



THE MATRIX



DREAM

DECIDE



Dear Readers,

It isn't always obvious how social justice takes form. When I began collecting submissions for this publication, I was initially surprised by the number of students who told me they were both uninterested and removed from social justice. They spoke of protests that they had never attended and research papers on racism, globalization, and environmental issues that they had never written. Sometimes this is where we are stuck— we view social justice as a movement that is separate from ourselves. But social justice is grounded in our dreams. Social justice begins from within.

Inside this publication, you will discover just a small sampling of the many issues that are encompassed in the term social justice. From the use of gendered pronouns to meditations on the death penalty, I hope that you find the contents of this publication both engaging and thought-provoking. Lastly, I hope that the issues raised in this publication invite you to further explore your own interests in the field of social justice. We couldn't include everything. I hope the contents of this issue inspire you to discover that which was left out.

The theme of this issue is inspired by those who saw inequality and sought to create change. Each step that has been taken toward the formation of a socially just world started because someone, somewhere, had a dream.

As always, remember that this publication is for you. *The Matrix* would not be possible without its advisor, contributors, and readers. My sincere thanks and appreciation go out to everyone who has made this publication possible. This issue of *The Matrix* is dedicated to you.

Selina Mach
Matrix Editor

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What is Social Justice?

RHC Social Justice Directors Explain What Social Justice Means to Them

Jade Neace

SJ Director in Hinderlie Hall

History, Social Work & Women's and Gender Studies '15

What does social justice mean to you?

To me social justice is the continual transcendence of social norms toward a truly equitable world. It is in my mind every American's duty to strive to both protect and progress the rights of all people, both socially and legally, to create a society that mirrors the constitution we live by. However countries just as humans are an open system and to achieve true equity it will take all of us that make up the human race to come together to create a bolstering and safe celebration of the spectrum of humanity.

How do you strive for social justice in your everyday life?

In my everyday life I try to use my privilege as a white middle class American as a pulpit to address the injustices within our world that revolve around race, class, and nationality. As a gay woman I understand that the same prejudices and barriers I face within my minority status can be applied to other minority groups in other ways, and I strive to use our similar experiences to bring minority groups together through my position as social justice director, as a member of the student body of PLU and as a citizen of the world. On a personal level I share my experiences of being a double minority to help people outside of the minorities I am a part of to understand the inequity I currently have, both socially and legally, and to create a non threatening environment of education in which to foster a more informed and progressive world.

McKenzie Williams

SJ Director in Stuen Hall

Anthropology & Philosophy '15

Why is social justice important?

I believe social justice is very important because in a world where we have to think about our own lives and interests constantly, being able to look at issues of justice and human rights that don't always have to do with our own needs is important. Looking at social justice issues is not only important for the good it can do for the whole of humanity, but also what it can do for our own personal growth.

How do you work toward developing a socially just atmosphere in your residence hall?

This year I strive to recognize the different ways in which social justice does or can touch the lives of our residents at Stuen. Every day I see how different issues around social justice impact my own life, whether that be my passion for women's rights or marriage equality, and I strive to maintain an open mind so that I may better understand what others are trying to stand up for, or just encourage others to find something they are passionate about as well.

Chau (Liz) Nguyen
SJ Director in Harstad Hall
Finance '14

Why is social justice important?

Social justice is a social movement of raising awareness that seeks to educate and promote human rights. It's important because we all live in a community in which no one has the right to judge people by their looks. I am human, you are human, and we have only one life to make a difference. We live to learn, to be different every day, and be proud, not to seek similarity and reject what is not.

How do you strive for social justice in your everyday life?

"Don't hate what you don't understand."

That is what I always keep in mind and tell to others every time I have a chance to bring up a social justice related topic. Be open to love and learning. Wait until you understand, then you can express your opinions. If you still don't like it, you could say "Speaking for myself, that's not me," instead of "I cannot accept it." That shows respect to yourself and others.

Ashely Hill
SJ Director in Pflueger Hall
Social Work '14

What does social justice mean to you?

Social justice is the creation and maintenance of balance in social welfare.

How do you strive for social justice in your everyday life?

In my everyday life, I try to be conscious of harmful terminology, microaggressions, and general ignorance. Because education is so vital and would help to alleviate a lot of the problems in this country, I try to help by tutoring students from elementary to high school in the Hilltop area.

How do you work toward developing a socially just atmosphere in your residence hall?

As part of the diverse community Pflueger Hall has to offer, I strive to promote a healthy and safe living environment that also allows students to discuss and question social issues without being discriminated against.

Lauren Mendez
SJ Director in Hong Hall
Anthropology & Psychology '15

What does social justice mean to you?

Social justice is making sure all voices are heard, and that the majority is made aware of the rights and privileges of minorities or discriminated groups. Also, social justice advocates how to create an environment that is safe and fair for everyone.

Why is social justice important?

Social justice is important in order to make sure that all people regardless of what beliefs they hold, have the ability to express themselves and to be treated as an important part of society.

Christian Dilworth
SJ Director in Foss Hall
Mathematics '16'

What does social justice mean to you?

Being the social justice director allows me to recognize different misconceptions and assumptions about the world and the people that inhabit it and use this knowledge and awareness to make a difference in somebody's life. It's the opportunity to bring PLU into harmonious balance by breaking down the stereotypes that surround everyone.

How do you strive for social justice in your everyday life?

Throughout my everyday life I always seek ways to make a difference on a relatively small scale in the hopes that it'll spread onward. I don't intend to change this attitude just because I have a title attached now, but rather try to identify and develop a better understanding of different cultures and traditions as to further make a difference.

