

# COMMUNITY COLLEGE MOMENT



INSIDE:

Richard Lennox on  
surfing the digital  
lifestyle

Anne McGrail on  
students' right  
to succeed

Carol Watt on  
teaching  
American Indian  
Languages

Bob Wing and  
Medea Benjamin  
on peace, change,  
and activism

Poetry,  
fiction,  
art,  
and more . . .

## NEW DIRECTIONS

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## Community College Moment Spring 2009

The *Community College Moment* is a faculty-led journal offering a forum for high quality progressive works that reflect a new vision of scholarship at the intersection of academic, activist and community interests. The *Moment* seeks to encourage and enhance the vital, inclusive scholarly culture uniquely possible at a comprehensive community college.

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# COMMUNITY COLLEGE MOMENT



Volume Nine  
Spring 2009

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## Change, Challenge, and Hope

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It's March, 2009, and like the flowers of spring many new directions are showing themselves abundantly, both off-campus and on. The United States has elected and inaugurated a new President, the first African American President in the country's history—not to mention the first born in the state of Hawaii. Other new directions confront us with great challenges: failing banks, the faltering of Wall Street, and the struggles of the automotive industry test our mettle as a nation. Closer to home, some new directions are bringing life to the campus atmosphere here at Lane Community College. Voters have approved a new bond measure to renovate the college's infrastructure. Enrollment shows an increase compared with the recent past. The use of technology to facilitate learning continues to climb, in and out of the classroom.

In this context of change, challenge, and hope, the *Community College Moment* brings together a collection of provocative thinking in many forms for your consideration. Among the diverse voices: Anne McGrail shows us the value of embracing a student's "right to succeed." Carolyn Litty writes about the ways a single teacher can broaden the lives of students, sending them in directions they never imagined. Kathy Torvik and Don Macnaughtan offer an alternative model for considering disability and new ways of thinking about the delivery of educational resources. In excerpts from speeches given at Lane's Peace and Justice Conference 2008, Bob Wing and Medea Benjamin stir us with their overview of recent political events and ask in what directions an emphasis on peace might take us. And, of course, technology shows up often: in the fractal art of Pat Sweeny, in Jim Bailey's use of Second Life for online instruction, Richard Lennox's ruminations on "the Digital Lifestyle," and Pam Dane's whimsical take on Facebook. In other pieces you can learn about multigenre art, American Indian Languages, how to lighten your life baggage, and the dangers of falling asleep on the bus. Many more poems, stories, essays, and art await on the pages within, to spark your imagination and send your thinking in new directions. We offer you the ninth volume of the *Community College Moment*.

Russell H. Shitabata and Ken Zimmerman  
CCM editors



## ESSAYS



To raise new questions, new possibilities, to regard old problems from a new angle, requires creative imagination and marks real advance in science.

Albert Einstein

# A New Direction: From “Freedom to Fail” to “Right to Succeed”

Anne B. McGrail

***Editors’ Note:** From the Lane Community College website: The Success and Goal Attainment Committee (SAGA) is a group of staff and faculty from many disciplines at Lane with the focus on improving student success. SAGA works to determine criteria and target areas for success and retention efforts through an inclusive process and consistent with the College’s mission and goals. It emphasizes the understanding of barriers to success and retention from both a student point of view and a faculty/staff point of view, in addition to gleaning best practices from the literature on student success, retention, and related areas.*



For the past several years, I have been a member of the Success and Goal Attainment (SAGA) Committee, a group of student affairs professionals and faculty at Lane who gather to coordinate retention efforts at the college. Of all the committees I have served on at Lane, SAGA is unique in that it acts as a “think tank” for student retention and success. Some members are assigned to the committee, but SAGA’s energy and efficacy, in my mind, come from members’ genuine sense of common purpose, a common purpose that enables us to overcome divisions based on employee group or assignment in academic or student services. This common purpose is to answer these questions: What leads to student success or failure? Why do some students remain and complete degrees while others disappear? Do those who disappear ever come back? Why do some students complete their degree goals in a timely fashion, while others rack up debt without making progress toward their degree? Why do some students feel at home at Lane while others feel unsafe or unwelcomed at Lane? What can we do to help students stay at Lane until they achieve their goals?

Of course, these are huge questions, with many answers. Over the past five years, as SAGA has come upon partial and tentative answers to some of these questions, at some point we always stumble upon an unspoken, intangible and unofficial underlying factor in our answers: in its efforts to be everything to everyone who comes to Lane, the college has given students the freedom to leave. Sometimes they go because they want to. But sometimes they go because they fail. When students lose their way because they’ve been given too little direction and too much freedom, we call this the “freedom to fail.”

To help readers understand the impact of this freedom to fail, we need only turn to data about student persistence and retention. Here at Lane, only 53% of students who begin school fall term will return for a second year. If they are going to school part-time, only 38% return for a second year. And while there are myriad reasons that students leave

a community college, there are other schools around the country with a much higher rate of persistence, in some cases nearly 20% higher than ours (“State Report: Oregon.” *Measuring Up: the National Report Card on Higher Education*. The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, 2008. <<http://measuringup.highereducation.org/reports/stateProfileNet.cfm?myYear=2006&statename=Oregon&cat=CO>>.)

We believe that we can make institutional changes that will enable us to improve our persistence rates and improve student lives more than we do already, but we have to address campus systems and attitudes in order to do so. Thus, SAGA has combined institutional and national research, widespread campus discussion, focused trainings, and pilot project implementation in order to initiate a shift at Lane in which the college might move away from a “freedom to fail” culture to a “right to succeed” culture. Recently, Lane received a five-year, two million dollar Title III Department of Education grant. This grant will provide support to implement policies and practices that will address this freedom to fail.

