



THE MATRIX *PRESENTS*

THE ABC'S OF PLU

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THE MATRIX

matrix.plu.edu

The Matrix is a highly collaborative, intensely experimental, and thoughtfully provocative conversation starter. It is not an echo chamber. It is not a newspaper. It is not simple and it does not simplify. It is social justice in process, in progress, in conversation. It is not the final word.

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We ask that you help us ensure the sustainability of projects like this by only taking as many copies of this book as you need. Additionally, if you like what you read, please support organizations like The Matrix, Mast Media, Saxifrage, and LASR — by picking up issues, visiting our websites, and getting involved. We need your help to continue the work of these publications for years to come.

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THE
ABC'S
OF
PLU

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FROM THE EDITORS

In the pages that follow, our contributors define, explore, and challenge some of the social justice vocabulary that so often circulates on campus without question. We're hoping this collection encourages you to better understand social justice concepts that might be new to you, and to question those that are familiar.

While pieces here were not written for the explicit purpose of being in conversation with one another, you will find that many circle or mention similar themes. As well as challenging the concepts they respond to, many of these pieces challenge each other. The picture they create is messy, incomplete, and at times contradictory.

We chose to work with an alphabet book because we wanted a way to think carefully about the language of PLU — and putting it in an alphabet book draws attention to the way that language shapes our community and discourse. Even though there are only 26 words covered in this book, the project asks us to think about all the words we use without thinking, especially when advocating for social and political change.

An alphabet book is also, in its very form, didactic: an educational thing to give to someone new. This is an intro to the very basis of social justice at PLU — but rather than this being an invitation to something pre-set (“this is what social justice means here”), it’s an invitation to not knowing, and (despite not knowing) still wanting to jump in, change things, and do what we can to improve.

We hope to give voice to some of the fundamental questions, topics, and current issues of PLU, and to be local in this process — but we work to not establish anything so concretely that we can't question it.

This is social justice in process, in progress, in conversation.
It is not the final word.

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A IS FOR

HELEN SMITH

Picture this: it's a beautiful day, it isn't raining, you and your white friend are having a wonderful conversation, when all of a sudden... they casually say the n-word.

Your pulse is racing. As the seconds tick past, you have less and less time to consider your options. But if you consider yourself an ally (and you do) a decision has to be made, a judgment has to be called: how do you, an ally, deal with this situation?

Option 1: Say nothing, confrontation is frightening. It's true, confrontation is the worst. But is it even right to let them go about their life when you know it's inappropriate for them to say it? When you could say something right here, right now? What is allyship even worth if you let moments like this slide? What if your allyship could only consist of saying all the right things and none of the wrong ones, maybe retweeting some social justice tweets here and there, and passing judgment on others' actions in your head? Although the non-confrontational part of you would like to choose this option, it's clear that the right thing to do is to make your position clear on the matter, to verbalize your discomfort with their choice of words, and discourage them from saying the n-word ever again.

Option 2: Say “Yikes” softly, but with feeling. A long time has passed since they actually said the n-word because you've been going through this exhaustive internal monologue in your head — they've moved on to talk about what they did over break, however (slightly alarmed at the frozen look on your face), they can tell something is wrong but you continue not to react to anything else they say, things are rapidly becoming awkward. So you just say “yikes.” Yikes is an expressive word. It clearly communicates something is wrong. So what if it leaves room for your friend to be confused about whether or not it was something they've said? They're an adult who can use context clues to figure out





what you mean. However, the margin of error here is broad, and the message communicated is incredibly vague. Yes, something *is* wrong here, but what exactly that is seems impossible to tell because of how much of the moment has passed. If you really want to make an impact, now is the time to be clear.

Option 3: Say “Friend, I think your use of the n-word is inappropriate because of its historical context. As a white person, I don’t think you should say it anymore.” Clear, concise, and to the point. It’s hard to confront people, especially our friends, but that’s often what being a good ally consists of: minimizing all the harm and ignorance that you’re able to. If someone close to you is doing something you know is wrong, let them know. That knowledge doesn’t do any good if you never use it. It’s impossible for your friend to make better choices if you choose to say nothing at all. Your friend has continued on the conversation — hoping you would snap out of whatever strange trance you have fallen into — but you interrupt their story while you have the courage to get the words out.

After you’ve said your piece, your friend looks bashful for a moment. “Oh,” they say. “Well, okay.” They continue with their story. Their easy acceptance surprises you, and makes you feel good about your decision.

Until they wonder out loud where the girl from their science class is *really* from. But you can handle this, you have options...






B IS FOR

HANNAH SOLTIS


Privilege.
Oppression
Safe Space.



You've probably heard these words and others like them being used around campus, in class or in conversation. Perhaps you've even used some of them yourself in your everyday life, or maybe you've pushed away from them with rolled eyes and exasperation. It seems like the only way to participate in campus culture is to engage with these words and take a hard stance on them: either wholehearted acceptance or complete rejection, crucial ideas or liberal nonsense. But what happens significantly less often is having the opportunity to see the actual definitions, connotations, contexts, nuances, and histories of these words. Without these foundations on which to ground the words, they become empty and useless.



Social Justice.
Intersectionality.
Bigotry.



When I first arrived at PLU, I was sure I knew what words like "toxic masculinity" and "problematic" meant, and spoke as if I did. I discussed intersectional feminism without even knowing the name Kimberlé Crenshaw, much less having read her work. I wrote papers using definitions of oppression and social justice based on posts I had read on Tumblr. I was so excited to speak the language that I never got around to making sure what I said was nuanced. Or helpful. Or true. But as I continued listening and learning, I came to realize that my words carried an impact founded on the hard work of scholars and activists who created this language for the purpose of changing the world. And there I was trying to use it to sound smart in a conversation. I discovered, as I began to take the time to look into some



BUZZWORD



of the words I was using, that I had been using many of them wrong. I had twisted, picked and chosen, glossed over. And I had a choice: to keep going with this shallow use of language, or to question whether what I said accounted for the complexities of the world.

Identity Politics.

Liberalism.

Inclusivity.

Now, in this time of hatred and confusion, our words mean even more. Language is divisive, and can just as easily tear down as build up. We have the opportunity at PLU to educate ourselves about how we use our words and what it means for our world, but that's not so simple when it seems like everyone else knows exactly what they're talking about. Superficially engaging with the ideas permeating the culture, both on campus and in the national narrative, is, above all, easy. But throwing words around without taking the time to give them their proper meaning leaves discourse having as much impact as a buzzing bee making noise without the sting.

Togetherness starts with

You.





C IS FOR CLASS

BREANNA WIERSMA

Some of the most important lessons I've learned at PLU had nothing to do with academics. I've learned a lot about how to pass for having enough money.

I thrifted a Columbia rain jacket and splurged on some discount Birkenstocks (that I still wear, despite having worn a hole in one of them through to the cork). A younger version of myself would even say that my little college rental was the house of someone rich, with its paved driveway, garage, dishwasher, and two bathrooms — luxuries that were far from my reach when I was growing up.

What's been hardest to learn is how to stomach the way that people talk about low-income people here: people who live in Parkland (who it seems like everyone's afraid of), their children (who are seen as nuisances or warranting pity), or those who work to keep PLU clean (who, honestly, I almost never hear anyone talking about at all).

Under slightly different circumstances, would they think that I'm the one who is dangerous, annoying and pitiful, or not worth acknowledging?

I've also learned that I'm still sometimes too scared of being judged — and of failing to pass — to say anything when someone complains about Parkland Youth, or passes a homeless person without as much as making eye contact.

In these situations, I wonder how people don't know better — but I know that these are lessons that I carry with me from home, the things PLU hasn't taught.

Those untaught lessons I carry from home:

How to cobble things together, prioritize, and adapt.

How to look after one another in community, taking the time to know about the lives of the people who serve you in grocery stores.

How to find the constellations in just a few stars, with imagination as a driving force in finding hope.



D IS FOR



YVONNE MARKUB

From the small island of Palau
with big ambitions and curiosity
for a new world,
I walked anxiously through the
heavy,
metal doors.

Diversity,
A word that had never passed
through my ears.
I remember on the first day of high
school—
my first American school—
I encountered a huge, bold sign on
the front of the building,
“Celebrating Diversity Everyday”

Diversity,
A word that I began to hear
with great pride and zest
from the school principal, the
teachers,
from everyone.

Diversity,
hallways filled with different faces,
different looks, spoken in different
tongues.
This was different for me.
Back home everyone looked like
me,
but not here.
I could not articulate this.

Diversity,
everyone talked about it.
Months passed and I am adjusting.
Then came the annual
multicultural assembly.
At that moment,
I witnessed the beauty of cultures
I had never seen before,
flourishing on stage.
I articulated,
that it was diversity.

Diversity,
Celebration.