Brent Tyhuis
SJ Director in Ordal Hall
Nursing '16

What does social justice mean to you?

To me social justice means creating an environment where everyone is represented equally and given the same opportunities as everyone else. It also means fostering a place where everyone feels welcome and accepted.

Why is social justice important?

Social justice is important for each person to be truly viewed as equal. There are people that are looked over all of the time, and there needs to be people that bring them to light so they can be on equal footing as everyone else.

Allison McClure
SJ Director in Tingelstad Hall
Business & Global Studies '15

What does social justice mean to you?

Social justice is more than simply protesting a wrong or fighting for something you believe in. It is being engaged in your interactions with the world, questioning all that you encounter against your faith and beliefs, and living upon your own definitions of right and wrong rather than merely accepting the status quo. This entails playing an active role in your life and how you view the world, and exploring your full potential to discover how you can give and help others to do the same. It's a very personal sense of justice that will change based on your values and perspective as an individual.

Why is social justice important?

The core values that social justice is based around are acceptance, understanding, and care for the ideals of equality and diversity in all areas of our lives. Whether you participate by thinking about these issues when you go about your day to day life, writing letters to those in power regarding your concerns and feelings, or physically supporting a campaign or movement.. It is that living with an awareness of your world, community, and personal life that makes social justice vital.

How do you strive for social justice in your everyday life?

I think a huge aspect of introducing social justice to an atmosphere, especially one full of people who are still figuring out themselves and their future, is to be supportive! Most of us live with some sense of privilege, and the concept of social justice and activism can be very overwhelming. Is the shirt I'm wearing today made by a ten year-old? Were those coffee beans used for my latte purchased ethically? Being someone who is still new at exploring my role in social justice, right now I simply try to consciously recognize my thoughts, words, and actions and how they affect others and if they are beneficial or detrimental to my community.

Why Feminism?

Olivia McLaughlin, Music & Women's and Gender Studies '14

"As tough as it is to call yourself a feminist, it's tougher not to."

-Gloria Steinem

This is a letter to my family.
This is why I am a feminist.

I've always known there is more to me than blonde hair and lipstick...I'm just waiting for the rest of the world to catch up. These frustrations and many more, led me to feminism.

When I first discovered I was a feminist, I was angry (and still am). No matter how many books I read my questions still outnumbered the answers and those unanswered questions led to even more questions. I found feminism at a time when my whole world was turned upside down. Feminism turned it inside-out and right-side-up. It was like I was a new person with new goals and new values, new dreams and new passions. I learned to love myself and to love my body – from my “pug nose” cousin Tracy dotes on, to my sausage fingers Papa loves to photograph.

And so it began. While I became more comfortable with myself, I became more uncomfortable with the world and the people around me. I saw oppression woven into everyday activities, and while feminism gave me a voice it also made me aware of how silenced I had become. It was a disturbing beauty.

So like the feminists before and around me, I am calling you, as my family, to action. I am not requiring you to stand next to me at the Slut Walk with “WHORE!” written across your stomach. I am not asking you to join me in becoming a vegetarian. I am not even asking you to understand why I cannot get married. I am asking you to read this letter and by reading this letter I am asking you too, to call yourself a feminist. Call yourself a feminist for your mothers, your daughters, your nieces and your aunts, your husbands and sons, fathers and friends. Feminism is not just a “women’s issue,” it is humanity’s plea for change – a change that will improve your life, my life, and future lives. We need feminism.

We need feminism because my sisters and I are still only earning 77 cents to our father’s dollar. We need feminism because Aunt Tootie deserves to be respected and heard in the court room. We need feminism so the mothers and mothers-to-be in our family will have control over their bodies and their reproductive rights. I need feminism because knowing nine friends that have been raped is nine too many. I need feminism because I want to live in a world free from sexual assault and harassment in the world, in the workplace, and in my school.

When I become a singer, do you not want the audience to hear my words? When I become a lawyer, do you not want the jury to respect my reason? When I become a professor, do you not want me to have the same opportunities to excel to a position equal to those of my male colleagues? When I become a gender equality super hero, do you not want me to be credited for my good deeds rather than my choice of tights and cape?

I am going to change the world around me; I have to. I have never felt more convicted and motivated and empowered. Yes, feminism has changed the person I am but it has not changed Livvie. This is, and has always been, the person I am supposed to be, because this is the person you’ve taught me to be – the woman you have taught me to be. So please, spare me the stereotypes. Maybe I don’t shave, maybe I do. Maybe some days I wear a bra, others I don’t. And maybe I am angry... but why wouldn’t I be? Why aren’t you? When in doubt, don’t ask me anything that you wouldn’t ask a man, because we are all the same. We are all people and one day we will all be equal. And when that day comes I will be someone to thank for that.