Of course, none of us has ever thought that we are here as educators to cause students to fail, and many of us may bristle at the phrase “freedom to fail.” Indeed, nearly everyone at Lane values *freedom*; it is such freedom that has made this college a place where students can explore, wonder, try new things, and discover talents and subjects that they might never have done without an open path. In addition, we value the sense of freedom linked to a basic respect for our students as adults: we don’t want to “tell them what to do.” Many of us have felt that by making their own choices, students learn about themselves and about life—even as they go through the disheartening process of tripping up. In some ways this freedom is an aspect of the quintessential American value of “opportunity.”

However, what may be perceived as opportunity does not translate to freedom to succeed, and the phrase “freedom to fail” can help us comprehend the disadvantages incurred by students left to their own devices when they don’t have the necessary skills to manage their freedom. For students who need guidance and structure, the freedom that we, as educators, cherish, translates into a freefall.

In such cases this freedom comes at too high a cost for too many of our students, and as stewards of public resources at a public institution, we owe it to our students to intervene. In many cases, freedom at Lane has translated into a set of “laissez faire” practices and policies, for example: with respect to student advising, students are not required to be advised in order to register; with course selection, very few courses carry prerequisites or even minimum placement scores in reading, writing, or math; while we know that students benefit from academic and social contact with a community of their peers, learning communities are not required; and instead of warning students who are at risk of failure early in their freefall, systematic intervention only occurs when GPAs drop to a point where recovery is difficult.



Granted, this “hands-off” attitude has worked well for many students: for the most motivated, mature and prepared students, this freedom to explore really does translate into the freedom to succeed on their own terms. Most Lane staff can tell you a story about a fantastic student for whom Lane and the world at large really was their oyster; we all are proud of those students who went about finding the pearl of success. This is the kind of freedom that all of us value and would like to preserve.

But the new direction we intend to pursue with this Title III grant implementation is really not aimed at the most prepared and motivated students. Indeed, the most motivated and mature students already take advantage of advising, take courses in sequence, take learning community courses and achieve high GPAs, etc. Rather, we are focused on the majority of students who come to Lane underprepared in some way: fully 45% of Lane students test below college-level in reading or writing, and 95% of students seeking to transfer do not test into college level math. To these at-risk students the world of college is another in a long line of demoralizing obstacles that life has thrown in front of them. And too much freedom has proven a tremendous disadvantage for them: for young or immature students; for students who are academically or emotionally under-prepared; for students who have already had to overcome enormous challenges just to walk into the front door; for first-generation college students for whom academic culture is threatening and alienating. Thus, whether intentional or not, there are many programs and practices (or lack of programs and lack of practices) at Lane that have provided a “freedom to fail” for many students. By changing our direction to emphasize the “right to succeed,” we can provide a new and navigable path for students who might otherwise struggle, drop out, or fail altogether.

### **New Emphasis as New Direction**

For the purposes of the Title III grant work, the “right to succeed” will involve implementing a set of best practices for student success and retention that may constrain students’ freedom in some small ways, but in return will make the college *truly* accessible by providing a path to success. So what exactly would this “new culture”—this “new direction”—look like? Well, in fact, it would look a lot like the Lane we already know. For years, SAGA and many other departments and groups on campus have already been at work building the “right to succeed” into students’ experience at Lane. Following its comprehensive research into best practices for student success and retention nationally, SAGA has adopted a set of seven. By implementing these best practices in key areas of students’ experience at Lane, students can exercise their “right to succeed” and experience the freedom that comes with achievement of their goals.

## **Best Practices for Student Retention and Success**

1. First Year Experiences
2. Academic Advising
3. Learning Communities
4. Supplemental Instruction
5. Early Warning and Intervention Systems
6. Campus Climate/Supportive Learner Environment
7. Active and Collaborative Learning Strategies

So how might these best practices translate into a new direction at Lane?

## **Course Selection**

In a “freedom to fail” culture, the road to selecting courses can be fraught with difficulty. For some students, in programs such as Nursing, for example, course selection has already been determined, and no one minds this lack of “freedom.” But for many students—and often, these are the most unprepared, and often the most inexperienced at college life—the college catalog presents a dizzying array of choices. Students are free to “explore” disciplines, and can take as many courses as they can pay for. Often, these same students arrive at the registration process late in the game, and so find that the only open classes are ones for which they may be unprepared.

In a “freedom to fail” culture, these students discover too late that they are ill prepared, or that they’ve taken too many classes given their work schedule and family life. Some of these students drop out, and we may never see them at Lane again. Some may return years later—at a high cost to themselves and also to the college that enrolls them. In a “right to succeed” environment, policies and programs are in place that guide students’ course selection and provide a supportive learning environment. Students take courses appropriate for their preparation and those that help them reach their stated goals in a timely manner. How does this happen? One way is through orientation and advising that are required, timely and relevant

## **Orientation and Advising**

In a “freedom to fail” environment, some students go to an advisor or counselor for help with their educational and life goals. At Lane, fewer than half actually choose to do so on their own. But we don’t want to force anyone to do anything. Instead, we allow students to “self-advise” if they don’t have time to make an appointment or stand in line for advising, and they can just sign up for any open courses on the first day of class. In a “right to succeed” environment, all students go through group Orientation and Advising geared to their educational goals. Up-front services prevent last-minute registration (and subsequent drop-out). To make this fiscally sustainable, more group advising sessions and

workshops provide timely information to all students. Meanwhile, advisors and counselors are freed up to work one-on-one with students who are struggling with particular issues.

### **Early Warning Systems and Intrusive Advising**

One of the most important reasons for emphasizing a “right to succeed” culture at a community college is the ethical responsibility we have as stewards of a public resource; at the same time, we are educators whose role is to help students become better stewards of their own resources. One of the major problems with a “freedom to fail” culture when our students are economically struggling is that they end up paying money for credits they never earn because of dropping out or failing. In the past, students have been free to keep failing classes and paying for re-takes—at least until they are called out by Financial Aid. By and large, instructors are not aware of how many times a student may have taken a similar course. And counselors and advisors hear about the failures only once students do poorly enough to be placed on academic probation.

