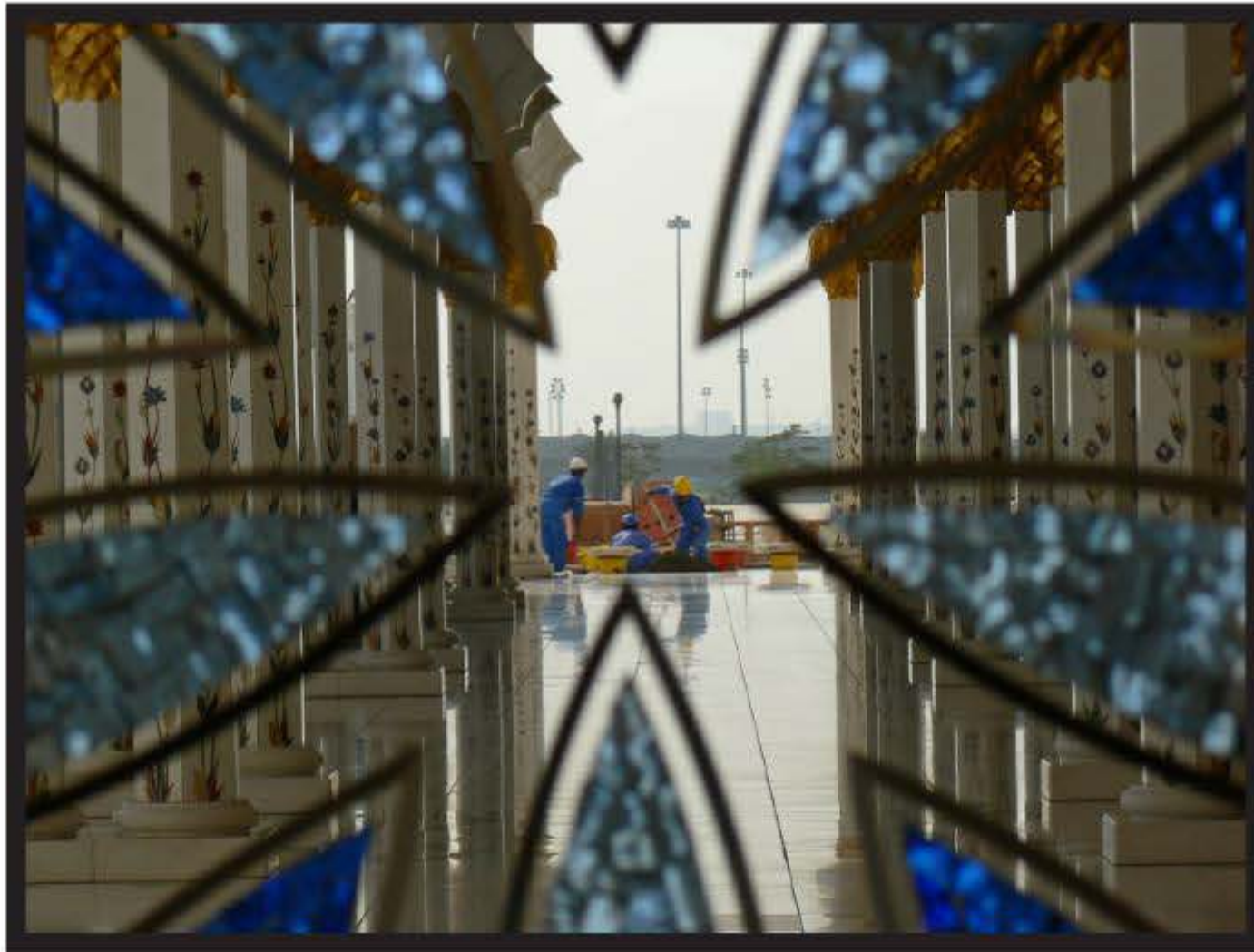
The other scene I worked with was the Rieke Scholar scene, which depicted the issue of funding between schools. This scene was placed at the beginning of Tunnel this year, and no better placement could have been chosen for a scene about education. When the scene began, Tunnel viewers were split into two different class-

rooms: a well-funded one and an underfunded one. On the well-funded side of the room, the participants each had individual work stations, while the underfunded class was forced to share materials such as books. When the scene began, everyone was asked to file in and read the material. In the underfunded classroom, a student (actress or actor) spoke out and said that they were tired of sharing materials and that they wished they had their own. When the scene came to a close, every student in the well-funded classroom graduated, while some students in the underfunded classroom were held back.