Love,
Your “Livvie-Girl”



Perspective

Pam Barker, Communications
& Political Science '14

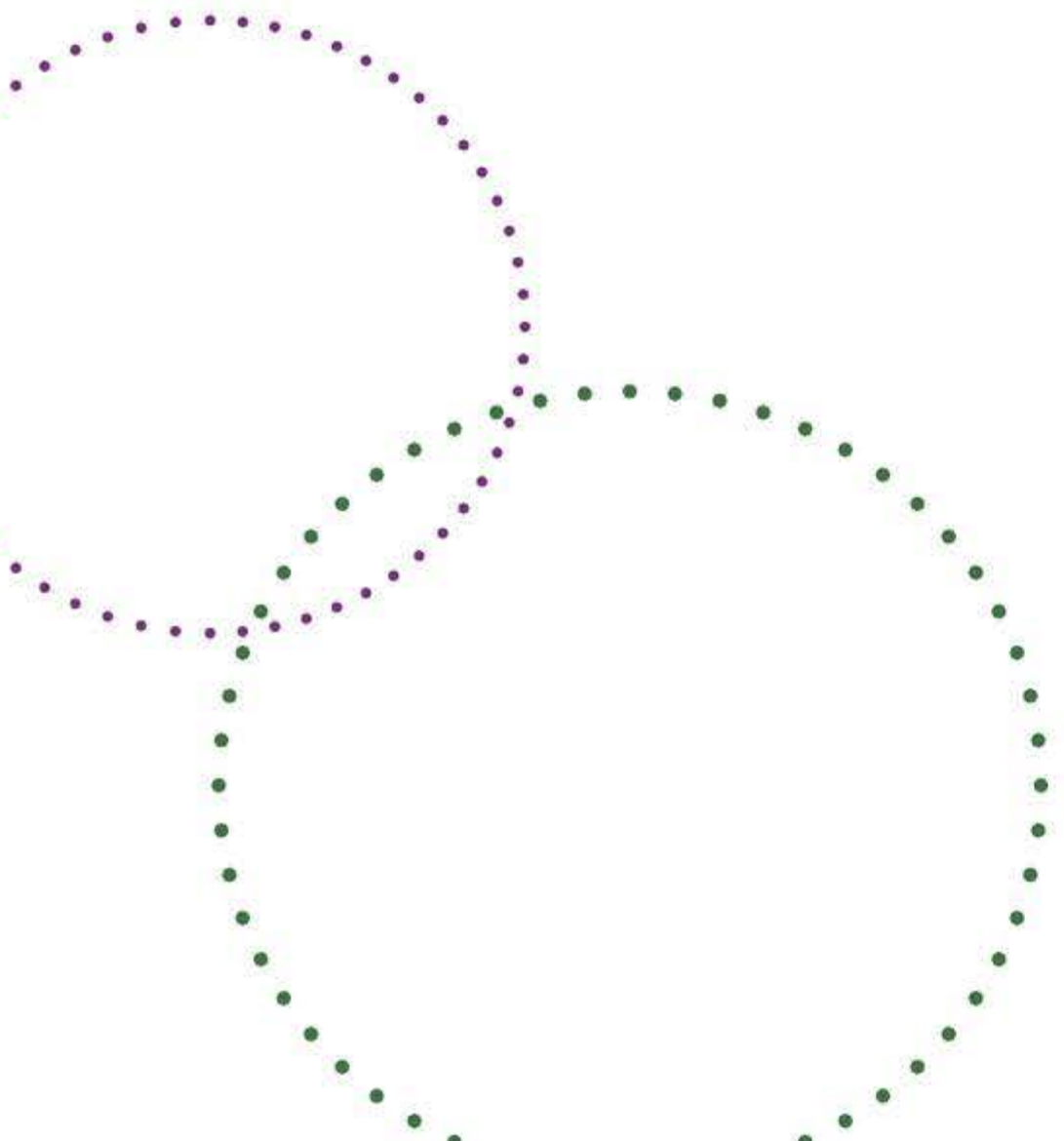
White walls
White shoes
White cars
White people
White World

Everything growing up
was white

An Advocate
I never dreamed I'd be

Perspective colored the sky
Love blurred my straight lines
Understanding opened a window
The fresh air was overwhelming

It's easy to think
That the world is
the way it always will be
But that
is not the case



Because people change
And come
And go
And adapt

Perspective is the key
I carried unknowingly
To unlock the world
And its beauty

Bright walls
Pastel shoes
Neon cars
Beautiful people
Technicolor World

Referendum 74

Washington Votes for Marriage Equality

On November 6th, 2012, Washington voted in favor of Referendum 74, a referendum to approve or reject a bill to legalize same-sex marriage in the state. The bill, which was certified December 5th, allows same-sex couples to marry, applies marriage laws without regard to gender, and specifies that laws using gender-specific terms (i.e. husband and wife) include same-sex spouses.



PLU's Queer Ally Student Union say "I Do" to Referendum 74!

Photo by Lace Smith



Katie Giseburt and Kimberly Wohgan show their support for Referendum 74 all the way from Bø, Telemark!

Photo by Katie Giseburt

goddammitlisten!

Andrew Tinker, Economics '16

You must be pretty damn privileged to have a sense of entitlement
Incarcerated in your mind so deep that a thousand feminists anti-racists
Rainbow flags tearful testimony passionate narrative
Cannot tear down the walls built by oppression Bastille
Your simulations of colorblind gender neutral post-power politics
No identity politics falsehood delusion to deny legitimacy to the downtrodden
This isn't egalitarianism this is subtle
Hierarchy supported by money by words by disbelief defense of status quo

Stuff your ears with the oil drenched blood soaked dollars you tote
Bags full of them guarded by the bullets more numerous than the teeth
Of those who couldn't afford a dentist because you blocked healthcare for them
You emblazoned a thousand graffiti tags of poverty on those whose scars cannot heal
Who are mauled by your propaganda mob mentality break arms hearts convictions
Who are these people look around past the walls of your tuxedo circus tent
Forget the fires of cocaine money alcohol that only modify your enjoyment
And asshole when you share develop addictions instead then blame the victim
Living off you parasite of your own genetic engineering we are angry
Uncontented with good is good enough with checks for peace