In a culture that emphasizes students’ “right to succeed,” Early Warning Systems, Mid-Term Grade reports, and Intrusive Advising provide students with consistent and timely feedback and motivation to do mid-course corrections rather than waiting to fail and go into debt. Such a system of intervention involves cooperation of academic and student affairs staff. In this way, the “right to succeed” culture may have a profound impact on the relationships among faculty and student affairs professionals. Instead of thinking of the “two sides of the house” as distinct, we may find a way to truly integrate what we offer students. And in so doing, we may find a new understanding of the values and challenges of the “other side of the house”—whether academic or student affairs oriented. This may in turn allow mutual respect to grow across the traditional divide between these groups. Thinking of student learning as an holistic experience—one that involves planning, prioritizing, coursework, homework, intellectual and social conversations, new skills in technology, financial literacy, personal responsibility, physical self-care, just to name a few—may both require and produce a new holistic work experience at Lane.

### **Learning Communities**

Holistic learning is at the heart of Lane’s history of Learning Communities, where paired courses offer students and faculty a chance to study a topic across disciplines while also engaging each other in a social community. For twenty years, the Women in Transitions program has provided linked classes to women in the community who are facing new directions in their lives; for more than ten years, learning communities that reflect faculty interest and research with names like “EcoTrails,” “Go For Baroque,” “Movement, Image, Text” and “Fat Cats and Underdogs” have thrived. These creative endeavors have been accompanied by learning communities that specifically address students’ needs: “BioBonds”



is an early example, which was designed to address student under-preparedness for the Anatomy and Physiology sequence. “Show Me the Money” guides students through the process of getting scholarships. And for the past five years, “Fast Lane to Success” has offered students a College Success class and an Effective Learning class. These classes, now paired with Writing or Math classes, form the core academic component of Lane’s nascent First Year Experience.

While learning communities have always been aimed at helping students succeed, the “freedom to fail” culture has been felt there too: since learning communities are not required, and students hear about them mostly through word-of-mouth, not enough students have been able to take advantage of the proven advantage they offer. (National research is unequivocal in the demonstrated benefit learning communities provide to retention and success; in community colleges, the social and academic integration offered in learning communities is particularly felt.) In the “right to succeed” culture supported by the Title III grant, Lane intends to offer some version of a “Fast Lane to Success” first-year learning community to 500 students by 2013. This will increase by more than five-fold the number currently enrolled. While we may never be able to require *all* students to take a learning community—community college students are simply too diverse in their schedules and goals—we can build a culture in which all students know about learning communities, and many more students benefit from them.

### **Tutoring and Supplemental Classroom Learning**

One of the reasons that writing and math classes are key courses in the first year is that they are often “gatekeeper” courses—courses that students must pass in order to progress in their program. However, many students lack the foundational writing and math skills to succeed, and here too is where the culture at Lane can change. While tutoring and other forms of supplemental classroom learning are key to successful completion of core classes, many Lane students are afraid of a stigma attached to tutoring, and don’t take advantage of these services. (Meanwhile, it is often the most successful students who inhabit the tables at Lane’s Tutor Central.) As we move toward a “right to succeed” culture, we intend to find ways to guide more students to the right tutoring services at the right point in their education so that they see tutoring as an activity for high-achievers.

### **Prerequisites**

In an environment where enrollments are tied to dollars, it is hard to imagine keeping students from taking classes they want. At the same time, for students to succeed, they need to be placed in the appropriate classes for their level of preparedness. Many of us know of students who made unwise choices supported by the *laissez-faire* attitude to prerequisites. These students may say, “I know the placement test placed me in Writing

80, but I saw this really cool 200-level class called ‘Literature of the Social Psychology of Ecobiological Mathematics’ and there aren’t any prerequisites. I can’t wait to take that. I’ll take Writing 80 later.” Of course, by the time they fail “Lit/Soc/Psych/Bio/Math 299,” many are too demoralized to take Writing 80. These students have a right to succeed that is more valuable than the freedom to explore at their own financial and education risk. And of course, the concept of prerequisites doesn’t preclude freedom to explore; it simply delays it until students are better prepared and more apt to succeed.

### **Technological Literacy**

Technological literacy may be the last refuge of the old “freedom to fail” culture since everyone acknowledges that access to and facility with technology are very uneven in a community college population. Since many students don’t have computers, or don’t have Internet access, we are reluctant to “force” them to use computers in courses. The Title III grant offers Lane the opportunity to permanently change this thinking by providing a student portal as a single mechanism for students to communicate with the college. For example, registration, application for financial aid, emailing faculty would be located there. Likewise, the college would be able to communicate with students, providing calendars of important deadlines and events, offering “early warning” to students at academic risk, and providing e-mail from faculty about upcoming assignments. We envision a future at Lane in which e-portfolios provide students a centralized and portable means to gather their best work over the course of their college career to take with them to future endeavors.

### **Cooperation and Commitment**

So who is responsible for taking this new direction toward a “right to succeed”? Will it be another pet project of some, while others remain on the sidelines? Not if it’s going to work. If there’s one thing this shift will take, it’s cooperation and a sense of common purpose. For students to exercise their “right to succeed,” faculty and staff must be unified in their intention to ensure such a right. An intentional integration of academic and student affairs must provide an holistic learning experience for students. This experience will support students as they develop skills for college success in all their classes and interactions with the college. This means coordinating and reinforcing principles of college success into the pedagogy and curriculum of many courses across campus and also in students’ co-curricular activities. These principles include: developing self-motivation, adopting a goal of life-long learning, taking self-responsibility for their life and learning, making wise choices, and developing interdependence and emotional intelligence, among others.