E I S F O R

ECHO CHAMBER

HANNAH GUTRICH

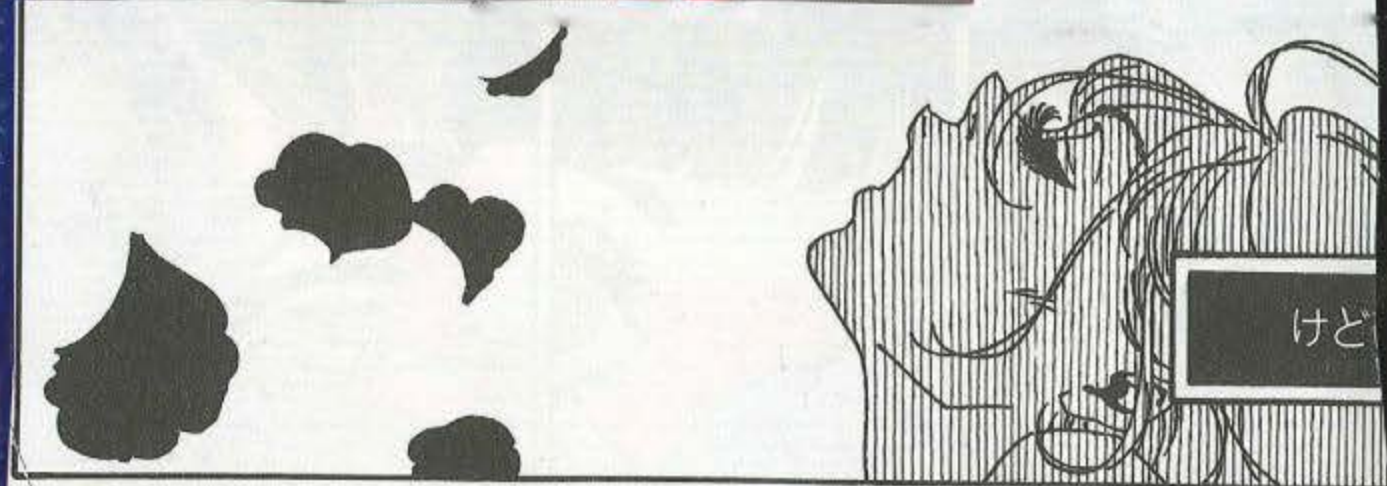
The echo chamber that exists within PLU is one that focuses primarily on the Left side of the political spectrum; I have rarely found individuals with educated opinions on the Right side voicing their contrary views to open classrooms, or even to their peers in general. I am reminded of a time when, in a communication class, a student with “veering right” opinions was openly condemned in front of a class — when they were only illustrating an opposing view, not even justifying it. Similarly, the day after Trump’s inauguration, my class had “feelings time” to process — and a student was persecuted by their peers for having a differing political position.

Whatever the reason may be, PLU tends to favor, project, and support opinions that favor the Left’s agenda. This does harm to students. Not all opinions should be valued in universities, but they sure as shit should be acknowledged. (And no, I am not talking about white supremacy, or denying of human rights, etc.) A first year in one class mentioned that she “would be fine hearing the other side’s opinions if they did not immediately become racist.” Automatically assuming that an opinion that does not align with the Left’s political agenda (or your opinion) is inherently racist and therefore against basic human decency is problematic.

Instead, we should shoot for well-mannered discussion, ask questions, and understand where and why people have the interests and thoughts that they do. Our generation must support temperate and free dialogue.

F IS FOR

FUCK

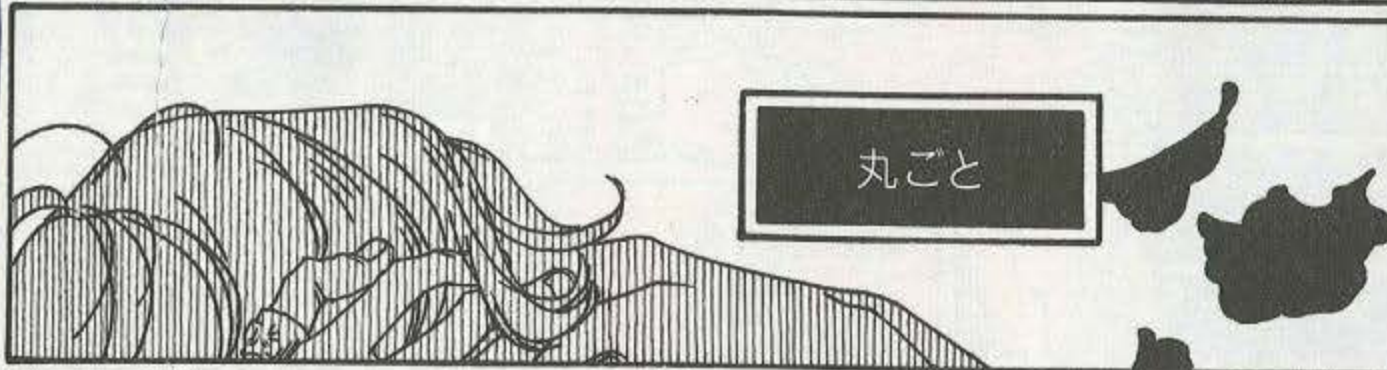


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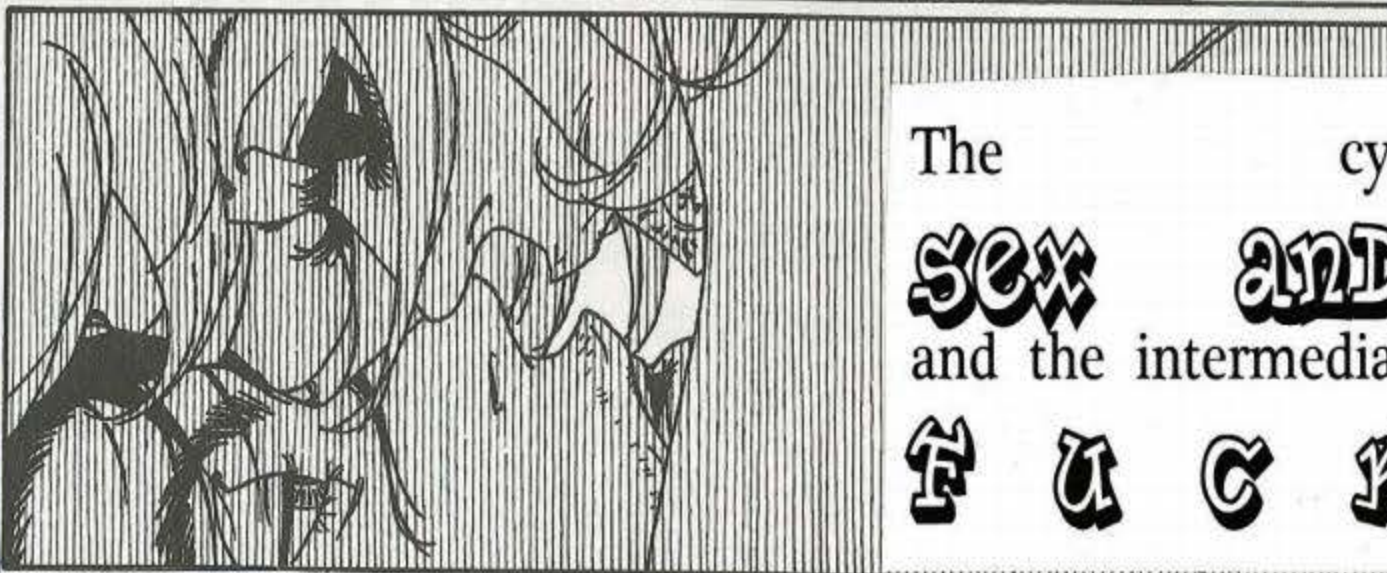


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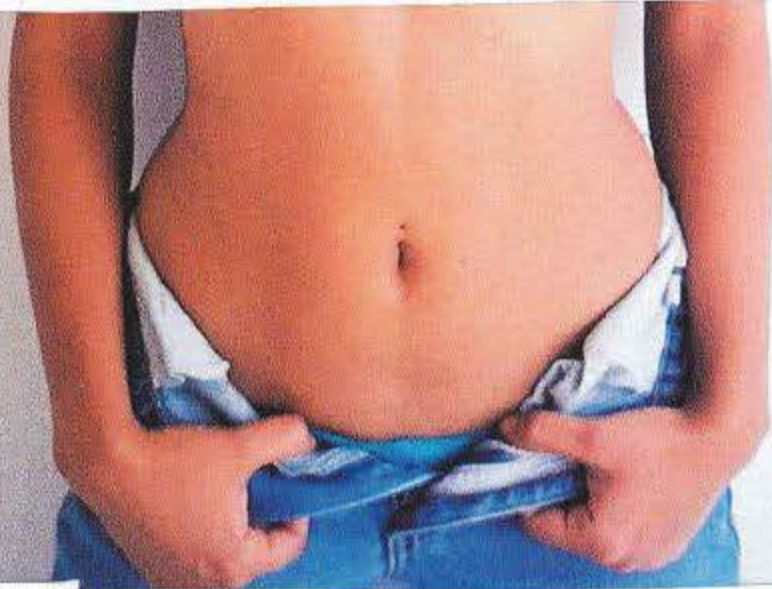
F U C K E

“ Our life is made by the death of others.”

See the uncensored version online at matrix.plu.edu.



By the time I get to you, you'll have died at one of three places: at the scene, on the way to the ER, or in the hospital. The chances that the last words you hear will be "I love you" are infinitesimally low. Most people die with the hollow dinging of hospital equipment ringing in their ears, if not the screaming of sirens, blasts of gunfire, crunching of metal, or crackle of radios.



Fuck. That's fucked.
Let's Fuck.
 You got
 Fuucked Up.
 Damn, I'd fuck with that.
**one GOOD
 FUCk**

of
Death
 od of total
 r 2



ZANTHIA DWIGHT

GO TELL IT
ON THE MOUNTAIN

Morrison

ojnarowicz

IS G

MICHAEL DIAMBRI

There seems to be an unspoken norm among liberal college students that we should desire a life of outspoken public activism. Some people feel a liberating rush when taking to the streets. In my own relation to activism, I have recently felt deeply uncomfortable attempting to force a desire to perform activism in such a manner.

The pressure to perform activism within liberal and intellectual communities conflicts with my strong aversion to social engagement. I have often felt guilty because of my inclination toward introversion and reclusiveness. I'm a history major. I want to spend an endless amount of time in the archives, I want to teach, I want to publish. I think activism can be done this way, but this isn't the way I feel my 'activist' peers are telling me to go.

I don't want to put myself in a box, though. In an ideal world, I would have all my ducks in a row and I would be able to do both. But my vocation is the work of a historian and when I think my involvement in activism is needed, yes, I will be ready to respond.

However — for myself right now — I would rather be the type of historian who informs activists fighting for socially just causes. As someone who loves history, I want to take time, look into the history of why these activist groups have developed, and work from there in whatever way I can. I don't want my name to be attached to something that might prevent another person from trusting my work. I think I have an ethical responsibility to tell stories, interpret, and inform.

