

STOP

AND

{The Matrix}
fall 2014

LISTEN



DEAR READERS,

This has been a year for change in many ways for The Matrix, our university, and the world. With change comes a need for contemplation, reflection, and sharing. Recognizing that in our Fall 2014 issue, we wanted to promote self-reflection and deep listening, not merely as tools for engaging in the stories of our peers, but as actions that themselves are the cornerstones of social justice. By actively stopping and listening, both internally and externally, we are able to recognize diversity and make sure our actions reflect our goals. Stopping and listening is not a *what* but a *how*.

There are so many stories, ideas, experiences, and challenges that surround us each and every day that we fail to see and share with one another. Whenever we have received questions about our theme, we have responded with the question, "What is the one thing that you want people to stop and listen to?" The enthusiasm and excitement that we have received from their answers has been powerful and we look forward to sharing that with our readers.

We were floored by the submissions we received. Each piece within this publication embraces our vision, as contributors share their unique voices and experiences, daring the readers to listen.

But, the work does not end there.

We hope that you not only enjoy this issue, but also take it as an opportunity to grow. Just like a road that has many stop signs, so too do our own paths. Therefore, we should seize these opportunities to reflect and contemplate. Sit down, stop, listen to what these authors have tried to tell you, and be open to letting yourself change.

Happy reading,



Angie Tinker & Laura Johnson

Contributors

Kyrie Benson
Carly Brook
Luke Gillespie
Kristen Hayes
Thomas Kim
Cameron Kobes
Nick Mann
Millie Pacheco

Special Thanks

Austin Ballard
Caitlyn Dawes
Hai Doan
Ruthie Kovanen
Beth Kraig
Art Land
Leah Larson
Cliff Rowe
Reland Tuomi
USMB
Impact
Readers Like You!

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Serving “with” the Parkland Community

CARLY BROOK '15

“If you have come here to help me, you are wasting our time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together.”

-Lila Watson

The Center for Community Engagement and Service serves as a resource for students, staff, and faculty who want to learn and serve in the context of the Parkland and Tacoma community. In order to carry out this mission while uplifting dignity, self-determination, and inclusion, we must ask how our efforts to engage bring up ethical considerations about equity and horizontal power relations.

Many models of service inherently maintain the status quo of power. People who engage in service, backed by many intersections of privilege, may want to “fix” problems without allowing space for grassroots, community-based solutions to emerge. People, backed by economic resources, may want to dominate the problem solving process without actually responding to the needs expressed by that community. People, backed by institutional power, may want to impose their worldview without sharing the leadership with the local community.

These approaches to service are problematic because they are fundamentally patriarchal in nature. They do not honor the need to understand problems in a complex way before attempting to develop strategies to address them. They don't recognize the strength and ability of those experiencing difficulty to creatively innovate solutions. They reinforce narratives of victimization and helplessness that disempower communities instead of building power and cultivating sustainable community resources.

So how can we learn and serve through community engagement in a way that mitigates the potential for perpetuating power asymmetry and inequality while maximizing the potential for meaningful collaboration and mutual learning? How can service learning and community engagement be a tool to challenge patriarchy, instead of perpetuate it? How can we as members of the PLU community participate in the work of social change with the local community as partners and collaborators?

“We need to understand that the creativity, leadership, and tools for social change exist already in the community...”

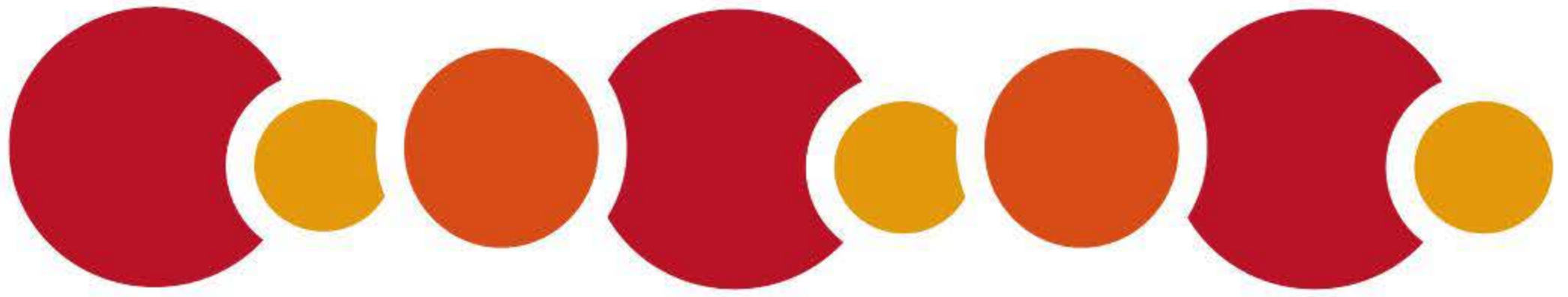


The Center for Community Engagement and Service serves as a point of contact for community members seeking university involvement with local organizations, programs and projects and for students, staff and faculty who want to learn and serve in the context of the Parkland and Tacoma community. We recognize the invaluable wisdom housed in our local community and seek mutually beneficial partnerships that deepen student learning while enhancing the common good.

We are a university embedded in the community of Parkland, a complex, ever evolving, diverse, and historically unincorporated part of Pierce County. Common public narratives about Parkland emphasize its crime, poverty and marginality. But working with community organizations, we've been humbled by the depth of knowledge many community members share around the history of Parkland. We've learned from students in this community about relationships and complex home lives. We've learned about innovative forms of community support in response to needs that exist in the Parkland community. We need to understand that the creativity, leadership and tools for social change exist already in the community and that one of the ways we can effectively navigate the web of power inequities inherent to service is to take a posture of listeners, learners and connectors.

The Center for Community Engagement and Service aims to be one of these connectors. Through the Big Buddies and America Reads programs we bring together students from PLU and students from Parkland to work together on academic success and mentorship. Through the English Language Learners program we create a space of multicultural and multilingual exchange through language learning. Through the work of the Parkland Mural we gathered Parkland narratives and brought them together to creatively tell Parkland's story. Through the Healthy Parkland initiative we are working to bring together people and healthy food resources to sustainably increase access to nourishing food. Through our on-campus events, we are connecting new information and new challenging perspectives with students' lived experiences to develop frameworks to responsibly engage in community engagement and service.