I did not know much about underfunded schools; however, Tunnel is supposed to be an educational opportunity from both ends, and that is just what I got. I believe my experience was like that of many others, because while teaching participants about what is currently going on in the education system, I also was able to learn what was going on. I was also taught in a sense that even as an African-American woman (in other words a minority), I too have some privilege. My privilege is both of achieved and ascribed status. I have privilege when it comes to comparing myself as an American to people in other countries that may lack things such as clean water, but I also have privilege as an educator and being able to step outside of myself for the greater good of others. By not knowing what was going on in the education system, I learned that everyone holds privilege in some aspects of their life. The most important part of Tunnel is being able to give that privilege up for a day in order to come together as one and become aware of the issues that surround us.

# In The Shadow of the Burj

*Kevin Knodell, History '11*



This photo was taken from inside the Sheik Zayed Mosque in Abu Dhabi Emirate. It is the largest mosque in the United Arab Emirates and one of the largest in the world. The ornate window décor frames a trio of workers toiling in the merciless Arabian sun.

The United Arab Emirates are known throughout the world as a symbol of luxury and opulence. The 7 Emirates, ruled by powerful Emirati families, make their living on international trade and commerce. They are constantly building newer and more extravagant buildings and importing newer and more expensive cars. In 2009, Dubai Emirate became the home of the world's tallest building: the Burj Khalifa. The Burj was meant to be a symbol of all that the Emirates have achieved. However, though built with Emirati money, the tower was built with the hands and sweat of thousands of imported laborers.

The majority of Dubai is made up not of the wealthy Emirati, but of expats brought in to do their bidding. Most come from South Asia, with other large chunks from Africa, and the Arab Gulf's less wealthy Arab neighbors. They sweat to fulfill the dreams of the UAE's architects, working on construction sites and roads, constantly loading and unloading freight in Dubai's bustling ports, and even working as police and soldiers enforcing law and fighting wars. According to the CIA World Fact Book, as of 2011 it was estimated that 73.9% of the population consists of non-nationals.

The following photos were taken in Dubai, Abu Dhabi, and Sharjah Emirates. They document not the lives of luxury that the Emiratis, or the European and American expats enjoy, but rather the work of the laborers that make that life possible. This is life on the other side of the Emirates, in the shadow of the Burj.

# A Photo Essay



# Caring for our Community: A Call to Consider Contingent Faculty

*Jessica A. Lewis, Psychology & Hispanic Studies '13*

If you have ever been a formal student, regardless of whether your most recent class was last week or last century, I imagine your first day may have gone a little something like this...

You found your classroom, grabbed a seat, watched for familiar faces as other students made their way in the door, and then waited for everything to get started. The teacher probably introduced themselves, explained the course and went over the syllabus. If you're anything like me, your brain was likely bubbling with questions: "Will this class be interesting?" "Am I going to like this professor?" "Did they just say daily homework?"

All of this is fairly standard procedure for the first day of class. However, what you probably didn't do is take one look at your professor and wonder, "Does this person have a permanent teaching position at this school? Are they going to be here next year, or even next semester? Is it really worth my time to get to know them?" I would assume that most students don't think about the employment contracts of their teachers when they decide to sign up for a class. As they form connections and start to build relationships with professors, they are much more focused on discovering what they can learn from that interaction than how much longer their teacher will be working at PLU. Yet many of the educators on our campus do not have a long-term contract with the University, and students have no guarantee that the professors they get to know this year will be around the next. As we discuss the themes of "Privilege and Responsibility," I ask my fellow Lutes to pause and consider who our contingent faculty members are, the impact they have on students, and the responsibility we share to ensure the ethical treatment of these important members of our community.

To begin with, what exactly do I mean by "contingent faculty members?" Generally speaking, these individuals are defined as any full- or part-time professors who do not hold tenure-track

positions at a college or university. For a variety of reasons, they do not enjoy the security of permanent employment and their contracts are typically organized on a year-to-year or semester-to-semester basis. Here at PLU, this includes people such as full-time sabbatical replacements or visiting professors, part-time instructors or lecturers, and clinical or professional mentors, among others. A recent survey conducted by the PLU chapter of the American Association of University Professors reveals that at Pacific Lutheran University, contingent professors can be found in every division and professional school of the University and they constitute nearly half of our total faculty (Christensen & Harty, 2012). These teachers are very much a part of our campus life, and the wonderful contributions they make to students' education are vital to the success of our university.