FOR GAY

As a gay man who studies queer history, I am confronted with another issue: much of recent queer history has been defined by the desire to be queer in public, to not live a furtive or quiet life. Many queer people have had to conceal non-normative sexualities and genders. The past of concealing our affairs, lurking in quiet underground spaces, and masking our desires are reminders of the reality — the closet — that many contemporary queer people frequently hope to avoid at all costs. To combat this, there is perpetuated an idea that queer people need to embrace queerness and be distinctly public in their conveying of queerness, especially when it comes to responding to calls for activism.

I am not writing this with an answer. For someone who has spent time studying his queer ancestors who paved the way for me to be gay in America in the 2010s, I feel bad. I feel ungrateful and I don't feel ready or able to do the work.

My experience has been difficult, but I've come to terms with the fact that I may never be the 'public' activist who uses their spare time into efforts for activism in the public sphere. I have also come to terms with the fact that I may very well someday be a great activist. But, right now I am waiting, learning, and watching.

What I have to keep reminding myself is that my work has potential — it does, after all, focus on queer communities, their growth, and their historical potential. Although it may not be my time *now* to be the world's fiercest activist, I may someday be that activist. Right now the best work I can do is *my work*.

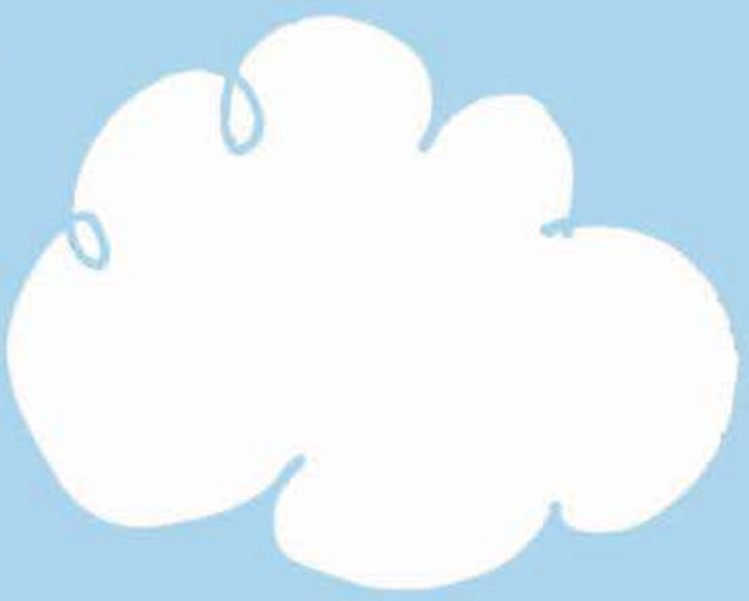
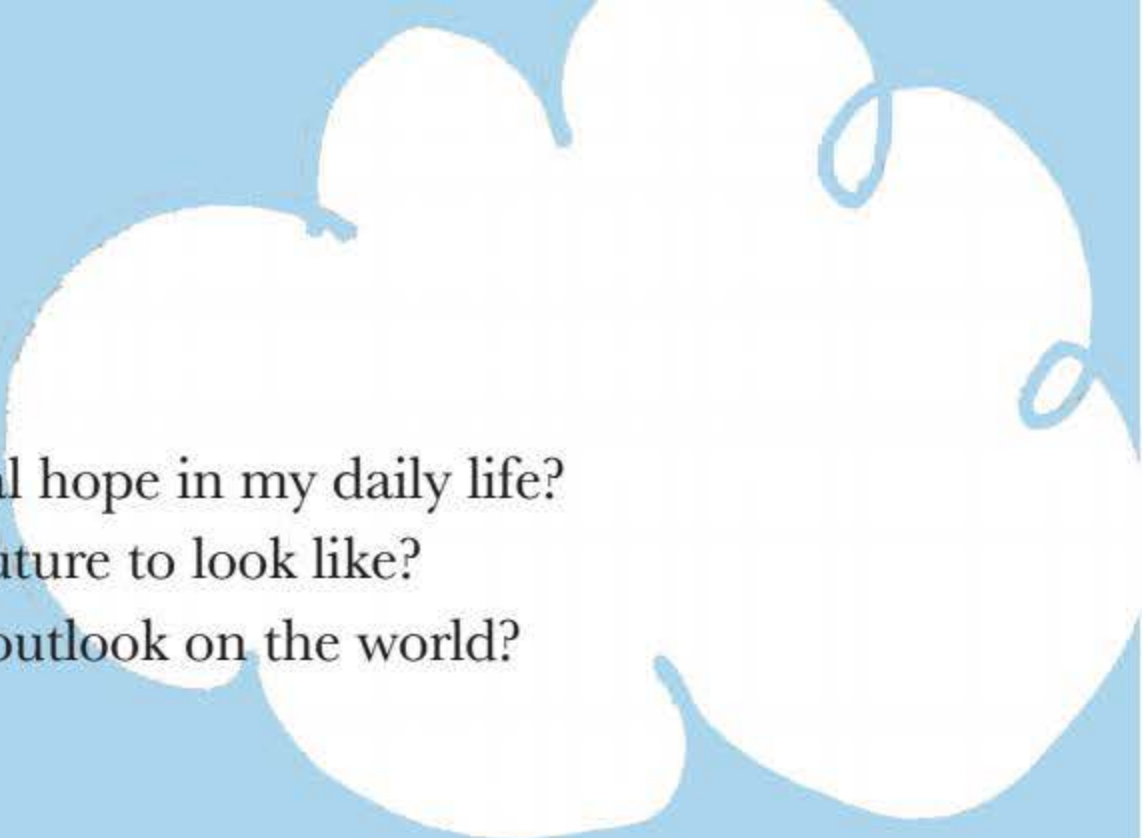
H IS FOR HOPE

ANONYMOUS

During the month of January, over seventy-five students, faculty, and staff from the PLU community participated in weekly meetings organized by ASPLU and the Diversity Center. Individuals who participated in the J-term Book Group reflected thoughtfully on the concept of radical hope and how it intersects with their personal lives. They read *Radical Hope: Letters of Love and Dissent in Dangerous Times*, edited by Carolina De Robertis.

This book contained dozens of personal letters from activists, scholars, and artists responding to the state of our current US society. In one essay, Junot Díaz defines radical hope as “not something you have but something you practice; it demands flexibility, openness, and what [philosopher Jonathan] Lear describes as “imaginative excellence” (p.13). Díaz’s idea of radical hope is echoed throughout the entire book in the many letters addressed to historical figures, grandparents, sons, friends, and strangers.

As a participant of the book group, I reflected by asking myself critical questions inspired by the idea of radical hope, as well as themes from various essays in the collection. This personal inquiry wasn’t easy, yet through the deep questioning, I began realizing where I still need to grow as a friend and neighbor. When you read some of my questions below, I encourage you pause, reflect, and think to yourself: What are my own questions?



How do I practice radical hope in my daily life?
What do I imagine the future to look like?
Do I have an optimistic outlook on the world?
What do I believe in?
What do I ignore?
When do I stay silent?
Why do some conversations with others end in divisiveness?
Have I given any false promises?
Have I been reflecting enough?
What is my role in working towards equity?
How do I enact the change I want to see?
Who is my community?
Have I been supporting local and global artists?
Who has inspired me?
Have I been living life in a way that serves others?
Am I afraid of change?
Am I honest with myself?
When am I vulnerable?
How can I empathetically listen to others who differ from me?
Do I ever question my hope?
When does fear control my actions?
Does rage ever blind my perception of the world?
When do I lose hope?
How can I rekindle my imagination?
Who do I trust?
What do I hope for?

I IS FOR

DR. JENNIFER SMITH

“Diversity is a key component of a comprehensive strategy for achieving institutional excellence.” (Association of American Colleges & Universities)



Not a slogan but a constant and continuous practice.

“Construction of a university continually reconciling its past with the necessity of an equitable future.” (The Collective, “Necessary Steps for the Advancement of Racial Equality at Pacific Lutheran University)



utes.

“Supports, challenges, and empowers students, staff, and faculty to combat gender-based oppression and enact positive social change.” (PLU Center for Gender Equity)



“It is not our differences that divide us. It is our inability to recognize, accept, and celebrate those differences.” (Audre Lorde)



“It is certain, in any case, that ignorance, allied with power, is the most ferocious enemy justice can have.” (James Baldwin)



vulnerable to becoming an empty phrase if vigilance, resources, and focus are not maintained.

“There is no social-change fairy. There is only change made by the hands of individuals.” (Winona LaDuke)





educational excellence for all requires centering a diversity of people, ideas, and perspectives.

“E



isting structures must be evaluated so as to envision new structures to integrate diversity, social justice, and sustainability into our living, learning, and working communities.” (PLU Ad Hoc Committee on Diversity, Justice and Sustainability)

“



ommitted to empowering the PLU community to engage in dialogue, programs, and initiatives that promote and enhance equity, agency, and action.” (PLU Diversity Center)

“



quip students with sophisticated intercultural skills.” (AAC&U)

Al



levels of the institution are responsible for achieving inclusive excellence.

“



love is not a ‘being’ word, it is an action word. When you see hate out there, understand that the challenge will never be the hate of some, but the silence, indifference and apathy of the many.” (Sen. Cory Booker)

“Pow



r at its best is love implementing the demands of justice, and justice at its best is power correcting everything that stands against love.” (Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.)

“Co



front the dark parts of yourself, and work to banish them with illumination and forgiveness.” (August Wilson)

“



concerted efforts to educate all students to succeed in a diverse society.” (AAC&U)



educate students for lives of thoughtful inquiry, service, leadership and care — for other people, for their communities, and for the Earth.

J IS FOR JEW

GILLIAN DOCKINS

In the early morning of the Wednesday after the pandemoniac election, quiet had finally taken ahold of campus. I brushed my teeth in front of the bathroom mirror — eyes swollen, head beginning to ache with 4 a.m. regret. I had not even begun the presentation I had to give later in the day. My phone vibrated on the porcelain sink, and when I looked down, I saw it was my brother.

“What’s up?” I tried to sound lighthearted. Gulps of air on the other line. “Hey bud, how are you feeling?”