We acknowledge our shortcomings and our room for improvement. We hope to continue to learn how to best serve with our community. We are inspired by Lila Watson's words and will continue to work together with our surrounding community for our mutual liberation.



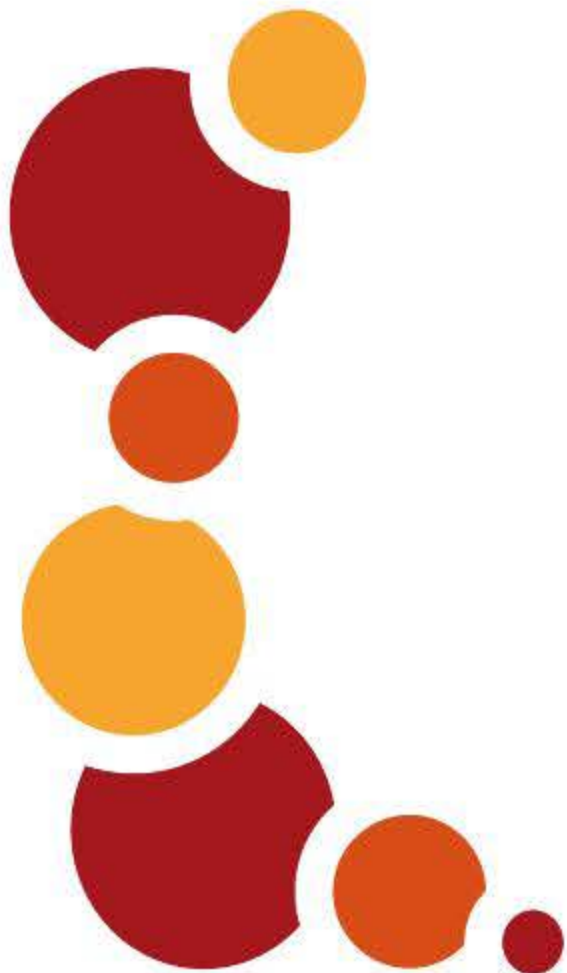
STRANGE GODS

KYRIE BENSON '15



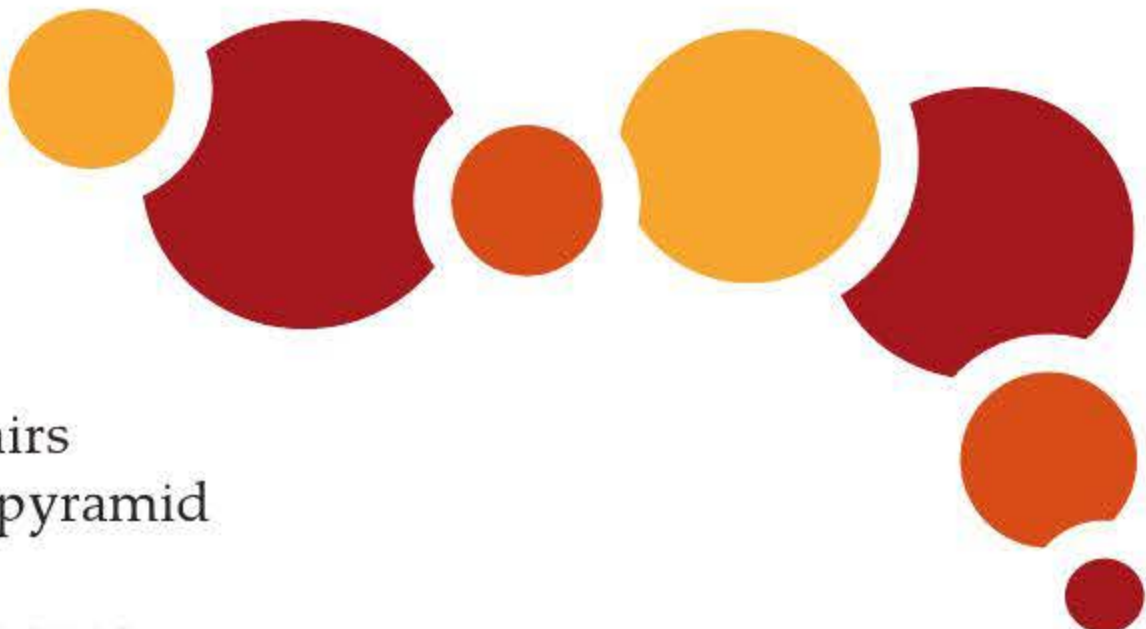
Kyrie Benson is a senior Psychology and Writing double major with a Hispanic Studies minor from Olympia, WA.

In September of 2012, I took a trip to Mexico City while studying away. During this trip, my class experienced the traditional Mexican Independence Day *grito*, or patriotic shout, as well as Aztec ruins and drenching tropical rain. In this poem, I try to reconcile our understanding of Latin American immigration, an issue we focused strongly on, with what we, as privileged American students, learned in traveling to Mexico. I also try to capture the sense that, even as we embrace a different culture, claiming it is really another form of colonialism.



In 1978, electrical workers
uncovered strange gods,
Huitzilpochtli renascent
three blocks from Burger King.
Statues with claws, skulls
with staring eyes, deities
torn limb from limb.

Such a long, tiresome bus ride to get there.



We, *los Americanos*,
climbed crumbling stairs
to the top of an *azteco* pyramid
called Babel
and shouted out in tongues.

¡Viva México!

That night, a tumble
of colors and rain drops, we consumed
a culture as if we could know it.