Not only do contingent faculty exist in large numbers on our campus, they also have deep connections with PLU's programs and students. One of the participants in the survey reported having served Pacific Lutheran University for 40 years, and the amount of time contingent instructors have taught here can truly range from a few months to a few decades (7). Regardless of whether their presence on campus is long-standing or relatively short, these professors can form lasting bonds with their students through their actions both inside and outside the classroom. If you gave a quick poll to the group of seniors graduating this May, I think you would be hard-pressed to find anyone who made it through their years at PLU without taking a course taught by a contingent faculty member. You might also have trouble finding a student who didn't have some story about how their life has been positively impacted by their experiences with a non-tenure-track professor. These educators have an extremely broad influence on students and their teaching often extends beyond the walls of their labs, classrooms, and stu-

dios. In addition to their basic courses, a full 77% of the respondents to the Contingent Faculty Survey were expected to hold office hours outside of class where students could meet with them to ask questions, and a number of these instructors also provide students with guidance and support by acting as “lab coordinators, concert series directors, and capstone or academic advisors” (12, 7). It is clear that they are dedicated, experienced, and willing to assist students’ academic development in multiple ways. Their status as non-tenure-track professors may imply a short-term influence, but any student who has been impacted by a contingent professor knows that there is nothing temporary about the lessons learned as a result of being in their classrooms.

As members of the PLU community, we are incredibly privileged to have so many dedicated and influential contingent professors on our faculty and we share a responsibility to ensure that they are treated with the utmost equality and respect. Part of our mission at PLU is to educate students to “care for their communities” and one way we can do this would be to address some of the monetary struggles that contingent faculty face. Sadly, an overwhelming 74% of the survey respondents did not consider their salary to be a living wage and only 51% reported receiving health insurance or retirement benefits (10-11). While resolving financial issues can be difficult, it is part of the challenge we face as a community and something we must address if all professors employed by the University are to be treated equally. In order for educators to teach at their best, they require the necessary resources to sustain themselves and their families. It is in the best interest of all those involved in PLU’s academic endeavors to advocate for living wages for every University employee. At a basic level, promoting the mission of PLU requires upholding just, caring practices here on our campus, and the unique situations faced by contingent faculty members are an excellent opportunity to do just that.

Ultimately, this is an issue that affects all of us. Whether you are a current student, an alumnus, a staff or faculty member, or you have some other connection with PLU, you are a part of the Lute community and you share a portion of the responsibility for guiding this University toward a future that best embodies its mission and vision. As we

welcome a new president to PLU and prepare for changes heading into the future, I challenge you to consider how we can most effectively come together to support those individuals who are so fundamental to accomplishing the goals of this school: our teachers. Contingent faculty in particular contribute substantially to the life of the University and the development of its students while dealing with the instability of short-term teaching contracts and unpredictable employment. For many students, these professors are much more than just temporary educators on our campus; they are teachers, mentors, and friends who have a lasting impact on our education, and our time at PLU simply wouldn’t be the same without them. In the interest of supporting our contingent faculty and creating a more caring, stable, and sustainable learning environment for current and future Lutes, I encourage all of you to step up and use the privilege of your voice to call attention to the issues contingent faculty face. If a professor on a temporary contract has had an especially positive impact on your life, make sure the faculty and administrators of PLU hear about it! Let the appropriate department head and dean know who has changed your life and how. Draft a letter, make a video, write an article, record a podcast, give a speech, create a piece of music, art, dance, or theater; communicate in whichever medium best suits you but do not remain silent on this issue. At the very least, we all have the power to start a conversation. Whether it’s at the lunch table, a residence hall wing dinner, a department or office meeting, or a gathering of the entire Faculty Assembly, I encourage you all to support your fellow Lutes by talking with your friends and colleagues about how we can all help improve the status of our more vulnerable non-tenure-track professors. After all, no group of people can work to develop solutions to problems they’re not thinking or talking about, and if you don’t take responsibility for your community, who will?

To learn more about contingent faculty at PLU and/or obtain a copy of the report cited in this article, email the author at: [lewisja@plu.edu](mailto:lewisja@plu.edu). Thank you!