We can support students in all aspects of their experience at Lane as they learn the language and practice of success. Instead of thinking that students learn academic material in their courses and should work on life-skills development in their extra-curricular activi-

ties, a “right to succeed” culture will acknowledge that this learning happens everywhere, and all staff need to support such learning where it happens. (We all certainly know that the freedom to fail is exercised everywhere!) Everyone is responsible: students take responsibility for their plans and goals; faculty and staff have high expectations of students and also provide the guidance and services that put students on the right pathway at the right time.

For this new direction to really take shape, it will take a cultural shift that is similar to several other successful movements at Lane: for example, the move to being a “learning-centered” institution; the move to putting “Students First”; and the move to thinking of how we can embrace diversity and create a welcoming environment for all who come to Lane.

When an explicit “right to succeed” replaces an unspoken “freedom to fail,” deep learning and transformation will occur in our students’ lives.

Thanks to Mary Parthemer and Kate Sullivan for their helpful suggestions on a draft of this essay. While the opinions expressed in this essay are mine, the work of SAGA, the Title III Steering Team, Grant Writer Aaron Schonk, and especially Title III Grant Director Mary Parthemer, form the foundation of the thinking and structure of the idea of a “right to succeed.”



# Be Careful When Falling Asleep on the Bus

Guillermo Portugal Durán  
Translated by Indira Bakshi



**Translator's Introduction:** *I teach the lowest level of English as a Second Language at Lane Community College. Often I get the recent arrivals to the country, whose language skills are just beginning to emerge. A few words pronounced correctly, or a phrase or two spoken quietly from the back of the room, is an accomplishment in my class. Guillermo Portugal Duran was in my Level 1 class in the spring of 2008 when he confidently told me one day in English, "I am a poet."*

*I translated the original version of this story for a presentation for the International Day. This day our department collaborates with other international student organizations to share and exhibit the cultures of the international and ESL students at Lane. Guillermo was the only student from Bolivia that year. He considered the task seriously. What could he share? We talked about the options after class, a presentation, a song, a dance, food, a table display or traditional costumes. His eyes shone brightly when he realized that he had a story that he was working on that he could share! He brought the story to me, which was more of a poem than a story at that time, and I began to translate it.*

*First Guillermo read in Spanish and then I read in English. The crowd was silent as the words evoked images of both Bolivia and Eugene in the minds of the listeners. Several people approached us after the reading and suggested we submit the story to the Community College Moment. A colleague in our department expressed the essence of the story best when she said "I felt like I was being transported back and forth from Bolivia to Eugene and dragged in and out of sleep."*

*This is the revised and polished version of that story. It retains the imagery of that first draft. Enjoy the ride!*

It's hot, the day is drowsy, and the vegetation is exuberant. I'm waiting for the number 82 bus on the route to LCC. At any moment the bus will appear, two large compartments, new and clean. The buses run on time and come and go criss-crossing the summer. The heat is unbearable, like standing in front of an oven door. Here you catch the bus only at the stops, and only at their time. If you miss it, you have to wait for the next one. It will come however it is, even empty, and when it goes, not even a trace is left behind. There's a lot of vegetation in Eugene. Most beautiful are the trees, with their many colors and shades, and the eagle crossing the crystal clear sky.

• • •

I'm sitting in the seat in the back. Sitting here is like a bad dream. Among so many people, you can't get off. You have to wind yourself between the passengers, barely moving,

pushing. It's like swimming in thick mud against the current; that's why it takes a long time to get off, and if you don't make it, you have to get off at the next stop. The cold is unbearable, and this old bus with hardly any windows or heating feels like a refrigerator. At least a bit of heat emanates from the many passengers that it holds. All right, why complain? At least I'm seated and I can see the people and the city through the window.

The bus pulls itself along heavily like an old worm, not only because of the chaotic traffic, but also because the driver goes slowly, so that people gather at the stops and he can pack in more passengers. This is how you learn to be patient in the torturous streets of La Paz.

Two women are in the middle of the street waving their hands. The bus stops and they get on, pushing. I don't know how they do it in their wide polleras<sup>1</sup>, but now they're inside. They have agreeable faces and a smooth gaze, long braids and gold capped teeth and every once in awhile they adjust their small hats with agile movements of their heads, never once using their hands. Nobody knows why; it's a mystery. A breeze unfurls an aroma of food, chocolate, sweat and beer.

We're close to Amazon Park, immense, beautiful, with people running and on bicycles. Number 82 stops, and an extremely thin young man in a black jacket gets on. A hood covers his head and you can scarcely see his face. The bus moves along quickly, and the air conditioner chills the air. It's comfortable to be in so much peace and silence. In Eugene, the peace is dream-like, and sometimes people smile at you with so much kindness.

Every once in a while, I stop to look at the passengers. Next to me an old man smiles, his face so wrinkled that it looks like earth furrowed by time. He's extremely thin, but his hands are beautiful, fine and slender. I lean back in the seat to look at the people gathered at the corner. The driver stops slowly. People throw themselves at the bus and get on, pushing each other, squeezing in where they can. I assure you that it is better to travel like a canned sardine than to stay on the street. The bus is full, but they'll still get on. They take awhile to load, while those already on the bus begin to shout at and insult the driver to leave and finish the route. Little by little, tired, the old bus moves again. Four men hang on the door, and yet another comes running from behind, because at any moment and at any place somebody always gets off.