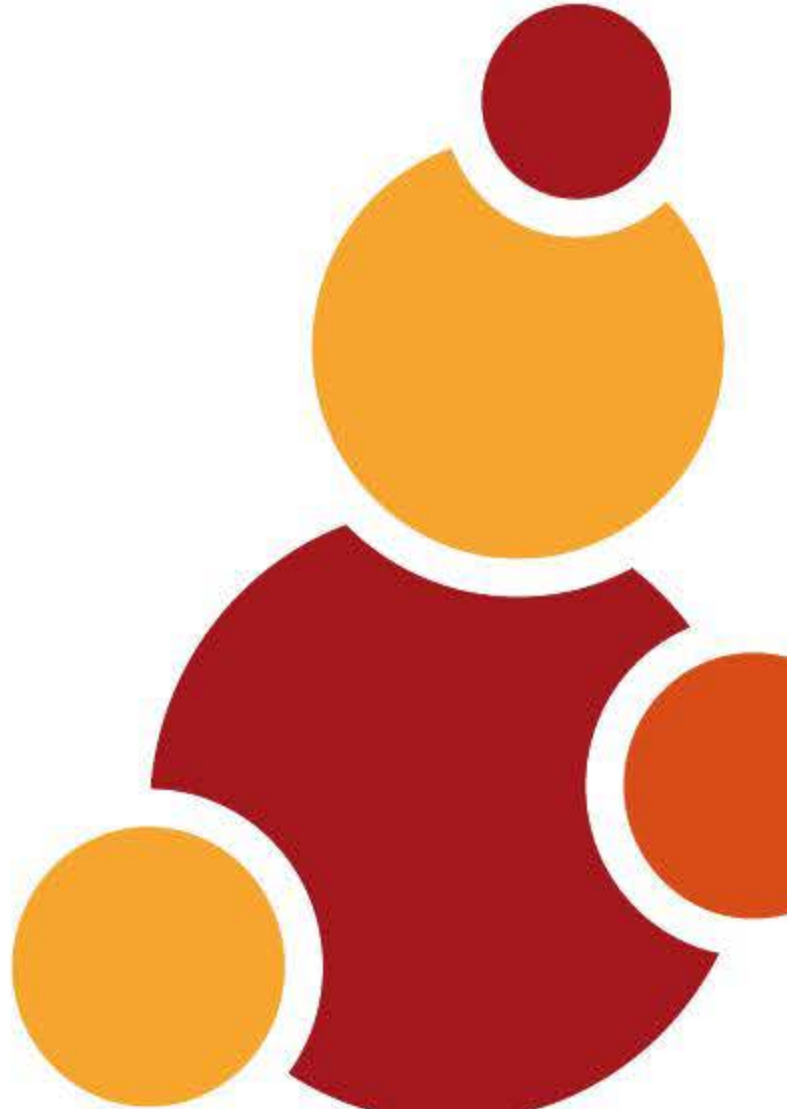
Rain pooling like coins
about our feet, our faces sloughing
off like snake skin. We walked
among Aztec dragons
and eagles, stone
bones, *huesos*, exhumed,
displayed. Us standing
drenched, *mojados*,

like migrants swimming the Rio Grande.

Rain gods and sun gods, gods
of sacrifice forming the foundation
of a cathedral.

*Nuestro Dios exige
los sacrificios también.*

Our God demands sacrifices too.



Why Social Justice?

Social justice is something that I am very new to, and I have honestly never heard the term before, at least where I'm from in Hawaii. When I first heard that Harstad was looking for a social justice director, I thought it would be a great way for me to get involved with the RHC and to become involved in PLU as a whole. It gave me the chance to be a part of something bigger. I began to do some research on what exactly social justice is and what it entails. In my opinion, social justice is about equality and human development. It is a term coined to increase awareness of working towards a socially just world, and providing equal opportunity to all people regardless of religion, sexuality, or nationality. As a social justice director, I am still learning a lot about different movements, agendas, and opportunities that are happening right now. Although I am a first-year, I am interested in growing as a social justice director and I am eager to learn more about the diverse topics social justice engages in, primarily with ethnicity and race. I would also be interested in learning more about human trafficking for forced labor, which is something I have recently heard about, and I find extremely interesting. All in all, I aim to educate myself and others about growing issues and topics that are occurring all over the world.

MILLIE PACHECO '18

Harstad Hall
Social Justice Director



Why not Social Justice?

GETTING PAID TO CARE FOR THE UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS



THOMAS KIM '15
Immigrant. Economist.
Follower of Christ.

of them are naturalized US citizens and 11 million are legal residents with green cards or work and student visas. And the rest, a whopping 11 million people, are undocumented immigrants.¹

That is a lot of people, especially in light of the total U.S. population of 316 million. Though one could simply choose to care less, the substantial issue here is that these 11 million immigrants are not functioning at their fullest economic capacity. And you should actually care. Ever since the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) of 1986, it has been unlawful for employers to knowingly hire undocumented immigrants. Especially with the adoption and wide usage of the E-Verify system, which allows employers to verify employment authorization within minutes, it is practically impossible today for an undocumented person to seek legal employment. This leaves two ways of looking at these 11 million individuals. The first is that none of the 11 million undocumented people are working. It is unlawful to do so, after all. The second is that maybe some of the 11 million are working, though unlawfully. Either way, it can be assumed that not all of the 11 million are operating at their fullest economic potential.

As an immigrant myself, I absolutely love all immigrants. I especially love advocating for immigrants in difficult circumstances. I love to place courage into them in their heartbreaking times. However, when it comes to various social justice issues in many publications, I personally have yet to see an economic viewpoint coupled with a compelling ethical reasoning. So, as an aspiring economist, I hope to present an economic method of reasoning to offer a tangible picture for any rational person to see our nation's desperate need for immediate immigration reform. In addition, as a follower of Christ, I hope to present a Biblical method of reasoning, displaying my personal conviction for genuinely loving the immigrants, especially the undocumented.

Immigration reform is absolutely needed for the U.S. as a nation to reach profit maximization.