#### References

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# The American Holocaust

*Laurie A. Reddy, Sociology & Communication '14*

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Before the spring of 2011, I would not have been able to give you a clear account of civil rights history in our country. I would only have been able to list three names for you whom I felt had a significant effect: Dr. Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, and Rosa Parks. I had knowledge of these names only because I wrote reports on them in high school. I also vaguely remember having assemblies dedicated to Martin Luther King Jr. at school. I would have agreed with you if you told me that segregation and racism ended in 1964 with the Civil Rights Act. As a young white woman, I was unaware of the bold leadership it took to propel our country towards a socially just society. Now, if you and I sat down today and had a conversation about the civil rights movement in the United States, it would be a completely different conversation. I would be able to tell you about the Little Rock Nine from Arkansas; I could recount for you the death of the four little girls at the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church in 1963. I could give you a pretty good synopsis of the KKK and the role they played in the murder of Emmett Till and many other civil rights activists. Instead of taking the backseat and enjoying my privileged lifestyle, I could take the driver's seat and show you the active fight I have taken up against racism.

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Imagine yourself in the United States in the middle of one long street. This street has a double yellow line down the middle and is paved like any other street. What makes this street unique from the millions around the world is that this street specifically divides the blacks and whites in our country. This street is representative of the discrimination, stereotypes, income discrepancies, and jury bias that occur every day in our society. The largest patch of that street is constructed of the racial bias that both parties choose to ignore, and some perpetuate. In these two large groups of people there are a few that are unique. They are unique because instead of staying on either side of the street, they voluntarily cross over to the other side. In doing so they open up the tough discussions on racial bias,

discrimination, and privilege with people of the other race. These unique people, like the civil rights leaders of the past, are sacrificing themselves for equality. They are putting aside their biases, cultural views, and opinions and choosing to be completely open to new ones. More than that, they are completely open to being offended and disagreed with, and they are patient enough to hear the other side's argument before countering. I am one of those unique people.

Unfortunately, this is a lonely place to be, as there are only a few of us willing to cross the street. The majority of my white counterparts have never understood my passion for civil rights and diversity. Instead, I was labeled with urban terms such as "Wankster" and "wannabe black person." These terms insinuated that I was leaving my white race behind and attempting to become a part of the black race. Since I have encountered few individuals who will cross the street, I have realized that this is a place of oppression as I am not always accepted into the black community or the white community. I often find myself alone when it comes to addressing microaggressions like racial jokes and the N-word. Unfortunately, when approached with these topics there are very few people who will actually sit and listen to my thoughtful opinions.

Until coming to college I often felt completely alone and oppressed in my fight for racial justice, with no one to turn to for advice. Upon receiving the Act Six full-tuition scholarship to Pacific Lutheran University, I started to feel a little more accepted. The Act Six initiative recruits urban and community leaders who want to use their college education to make a difference on campus and in their communities at home. Act Six scholars are taken from communities that are usually low-income and have high crime and/or low graduation rates. We are selected because, against all odds, we made the choice to stick with our education and further our dreams of success. Drugs, gangs, violence, and teen pregnancy were all around me in high school. The majority of the friends I started



high school with dropped out junior or senior year. I have at least three friends in jail right now, and two weeks ago one of my close friends, as well as another young man I attended school with, was shot. I am thankful to say that after two surgeries and a week in the ICU my friend survived; unfortunately, the other man did not. The other students I know from school that did succeed and were able to “get out” have no plans of going back. That is what makes Act Six scholars so unique: we have the desire to go back to our communities and work for positive change.

After receiving the scholarship, I went through nine months of training with six other students that would be in my cadre at PLU. We were trained on how to start those difficult conversations with people of any race. We were given skills and materials that would last us a lifetime, not just our time at PLU. In two-hour sessions once a week, we dissected readings on cultural norms, traditions, and differences. These sessions gave us the opportunity to interact with other individuals from different cultural backgrounds and gain perspectives besides our own. For some, it meant trying on a different lens with which to see the world. In our sessions I met other people that were just as passionate about other races and how they may live harmoniously. My new peers were activists for social change like myself; they actually wanted to spend time and energy on the problems in their community. Act Six was the first time that I felt completely accepted for who I was. My motives were no longer being questioned, and it was no longer assumed that I was trying to be black; I was a unique white person.