Harris wasn’t well. He hadn’t slept yet either, and his mind had started to swirl with the same paranoia and anxiety that mine had.

“What if they come for us?” Harris asked, a question that would have sounded melodramatic without the authentic fear that broke his voice. “Eventually, they always come for us.”

“You can always go to Israel,” I said, half honest, half sardonic.

My brother snorted without laughter.



Jews are instilled with a historical narrative of oppression and struggle that is intrinsic to their identity. Growing up, I was repeatedly recounted the story of Jewish enslavement in the time of Moses. I was educated thoroughly on the Shoah, the Diaspora, and on the overall murders of Jews in Europe. I understood from an early age that being one of “God’s Chosen People” was not necessarily a positive marker. Chosen perhaps, yes... But for what?

In high school, I was assigned a genealogy project that required me to research my mother’s family, originally from Romania. My Google search returned information about the forcible expulsion and slaughter of the Romanian Jews. In the 1870’s, the Ashkenazis were evicted from Romania. Some were forced across the Danube river, rejected from entrance into neighboring Turkey, and drowned. Seventy years later, at least 150,000 Romanian Jews were murdered in the Holocaust.

Now, 73 years since the end of the Holocaust, it is arguably the best time in the history of Judaism to be a Jew. The formation of the state of Israel has provided security to a dispossessed people. Growing up, I rarely experienced blatant anti-Semitism, save a few nasty kids in middle school. Despite this safety, I’ve become deeply conflicted in my Jewish identity in the past few years, as I have begun to deconstruct the imperialist and colonial power that Israel wields against the Palestinian people. This concept of security at the expense of the well-being of others has never been palatable for me. But I also understand the need for a homeland, a place for Jews to be Jewish without persecution. I don’t have answers to this vastly complex problem, only pain for the Palestinian people, and an aching desire for peace.

The events in Charlottesville last summer were like a bad dream. Vitalized by current political rhetoric against minorities, racists and anti-Semites felt entitled to share their vitriol. It’s my opinion that anti-Israel political sentiment has additionally bled into careless anti-Semitism from some members of the Left. The struggle against prejudice is an everyday one, one that requires dialogue, an examination of historical injustices and current events. It is a mistake to assume that anti-Semitism is a cultural disease of the past. It is of the same pattern of thought as the current discrimination against other groups such as Muslims and Mexicans. As a Jew and as a person who stands for peace on this campus and beyond, I believe we must:

“Stay aware,” my brother told me before saying goodnight, “Bad things happen when we don’t pay attention.”

K IS FOR KNOWLEDGE

GENNY BOOTS

My mother had a lot of strange sayings and habits that peppered my childhood.

One was “burrskin arronskin,” which she would announce when it was particularly chilly (I don’t know what it meant, either). Or, when other drivers would let her pass, she would flash a peace sign and say aloud “Peace Brother” or “Peace Sister” or “Peace Grandpa.”

And, in a particularly embarrassing moment, my mother once stood on the top of the stairs and welcomed my ninth grade friends into our home by saying, “Greetings, Earthlings.”



One of her iconic (or, as my sister would say, annoying) phrases was said in a sharp robot voice.

“I know Na-Thing”

“I know nathing”

“I know nothing”

This was the soundtrack of car rides, it was an excuse to change the subject at dinner, and it was said to annoy my all-knowing sister. And whether she meant to or not, one of the biggest lessons my mother taught me is to recognize how little I know.

And I think that’s beautiful.

Consider this equation:

Knowledge (A) is
power (B)
is the root of oppression (C).

And $A = B = C$



How would our society be structured if we valued different types of knowledge from indigenous people, women, immigrants, old and young? If the relationships between history, science, art, and ethics were celebrated rather than cordoned away from each other?

What would our world look like if we let go of a relentless, merciless, and narrow pursuit of knowledge?

Apparently becoming your mother is something to fear, but what can I say? I know nothing.

L IS FOR LUTHERAN

REV. JEN RUDE

That's when I knew I was a Lutheran.

So many things felt up in the air. Would my family accept me? Would my friends understand? But somehow, in this complicated mix of coming out as queer during my first year of college, the one thing I never doubted was that God loved me. Wholly (Holy). Unconditionally. Although raised Lutheran, I think this is the first time I really felt Lutheran. At my Lutheran Church, Lutheran Youth Gatherings, Lutheran Summer Camp, I had apparently absorbed this message of love and grace and God's fierce love for all the world and now in these moments I had to ask myself, "Do I believe it?"

Turns out, I did. I do.

That's probably why I stayed Lutheran even though there would be (are) plenty of times the Lutheran Church would disappoint me, anger me. This community is not immune to sexism, racism, heterosexism, classism, and all the things that exist when a group of flawed and beautiful individuals ("sinners and saints" is how Martin Luther talked about this complexity within each of us) gather together in community.

It's nice that this means that there is room even for my flawed and beautiful parts, which is not insignificant. But Lutherans also believe in transformation. Not perfection. Those flawed parts (individually and communally) never completely go away. But new things are possible. Change is possible. Reformation is called for. Revolution may be required.

And that's why I serve as University Pastor at PLU, joining those who seek to educate in the tradition of Lutheran Higher Education. This is an education that values all of creation (human and non-human), that asks the critical and Big Enough Questions because our lives exist in paradox and tension. It calls us to lives of service and meaning through our vocation — and it does all of this in a beautiful and flawed community of learning. This education is not just for our own sake, though. Not just so we can congratulate ourselves on being interesting, well-rounded, and informed, but for transformation — of individuals, communities, and the world. As I look at myself and at our world, I see we are all in desperate need of fierce love, reformation, and transformation. And that's why I still call myself a Lutheran.



M IS FOR MAJOR EVENTS

HILARY VO

Dear Ms. Maya Angelou,

In the three years since your ascension to the ethereal plane, people of color continue to struggle, but we are resilient. 2017 was a year of erasure. Erasure of the legacy of the Obama family, erasure of policies, erasure of promises. But with that erasure, people of color all over the country have been re-claiming their histories, creating change within their communities, and, most importantly, writing to fill in those blanks. Your story filled in one of the biggest blanks in the literature of the history of America, and the legacy of your story has inspired the ambitions and struggles of countless communities of color. With the election of an abomination to the highest position of power (#notmypresident), the fallout — the lies, the bigotry, the heartbreak — have been felt severely by communities of color. Having read your work for the first time at a predominantly white institution, your legacy inspires me to continue to fill in the spaces where erasure occurs. I know many people of color, including myself, who turn to your poetry when we need courage.

*You may write me down in history
With your bitter, twisted lies,
You may trod me in the very dirt
But still, like dust, I'll rise.*

The biggest issue facing not only communities of color, but everyone is the current environmental crisis. When beginning his term, Trump allowed for the continued work on the disastrous Dakota Access Pipeline and Keystone XL pipeline. His order impacts indigenous land, the land that they stole, that we benefit from. We are beginning to understand more and more each day, how issues of environmental justice intersect with racial justice. The earth is reacting to these climate changes in radical ways, with Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria within months of each other.

*Just like moons and like suns,
With the certainty of tides,
Just like hopes springing high,
Still I'll rise.*

I hope that wherever you are, you are watching over this planet and these communities, with the moons and suns, waiting for the day when we will respect the earth more than we respect each other.

The political administration's hate rhetoric brought an unfortunate rise in white supremacy. In August, there was a gathering of "alt-right," white nationalist, neo-Nazi, and neo-Confederate groups protesting the removal of the Robert Edward Lee Sculpture and other Confederate monuments and memorials from public spaces, held in Charlottesville, Virginia. Violent clashes broke out between attendees and counter-protesters.

*Did you want to see me broken?
Bowed head and lowered eyes?
Shoulders falling down like teardrops,
Weakened by my soulful cries?*

These people wanted to see communities of color broken, supporters of these communities broken. I watched as my fellow friends of color mourned, organized, and protested these actions. Although the divide between the white supremacists and the "social justice warriors" deepened, out of the chaos came a renewed passion for social justice. Many groups responded with protests and rallies against their action.

*Out of the huts of history's shame
I rise
Up from a past that's rooted in pain
I rise*

As writers and educators, we have an utmost duty to tell the truth, whether that be an individual truth or a larger societal truth of oppression. It is impossible to move forward without seeing where we've been. Thank you for leaving behind a legacy that shows the world how far you've come, what you've been through, and inspiring so many writers and educators to follow in your footsteps.

*Leaving behind nights of terror and fear
I rise
Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear
I rise
I rise.*

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Lang V." with a stylized flourish at the end.



N IS FOR

NON-BINARY

TATE ADAMS

LEGEND: “Ode to Sleep” by Twenty One Pilots
“Scheherazade” by Richard Siken
“To Boddah” by Kurt Cobain

He is an experienced simpleton
He terrifies me to the point to where I can barely function.
He opens his eyes, cause he's told that he must
He told me I was gone

They pull the shaking bodies out of the lake
They dress them in warm clothes again.
They set my soul on fire and
They remind me that he's what I used to be
They sweat ambition and empathy
They're not taking prisoners tonight
They'll stay awake
'Cause they're inconsolable.

The cut-up method is a Dadaistic art technique in which text is cut up into discrete pieces and rearranged to form new meaning. This particular text utilizes the lyrics from **“Ode to Sleep”** by Twenty One Pilots as the adhesive to hold together the consoling warmth of poet Richard Siken’s **“Scheherazade”** as it is juxtaposed against the somber, self-loathing tone of Kurt Cobain’s final written letter, **“To Boddah.”** Not only does the piece speak directly to the experiences of transitioning to non-binary identity, the form itself speaks to the experience at a deeper level. Much like the cut-up method, my experience with establishing my non-binary identity has been one of affixing seemingly dichotomous concepts to create something that is entirely different than merely the sum of its pieces.



“Under the guise of diversity, people involved with homosexual organizations at PLU have been charging up students this year with their messages through numerous programs... I am concerned that with the excessive number of homosexual based programs sponsored by PLU we are creating an atmosphere where students no longer feel comfortable voicing their beliefs for fear of condemnation. In the past it was the homosexuals who feared condemnation. Now the tables have been turned and our focus has been lost.”