Did you know that there are 40 million individuals in America who are born outside of the U.S.? 18 million

In our current labor market in America, there are occupations that undocumented folks can work in, and occupations that they cannot work in. Low Skill Occupations (LSO) tend to be less organized, allowing the undocumented individuals to successfully misrepresent their immigration status, or simply have employers who are willing to hire them, though unlawfully. On the other hand, High Skill Occupations (HSO), such as Fortune 1000 companies, government agencies, and military services, are practically impossible for undocumented individuals to land employment due to the well-established eligibility verification system and the employers' unwillingness to risk getting caught due to a reputation and financial cost associated with it.

You can see that BO amount of undocumented workers (on the left) work for the wage of BC in the LSO, whereas OD amount of documented workers (on the right) are working for the higher wage of DE. Some assumptions that are made for the sake of the model is that an employee's marginal productivity equals the wage, all employees have similar skill level (ie college grad), and that the marginal productivity is a linear function to the number of workers in that occupation, and is independent of the number of people employed in the other occupation.

It is apparent that the Low Skilled Occupation is overcrowded, in a sense that the marginal productivity of LSO, represented by BC, is less than that of HSO, which is represented by DE. This means that the overall output of this labor market can be increased by decreasing employment in LSO, and shifting that employment over to HSO. However, the current law under IRCA 1986 prevents this from taking place. But, what if America allowed them to work lawfully? In other words, what if our law allowed the 11 million to be employed in High Skill Occupations?

The answer is simple. America would get richer.

If we allow the undocumented labor force from B to S, for instance, to be able to shift over to the HSO, JH amount of work force will be created in HSO. From this change, undocumented workers working in LSO will have increased of marginal productivity from BC to SF. This means that their efficiency, as well as their wage, will increase. This would mean that the remaining undocumented workers will make the new wage of SF, which is higher than BC. Those undocumented workers who would now work for HSO, noted by JH, will make at least HG(=SF), since SF is

the opportunity cost of them leaving the LSO.

And of course the depression effect on the wage of the documented workers in HSO will be minimal since 305 million to 11 million is a very small ratio. The current Deferred Action for Childhood

Arrival program attempts

to do this. But the scope of this program is miniscule and the limitation of a mere 2 year period with the uncertainty of renewal does not give the employers enough incentive to invest in DACA individuals to the extent comparable to a typical documented employee. If we as a nation allowed the educated and skilled undocumented immigrants to work legally, overall profit will increase. In addition, the resulting wage gain and productivity will ripple through the economy, since the 11 million undocumented workers are consumers as well as tax payers. We would get richer by caring for the undocumented individuals in a tangible manner.

Your personal life would get richer, too.

“We would get richer by caring for the undocumented individuals in a tangible manner.”

Personally, providing a tangible and legitimate way for these undocumented individuals to economically thrive is so much more than a simple tool for profit maximization. Ever since I made a personal choice to follow Jesus Christ some time ago, I was called to care after the vulnerable. And as I continue to read my favorite book, it's difficult not to notice all the immigrant characters—Adam and Eve (the exiles) to Abraham, Sarah, Lot, Joseph, Moses, and Ruth. Even the Man who I am madly in love with is an immigrant. He left the comfort and glory in heaven to experience hunger, pain, and death in our world. Our missionary God accepted His displacement from heaven to bring salvation. Jesus, the love of my life, is an immigrant.

The rule of thumb for me is to submit to the governing authorities, the U.S. government in this context, since there is no authority except that which God has established (Romans 13:1-4). It's a solid and seemingly simple place to be. But it's not that simple, actually. Even for the author, Paul, it wasn't. He obeyed the law, except for the times when he didn't. He unlawfully preached the gospel, at the cost of his life. In addition to Paul, many apostles who resisted authorities claiming "we must obey God rather than men." All paid for the consequences. Even Jesus paid the price. So for me, loving the undocumented individuals is much more than adhering to a made-up tradition. It's about following God. But how do I reconcile with my calling to submit to the governing authorities?

“So for me, loving the undocumented individuals is much more than adhering to a made-up tradition. It's about following God.”

Context is the key. The verses right before Romans 13 tell me not to be overcome by evil, but to overcome evil with good (Romans 12:21). Just like my Rock Jesus died on the cross and triumphed in the resurrection, I am called to live a life submitted to the governing authorities, and then to accept the price of living like Jesus in a Christ-centered community. And that community looks like this: honoring one another above oneself, practicing hospitality, rejoicing with those who rejoice, mourning with those who mourn, and ultimately, being willing to associate with people of low position (Romans 12:9-16).

Jesus, God the immigrant, enters our world despite humanity's attempt to keep Him out by building a wall of sin. This outsider, a Galilean with no respectable family, formal education, nor approval from religious elites, was never authenticated in His life. And what a horrible deportation He had, especially following an unjust execution! It's worse than the deportations executed by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

As an economist, an immigrant, and a follower of Christ, it makes sense for me to love the undocumented people in America and to create an avenue for them to thrive. You see, loving the undocumented immigrants not only fulfills the life calling, but it also pays. So, I invite you,

Would you like to join me in getting paid to care for the undocumented individuals in America?

References:

i Passel, Jeffrey S., and Senior Writer D'Vera Cohn. *Unauthorized immigrant population: National and state trends*, 2010. Washington, DC: Pew Hispanic Center, 2011.

ii Bergmann, Barbara R. "Occupational segregation, wages and profits when employers discriminate by race or sex." *Eastern Economic Journal* 1, no. 2 (1974): 103-110.

Quick Reflections

CAITLIN DAWES '16
RESIDENCE HALL ASSOCIATION
SOCIAL JUSTICE DIRECTOR

I cannot recall the first time that I realized when I became passionate about social justice or advocacy via education. Upon a quick, but deep reflection of my memories, I think it might have been my sociology 190 class with Dr. Joanna Gregson. I think it is fair to give her this credit, since she is my adviser and was my first class that I ever took at PLU. It was with that class that we went over racism, sexism, heterosexism, the different sociological perspectives, stratification, and gender, along with many other topics. But it was due to this class that I finally learned how to put into words what I could not articulate as uncomfortable feelings that I have experienced. Now, I may seem biased as I am a sociology major, but it was because of this class that sparked the beginning of my social justice passion, and with this class many advocates have sprung forth. We need classes like this, because it teaches the other half of the story that some are afraid to venture into because of their privilege in being able to ignore those oppressed. We need advocates, because not everyone has access to higher education. We need social justice, because not everyone is willing to stop; and listen.



on Stop & Listen

WHAT DO YOU WANT PEOPLE TO



Alice Henderson:
Complexities



Claire Erickson and Andrew Calvin:
All things Environmental!