• • •

The digital sign above the driver lights up. Its luminescent red letters tell the date and the time. We stop again, the automatic door opens, and some passengers get on. They get on in silence, without touching each other and maintaining distance, maintaining their

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1. Polleras—very thick bell-shaped skirt, native dress of the women in eastern Bolivia.

free space. One man stands in front of the bus and lowers the bicycle rack; he loads it and gets on leisurely. The air conditioner makes the trip pleasant. Everyone rides in silence. They don't look at each other, keeping a certain mental and physical distance. The thin young man sits next to me. I look at his face thoroughly; it is pale with sunken eyes. The 82 moves and we continue on a fast route. Up front, you can hear a conversation. I get comfortable in the seat, and a pleasant aroma envelopes me. I look out the window, and I only see trees and trees, a lot of vegetation, many greens that blur into many greens. At once, I don't know why, I feel very relaxed and sleep begins to overwhelm me. I feel good, I close my eyes, it would do me good to snooze a little.

• • •

The motor purrs wearily. One by one, they pile in, making room, side-to-side, elbow-to-elbow, body-to-body and the driver always shouting. His voice rises over the lively music. "Please, move on back. There's more space in the back." Where? If you dropped a pin, it couldn't fall to the floor. The bus moves. It goes slowly, tediously; then I notice a dog is panting on the shoulder of an old woman. His long and dry tongue hangs down like a tie. Suddenly, above our heads I see a tray appear, then a hand, after that an arm, a shoulder, a head. It's an old man selling tea in little plastic bags. He moves among the passengers like a phantom, stretching high and low supporting his platter above the heads. "Hot teas. Hot teas." He sells one and then another and then disappears in the same way that he appeared. I stand up to stretch my legs and look at the people. They're all talking and laughing. A guitar sounds, from where, I don't know, and two drunks begin to sing a bolero. Unexpectedly, a hand reaches through the window and snatches a woman's hat: it disappears in an instant. The woman begins to yell but she can't do anything. I can see the thief well. He is a gangly young man and he walks slowly, whistling and looking at the bus. He crosses the street, dodging the cars and is lost among the people on the other sidewalk. I move away from the window a little. You need to be careful; this how they rob glasses, hats and anything in reach.

The old man next to me reaches into his pocket and surreptitiously sprinkles a powder over my face. We look at each other. When he smiles at me, his thick and delineated lips do not hide his absence of teeth. I look out the window again and little by little I go to sleep and I begin to dream. It must be the cold, I tell myself. I close my eyes. Somebody shouts. "Thief! Grab him!" Some people stand up to get a look at the thief; it looks as if he is behind the driver. I feel tired, I don't feel like looking. You can hear more noises, blows; surely they are giving the thief a good beating. Sleep triumphs and I begin to dream. I see the beautiful trees with white and pink flowers, leafy pines and an eagle crossing the blue sky.



A rare sensation wakes me. I open one eye. There's a hen pecking at my shoestrings. Something frightens her and she leaves. A small boy appears crawling after her. They disappear under the seats. I close my eyes, and I return to my dream. The trees appear, the crows, the raccoons, the squirrels climbing the trees and the eagle marking the sky. A sad voice wakes me. It's a child, situating himself among the people, begging. He smiles at me. I pity his small dirty face, his afflicted and sunken eyes. He is so small and thin that he moves easily from one side to the other like a snake. I look for a coin in my pockets. I become scared; my clothes are bloody.

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The dream is getting stronger, I see the digital sign, the infinite pines on the flanks of the 82. My head falls forward. The dream seduces me, irresistible. I allow it to carry me through its peace. I dream of Illimani, the mountain that weeps snow. Silent and majestic, she imposes her beautiful splendor on the city that wriggles at her feet. Miles of vehicles file in antlike fashion in a boundless chaos, miles of shouts and voices harmonize in a silent passion for life, for the mute tenderness of the city and its dogs.

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I don't understand. I lift up my clothing, and I see a wound in my stomach, closed but still bleeding a little. I'm surprised, terror stricken. I try to ask for help from the old man next to me, but suddenly my sight is clouded and the dream closes my eyes again. My mind resists; I try to wake up completely, in vain. The dream is deep and obstinate. In a complete darkness, I become drowsy. I ask myself what happened because I'm bleeding. Maybe we had an accident, but all around me everything sounds normal. There aren't any shouts or moans, only one laugh after another. Little by little my mind begins to brighten in this dull darkness, coming across an explanation. A terrible drowsy thought assaults me. I am terrified. I want to speak, to ask for help, but I can't. My lips and my tongue are dry, hard. My head falls heavily. I make a super human effort and forgotten thoughts come to my mind, things that they used to say about the Khari Khari<sup>2</sup>. I'm scared. Surely, they have taken my fat. They say that they use this fat to make a soap that rejuvenates, which makes wrinkles disappear. I make another effort to wake up completely, but it is useless. The more I try, the sleepier I get. I breathe heavily, quickly, deeply. I look at the wound in my stomach, at the old man next to me. I'm not surprised by his malicious smile. I lose myself in his dark and sunken eyes. I let myself go in the drowsiness and I fade away into the darkness of the dream.

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2. The Khari-Khari are sinister characters from the Andean Aymara culture. Nobody knows how or why they steal fat from obese people in the public transports.



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A slight pain in my waist causes me to open my eyes. I imagine that everything was a bad dream, but the bloodstain on my clothes brings me back to reality. With difficulty, I lift up my clothing and look at the wound. It's fresh, moist, sewn together with a black thread. I shake my head. I want to react, but there's something strange, everything has changed. I look for the old man next to me, but he's not there. In his place is a thin young man with dark and sunken eyes, with a cold gaze and dry and terse skin, like the skin of a drum. He covers himself more with his hood and I look at his malicious toothless grin. I look at his fine and thin hands. I am even more afraid. I don't know where I am. The window is enormous, everything is different, and the bus is empty. I look through the window; everything is green. I only see infinite pines and an eagle crossing the sky. My mind is numb; I don't understand anything. I hear a voice that comes from the red sign: "Please. Gather your belongings before leaving." The bus stops. The young man gets up and disappears. I can't get up. I am overcome by fear, sleep. Be careful when falling asleep on the bus. The people begin to get on. I close my eyes, and sleep overcomes me. I lose myself in the darkness.