We are revolution but not guns not fire not your own sickness
New democracy in an old republic the multitude majority minority hearing
Not deafen but listen speak include encourage remember
All in the mock trials with props and wigs that make fools of patriarchy
An ironic wink of the eye and a tent with endless witnesses
Our history books are bursting full of voices hard lessons wisdom
Contradictory and embittered and hurt so hurt

I am a white male from a well-to-do family but
There is so much more to me and you know this because
You are forming the same objections in your head
You know the labels apply to yourself but you are not me
Are not the elite or the Wall Street or the government
But stop and consider if you know there is more to me than you know
That there is more to everyone than just the polite pause before passing on
Scrolling down averting eyes flipping that page on history
I implore you to listen to the story of the half-seen-never-heard

A Letter to PLU

Anonymous

Dear Reader,

A little over a year ago, a part of me that I'd been hiding from for a long time opened up. I discovered a dimension of myself that made life a little more complicated, but much more beautiful.

I am queer.

Queer can mean many things for many people. Its meaning is not fixed, even within the context of a single person's story. The ambiguity and fluidity of the word is what makes it so charming a descriptor, when indeed one is forced to label oneself. Given this inherent vagueness, let me explain what queer means for me and tell a little of my story.

I am not incapable of being attracted to men but as I discovered, I feel a far deeper pull toward the woman side of the gender binary than the male side. This realization started with a simple discovery of an irresistible draw toward a specific person, but that was only the beginning. I found myself questioning assumptions I had made my entire life about myself and others, and that others had been making about me. The sudden awareness of that attraction opened something that I realized had been a part of me for ages. I had only been too afraid and too uncomfortable with myself to have it dawn on me before.

Many people assume that what I am feeling is impossible, that I must be struggling with some kind of sexual perversion that is against God's intention. Yet I know that what I have felt in this instance for women is not essentially different emotionally, romantically, physically, or spiritually from what I have previously on occasion felt for men. That is, of course, except for the fact that it is far more penetrating and genuine than any feelings I have ever felt for a man. It is not impurity or carnal lust. It is the absolute connection of every atom of your being to another person. It is appreciating them for everything they are and wanting to know them more deeply and be equally known by them.

What is sin, when it comes down to it? Sin is nothing more than disharmony with God, the universe around you, and your inherent self. From the moment it first dawned on me that I (generally a woman in terms of social gender and anatomy) was in love with another woman, I felt instinctively that nothing in this was wrong. I did not feel one ounce of spiritual conflict. In fact, it felt right, more right than anything else had in my life.

Some people may think that I am making life more difficult for myself. I assure you, I am not. Embracing the full complexity of my romantic and sexual self has made me infinitely both more alive and at peace. And now I will not ignore this part of myself and attempt to funnel my life into a path seen as more acceptable by society. I already know what it would feel like to deny this part of myself, because I spent most of my life unconsciously trying that already. And rather on accident, I discovered the alternative. Having been awakened, healed, and brought to life, there is no way that I could go back to the pain of feeling severed, as though half of me was dead or covered up.

I hope that anyone as lost as I was now or in future generations may have the courage to let something similarly trapped within themselves open up. I also hope that those who are completely “straight” or with minimal degree of queerness may come to understand a little better something that may seem entirely alien and unnatural to them. I hope they will understand a little more, be willing to learn much more, and finally be active in supporting those who face a deeper struggle in this area than themselves. It is in fact not the least bit unnatural to find oneself in some way outside of society’s norms. It is very straightforward and unalterable. But even so, this is something that I admittedly could not imagine, let alone understand, until I experienced it for myself.

I want to pursue the creation of a world where feelings outside of strictly male/female relationships are not unimaginable and not misunderstood, for either those who experience them or those who don’t.

My dear reader, it is in our power to achieve this. Please help me to do so.

With sincerity,
KTR

What They Call You

Jakob Maier, English & Philosophy ‘15

There are sharp cracks in my skin.
I first notice them in your bathtub;
“You are scratching me,” you say,
and I was.

The boys in your class say you look like a porn star.
“She is beautiful,” they think,
“when she blows her nose,”
and you are.

Wrapped in a damp green towel,
You stand calm as I bandage your cuts.
“You didn’t hurt me,” you smile,
and I hadn’t.

You comb your hair with purring prowess.
“You are beautiful,” I say,
“not like a porn star, like you,”
and you know.

Declaring War on the Defenseless

Sarah Johnson, Communications '14

Humans communicate with each other through various languages. Some humans are not capable of communicating with people who speak a different language than them. Some humans don't possess the ability to speak, and some are unable to hear. Despite these variations, people recognize that different forms of communication do not dictate the value of human life.

Animals also communicate with each other. Some animals communicate with humans using methods accepted and even practiced by humans. A few distinct species are capable of mimicking a human's voice in an attempt to deliver a message. Animals display their intelligence and understanding of their place in the world through their own forms of communication and interaction within the environment.

Humans have developed a sense of entitlement with regards to their presence on the face of this planet. This development may have thrived from continual domination over the lives of defenseless creatures. People feel power and strength over animals without voices to express their thoughts, emotions, and concerns. Not hearing, or better, understanding the messages being communicated from animals draws the conclusion they must not experience life to our ideal value as humans. Animals must not experience pain. Animals must not suffer, or know right from wrong. An animal not speaking out in an accepted human form of communication must mean they experience life in a different realm than we can appreciate or respect.

Wrong. People, who understand family, should recognize the love and unified bonds held within communities of animals in the wild. People, who appreciate compassion, should see how animals attend to those in need of food, cleaning, or healing. People, who possess intelligence, should identify the use of tools and application of survival skills by animals. Not enough people on Earth can recognize, appreciate, and identify the beautiful similarities between humans and animals. Not

enough people understand the differences are evident merely in our appearances.