Hilary Vo:
Minority Rights Education



Jacynnda Woodman-Ross:
Victims of Domestic Violence



Olivia Ash:
Music that EMPOWERS Women



Bonnie Griffin:
Subaltern Voices



Jason Lynch:
Feminism & Consent



Maylen Anthony:
*Reproductive Rights and
Accurate Sex Education!*



Rachel Diebel:
The Voices of Today's Youth



Anne-Maria Falloria:
Indigenous Peoples



D'Ajah Johnson:
Black Student Union



Camille Adams:
Minority Rights Education

STOP & LISTEN TO?

A Race Analogy

CAMERON KOBES '15



Say you have two hundred people all lined up to compete in a distance race. Three miles, let's say. These contestants are a lot of different ages, from different places, wearing different clothes. The race is scheduled to begin at noon, at which point the starter gun will go off and people can begin running.

But in this race, there's a set of bizarre rules that dictate when you can actually start running. If you have a yellow shirt on, you get to start one minute before the gun goes off. If you have orange shoelaces you get to start two minutes before the gun goes off. If you've over five foot six you get to start three minutes before the gun goes off. If you have a tattoo on your body, you can't start until thirty seconds after the gun goes off. If you haven't gotten a haircut in the past month, you can't start until a minute after the gun goes off. If you wear glasses you can't start until five minutes after the gun goes off. So when the race is up and going, some people have a huge head start, some people have a small head start, some people are delayed a little bit, and some people are delayed a lot.

Now take this analogy and have the people who got a head start shouting back to the people who were delayed: "Why are you all so far behind? Why are you moving so slow? Stop being lazy and run faster!" A spectator might look at this bizarre race and wonder why it's so unfair to its competitors.

“I didn’t earn whiteness, maleness, or heterosexuality, but those are all attributes I have that give me a head start in that great big race.”

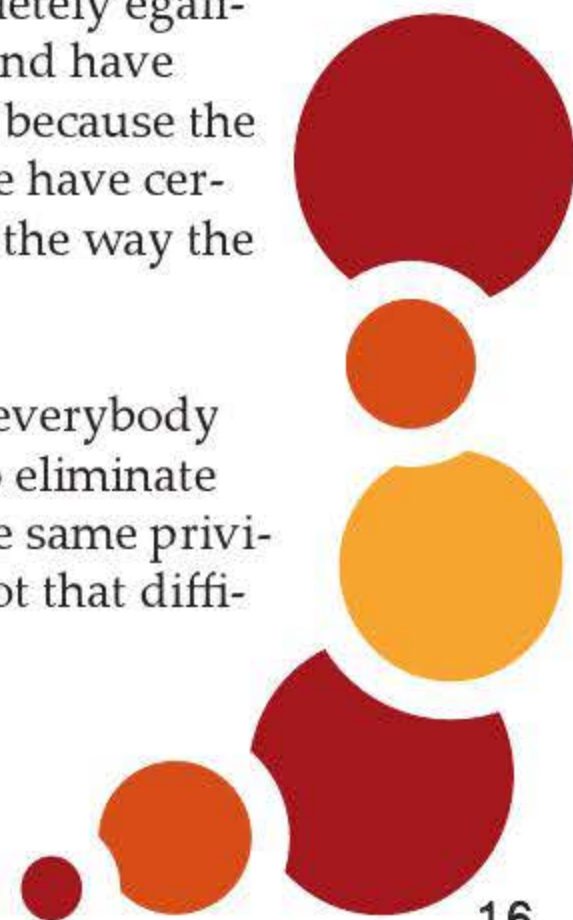
That’s how privilege works.

The finish line in the analogy is getting the most out of being a member of the society you’re in. If you’re born into a family with a lot of money, that’s a head start. If you’re born in an area with access to medicine, food, good education, or other resources like those, that’s a head start. If you’re born a member of the group—social class, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation—that holds the power in society, that’s a head start. If you’re not in that group, that’s a delay. If you’re born with physical or mental disabilities, that’s a delay. If you don’t get to be born at all, that’s a delay to such an extent that competing in the race is denied you; even being born is a privilege.

Privilege is whatever you’ve been given that puts the odds in your favor. It’s the unearned gifts that the world gave you and denied to others. I personally have the advantage of being a white male heterosexual in a country that favors white male heterosexuals. I didn’t earn whiteness, maleness, or heterosexuality, but those are all attributes I have that give me a head start in that great big race. I don’t have the advantage of being born to a wealthy family, but I have other advantages which work in my favor.