## Ten cuidado. No te duermas en el colectivo.



*Guillermo Portugal Durán*

Hace calor, el día está adormilado y la vegetación exuberante. Estoy esperando el bus 82 en la ruta que lleva al LCC. En cualquier momento aparece el bus, de dos compartimentos, largo, nuevo y limpio. Los buses son puntuales y van y vienen atravesando el verano. El calor es insoportable, como pararse en la puerta de un horno. Aquí tomas el bus sólo en las paradas y a su hora, si lo pierdes tienes que esperar el siguiente, vendrá como sea, incluso vacío, y cuando se va no deja ni rastro. Hay mucha vegetación en Eugene, lo más hermoso son sus árboles, de diferentes colores y matices, y el águila cruzando veloz el límpido cielo.

...

Estoy sentado en un asiento de atrás, sentarse aquí es como un mal sueño, entre tanta gente no puedes bajar, tienes que deslizarte entre los pasajeros, apenas, empujando, es como nadar en denso lodo y contracorriente, así tardas mucho en salir, y si no lo logras tienes que bajar en la siguiente parada. El frío es insoportable, y este viejo colectivo casi sin vidrios ni calefacción parece refrigerador. Al menos emana algo de calor por tanto pasajero que lleva. Bueno, para qué quejarse, al menos estoy sentado y puedo ver por la ventana a la gente y a la ciudad.

El colectivo se arrastra pesadamente como un viejo gusano, no sólo por el tráfico caótico, sino también porque el chofer va lento, para que en las paradas se aglomere la gente y pueda cargar más pasajeros. Así aprendes a ser paciente en las tortuosas calles de La Paz.

Dos mujeres están en medio de la calle agitando las manos, el colectivo para y suben empujando. No sé como lo hacen con sus anchas polleras<sup>1</sup>, pero ya están dentro. Tienen caras risueñas y mirada suave. Son robustas, de trenzas largas y dientes de oro, y de cuando en cuando se acomodan sus pequeños sombreros con ágiles movimientos de cabeza, casi nunca usan las manos, nadie sabe por qué, es un enigma. Una brisa expande un olor a comida, chocolate, sudor y cerveza.

Estamos cerca del Amazon Park, inmenso, bello, y la gente corriendo o en bicicletas. El 82 para, sube un joven extremadamente delgado de chaqueta negra, una capucha le cubre la cabeza y apenas se le ve el rostro. El bus avanza rápido y la calefacción enfría el clima, es confortable estar en tanta tranquilidad y silencio. En Eugene la tranquilidad es de ensueño, y a veces la gente te sonrío con mucha amabilidad.

1. Falda gruesa en forma de campana. Vestimenta nativa del occidente de Bolivia.

De rato en rato me paro a ver los pasajeros, a mi lado me sonríe un viejo, su cara tan arrugada parece tierra surcada por la eternidad. Es extremadamente flaco, pero sus manos son bellas, finas y delgadas. Me reclino en el asiento, a mirar la gente aglomerada en una esquina. El chofer se detiene lentamente, la gente se lanza al colectivo y suben empujándose, metiéndose como sea. Te aseguro que es mejor ir como sardina en lata que quedarse en la calle. El colectivo está lleno, pero igual van a entrar. Tardan en subir, los pasajeros se molestan, empiezan a gritar, a insultar al chofer para que parta y termine la ruta. Poco a poco, cansado, el viejo colectivo se mueve otra vez. Cuatro hombres cuelgan de la puerta y otro viene detrás corriendo, total, en cualquier momento y en cualquier lugar alguien siempre baja.

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El letrero digital que está sobre el chofer se enciende, sus luminantes números rojos dicen la fecha y la hora. Paramos otra vez, la puerta automática se abre y suben algunos pasajeros, entran en silencio, sin tocarse, manteniendo distancia, manteniendo libre su espacio. Un hombre se pone delante del bus y baja el soporte de bicicletas, la sujeta y sube tranquilamente. El aire acondicionado hace agradable el viaje. Todos van en silencio, no se miran, mantienen cierta distancia física y mental. El joven delgado se sienta a mi lado, recién le veo bien el rostro, es pálido y de ojos hundidos. El 82 se mueve y seguimos viaje rápido. Delante se oye una breve charla, un efímero diálogo. Me acomodo en el asiento, un delicado aroma me envuelve, miro por la ventana, sólo veo árboles y árboles, mucha vegetación, muchos verdes que se difuminan en muchos verdes. Inesperadamente, no sé por qué, me siento muy relajado y empieza a invadirme el sueño, me siento bien, cierro los ojos, total, me hará bien dormir un poco.

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El motor ronronea fatigado. Uno a uno se van metiendo, acomodando, lado a lado, codo a codo, cuerpo a cuerpo y el chofer siempre gritando. Su voz se impone a la música alegre. *"Por favor. Recorran más atrás. Atrás hay más espacio"*. ¿Dónde? Si lanzara un alfiler no caería al piso. El colectivo se mueve, va lento, aburrido, recién voy notando que un perro jadea sobre el hombro de una anciana, su lengua larga y seca cuelga como corbata. De pronto, sobre las cabezas, veo aparecer una charola, luego una mano, después un brazo, un hombro, una cabeza, es un viejo vendiendo mates en bolsitas de plástico. Se desplaza entre los pasajeros como fantasma, estirándose hacia arriba, hacia abajo, sosteniendo su bandeja sobre las cabezas. *"Mates calientes"*. *"Mates calientes"*. Vende uno que otro mate y desaparece del mismo modo que apareció. Me paro para estirar las piernas, para ver a la gente, todos charlan y ríen. No sé de dónde suena una guitarra y dos borrachos se ponen a cantar un bolero. Inesperadamente una mano se mete por la ventana y agarra el sombrero



de una mujer, desaparece en un instante. La mujer empieza a gritar, pero no se puede hacer nada. Veo bien al ladrón, es un joven desgarbado y se va lentamente, silbando y mirando al colectivo, atraviesa la calle esquivando los autos y se pierde entre la gente de la otra acera. Me alejo un poco de la ventana, hay que tener cuidado, así roban lentes, sombreros, aretes, todo lo que pueden agarrar.