Animals are suffering across the globe. Species are becoming endangered due to human forces. Deforestation, overfishing, pollution, oil and gas development, climate change, and illegal wildlife trade are the major threats opposed on animals. Humans are destroying the environments of animals for an economic profit; there is no value on the lives of those being taken. The black market determines the value of animal lives that have something to offer to humans. Elephant ivory, rhino horns, tiger pelts and bones, turtle shells, shark fins, and other prized byproducts are seen as objects, not as the body parts of living, feeling creature. The destruction of lives and over-exploitation of some species has led to population sizes in the red zone. These animals are not capable of reproducing at the rate they are being murdered, or living in the conditions that we as humans have established for them.

How many remarkable species must become extinct before humans understand how their detrimental behaviors are influencing the ecosystem? Some people fear the end of the world, but have no understanding of this perspective held by some animals. These animals grieve and experience pain; they understand death and the loss of a family member. When people lose loved ones by murder, they fight back. These animals are being murdered in front of their families, fighting back in the only ways they know. Animals are taken advantage of because they don't fight with our words or our guns.

People must appreciate the life of an animal as they would their own neighbor. The fear and pain we experience as humans needs to be a bond we develop with animals. We should appreciate and respect the biological diversity that has blessed planet Earth and allowed all life forms to thrive. Destruction of these species will create a life a gray solitude to humans in years to come. Live wisely and compassionately, for murdering these animals is an attempt of suicide by the human race.

For the Twelve Lost Tribes of Israel

Jade Neace, History, Social Work & Women's and Gender Studies '15

Red
runs through every stitch
the searing tones of her breath
she says even the air reminds her of the electric eyed snake, its amaranthine pump
as the weight of steel hands
hold her in the cage of her own skin
the broken canvas of her skin
wrapped around him like a plated coat of red
his hands
slowly dismantling every single stitch
the reverberating pump
running her nerves dry but there were no words, no scream, only the steady sound of her breath
often I listen to my own breath
rising and falling with the calm of the tide under my skin
They never ask, "What is the price of a stolen calm?" it is always "What was she wearing?" already sure the pump
is caked on her hands, but I know better I know even now the blood in her veins screams red
she will never see her will as more than a stitch
swallowed, in the weaving of the world by much larger hands
once in late January, after three months of not touching another living cell, she reached out for my hands
and stood there running over them with her own skin
"he's here still he hangs suspended above me frozen when it leaves my mouth is his breath
and it all floods back on top of me those blood red sheets come close enough to touch every stitch
when I close my eyes the veins of my eyelids scream red
even when the world lies stagnant when everything is dead and whited out, I still hear the pump"
"the pump"
it exclaims itself in the purgatory of my sleep, the desperation of her hands
searching for a warmth that does not scorch like coals, red
with the silence of a fire, red with the slow flow of oxygen, that he casts the flames within his used breath
I want to give her a skin
that lasts, a skin thick enough to keep the pump out, I tell her "with these hands I will re-sow every stitch"
she asks me, "At which stolen stitch
does the body come undone? Does the Pump
break before or after?" She asks me, "Can my body be rebuilt in skin
that comes from hands
the same? She asks me, "Can breath
be reborn once it curdles? Can we ever wash off all of this red?"
My only answer, "You, my sister of Israel, are more than the red
he splattered on your skin, you are more than the skin itself. You are infinite. Claim every breath,
everything you need lies in the stitches that make up the skin on your hands."

Meditations on

Sexual Assault

Anna Rasmussen,
English & Philosophy
'13

I.

We sat on the couch with our ankles
barely touching. Silent, I tried to pull
my limbs inside my body. To fold into myself
till there was nothing. I had a sickly feel –
like summer on eggs: burning rot.

I remember only the loud things:
the TV bouncing color on the wall
like Christmas lights, your hand
like a screaming spider, the full dark
behind the shutters, your hand
where it shouldn't have been.

And the way I said NO: a rock kicked
by a racehorse. The way it spit out
like madfire yet went unnoticed.

II.

They ask questions and I hear only my interior monologue.

How would you characterize this experience?

You are not listening – there is no dictionary
for the victim. The words do not exist.
There are only ideas dressed in dark fog
that row boats through my memory.

And how do you feel about what has happened?

How do I tell you, what remains is the way
the steering-wheel felt on the drive home –
like my hand and the leather were one
cold, rubbery sameness? How do I tell you –
my toes forgot they were separate? Or how
do I say – lately I understand why leaves crackle
when they are forced from the ground?

III.

There is a kind of hate that moves
through you like vines.

Vines that singe you from the inside –
fast like a hot snake.

There is another kind of hate that hangs
like heavy grapes in the gut.

They wait and ripen. Inevitably falling,
bursting open in unexpected slime.

There is the quiet kind.
Cultivated only in glances and dying plants.

Once I felt a ticking hate.
Tied to a clock hand, I woke to it.

Then there is the worst hate. That sets fire
to this room, that forgets I sleep here.

IV.

An unsent letter to your sister:

From your train window you watch
the matte clay of the city buildings
as the move by in streaked wind.
You remark on the grandeur of
their shape, their quiet endurance.
You believe the best of each stone.

I will not tell you that this place
was abandoned long ago. Empty.
There is a hollow statue filled
with maggots. There is a small blue
bush that is already dead. There was a war
but I will save you from its wake.
I decide who is left untouched.

V.