*-Lindsay Tomac, editor
(March 8, 1996, Mooring Mast)*

This quote caught my eye for its “fun” level of homophobia, one that we all pretend has been eliminated from PLU’s campus, but it also led me to consider how the tables have continued to turn. Are queer students truly more visible on our campus than they were 20 years ago?

Queerness is no longer demonized or openly condemned on campus. It is largely accepted as a part of campus culture and is made highly visible in certain ways: students can buy rainbow Rose Window shirts, live in the Lavender wing, and look

O IS FOR OUT

MOLLY MUNSTERMAN

up to openly queer staff members. It would seem there is no reason for anyone to question the level of queer visibility on our campus, as queerness has been fully incorporated into PLU’s culture.

Visibility should be about much more than imagery and a hasty reference to queer community; it requires much more open and potentially contentious discussions than seem to be taking place on campus currently. The popular PLU approach to being queer almost resembles someone reading a script crafted by prevailing narratives of queerness. In a stressful and dramatic event, students slowly come out to a widening circle of people. They declare that they were “Born This Way” (because we all know that no one would want to be queer if they could do anything to prevent it). Queerness is transformed from a shameful secret to an inherent and unchanging part of their identity.

Once queerness — a seemingly pre-fabricated identity — has been achieved, any further unpacking of what that means for an individ-

ual is avoided when at all possible. This runs counter to a more extensive examination of oneself: the type of critical self-analysis that PLU always mentions in terms of finding your vocation, but never extends to reflecting on one's own positionality.

Queer visibility may have faded from campus, but individual queer students are still subject to moments of hypervisibility whenever other students decide to take a voyeuristic approach to their coming out story. Heterosexual students are typically more than willing to discuss queerness, as long as the conversation centers on their fascination with how it marks students as different from them (and as potential sources of drama). *When did you first realize you were gay? Was it hard to come to terms with that? How did you come out?*

The intimate details of a queer student's life are certainly still subject of discussion. Those asking these questions are seen as genuine allies trying to learn, incapable of homophobia since they do not fit the mold of a typical homophobe like in Tomac's op-ed.

True visibility — the state of being able to see or be seen — is impossible if a group is being misrepresented or at least limited in their ability to represent themselves. This is the case with the prevailing tropes and narratives associated with queerness: for far too long, the sad, desperate, and/or dead queer trope has dominated representation in U.S. media.

Coming out is typically presented as an immensely stressful and emotionally draining event; the risks of familial or social rejection are continually brought up. This approach is unknowingly and unthinkingly reified by young people who adopt this mode of operation when they haven't seen an alternative. It is also represented as a one-time event, when in actuality all people are continually in the process of outing themselves. It is just conceptualized very differently and normalized for non-queer people to do so routinely and without emotion.

Redefining coming out should also serve as a general call for more critical reflection about positionality among individuals who identify as queer. For some, queerness places them in a marginalized position after they have grown accustomed to benefitting from unearned privileges. Rather than questioning their place and participation in systems of oppression many allow racism, sexism, and other forms of bigotry to continue unchecked in the queer community.

Queer visibility should challenge prevailing norms, not frame itself in terms of outdated and overly reductive societal constructions.

Queer PLU students need to decide if some imagery and nods to diversity are enough: or if they need to do some outing.

P IS FOR

Parkland

MADISON SHEWMAN

(Reactionary piece to events on Pacific and Garfield on November 19, 2017)

Message sent at 2:12 AM:

HOLY SHIT DID YOU HEAR THE GUNFIRE

Message read at 5:43 AM

No, I didn't hear the gunfire.
I was asleep, safe and sound
under my warm covers as bullets pierced
flesh and severed spines
two streets away.

I had a front-row seat to the
slaughter
but I slept right through it.
Didn't hear a thing.

Now that I know
the gunfire happened there's a
sick
feeling in my gut, like sour
fear
that tastes like milk gone bad.

Worse — the gunman got away.
He's still loose, wandering
the streets with his weapon
and his crazy and vicious anger.

The gunman always gets away.

We hear the gunfire outside our windows,
we hear the gunfire in the blood-red headlines
that greet us with blood-stained smiles in the morning.
Bright and early —

Did you hear the gunfire?

Weary: No, how many
died
this time?

None. One. Three. Fifty-Eight.
Twenty children.
A stockpile of weapons.

It's such a
pity, we say. Such a
waste
of human life.

But no one really hears the gunfire.

If we heard the gunfire we'd be up in arms
to limit the arms, keep them
away from crazy people and angry people
and bored rich people and desperate poor people.

If we heard the gunfire
we'd be taking steps
to reduce it, uniting
to make it harder for mass-murderers
to murder.

But no one hears it.
The gunfire fades
into white noise.

The gunman gets away.
He gets away because we love guns
more than we love our fellow man,
more than we love our children.

Gunfire will be the last thing they ever hear.



Q IS FOR QUEER

ALICIA SPRAGUE

I see so many PLU community members walking around in t-shirts and sweatshirts with the rainbow Rose Window. You know the ones, just the Rose Window but with a rainbow instead of one solid color, and the abbreviation PLU. It might be you, and it might have been me: if I had never been told that it has no benefit to PLU's Queer community.

The rainbow is a symbol embraced by the LGBTQ community. It is a sign of recognition and acceptance, of care and community. I am sure that many wear it as a sign of belonging or support, without the recognition that none of the profits help to support any of the queer community, at least not directly.

Just like any other sale it goes to the general fund of PLU, which may be used to support queer students but it does not have to. There are six items in the Lute Locker that have the rainbow Rose Window, and two of these are ones that I see often.

If the profits were used to help the queer communities on campus the idea that we are supportive of the community would be much more believable.

For some students who fall under the LGBTQ umbrella, there is the recognition that our school is using something that, for so long, people did not want to see. Now the school uses it as a tool of propaganda, so many of our community members wear it, and it shows that the community supports its queer members, but there is no tangible support. There is nothing to ensure that any of the profit will benefit students who are queer, who might be struggling financially or emotionally, and



who are looking for a community because of how society treats their sexual orientation or gender identity.

A school that made a Lavender wing and gender-inclusive bathrooms does not seem to recognize the need to support their students in such a small way. PLU is benefiting off of the care of the people in our community; they want to care about the individuals who may not identify the same as them.

The rainbow is a symbol for the queer community, a symbol that has been fought for by many people — and PLU uses it as a piece of propaganda, to act as if they are supporting the Queer community on campus.

Being an Ally isn't just saying you support us, PLU: being an Ally is standing beside us.

**Editor's note: The Matrix reached out to the Lute Locker for comment on the sale of rainbow Rose Window merchandise. Amanda Hawkins, Store Manager of the Lute Locker told us via email that no portion of the profits have been donated yet, but a plan is in place to do so by the end of the fiscal year.*

“Currently I am in the process of working on that so that a portion of the proceeds will be going to LGBTQ+ clubs/orgs,” Hawkins said.



R IS FOR RACIAL JUSTICE

QUENESSA LONG

PLU culture is a funny thing.

I have never been in a place that screams and screams and screams about an issue while simultaneously silencing those providing answers.

It's like watching a well-looped GIF: it plays over and over again, and you find yourself lost in the happenings, until you realize a few moments later that you

are caught in the motion, but never reaching an ending result.

It's like being on the teacups at Disneyland (side note, I have never been to Disneyland, this is just my assumption of what it feels like)... It's like being on the teacups, spinning and spinning and spinning... until someone pulls the lever to make it all stop.

But unlike the teacups, the battle of fighting racism is not a ride that one can simply exit.

Racial justice is not just a term that one can enter into, straddle for a while, then leap off of when one is "all finished."

Because unfortunately some of us are not afforded that sort of exit. We must stay.

But some of us have whiplash. Some of us are tired. Some of us are tired of entering into spaces where we have to take on all of the emotional energy, then become forced to apologize for it, Even though we too feel sick.

Some of us have to inhale the fumes of ignorance and injustice and fallacy repeatedly,

We do not get to live lives of thoughtful inquiry in terms of racial justice. We have had to enter in with our whole selves.

We have had to follow the mission statement for racial justice long before attending this PWI.

We have been screaming.

And suggesting to you more than a book group to solve your problem of racial injustice

It makes me want to tap the mic and ask, is this thing on?



Because it seems like no one can
ever hear me,
Or rather that I am being heard in
a vacuum.

In hearing your justifications for
your slow attempts at progress...
I tire.

But even though racial justice on
this campus is years away from
equity,

I have to remember why I march.
Remember that when I march the
ground shakes as my feet, my
thighs, my belly, my chest, my
heart, my head pulls me towards
justice.

I remember that this fight has been
happening long before me and
will continue after me...

I remember that even though those
around me do not have the
answers, or are slow to progress,
I must stay true to my soul's call
for true racial justice.

I must persist.
We must persist.

It is said, something that our
campus must know, is that
"Sometimes Politics Makes
Demands of the Soul." (Ekow
N. Yankah)

We can no longer silence the call
of that demand.
So I say again, we must fight.

And even though, as mentioned
before, this is going to continue
to be the hardest thing to pursue
for PLU,

I still must make the call to action.
I still must call to my community.
I still must tell those fighting, I see

you. You are not lost in the void
of PLU.

I write this piece for you.
For those continuing the long haul
of a fight.

For those doing more than the
surface level.

For those who want to scream
(because there is space for
that too) but who also want to
endure the pursuit of justice...

This is for those who love justice
deeply,
whose hearts always continue to
love deeper,
whose hearts always seem to mend
one more time,
who are ready for the fight just
one more time, because the
movement needs them just. one.
more. time.

Even though we are often asked to
give despite what it means for
ourselves,
we are convinced to give, because
we are called too.

I will keep yelling, continue
searching, until I find others
who know what it means,
Means to fight,
Means to stand,
Those who know what racial
justice is outside of the Webster
(white male) definition.

We are powerful, but as long as we
continue to be idle,
Continue to cripple beneath our
fears for real change...