During spring break of my first year at PLU, I spent ten days on a civil rights history trip in Alabama and Atlanta. One of our first stops was the Southern Poverty Law Center in Montgomery, Alabama. I distinctly remember the fountain out front of the center: it was a bowl shaped object made of granite or stone, and a slow stream of water came out of the middle and flowed over the sides. On the top of the structure (where the open-

ing of the bowl would be) were about 100 engravings that went around the top of it like a timeline. Each engraving was in remembrance of a person that died during the civil rights movement. At the end of the timeline there was a large gap. The tour guide explained that the gap was there to show that the civil rights movement was infinite; the sculptor had recognized that more people were going to die before equality was achieved. It was here that I realized the enormous capacity of the civil rights movement, and the minute part I play in it.

Later on in our trip, I got the opportunity to meet Dr. King’s barber; he cut my classmates’ hair as we sat and talked. He not only told us about the exceptional deeds of this historical leader but also his humor and humanity. In our conversation with him I was made aware of how much of a difference I could make in my country. Dr. King was a regular

“The tour guide explained that the gap was there to show that the civil rights movement was infinite; the sculptor had recognized that more people were going to die before equality was achieved.”

person just like myself, but he chose to be bigger than the oppression around him. Dr. King chose to make a difference and to publicize his beliefs and the change he wanted to see in the world. In Montgomery, we visited the Rosa Parks

Museum. While on the tour, the guide told us that the cement we stood on, next to a fountain, was once used as a platform to exchange human beings as currency. In other words, the lives of black men and women were bought and sold by white men. Yet, when I read the sign in front of the fountain it said nothing of the sort, and I was infuriated. Instead, I remember the sign describing the fountain as a prominent structure in Alabama’s first business district. My anger and negative emotions stemmed from my belief that our country wishes to hide the ugly parts of its past and to only tell the success stories.

During this trip, I encountered many civil rights heroes and events that my high school textbooks never touched on. I visited sites where men, women and children lost their lives in the fight to be considered equal citizens in my country.

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# I Am Minority, Hear Me Smile: PLU's Lack of Meaningful Engagement on Diversity

*Kristiana Henderson, Chinese Studies, Norwegian Studies, & Global Studies '12*

**A**s a Chinese Studies major specializing in Tibet-related issues, I have spent a considerable amount of time looking at the portrayal of “ethnic minorities” (or, more accurately, indigenous communities) in modern Chinese and Western history, and especially of Tibetans. To Western eyes (and, I would guess, to more than a few Chinese viewers as well), the billboards, television ads, movies, Chinese viewer-oriented music videos, and other popular and social media websites are incredibly cheesy, no matter what kind of budget was poured into them. The Tibetans portrayed are almost always female, and by this, I mean a kind of startlingly submissive femininity: tame, patient, willing and able to please, and yet “simple” and “innocent.” They send a sleeker marketing image as they bend to the Orientalist will of those holding the reins on what is being marketed and commoditized, whether it is an actual product or a political agenda to sell. They smile brightly and unequivocally as they dance on yak-filled open grasslands that are being taken from them as they are forced into rows of concrete resettlement blocks as part of a government-mandated “comfortable housing” project. They dance boldly along sparkly rivers that are being dammed and re-diverted in ways that choke the river of the flow of its nutrients in some areas, causing over-flooding in others and desertification elsewhere, and where the benefits, including water, hydro-electricity, and even profits, all end up elsewhere. These “token Tibetans” may even say a few gratuitous words of welcome and patriotic sloganry in their language as policies continue to strip them of their rights to

education in their primary language. And all the while, they trumpet the so-called success of their community by touting products whose profits are connected to some headquarters in Beijing, Shanghai, or Hong Kong.

So...why am I bringing this up?

Because, despite how bizarre this anecdote may seem, this is not a unique phenomenon. We do this in America as well, and more than we'd be comfortable admitting. Even more, we do this at PLU. It's just we've been desensitized, or perhaps more accurately, we know something is wrong, but we are still uncomfortable even grasping exactly what. It took me going halfway around the world to confront these disconcerting stock-types of Tibetan and Uygur women who seem to want nothing more out of life than dancing, selling milk powder products or tourist packages, and saluting Tian'anmen Square to realize this. Even this past semester when I was in my Global Studies capstone class, we discussed why diversity is promoted at PLU. I snarkily offered that it was so we could have the same few minority students rolling on the front page every day. We all laughed heartily, and some classmates mentioned that comment to me even days later. I bring this up because this anecdote hits at a profound truth that we all, even subconsciously, recognize cynically: behind all of PLU's veneer and slogans on diversity, we are using our minority students and their accomplishments for institutional gain, and ironically, many of these accomplishments were done in spite of or even in defiance of a sense of unwelcome from the university because of this institutional posturing.