My body is a strange orange that unpeels itself.
Layers forgetting how to be as they were once known.

Lying in my bed, I feel my atoms
shifting ever-constant. I am a figure of their dancing –

particles surface like a boiling ballet, colliding
and bruising one another, never still.

Repeat: This is not the body you had ten minutes ago.
Repeat: I blink and everything has changed.

I run my nails up my thighs and feel how I have
scrubbed my skin pink with the kitchen sponge.

I count the skin cells as they invisibly flake under my nails,
drawing little paths of bright white into my new body.

He/She/It

Andrew Tinker, Economics '16

There is a problem
I think

With how we frame ourselves
As people
But we don't frame ourselves
As people
We frame ourselves as girls
And boys

What is the difference really
A penis or a vagina
A few other physiological alterations
But aren't there the same number
Of physical changes
Between races

We don't specify race in everyday talk
So why do we
For sex feminists need
A lingual revolution

Please Stop Me from Killing Again

Joshua Cook, English '13

I'm not certain whether it is more frightening to feel a primal *urge* to murder or to intellectually *fantasize* about murder, but I have done both. I suspect, in fact, that many people could empathize with me: the father who sits with his daughter as she awaits a rape kit, the sister who identifies her dead brother as the victim of a hit-and-run, the nurse who documents the signs of abuse on an infant, or even one of the millions of Americans who looked at a television screen or read a newspaper on the 11th of September, 2001. Some good people think about murdering other people. Homicide, bloodshed, a revenge-killing, or crime of passion; institutionalized or independent, a desire to take a life is arguably a desire to murder.

Fortunately most people possess a semblance of self-control. Whether they are deterred by morality, reason, fear of legal ramifications, or even an aversion to blood, most people do not murder. But would that change if government or religion soothed their moral senses by declaring *some* murders *justifiable*? What if an appeal was made to their reason; what if they were shown that murder was best for society in a utilitarian sense? What if *the law itself* carried out these killings far removed from public sight, where no one had to see any blood? What if it could be carried out in a manner that shed almost no blood at all? If these conditions were met, *could a person justify their approval of actual murder?*

Such questions are merely hypothetical in over two-thirds of the world's nations. For countries like China, Iran, North Korea, Yemen, and the United States, however, owning the majority of the world's state-sponsored executions has become a fiercely defended "right." In 2009 alone, according to the Amnesty International report on death penalty facts, we as a nation consented to the taking of 52 human lives. It's fair to say that we (again, as a nation) take a far greater number of lives every year through war and sanctions, but the kind of murder to which I refer is much more specific. It is deliberate. It is intended and prepared for the one individual by the state or nation. And it is cosigned by *we the people*.

As I read articles in the news about home invasions, kidnappings, and even brutal acts of torture, I'm confronted with mental images and questions. I see members of my family in those horrible circumstances; I imagine the apprehension of the perpetrator and the subsequent trial, and wonder if I would be able to tell the prosecutor that I don't want to push for the death penalty. The mere thought of it raises my blood pressure; I catch myself clenching my teeth. If I were provided with the opportunity to *personally* kill the perpetrator, would I hold true to my moral ideology? If not, how much less would I be able to resist the temptation to let my government kill the perpetrator for me (especially in a society that knows how to "justify" such things constitutionally and biblically)?

There's a good chance that I've personally taken a life in the past. In the military, I was fired at and called upon to return fire. It was hard to say whose bullets killed which insurgent. But before combat, I consistently earned high marks on the rifle range; in combat I was calm, kept a clean weapon, and was generally able to fire from convenient positions. The fact that I will never know for sure whether it was me or someone else in the platoon who made the killing shot allows me to not think about it very much. But in those moments of silence and honesty, I have to logically acknowledge probability: there's a good chance that I've killed.

And I hope to never do it again. Fortunately I am susceptible to deterrents. While I could eat a plate of spaghetti and cheese while watching open-heart surgery and not feel a twinge of nausea (as someone who's worked in the medical profession, the sight of blood and gore do not intimidate me), I am certainly a creature who is kept in check by morality, reason, and fear of legal ramifications. If someone intentionally harmed my wife or children, however, I would likely encounter a phase in which I might weigh and balance those checks against the intensity of my emotion (i.e.: I might ask myself questions like, "If I saw the perpetrator in a dark alley, what would I do?"). But this is the difference between me, a fickle human being, and the judicial system. At least it should be.

I need the judicial system to be stronger than me. I need it to be above my emotional weakness. Isn't this what the blindfolded Lady Justice is supposed to represent? So why do I continually hear callers on radio stations or friends in my living room say things like, "I'm sorry. If you kill someone, then you need to die. I'm not paying for your ass to sit in a prison and

lift weights or watch TV." Is it because they are weak like me? Is it because they have an emotional desire for revenge that they confuse with a sense of justice?

Ironically, many of these disgruntled folks also profess to follow a man who reportedly attended an execution and said, "let the one who is without sin cast the first stone." This, of course, easily translates to, "let the one who is without sin inject the pancuronium bromide, potassium chloride, and sodium thiopental or pentobarbital." Perhaps more interestingly: the states with the highest number of people who profess to follow this man are states that vehemently guard their "right" to institutionally murder ("Death Penalty Facts"; Barooah). Observations such as these, albeit unscientific and not necessarily based on a representative sample, lead me to wonder how much cognitive dissonance is necessary to murder a man or woman while retaining a faith that is arguably quite life-affirming.