We will continue in theory, yet not
in truth.

It is time for us to face and endure
the truth, PLU.

S IS FOR SELF-CARE

ANONYMOUS

In my sophomore year, I stood on Red Square on a partly cloudy afternoon, talking to a senior who was very involved with capstone research. I asked, “How do you not get burnt out? How do you keep going?”

There was a long pause. The senior’s eyes aimlessly scanned the trees.

Then their eyes refocused on mine. The senior slowly replied, “I guess I haven’t been practicing self-care well lately... I didn’t really have time to eat lunch today, and I had trouble falling asleep last night. Still, I try to take care of myself the best I can.”

My eyebrows slightly furrowed downwards. I felt a longing to blurt, *I have a granola bar in my backpack — do you want it?*, but I held my breath and stood in the silence. The senior took a breath.

“But, what keeps me awake at night and gives me energy

throughout the day is my passion.” Then, after another pause, “I guess, I’m still a little hungry though. I’ll head to OMM for a snack.”

The sun began to peek through the clouds and I squinted a little, trying to digest the words that seemed to ring across the chilly spring air. Trying to digest the idea that the very thing that can bring us life can also bring degeneration.

How could a good thing become bad? I’d think about my elementary school teacher who was so enamored with teaching that my mom would even say that she talked about school outside of work hours. She never seemed to get tired; she was full of bountiful energy. I used to ask myself, *was it all a show? Or was she so passionate that she didn’t get tired?*

But I now realize it was neither. I now reflect on my elementary teacher and understand that she must have practiced dedicated self-care. She surely must have devoted

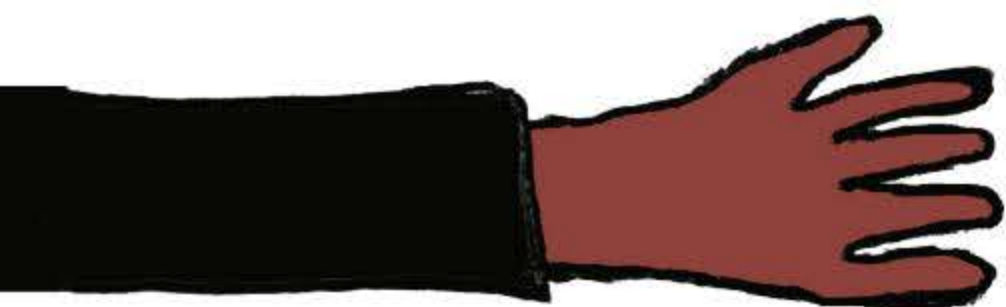
her weekends to resting and keeping company with her loved ones. She must have found outlets for self-care other than her passion.

There's a grey area between passion and self-care. Passion can become all consuming. I think that grey area is sometimes lost in our conversations about self-care. I hear about how self-care is something that fuels our soul and repairs damages, making us ready for another day for bravely living our lives. Yes, that part is important, but self-care is also something else, like recognizing that our methods of practicing self-care must change with our changing needs. Our passions and go-to methods for self-care may not keep us going forever.

My elementary school teacher may have woken up every day for two weeks fueled by her passion for teaching, but then, she may have woken up the following day, realizing that she needed

something else. She needed to incorporate something different into her life. Something else that can rejuvenate herself. Maybe it was coffee, or reading a great poem before the start of the school day. I'll never know.

Self-reflection is the essence of self-care. When I think back to my Red Square conversation in sophomore year, I admire the senior's honest reflection, and I want to do that reflection myself in the future. I strive to realize when I need to amend my self-care practices, so I can live in healthy balance.



T IS FOR THEY

CLAYTON REGEHR



These words are autobiographical. This piece works to acknowledge how a person can be blind to the othering of people and the identities they hold. As an attempt to disrupt ignorance and misunderstanding, the form — inspired by Kaveh Akbar's "Learning to Pray" — forces the reader to adjust their gaze, to embody a non-traditional perspective, to reaffix their own assumptions of what is known. These words can speak to an expanding source of empathy that we must all work to achieve.

i could tell she wanted
destruction, but the lines
in her face stretched with

patience. fingers rolled into palm
forming a cradle like an atlas
of an indecisive storm. it was

the love of moments
between clouds. it was the
creeping tree, harsh-bent

like a spoon. it was the vacancies
of pavement among suds and
chalk that soothed down the

hillslope. it was the million green
blades eager to pierce the air.
she said this is what you've missed:

a tenacious love they've found
for themselves, a personal divinity
ungathered. i could not fathom

a life not my own. i could not break
the uncertain stare, hard like my
heart. what do you want? i asked

hollowly. not a prayer, but
knowledge that we are coming
with a rebellion of color.



MATTHEW SALZANO

“I think that every student, every faculty member, and every administrator should ask her or himself everyday, ‘what is a university for?’ [...]

I always thought what was supposed to happen was something called ‘education,’ which is a kind of transformation and (from *educare* in Latin) a ‘leading forth’: [your teachers] lead you out of your state, and you leave University different, as someone else, other than the you who came in. [...] We may be shifting to an idea of universities as ‘expressive’ spaces, where students come in and try to discover and express their identity in a supportive environment. [...]

I tend to think that’s a fundamental misunderstanding of what a university can, let alone must, be in a free society.”

- Dr. Teresa Bejan, Associate Professor of Political Theory at the University of Oxford
(*Virginia Review of Politics*, April 2017)

I have had a few professors laugh at me recently when I mention that I think I have changed a lot since starting at PLU. It’s a knowing laugh, a “no shit” laugh, a “thank god” laugh. It’s an acknowledgement that I take longer to think before I speak and that the words come out a little slower, a little quieter. It’s a recognition that some of my impatience and insecurity was left on the hairdresser’s floor with the faux hawk that accompanied me that first September.

This laugh is also their awareness that I have only reached an early benchmark, foreshadowing much more learning and changing and transformation.

I think it is tempting to think about a college education (following Wendy Brown’s *Undoing the Demos*) in a neoliberal way: how much more income can I make because I took these four years off from the labor market? Following this line of thought, the growth I found in my four years at PLU only mattered if it resulted in a boost to my lifetime income.

I want to explore a concern I have about this impulse as it intersects with the popular word “belonging” on campus. Surely, it would be easy for a university simply interested in turning profit and pedigree through students to emphasize belonging as a feeling of comfort — a lack of unease, a lack of discomfort with the status quo.



UNIVERSITY



→ ? → ? → U IS FOR ■

But at an institution that cherishes “thoughtful inquiry,” this proves difficult.

Inquiry, especially self-discovery, is incredibly uncomfortable. To echo Molly Munsterman (see “O is for Outing”), self-directed inquiry requires the uncomfortable, active, critical look at what dominant narratives we believe about ourselves and our growth. As I step out of the closet, I pick up a rainbow flag, a pronoun pin from the CGE, and an application to the Lavender wing: my pre-packaged identity can comfortably rest largely unchallenged by folks who understand similar marginalization. I learn little about myself and those around me, satisfied with all the trappings of my new identity.

But if we want to stick to that mission statement, our sort of belonging must require the willingness to “know nothing,” critically examining our positionalities and the entire system of identity labels. It requires feeling deeply uneasy because of our awareness about how much more growth we have yet to find.

This is not to argue that marginalized groups — especially students of color — should be ignored when they seek changes to fight issues of systemic inequality. Instead, the sort of belonging that counters the prejudices of the outside world should help address racism in ways that go beyond simply accommodating any of the racial, gendered, or sexualized codes that enable all the “isms.” That’s why we must be careful that when we say “belonging”: we don’t mean creating an environment where any student can enter and leave without questioning the ideologies they brought with them.

How can we make belonging about feeling accepted, valued, and supported while questioning exactly what one wants acceptance, value, and support to be attributed to? How do we conceptualize a belonging where the personal and social qualities required to fit in aren’t tied to whiteness but to questioning the status quo? How can we resist categorization that limits one’s ability to explore their wholeness without invalidating people experimenting with new ways of being?

Let’s make a community where we can all laugh with one another while we transform.





V IS FOR

RIZELLE ROZALES

The feeling begins in my sternum and travels through the nerves in my chest, moving through the roots of me. In these moments, I reach for my deepest memories of joy, of love. At times, I may reach for the wounds of my greatest heartbreak and devastation, all in different stages of healing. The audience murmurs, the lights rise, I take a breath. Out it comes: my voice.

I was raised to perform. At the age of five, I was taking piano lessons and training as a competitive figure skater. When I was six, I remember practicing every riff, note by note, in Christina Aguilera's "I'll Turn To You" in the shower. My parents fed me Stevie Wonder, Filipino soul food, and church on Sundays.

I found success in following directions. My routines on the ice were dictated by my coach. I have memories of crying during practice, drilling moves again and again. I practiced scales on the piano for hours, my tiny hands struggling to obey my orders to twist, stretch, and jump as the technique demanded. I sang lying down with encyclopedias on my diaphragm and I prayed every night before bed. By the time I finished elementary school, I had five instruments on my tool belt and spoke music theory like a second language — but at the end of the day, I was no prodigy. All you need is a knack for doing what you're told, along with a dose of middle-class, Christian privilege.

I was a well-oiled machine of a performer, consuming the weight of my ego in scripts and sheet music. I was bloodthirsty for the spotlight in which I was born and raised. I was primed to be a ballerina, rooted in sacrifice and discipline.

Studying jazz and soul music is what saved me as a musician. It taught me the difference between artistic expression and creativity, between obedience and curiosity, between fear and freedom from it.

It was not until I started studying writing and social issues that I understood what it means to have a voice.