El viejo de mi lado mete la mano en el bolsillo y disimuladamente esparce un polvillo aromático sobre mi rostro. Nos miramos, me sonrío, sus labios gruesos y bien delineados no esconden su falta de dientes. Imagino que el polvo es para ocultar el mal olor que sale de alguna parte. Vuelvo a mirar por la ventana y poco a poco me entra el sueño, será el frío, me digo. Cierro los ojos. Alguien grita "*!Ratero. Agárrenlo!*" Algunos pasajeros se levantan para ver el robo, parece que es detrás del chofer. Me siento cansado, no tengo ganas de ver. Se oyen más ruidos, y golpes, seguro le están dando una paliza al ladrón. Me vence el sueño y empiezo a soñar. Veo hermosos árboles de flores blancas y rosadas, frondosos pinos y un águila cruzando un azul cielo.

Una rara sensación me despierta, abro un ojo, es una gallina picoteando los cordones de mis zapatos. Algo la asusta, se va, aparece un niño pequeño arrastrándose detrás de la gallina. Desaparecen debajo los asientos. Cierro los ojos, vuelvo al sueño, aparecen los árboles, los cuervos, los mapaches, las ardillas trepando los árboles y el águila rayando el cielo. Me despierta una voz triste, es un niño metiéndose entre la gente, pidiendo limosna, me sonrío. Me apena su carita sucia, sus ojos afligidos y hundidos, está tan pálido y delgado que va de un lado a otro fácilmente como serpiente. Busco una moneda en mis bolsillos, me asusto, mi ropa está ensangrentada.

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El sueño va cobrando fuerza, veo el letrero digital, los infinitos pinos en los flancos del 82. Mi cabeza se inclina hacia abajo, el sueño me seduce irresistible, me dejo llevar por su paz. Sueño con el Illimani, la montaña que llora nieve, silencioso, majestuoso, impone su hermoso fulgor a la ciudad que serpentea a sus pies. Miles de vehículos hormiguean en un desbordante caos, miles de gritos y voces armonizan en una pasión silenciosa por la vida, por la ternura callada de la ciudad y sus perros.

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No entiendo, me levanto la ropa lentamente y veo una herida en mi abdomen, está cerrada, pero aún sangra un poco. Estoy extrañado, aterrado, intento pedir ayuda al anciano de mi lado, pero repentinamente se me nubla la vista y el sueño cierra otra vez mis ojos. Mi mente resiste, intento despertar totalmente, en vano, el sueño es profundo, obstinado. En una oscuridad total, aletargado, me pregunto qué pasó, por qué estoy sangrando. Tal vez sufrimos un accidente, pero a mi alrededor todo se oye normal, no hay gritos ni quejidos,



salvo una que otra risa. Poco a poco mi mente va alumbrando en esa soporífera oscuridad, encontrando una explicación. Me asalta un terrible pensamiento adormilado, me aterra, quiero hablar, pedir ayuda, no puedo, mis labios y mi lengua están secos, duros. Mi cabeza cae pesadamente. Hago un esfuerzo sobrehumano y vienen a mi mente pensamientos olvidados, cosas que suelen contar sobre los Khari Kharis.<sup>1</sup> Tengo miedo. Seguro me han sacado la grasa. Dicen que usan esta grasa para fabricar un jaboncillo que hace rejuvenecer, que hace desaparecer las arrugas. Hago otro esfuerzo para despertar totalmente, pero es inútil, a más esfuerzo más sueño. Respiro fuerte, rápido, profundo. Veo mi herida en el abdomen, al viejo de mi lado, no me extraña su sonrisa maliciosa, sus ojos oscuros y hundidos me pierden en mí mismo. Me dejo ir en el sopor y me desvanezco en la oscuridad del sueño.

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Un leve dolor en la cintura me hace abrir los ojos, imagino que todo fue un mal sueño, pero la mancha de sangre en mi ropa me devuelve a la realidad. Levanto con dificultad mi ropa y veo la herida, fresca, húmeda, cosida con hilo negro. Sacudo la cabeza, quiero reaccionar, pero hay algo extraño, todo ha cambiado, busco al viejo de mi lado, no está, en su lugar está un joven delgado, de ojos oscuros y hundidos, de mirada fría y piel seca y tersa como piel de tambor. Se cubre más con la capucha y veo su maliciosa sonrisa sin dientes. Veo sus manos delgadas y finas. Me asusto más, no sé dónde estoy, la ventana es enorme, todo es diferente y el colectivo está vacío. Miró por la ventana, todo es verde, sólo veo una infinidad de pinos y un águila cruzando el cielo. Mi mente se paraliza, no entiendo nada. Oigo una voz que sale de un letrero de letras rojas: *"Please. Gather your belongings before leaving"*. El colectivo se detiene, el joven se levanta y desaparece. No puedo levantarme, me vence el miedo, el sueño. Ten cuidado. No te duermas en el colectivo. La gente empieza a entrar. Cierro los ojos, me seduce el sueño, me pierdo en la oscuridad

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2. Los Khari Kharis son personajes siniestros de la cultura andina aymara. Nadie sabe como ni para que sacan la grasa del abdomen a las personas obesas en los transportes publicos.

## What Kind of Indian Are You?

*Kendra Gilds*

The nearing completion of the Native American longhouse on the Lane campus and the possibilities it holds for fostering community have brought me to a reflection on identity. When the longhouse was in its early stages, I found myself explaining to my then four-year-old son what the “big logs” on campus were for. He then asked, “Mama, what’s an Indian?”