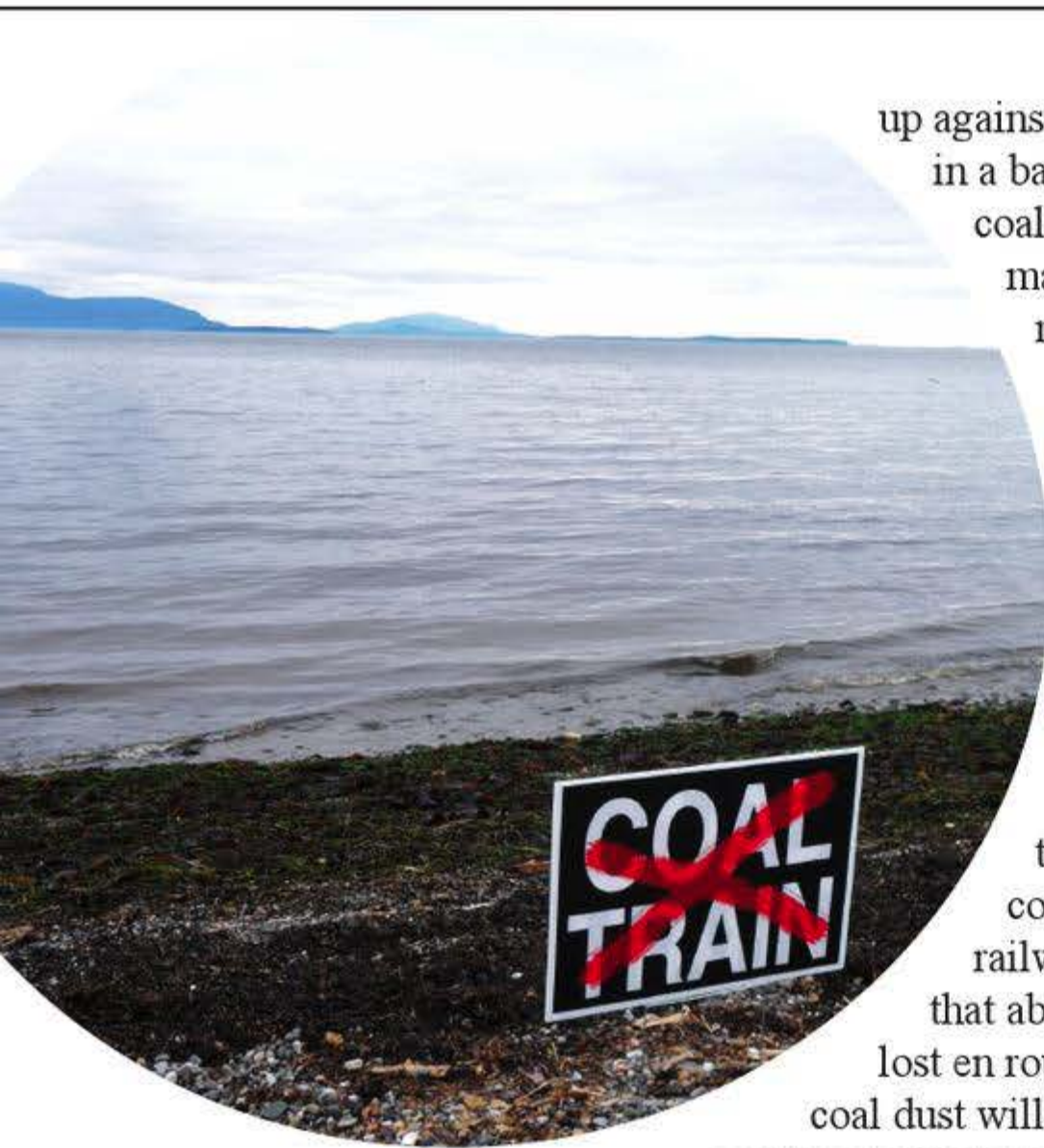
But maybe that's just it: the desire to murder is strong. I speak only for myself when I say that there is something deeply rooted about a sense of and desire for revenge under certain circumstances. It takes a soul like Mohandas Gandhi or Aung San Suu Kyi to startle me; to make me realize how much, if I let it, I can mistake revenge for justice. This is why I would repeatedly plea for my judicial system to be stronger than me; to be above the archaic practice of institutionalized murder; to stop me, should the situation ever arise, from killing again.

References

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Modern Day Oppression of Indigenous Rights



Members of PLU's GREAN Club learn that the proposed coal train is both an environmental and social justice issue

Citizens of the Pacific Northwest are currently standing up against some of the largest coal companies in the United States in a battle for our environmental and personal health. Excess coal is being mined in Wyoming and Montana that is no longer marketable for domestic use due to western states' commitment towards eliminating this dirty fuel source. As a result, coal companies have proposed transporting their product through the West Coast to Asian countries, mainly China, where coal is in high demand. New infrastructure would be required to accomplish such a task, so the proposed method is to transport coal by train to various coal export terminals along the coast where it will be sent to Asia on huge tankers.

There are numerous environmental and health concerns associated with all aspects of this plan. The trains themselves are of huge concern, as the cars must be left uncovered for the entirety of the trip to prevent combustion. The railway company that owns these rail lines, BNSF, estimates that about 500 pounds of coal dust per car of each train will be lost en route to the export terminal. As a result, massive amounts of coal dust will pollute the air of each community that train passes through, causing respiratory and other health problems. Each train is about a mile-and-a-half long and it is estimated that there would be about twenty trains per day going to and from the export terminals, halting traffic and creating safety concerns in each community. These trains would also constrain passenger train use of the rail, and would limit the transport of other goods. Another huge concern associated with this project is the negative effect it will have on the local marine environment. A coal export terminal would raise marine traffic, significantly increasing the possibility of oil, and now coal, spilling and contaminating our waterways; which is especially problematic since Washington is facing budget cuts in its oil spill response program. These risks make this issue personal for those at Pacific Lutheran University as it would impact us if it is approved. These trains would be running right through our region and we are right on the waters of Puget Sound. The health concerns associated with this should be a concern for PLU students, but an even larger social justice issue that students should be aware of is the exploitation of an indigenous group in Washington, the Lummi Nation.