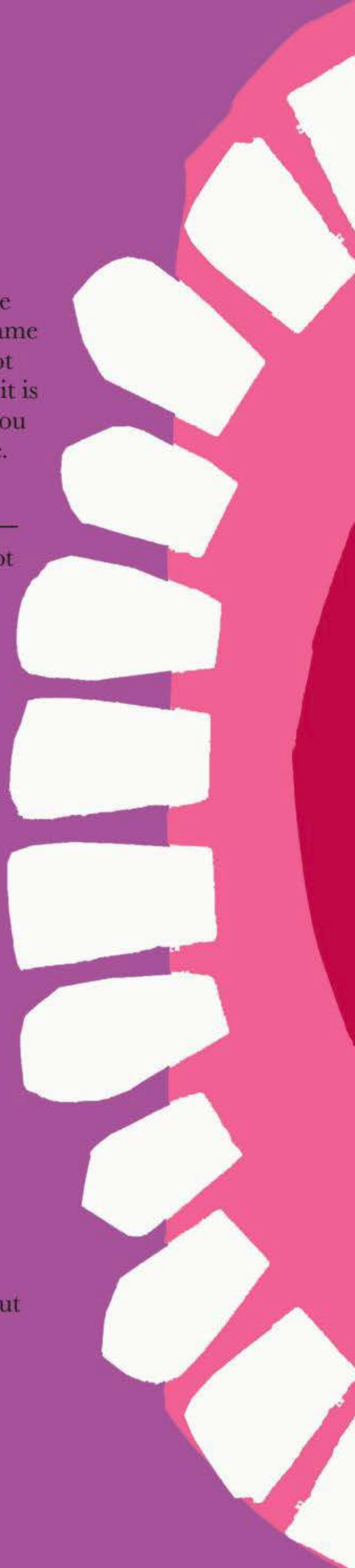
VOICE

Voice, I realized, does not lie in the snowglobe of perfection. Voice lies in the trenches of the war zone within, behind the doors we lock in an attempt to tame our deepest desires and vulnerabilities. A voice is not obedient. It is not pretty or polite. It is a vulgar cry, it is a force, a weapon crafted and wielded by you and you alone. A voice is the fire that comes with being alive. To have a voice is to have a soul.

Ink on paper, paint on canvas, and sound in space — all lie neutral until paired with voice. Art alone is not to be feared, it is voice that is dangerous. Countless dictatorships and regimes have not fallen by drawings of birds or photos of the beach. They fear the curiosity of journalists, the research of scientists, the assembly of youth, the whispered conversations on porch stoops. They fear the honest expressions from a repressed collective. Pages of history are stained with the blood of voices.

In a world of “isms,” I had been conditioned to trim the thorns from my voice. I learned to keep it sedated, sweet, and beautiful. For many years I disciplined my voice into submission, boiling it down to a paste palatable enough to be loved by my parents, by men, by God. I’m still learning to listen and nurture my own voice, rather than forcing it to behave. My medium is in music and written word, while for some it may be architecture, software design, or medicine.

After a performance, some people ask me how in the world a tiny girl like me could get a big voice like that. I sing with the floodgates open, and I write with arms wide. Because after years of being raised as a musician, as a woman, as an artist without a voice — I can’t waste a single breath in silence.





W IS FOR WILD AND PRECIOUS LIFE

ALEX LUND

When I think about vocation and what I plan to do with my “wild and precious life,” I think I fall into the trap that many of us do and conflate one’s purpose with one’s occupation. It is tempting, almost logical, to view how one influences the world and relates to those around them in the context of a career, but what is logical may not be what is natural.

In Mrs. Bonwell-Nafie’s fourth grade class, we had creative writing four times a week for about a half an hour a day. Somewhere in between writing Harry Potter fanfiction and random top 10 lists, I wrote a piece titled “One Day” where I flirted with possibilities of my future. From curing cancer to developing a force field that repelled hurricanes, the longer the list grew, the more outrageous and world-changing the potential careers became. I remember having a sense of desperation as I had no idea what I wanted to be when I grew up, so naturally I listed everything I could think of, hoping one would stick.

I was able to distill the laundry list to a single aspiration in high school: to become an orthopedic surgeon. I spent many hours of my late teens researching medical schools, job shadowing local physicians, and telling everyone who asked exactly what I was going to do when I grew up. It was comforting to have an answer to that inevitable, intransigent question. It was comforting to have a sense of direction, to be moving towards a future of my own making. It was comforting to have a purpose.

I rode that comfort onward, through my first two years at PLU. When presented with the now familiar question of what I was going to do with my “wild and precious life,” my response was quick, a pre-programmed reflex — like when the doctor knocks your knee



with that weird triangular hammer and your foot swings out.

I began to notice that my answer was feeling less natural and more draining with every response. Gravity seemed to have increased, and my foot lacked the energy it once had with each swing. Each time I sat myself down and opened up my MCAT study guide, I also felt myself putting on a mask, one that until recently had felt like my own skin but now was so irritating I longed to rip it off.

To a point, I had let my purpose be consumed by an occupation and as a result my identity had morphed. It had been chiseled down beyond recognition and I felt lost without the rest of the pieces, shavings swept away thought to be without function. My “wild and precious life” all of a sudden did not feel my own, but a stranger’s.

Once again, I am a jumbled mess of “One Day[s]” with a seemingly terrifying amount of pathways diverging ahead of me into chaos. However, I have found peace in the discomfort. Part explorer, part masochist, I lean into the discomfort of being lost. When once I felt disingenuous, now I readily search for what feels like life.

PLU’s catch phrase for vocation at one time felt like a nuisance, picking away my preconceived notions of self, exposing my performance. Now “wild and precious life” is a gentle reminder to ensure that life is enjoyed, the purpose is found and derived in every aspect of my identity: brother, son, friend, teammate, student, and those yet to be.



A decorative graphic at the top of the page features three strands of black barbed wire against a light blue background. The wires are strung across the width of the page, with sharp points extending upwards and downwards. On the right side, a thick, dark brown vertical bar is partially visible, suggesting a corner or a post.

X IS FOR

DR. BETH KRAIG

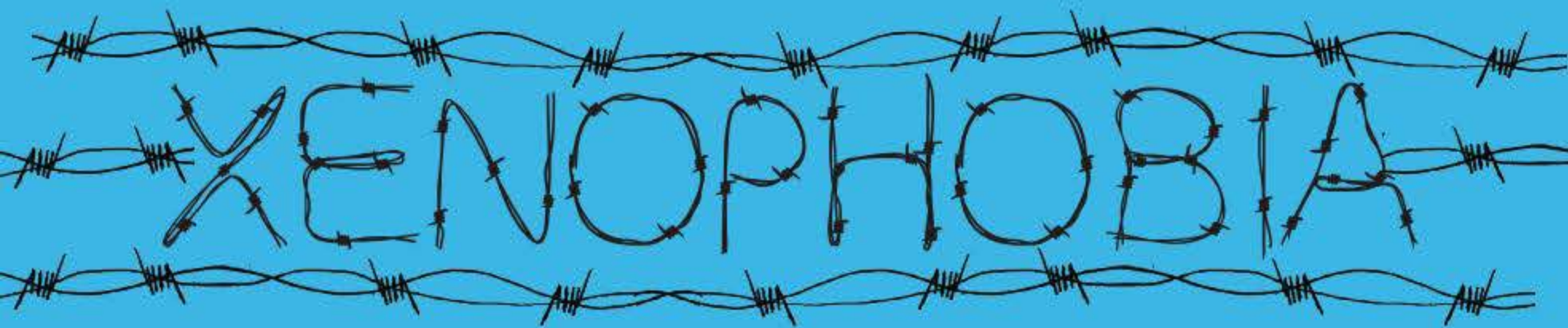
The question raised by any effort to define xenophobia is simple. Who, exactly, is the Stranger? If I am afraid of the Stranger, surely I know how to identify that Stranger who frightens me so very much?

As a historian, my efforts to define any concept or label immediately sink into the past and challenge me to imagine deeply. If I am imagining a forested area of land some miles inland from the salty waters of Whulge, perhaps in 1792, I must envision the Stranger as a white person floating aboard a large wooden ship with expansive sails. I do not know (yet) that this group of white Strangers has claimed ownership of that forested land and of Whulge itself (which they have renamed “Puget Sound” to deepen their claim to my home).

Time passes, armed invaders arrive, germs infect us, and the Strangers turn out to have been quite deserving of my fear. They destroy so much. Their arrogance comes naturally to them. Along with my fear, I cultivate anger and skills of survival and resistance.

Of course, if I imagine the same land covered with buildings in the second half of the 20th century, and I am descended from Norwegian Lutherans and see this place as my heritage, the Stranger might be quite different. The Stranger might claim African or Asian or indigenous ancestries (the Stranger might even descend from those people who lived here before 1792). The Stranger might not be Lutheran (or even Protestant, or even Christian). The Stranger may bring sexual and gender identities that push me to abandon the comfortable binaries where I like to live. Of course, I only speak one language, but the Stranger might speak two or three or more. The Stranger might be a fellow student or staff member or faculty member, but, somehow, not like me!

These Strangers come to learn. They come to change my sense of entitlement and ownership, yes, but through fierce education — through teaching me to be far more aware, far more focused on justice, far more visionary as I gradually begin to dedicate my energies toward a future that can grapple with the very concept of Stranger and shrink its power.



XENOPHOBIA

I gradually try to release my fear, but I still cultivate anger and skills of survival and resistance. Now I must deploy these skills alongside the Strangers to reduce xenophobia.

And yet, if I am in that community of learners at PLU, now in 2018, could I now be seeing my neighbors in Parkland as Strangers? Who is that 12-year-old on a skateboard, gliding past me down the hill to lower campus? Is the Stranger now a student at Keithley Middle School? Is it possible that I am defining myself as “belonging” here more than that young person, who may have lived in this place for a lifetime?

I snap fully into the present. The history still surrounds me, but I can see from my brief travels into the past that xenophobia is a changeable beast, a slippery and sly trickster always ready to take on a new shape and tell “me” that “they” are Strange. How can I guard against this? I must learn more. I must imagine better. I must locate and question my fears. Vigilance matters, not to find and fear the Stranger, but to find and confront the seeds of xenophobia wherever they take root. Fear of xenophobia must be my guiding motto.