I have heard on many occasions from truly well-accomplished and well-rounded minority individuals who constantly are exalted as the

“face” of the university (when the statistics still say otherwise), how irritated and even lonely they feel as a result of becoming promotional materials. I have heard these same students voice that the university, through the way in which it promotes “diversity” through surface-level images of beaming “diverse students,” has ironically made many a student have fewer causes to rejoice as he or she has become stuck in an institutional propaganda campaign. Even more ironically, these same students, including seniors, mentioned that they even contemplated quitting the university altogether because of how aggravating it was to feel singled out for the racial/ethnic parts of their identities. Understandably, these students are and want to continue to be proud of their heritage and identity, but for this to remain authentic means relinquishing control on “messaging” diversity from institutional leadership catchphrases to the hands of students and discussions on diversity and privilege that our school as a whole is still waiting to have. Why should it be that anyone’s accomplishments and stories are promoted specifically for a type of political correctness that results in more awards for the school, more competitive enrollments, and greater and a higher number of donations? Why should it be that their personal trials, tribulations, and successes still inevitably lead them to become the “token minority” pawns on PLU’s path to greater glory? Even more, can’t we see that the way we message diversity at PLU has inevitably led to a type of passive cynicism that would lead a group of Global Studies upperclassmen to laugh at a passing comment about our own webpage?

Let’s of course clarify that PLU and its administration is not quite the same as that of the Chinese Communist Party. If I ever claimed that PLU leadership, and especially that tied to messaging, equaled the top leadership of the CCP, I should have my diploma revoked. However, I think we should take a step back and analyze the similarities in how PLU handles its “diversity,” and that this should make us feel nervous and uncomfortable. Furthermore,

I think we can also agree that we can collectively change this uncomfortable truth simply by bringing about greater awareness that we are, in fact, doing this kind of “token minority” self-promotion. Even if you, dear reader, want to object and say “that isn’t so!,” I welcome you to take another look, or better yet, keep in mind that there are PLU students who claim this has been a negative part of their college experiences, and by simply passing off my comparisons, you are using your position of privilege to deny a classmate’s voice. Just as much, I should also address the concern that those in charge of promoting this school swing the other way by no longer publically recognizing these students who self-identify as being different from PLU’s (let’s face it) white majority, for fear of continuing to perpetuate this weird new form of discrimination.

I have a few suggestions that could start remedying this problem. The first is one that PLU counselor and psychologist Joanne Ito, a still largely unsung hero in the fight for true equality and social justice at this institution, proposed: that PLU, and those who directly control it administratively and in messaging, take the results of the Diverse Learning Environments Survey with a willingness to look itself straight in the mirror and be honest with itself. This survey is not just about a word, but about a concept in action, and likewise, must be employed on a level that goes beyond surface-level symbolism. It’s as they say, “the first step is admitting you have a problem.” It is one thing to take a survey, but my concern is that if we are not careful, we’ll just find some positive part of it for future messaging rather than be willing to pinpoint the painful realities where we still need work. Saying “we are a fair and diverse institution” that is “beyond” the problems that this survey addresses is, in itself, a form of ignorance that causes suffering by denying a need for greater introspection. I ask those in charge of PLU in all areas to press for taking this questionnaire into our academic planning, and for students and faculty to hold the leadership

accountable in that process. The shame we potentially risk facing by being honest in this survey will be the source of our future growth.