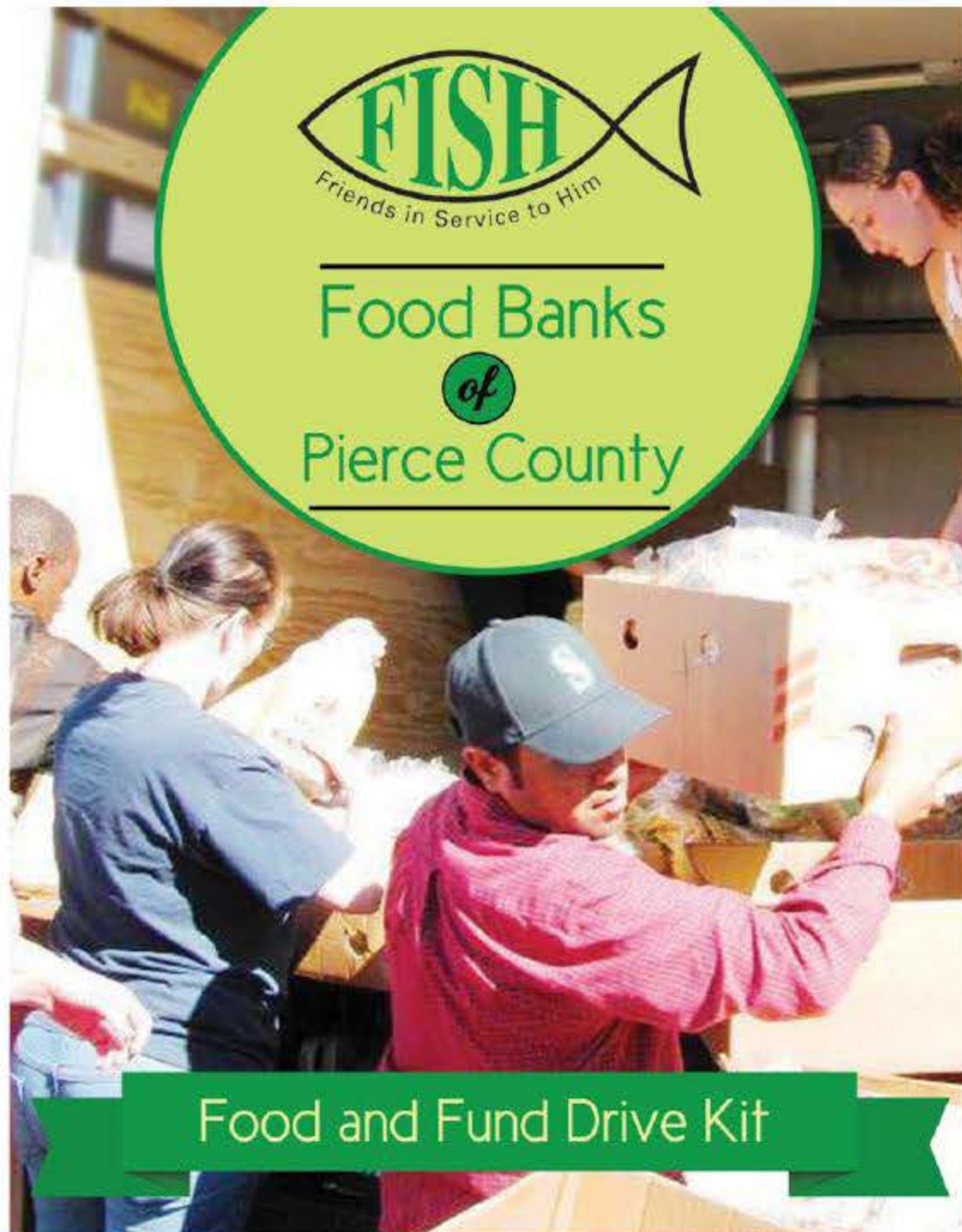
Having privilege is not a bad thing. It’s just something to be aware of. People with certain privileges can’t blame other people for not having those same privileges. People who have not been held down can’t look at people who have been held down and accuse them of being lazy. We don’t have an egalitarian society. To my knowledge, never in history has there been a completely egalitarian society. The only way all people could be on equal footing and have equal opportunities would be if we had an egalitarian society. But because the world is unfair, we don’t. Because the world is unfair, some people have certain privileges and other people lack certain privileges. That’s just the way the world works. That’s the system we all have to operate within.

The least anyone with privilege can do is acknowledge that not everybody has had the same advantages they’ve had. You don’t need to try to eliminate your own privilege, you don’t need to try to grant other people the same privilege you have, but at least acknowledge your own privilege. It’s not that difficult, and it makes the world at least a little bit more civil.





Examples of Visual Advocacy from Nick Mann



Starving Artist:

The Journey of a Creative Professional

NICK MANN '15



Nick Mann is a senior Studio Art major at PLU, a freelance graphic designer, and the Art Director of Impact.

they don't need to go to grad school? Is it because society sees art majors as lazy and incompetent?

Artists and designers are visual problem solvers. People need decorations in their house, ornaments in their front lawns, flyers for their events, and designs for their Facebook games.

People need to stop and look around them and realize an artist or designer went into great detail over how everything was made and used. Nothing is arbitrary. From color to material, there is a cognitive reaction to how people think and feel, and that's a puzzle that's up to the creative professional to solve for the user.

There is a mandatory willpower to keep creating art even after graduation. Many successful artists and designers don't have bosses; they are their own bosses, and as a boss they are the ones who set their standards. If you talk to any entrepreneur, they'll tell you their life isn't easy; but it's rewarding, and that keeps them going every day. Like-


As the Art Director of ASPLU's Impact, a student run ad & design firm, I attended the Fall Preview Day for the new students of PLU to offer insight about how we work and why it's important for those who want to be in the creative field to join us. A mother and her daughter were intrigued by my booth and proceeded to ask questions just like any other person. One of the first questions she asked was, "Are your parents proud of you?" I thought she was just being cheeky and didn't think anything of it.

She followed it by asking, "What are you doing after graduation?"

Then I realized she was stereotyping me.

Why have students who aim to become creative professionals been looked down upon? Is it because





wise, you wouldn't hear an artist saying their craft is easy, because if it was, they wouldn't be trying hard enough.

Happiness is an important factor contributing to a career, and it's also subjective. Office jobs can be lucrative, but how many of those office workers feel their actions are making a difference? Or how many are trying to look busy so they can do the least amount of work possible?

Artists get the chance to create work that will last longer than them, and they can't see themselves doing anything else.

If you venture into an art museum, you might hear the words uttered, "I could have done that." But did they?

Pablo Picasso, one of the most influential and successful artists of all time, has been known for his simplistic style of abstract shapes. He is also known for resisting the critics.

As the story goes, Picasso was walking through the market one day when a woman spotted him. She stopped the artist, pulled out a piece of paper and said, "Mr. Picasso, I am a fan of your work. Please, could you do a little drawing for me?"

Picasso smiled and quickly drew a small, but beautiful piece of art on the paper. Then he handed the paper back to her saying, "That will be one million dollars."

"But Mr. Picasso," the woman said, "It only took you thirty seconds to draw this little masterpiece."