PARKLAND

Y IS FOR YOUTH

KATE WILSON

A student walks with their backpack slung over one shoulder, talking and laughing with their friends. They are too young to be enrolled at PLU and too young for high school: middle schoolers. The average Lute seeing a crowd of them would lean to the nearest Lute within earshot and mutter: "Parkland Youth."

Parkland Youth walk and bike everywhere they can, on the sidewalks surrounding PLU and through campus itself. They use our buildings as shortcuts on their travels; they loiter where they can. Some tell fantastic stories about afternoons spent in the Cave, dreaming until the next afternoon they can come to campus. They love PLU.

When I volunteer with students at Keithley Middle School, they ask what classes they have to take in college; they ask what it's like to live in a dorm. Parkland Youth want to know who the principal of PLU is, and they want to know if there is detention or in-school suspension in college.

Parkland Youth want to be on campus not only because it is a new and exciting place that is away from their home and school life: some want to become Lutes. And some Parkland Youth love PLU so

much they do grow up to become Lutes after spending four years at whatever high school they are placed in by their parents. Many of you may recall being a student at Franklin Pierce, Washington, or Gates High School; Keithley or Ford Middle School; or one of the eight elementary schools in the Franklin Pierce School District.

And when we entered PLU, most of us entered the Parkland community for the first time. Most of us entered as youth. 18-year-olds who were told "you are adults now, you have chosen our college, and you need to choose a degree that will lead to your future." We have questions about the real world, we go exploring and socializing at potential job markets, potential places to live, trying to find potential friends and potential partners. We escape from our current school and home life.

We also were once high schoolers and middle schoolers and elementary schoolers. We were 13-year-olds and we were 10-year-olds. We were the youth of wherever we came from, and we are the youth wherever we are.

So the next time you want to cry Parkland Youth: consider the fact that you are Parkland Youth, too.

Z IS FOR ZEITGEIST

MATRIX STAFF

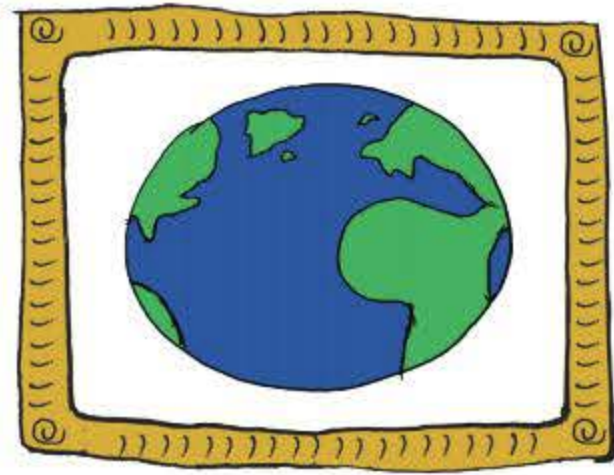
Scholars have long maintained that each era has a unique spirit, a nature or climate that sets it apart from all other epochs. In German, such a spirit is known as “Zeitgeist,” from the German words Zeit, meaning “time,” and Geist, meaning “spirit” or “ghost.” Some writers and artists assert that the true zeitgeist of an era cannot be known until it is over. (Merriam-Webster)

What is the spirit of our time?
What are the unique pressures, motivations, challenges, and central concepts that guide us right now?

In this book, and online at matrix.plu.edu in Fall 2017, we’ve explored contemporary realities: trying to answer the question “Who are we?”

In the 25 letters before Z, authors have started to weave similar threads together in a roundabout response to this question. It has resulted in an interesting cross-stitch, a design that may give us a starting point to think about this era’s unique spirit. Four of these threads stand out to us:

- Place: How, if at all, do we fit into Parkland and the other spaces that we inhabit?

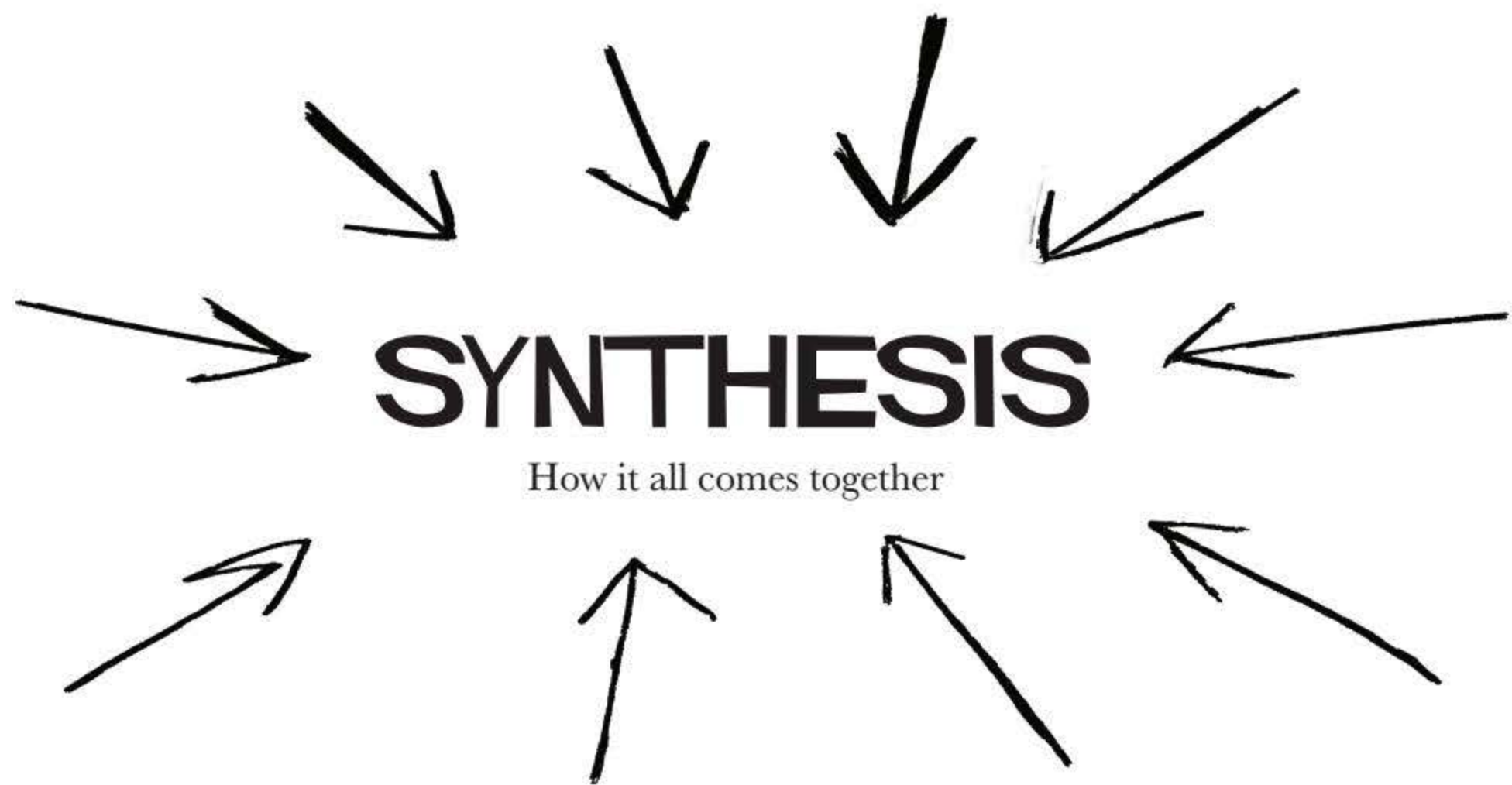


- Identity: What groups do we belong to, how have we found them, and how well do we fit inside of them?
- Difference: How do we understand “them,” and how do (or can) we work together across difference?
- Bravery: When and how can we find the courage to ask good questions and speak out against injustice?

How will these four threads continue to weave together? As they combine and make new designs in the spirit of our time, what new issues and concerns will we be faced with? How will we deal with them? What kind of future are we building with them in mind?

That’s why our second theme builds on the first: **Where are we going?**

We invite you to continue to explore with us as we try to figure out what it means to be where we are. Contact us at matrix@plu.edu or at our submissions page at matrix.plu.edu to get started.



A - That knowledge doesn't do any good if you never use it.

B - And I had a choice: to keep going with this shallow use of language, or to question whether what I said accounted for the complexities of the world.

C - Under slightly different circumstances, would they think that I'm the one who is dangerous, annoying and pitiful, or not worth acknowledging?

D - This was different for me. / Back home everyone looked like me, / but not here. / I could not articulate this.

E - Our generation must support temperate and free dialogue.

F - Our life is made by the death of others.

G - But, right now I am waiting, learning, and watching.

H - What do I believe in? What do I ignore? When do I stay silent?

I - Love is not a "being" word, it is an action word.

J - Bad things happen when we don't pay attention.

K - What would our world look like if we let go of a relentless, merciless, and narrow pursuit of knowledge?

L - As I look at myself and at our world, I see we are all in desperate need of fierce love, reformation, and transformation.

M - It is impossible to move forward without seeing where we've been.

N - They remind me that he's what I used to be.

O - True visibility — the state of being able to see or be seen — is impossible if a group is being misrepresented or at least limited in their ability to represent themselves.

P - But no one hears it. / The gunfire fades / into white noise.

Q - Being an Ally isn't just saying you support us, PLU: being an Ally is standing beside us.

R - We are powerful, but as long as we continue to be idle, / Continue to cripple beneath our fears for real change... / We will continue in theory, yet not in truth.

S - I hear about how self-care is something that fuels our soul and repairs damages, making us ready for another day for bravely living our lives.

T - i could not fathom / a life not my own. i could not break / the uncertain stare, hard like my heart. what do you want? i asked / hollowly.

U - Let's make a community where we can all laugh with one another while we transform.

V - A voice is the fire that comes with being alive.

W - I lean into the discomfort of being lost. When once I felt disingenuous, now I readily search for what feels like life.

X - Vigilance matters, not to find and fear the Stranger, but to find and confront the seeds of xenophobia wherever they take root.

Y - The next time you want to cry Parkland Youth: consider the fact that you are Parkland Youth, too.

Z - What is the spirit of our time?