On to the next piece of advice. After really listening to what we, as an entire institution, think about the state of diversity on this campus, we must make the results of the survey part of planning for PLU 2020, and keep engaging in how to reconcile this survey with where we think we should be headed next. I know there has already been a great amount of discussion regarding PLU's diversity for the next ten-year plan (I have to commend PLU on its bold commitment to long range planning; even China only thinks in terms of five-year plans!), but again, action must come shortly after the platitudes. As far as the other parts of PLU's messaging go, like sustainability, global education, being a Division III school, and Lutheran heritage (why, yes, I did work for the Office of Admission!), we have come a long way in making these more than empty slogans, but rather truly applicable realities. Now

found myself, including on my international study away ventures, I have been quite proud to say I was a Lute and have wanted others to see why that is. So how does this sound: what if those in charge decided to work with various groups of students and ask them – really ask them – about their own opinions about the school? What if messaging PLU's diversity included more serious, if uncomfortable, questions about what diversity actually means? What if we extended these conversations to more than the Diversity Center, the Sociology department, Red Carpet Club tours, and closed-door meetings? Before PLU continues pushing diversity as a main focal point, the leadership at this school should further take the voices of minority students into account, far more than they have been doing. After all, those who already feel marginalized by the way things are going with our current system that values convenient, tame platitudes over active dialogue and engagement understand it for the façade that it is. How about we, and particularly those in administrative power

So how does this sound: what if those in charge decided to work with various groups of students and ask them – really ask them – about their own opinions about the school? What if messaging PLU's diversity included more serious, if uncomfortable, questions about what diversity actually means?

we just need to get the part about diversity to grow up. After all, no matter how much this really should just instantly change, ideally before even the next school year, this kind of shift in consciousness and awareness takes time.

**H**ere's another "radical" thought: let's just rethink how all PLU students, and especially those who have most been targeted to promote the university by virtue of their supposed "otherness," want to message themselves. I think this needs a little good ol' democracy. I fully understand and support PLU wanting to look good – it helps all of us in the end, just so as long as it is not taking shortcuts on the marathon to social justice, equity, and true democracy in which people speak for themselves and about themselves on their own terms. I still believe PLU is a great school with a wonderful student body and supportive, engaging faculty, and wherever else I have

at PLU, actually sit down and welcome self-identifying minority students to share they would talk about PLU, and how their identities can and cannot factor into these promotions?

What I am talking about here is a hot and nasty matter of inverting a power structure in messaging PLU in which the leadership still takes the initiative and responsibility. After all, minority students should not be expected to be the only ones working on these issues; as students, they have enough things to deal with, and in terms of social justice and equity, it is unacceptable to force them to do all the work. It is important that the leadership – and here I also include students who come from traditional positions of power and privilege, especially in regards to race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic background, and ability – assume roles of being supportive yet non-patronizing in a way that respectfully reaches out to minority students. I hope we can become

an institution that can have fewer awkward conversations about what words such as “diversity” truly mean, and with it, fewer awkward cover-ups for our awkwardness. I hope that the privileged community at PLU can convincingly acknowledge and value the experiences that these students have shared, and bring it out of the periphery of what it means to be a Lute.

This may mean that not all of the new publicity about how PLU handles difficult issues of privilege and power in terms of diversity will be as “happy” as those Tibetan women on the other side of the pond appear the moment a tour bus arrives, but a little honesty in messaging can actually do a world of good. Think of what a university would look like if prospective students entered the university aware of this important dialogue that went beyond “politically correct” catch-phrases. Think of how much PLU as a whole could improve if its diverse student body felt just as welcomed as the rest of the PLU population, and if however they identified themselves was something celebrated and valuable to an academic learning environment rather than canned into stuffy, worn-out sound bytes. Think of how much stronger our community could eventually be if PLU, and especially its leadership and faculty, are willing to admit that “not all is fine and well” when it comes to topics of power, privilege, and diversity, even on our progressive campus. Besides, it is always a good thing when students stop feeling like they need to drop out because they don’t feel welcome for who they are without institutional airbrushing. I still believe that the U.S., and with it, its institutions of higher education, can lead the way in showing how to move past this strange form of quasi political correctness and into a forum of dialogue where eventually everyone can feel comfortable and welcome to learn from and with each other.