"My good woman," Picasso said, "It took me thirty years to draw that masterpiece in thirty seconds."

Picasso didn't allow this critic to dictate his worth. Why should others?

After I explained in detail my career plans to help businesses with advertising to the mother at the Fall Preview Day, she smiled, nodded her head, and walked away as if she didn't listen.

Because she walked away she missed an opportunity to learn, not only about my career choice, but also about an artist's journey. It is not just about the outcome, but the process and execution. You are the one that has the authority to dictate the value of your choices.

Don't listen to the critics.

DISILLUSIONED

KRISTEN HAYES '15



Kristin Hayes is a Psychology Major with a Women and Gender Studies minor. She graduates in 2015.

The moment I walked through the doors of my Pacific Northwest liberal arts university, I was taught to know my privilege. Everyone has a responsibility to understanding his or her own unique circumstance, and to act justly because of it. I was introduced to the multi-layered and complex identity of an activist.

So, what does it mean to be a “real” activist? I see an awareness of privilege become a burning scar in far too many striving activists, where his or her attention is brought to everything they are doing wrong. “Checking your privilege” often loses its innocence of just being a healthy reminder. Feelings of guilt are easily internalized. Maybe it’s personalizing the social, economic, and political reality of your gender, age, sexual orientation, race, and socioeconomic class. This can be paralyzing and incredibly harmful both internally and externally.

The personalization of politicized terms does not reflect purpose or intention. Nobody needs or benefits from people trying to live up to an impossible feat of “saving the world” or understanding circumstances that will never arise in their personal lives. What people do ache for in dire situations, are real people. By describing this specific population as “real,” we run into the obstacle of putting to words the indefinable. In a piece by Amber Colyer entitled, “Real Men and Self-Perception,” Colyer attempts to question society’s construction of real. She asks, “What is this ‘real’ bullshit? We use it constantly in modern society... Surely, I am fleshy and real, as far as I can figure.” So, again I question, what does it mean to be a “real” activist?

“Checking your privilege” often loses its innocence of just being a healthy reminder.

I constantly ricochet between my ideologies as a psychologist and a sociologist. Is the definition of “activist” socially constructed? Or can I, as an individual, decide how I will best contribute through my unique passion for social activism? Is there a fluctuation between both ideas? To add depth to the current existential crises, I

question to what extent I consider my personhood attributed to my role in making a difference. Will my identification as a social activist overcome my personhood? Or will I strike a balance with other interests? Courtney Martin, writer, speaker, and avid feminist, spoke to this through the term “martyrism.” Through one of her books, “Do it Anyway,” she speaks to a new generation of activists where “activism [does not] martyrs their identities.”

To successfully coexist with the dark injustices and feel confident in the face of adversity, it is our responsibility as humans to care for ourselves. Our quality of self-care extends to our work as activists. Courtney Martin explores the personal struggles of activists in her statement, “I was disillusioned and paralyzed by the difference between what I had been socialized to think social change was and what it actually is in the real world.” How will we ever define what it “truly” takes to be an advocate for social change? This will be an everlasting existential question for the individual to decide within himself or herself.

Oftentimes social activists run on the notion that life is unfair, that we should be each other’s advocates, that people shouldn’t suffer in silence, and then work towards a safer world with heightened equality. These are beautiful goals, and


I stand by each one. But what goes unnoticed is the overwhelming

When harmful emotions are silenced, dangerous consequences occur.

ing amount of disillusionment within the lives of social activists (especially budding activists), and the destructive role this plays in personal lives. When harmful emotions are silenced, dangerous consequences occur. This is where the experience of “activism” becomes so skewed. Sometimes it doesn’t feel like something to be proud of anymore. Instead, it appears as a competition and reflection of the Western need for objectifying the subjective.

I propose that “real” activists are “real” individuals.

This demanding, never-satisfied enough, dried-up, and wilted drive of Western society represents the biggest force against self-care. We are never enough. Guilt and shame run wild. They manifests into negative voices pressuring activists to be better, faster, and stronger. Oftentimes these voices are stuck inside the most intelligent and dynamic advocates for social change. But if the most passionate, educated individuals burn out, who will follow in their footsteps? I am in complete solidarity with our universities, social justice programs, and conventions telling individuals to “check their privilege” and act accordingly. I know these statements can change the way people see the world and I value them deeply. There is more to the story that needs to be told. There is too much that goes untold inside some of the most seemingly “empowered” individuals.



Irrespective to the uncomfortable position of disillusionment, many reactions can occur. Sometimes, this results in throwing oneself into the fire and dedicating lives to work in activism, often reflecting helplessness and shame (and echoing Martin's idea of martyrism). These large, dark truths can act as burdens. Some individuals feel overwhelmingly negative about their helplessness or inherited privileges, and that the easier option is to dismiss activism all together. This is reflected in Kat Stoefell's piece about male feminism,

"The system - whether it's the patriarchy or white supremacy or capitalism - does not offer special exemptions for individuals with good intentions. And that should make you mad: the fact that even though you know better, and you are truly a male feminist, you're still stuck being the bad guy. You can't opt out of the privileges you inherited at birth. Or, as my male feminist friend once put, 'I'm not one of the good ones and neither are you and neither is anyone, FYI.'"

So what does it mean to be a "real" activist, devoid of the "bullshit" that society has coined upon this term? What does it mean to be "real," in general? And most importantly, how can we be genuine in our own struggles as activists, while fighting for global justice and healthy change? I think we often eliminate the personal, humane aspect of our roles as activists, and focus only on how our privilege affects the world. I propose that "real" activists are "real" individuals. Individuals who accept the emotional weight of the struggles they are working with, dissect them, and integrate them into the bigger picture. It is not possible to co-exist with the world, without coexisting with oneself first. This is often left out of the political conversations, but in my opinion, it is the missing factor for becoming the most effective, compassionate activist possible.

It is not possible to co-exist with the world, without coexisting with oneself first.