The Lummi People are a Native group who have lived in Northwest Washington for hundreds of years. This proposed coal export project would directly affect the Lummi Nation as the construction site is on their ancestral land. The Gateway Pacific Terminal, the largest proposed coal export facility in North America, would be developed on their land at Cherry Point, located on the coast of Washington just north of Bellingham. Cherry Point, known to the Lummi people by its ancestral name Xwe'chi'eXen, is a place of deep spiritual, cultural, and historical significance.

There are many ancient names linked with this sacred place that are still called on by the Lummi people, tracing their ancestry and history to those ancient relatives. This proposed export terminal at Cherry Point would have numerous detrimental consequences for the Lummi culture as it would desecrate their sacred land.

If this plan were to be approved, the Lummi Nation would lose the right to their land as well as their fishing grounds, which are crucial to their cultural heritage and their subsistence. Xwe'chi'eXen has been the site of a Lummi village for over 175 generations, where they gathered, fished, and learned the ways of their people. The bay that Cherry Point overlooks is a large fishery for shellfish, herring, and salmon. If the port were to be built this rich and fertile area would be polluted and would result in a decline of fish populations and a loss of the Lummi's way of life. This place is part of the Lummi Nation's creation story and their First Salmon Ceremony. Xwe'chi'eXen is an incredibly sacred and precious area for the Lummi People; destroying it would be devastating to their culture and would desolate their traditional way of life.

On Friday, September 21, 2012 the Lummi Nation hosted a gathering to honor this land and their ancestors. Four members of PLU's GREAN Club were fortunate enough to be able to travel to Cherry Point to witness this ceremony and the beauty of the area. At the ceremony, the Hereditary Chief and leaders of the Lummi Nation spoke in their Native language and in English about the importance of Xwe'chi'eXen and how sacred it is to them. They shared many moving stories of their memories of this land and how it is a place where many have gone for calming reflection and guidance from their ancestors, who are very much present there in spirit. To put it into perspective, they explained that destroying it would be equivalent to building on other more widely known sacred grounds like Arlington National Cemetery. Multiple people gave accounts of how this land is a part of who their identity and they called for collaborative action so that it can remain their home. In a handout they gave at the gathering, Clifford Cultee, the Chairman of the Lummi Nation, was quoted as saying, "It is our promise and or duty to our ancestors, our elders, and to future generations to protect and preserve Cherry Point." To uphold this promise, the Lummi burned a symbolic check to make a statement that their rights are not for sale and they will not allow their sacred grounds to be demolished by this already too destructive coal industry.

It was an incredibly inspirational and empowering opportunity to stand beside a group of people who are so passionate about what they believe in. The Lummi displayed remarkable strength in standing up to these huge coal companies. Similar to many indigenous groups in North America, for centuries the Lummi have faced exploitation and injustices of having their land taken from them or destroyed by outsiders. Many would think that into today's modern world, oppression such as this would no longer occur, especially in a state as forward thinking as Washington; unfortunately, this is not the case. If this coal export project is approved and the companies are able to build The Gateway Pacific Terminal, Washington will be taking an unjust step backwards in history, taking ancestral land from these people and destroying their livelihood.



Representatives from the Lummi Nation speak out against the proposed coal train



Note: All of the information provided in this article was taken from a packet of information collected by Jewell James, a leader in the Lummi Nation, given to GREAN members at the September 21st ceremony at Cherry Point, Washington. For more information about the Proposed Coal Export Terminals in Washington and Oregon, visit: powerpastcoal.org. If you would like to get involved at PLU to help stop the coal exports contact GREAN at grean@plu.edu.

Eucalyptus

Aaron Bizier, English & Communications '14

Eucalyptus trees pose in the spotlight gaze
dusk smooths the harsh light
My eyes close
I feel the air move into my nose
then carbon escaping my bodied lips—
crickets' chants fill the space
My eyes flicker lashing the face
shaking the sundust from my rheums' chambers
A mothering breeze pushes me to and
fro like a worried parent. I sigh again
'till gravel thoughts blur away—a slate refreshed
My eyes close
Invisible beams cringe the face soaking in sun like a sponge
in a microwave Sundust and flies
begin their whimsical precision pivoting in East Coast swing
the face feels the little bugs darting here and there,
I sense them around my temples.
My eyes open
like a new born my eyes adjust
the mother wind curves my smile
as the sun curves the moon
I sigh
My face solemn in the fading citrus light
and January summer breeze
drops like a setting moon.



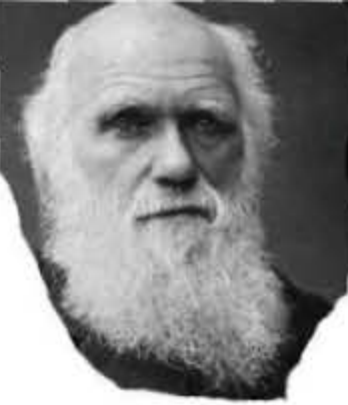
THE MOORING MAST



Sax·i·frage

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