Therefore, let’s recap: are we truly willing to be that open university that makes all students welcome, or are we complacently sitting, patting ourselves on the back while remaining unwilling to face the fact that by just the virtue of us

prematurely walking away from this problem, we are still contributing to it? Is this not a form of privilege, power, and social injustice in itself? Is this not yet a way in which we flex our muscle of unearned power created through these subtle forms of oppression? I’m just upset that right when I attained a little more enlightenment on what could make this great institution that much better, I’ll be graduating myself. But even if I weren’t about to leave PLU as a student, I would still only be one voice if we didn’t collectively go after trying to solve this diversity gap at our school. Even more, I am far from fully understanding “what is wrong with this picture,” and I recognize that my solutions are still rudimentary at best. Regardless, I greatly hope this article can add yet another voice to a dialogue that can eventually lead to more concrete and lasting solutions. I know you’ve heard this all before, but I’ll say it again anyway in light of considering diversity at PLU: do not be afraid to speak up, to ask questions, to question yourself, and to take into account that other viewpoint. And then, after opening up the discussion in class and with friends and faculty, start thinking of more solutions on how to change this. At PLU, we do a lot of talking about uncomfortable issues, and frankly, this society is still supposed to be one that is democratic, which is more than what I can say in relation to my introductory anecdote. So why not take advantage of the fact that we can learn, grow, and change things by openly confronting the systems of privilege and power that exist right in front of our eyes? A little concerned awareness can go a long way, and last I checked, that is why we chose to go to a school like PLU. So please, as you either embark to graduate or start preparing for summer and the upcoming school year, keep these issues in mind, especially if you find yourself in some capacity helping to message PLU and PLU diversity. Let them simmer, and hopefully even boil. Maybe then we’ll be able to come one more step further towards a true diversity that we can all be proud of.

## Straws Only Suck Because You Do

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*Continued from page 3*

While I was filled with hope to observe all of the incredible creatures seemingly alive and well amidst the garbage, it was disheartening at the same time, and I know we can do better.

A majority of the junk we gathered is entirely unnecessary in our society and straws bring up a perfect demonstration. Consider how many beverages, let's say coffees, you purchase per week. Now multiply that by approximately the 52 weeks that are in a year. For many of you, that is a lot of cups! But it is not only a cup. It could also include the plastic lid, the cardboard cozy, and perhaps a straw or two. Maybe the armful of straws Dave and I collected equate to your yearly intake? What if EVERYONE consumed that much unnecessary rubbish per year? Think about all the plastic bottles, plastic bags, plastic silverware and other unnecessary plastic or non-plastic items you use. The waste you and I produce clearly adds up far beyond lattes. Too often we are too oblivious to the amount of avoidable waste generated through our daily consumption. It is environmentally detrimental to remain unconscious of the effort necessary to extract oil, transport it to a refinery, manufacture it into plastic products, ship it to where it can be sold and purchased, and then disposed of, yet somehow this process seems to take less effort than to, for example, simply wash a reusable water bottle. Everything comes from somewhere and everything goes away to somewhere. Our society has made it convenient to be wasteful, and as a coffee-drinking, snack-munching, on-the-go student, I understand how difficult it is to change habits. However, I would encourage you to remember the entire system you are playing into when you purchase something. Our actions have a global impact and making small changes to our daily routine are worthwhile first steps. Try making it a responsibility to have a reusable version of that thing you are about to turn into trash in the next couple of minutes, because while you might not see where your trash is going, eco-diver Dave and his glorious beard will; but more importantly, some poor sea turtle will.

## The American Holocaust

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I stood where four little girls were killed at the hands of an anonymous bomber as they got ready for Sunday school. I stood at the pulpit where Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. gave his famous speeches about nonviolence in a country that was beating and lynching the very people he was instructing to be peaceful. I walked across a bridge where calm, peaceful men and women were attacked by police with pepper spray, dogs, and batons simply for expressing their opinions. Yet in all of these places, there was no explanation of the events and worse yet, no apologies. It made me feel as if my white race has been glorified and made to seem superior to the minority races in the country. I believe that if the true stories in our history were told, the playing field among races may begin to be leveled.

I have reached the understanding that oppression is generational and the only means of stopping the cycle is to educate others on how to become part of the fight; in doing so, horrific events such as slavery and genocide could be brought to an end. This process can be started by offering some sort of compensation to the victims of slavery in our country. Instead of money, I suggest our country acknowledge the horrible experiences these people went through by giving complete accounts of American history in our textbooks. Also, just as we have a Holocaust museum in our nation's capital, shouldn't we also have a Slavery museum? Is slavery not the American Holocaust, and do its victims not deserve the same amount of recognition and apology? In the words of the late Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., "I refuse to accept the view that mankind is so tragically bound to the starless midnight of racism and war that the bright daybreak of peace and brotherhood can never become a reality... I believe that unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final word."



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