WITH EVERY STEP

LUKE GILLESPIE '16

Being queer is like having a permanent rock in your shoe, resting just beneath the most sensitive part of the foot. It juts out at your raw flesh, pinching and poking. It is something unseen that you carry with you no matter where you are, something you feel with every step, something that you cannot get rid of or destroy.

From your earliest years and within the realm of the ages of "innocence," you walk with this rock in your shoe, but you cannot comprehend what it means to have this stone pushing into the sole of your foot. You accept this rock as normal, as something that everyone carries with them in dark places that you cannot see.

It is only when the scope of cultural and societal understandings of sexuality affects you that you begin to question this rock,

But this rock cannot be moved, let alone seen. it cannot be pulled out of your shoe; your pain cannot be erased.

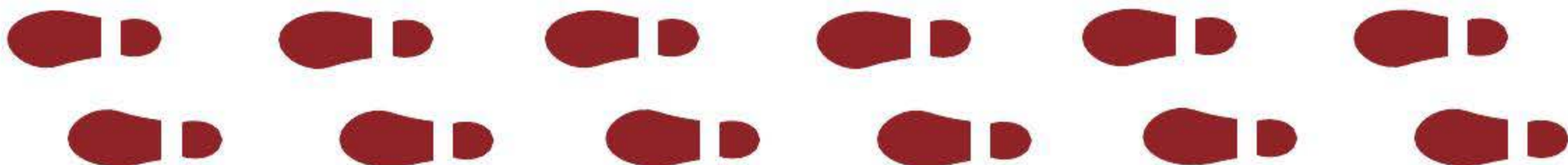
this stony mass protruding into your foot. It is only when society repeatedly tells you that to carry this rock is wrong, is bad, that you begin to feel the weight of your body pushing down on this stone that rests just underfoot. It is only

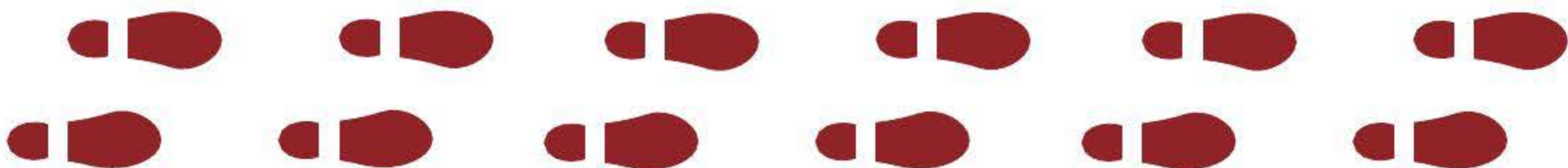


Luke Gillespie is an Environmental Studies major with Global Studies and Women's & Gender Studies minors.

when your mind becomes aware of the normalization of heterosexuality and the adverse persecution of homosexuality that you feel just how much that rock is hurting you.

Being queer causes millions of terrified and curious youth to rapidly untie their tightly bound laces, to wrench their aching feet out of their millions of worn shoes, and to frantically and fearfully search for the source of this pain, this rock that affects every painful step that they take. They must find this rock and attempt to toss it aside before someone notices that they have been carrying it all along, hiding it away from the hateful scrutiny of society.





But this rock cannot be moved, let alone seen. It cannot be pulled out of your shoe; your pain cannot be eased. You morosely slip your foot back into your shoe, feeling that rock press itself into the same part of your flesh that it always has. Every step the same, the stone unmoving.

You are not the only one who carries this burden, this rock in your shoe.

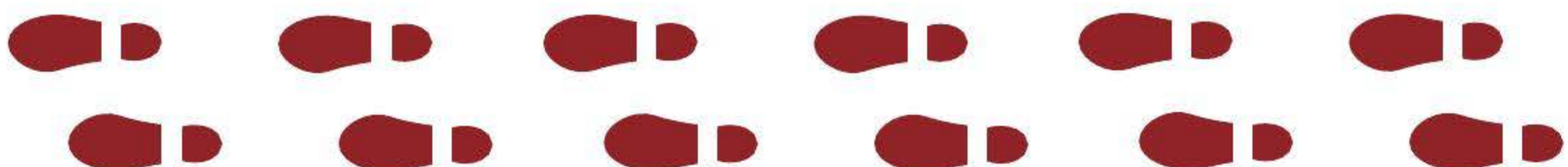
With the education and support that is provided by positive

sources, you will realize that you are not alone. You are not the only one who carries this burden, this rock in your shoe. With the knowledge that you are a human being and “he” is a human being and “she” is a human being and that everyone comes from the same place, the pain from this rock will slowly and exponentially deteriorate. The skin on the bottom of your foot will become calloused, and the rock will make every step you take stronger. Where once was pain now lays resistance and strength.

We are all born under different circumstances and into different consequences: some might carry nothing in their shoes besides their feet, some might carry this rock, and some might carry a boulder. We are all born with different minds, different skin, and different privileges. But we are all born the same way, from the same beam of light that has been shining since the first breath was ever taken in. We all swam in the same ocean as single-cell lifeforms, floating towards a common destiny.

Where once was pain lays resistance and strength.

Being queer is like having a permanent rock in your shoe with every step, but this rock is not a source of pain, or anxiety, or sorrow. This rock is a bursting stream of life, of happiness, of love. A long time ago, I hated this rock and wished it away from me. But now, I carry it proudly. I celebrate this rock. It dangles from a string around my neck for all the world to see, and to remind me that what once was pain has transformed into beauty.

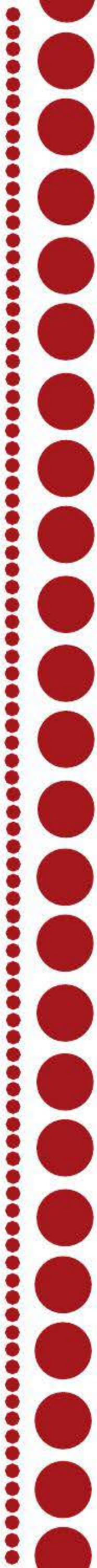


You've **stopped**.

You've **listened**.

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Now go change the world.



{THE MATRIX}

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