A few years ago I met with a couple, the husband of which was as a historian intimately acquainted with the history of my tribe. When I returned from a cordial but stilted lunch, one of my co-workers remarked, “You weren’t the right kind of Indian for them, were you?” He was right; I wasn’t. Some of my dear friends regularly remark, “He’s an Indian like you’re an Indian.” Their meaning is clear: not so much.

My son’s question echoes in my ear. What’s an Indian? Or, perhaps in contemporary accepted parlance, I suppose the question should be “What is a Native American?” In truth, I resist asking the latter question because, according to my family on the Tunica-Biloxi reservation in Marksville, Louisiana the answer is simple. Native American is the highfalutin’ name college-educated people call us Indians. As my dad says, “We were Indians long before they got educations. Kinda silly they go to college and come back and tell us we ain’t Indians no more.” So, at the risk of offending some individuals, in my family we are American Indians. We’ve always been American Indians.

So, then, what is an Indian? Like the often-cited “definition” of pornography, “I know it when I see it,” this becomes a challenging question. If you think it’s not, try explaining it to a four-year-old.

The federal government’s definition of an Indian generally invokes blood quantum, but four-year-olds don’t understand blood quantum. So, can a person be an Indian only if they have a particular amount of “Indian blood,” as the federal government suggests? Well, even for the government it isn’t that simplistic. They set a blood quantum level but add a clause to the definition that allows individual tribes to set their own requirements, so the amount of Indian blood one needs to be a member of the St. Croix Chippewa Indians of Wisconsin is quite different from the amount of Indian blood required to be a member of the Karuk tribe of California. It also matters, for some tribes more than others, whether your Indian blood is from that particular tribal line or if your ancestors mingled with the bloodlines of other tribes. Not all Indian blood is necessarily equivalent in these matters.

Now, try explaining to a four-year-old what an Indian is without bowing to ancient stereotypes, *especially* when such questions are tethered to questions about what a longhouse

is. Certainly many Indians are remote descendants of some of the first peoples to inhabit this land, and that's an important attribute to acknowledge. But after that, the water gets murky. Does one explain, especially to someone with such a short attention span, how Indians used to live, and risk invoking simplistic and often inaccurate terms like "teepee" or "wigwam?" "Indians are people who used to live in teepees." How trite. And even if I could be historically accurate about how some particular set of Indians lived, and we all know that tribes are as individual in terms of their culture as the Germans are from the Pakistanis, is a single image sufficient to leave my son with?

Perhaps being an Indian means being involved in one's culture? Does one's "Indian-ness" depend on how many pow-wows he's been to? Are individuals who live on a reservation more "Indian" than those who live near and work on a college campus? Would I be more of an Indian if I wore beads? And who makes these determinations?

Interestingly, most tribes did not historically hold "pow-wows." Modern pow-wows have become a tribal universal across this country only in the very latest part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. My tribe, for instance, never engaged in pow-wows until very recently; I can't say what the original motivations were—camaraderie, I assume, among other things—but I wonder if part of the motivation was to become more "Indian-like?"

When I first tell folks that my son and I are Indians, there is a brief silence while the stranger gives me a once-over look. I can hear their thoughts (because sometimes they say them out loud): "You don't look like an Indian." My common response now, whether they've asked the question verbally or not, is to joke that "I know I don't look like an Indian. I'm as white as the driven snow," but I assure them that my dad looks like an Indian; I favor my mother's side of the family. Granted, if I had a darker skin pigment perhaps my Indian heritage wouldn't be questioned. But I wonder if it's not deeper than that.

One reason I wonder is because, once I've told folks that I am indeed an American Indian, the next question that leaps spontaneously from their lips generally includes a Native American stereotype. "Where do you live?" The only appropriate response I've found is "I don't live on a reservation, but some of my family members do in Louisiana," because that's the question they're invariably asking. Sometimes they are quick to assert their approval of "my" culture: "I saw 'they' had a pow-wow recently. I wanted to go but had family obligations." Such a response makes me wonder if my questioner feels that "we" Indians all act in concert and are watching out for how many whiteys attend "our" pow-wows. And my all-time favorite statement from such an encounter: "Isn't it horrible what we're doing to the land?!" This shows me that they've clearly bought into the idea that all American Indians were keepers of the "sacred" land, a myth that is easily refuted with very little historical research. Every once in a great while when I'm feeling particularly snarky, the question "Do you live on a reservation?" invites the tongue-in-cheek but hon-



est reply, “No, but my dad’s an alcoholic and we lived on welfare.” Does *that* make me a “real” Indian in society’s eyes?

Do I fault folks for resorting to myths and stereotypes about American Indians? Do I become enraged or, worse, preachy toward well-meaning friends and acquaintances who suggest that I am not entitled to my heritage because I do not play the appropriate part? I try not to, because it’s not their fault. Who decided that modern “Native Americans” must live on reservations to be considered Indians? Or that we must care passionately and tirelessly about environmental issues to the exclusion of all else? Or that we must be staunch supporters of Democrats and affirmative action policies?

I value honesty and being true to myself above all else. I know that there are many modern Indians who still do live on reservations. As I’ve said, some of my relatives are among them. I also am aware that some American Indians still live many aspects of the traditional life. Yet my cousins have a big-screen TV in their house on the reservation. Are they less Indian because they have bought into capitalism and the acquisition of modern luxuries? I am college-educated and have a graduate degree and do not live on the reservation and never have. Perhaps it makes folks feel better to define Indians in a particular way. It would certainly be easier to talk to my son about what an Indian is if I could resort to stereotypes, myths, and fables. But we’re all so much more interesting and complex than that! And I don’t recall having to explain to my son why a close friend of German descent, whose parents immigrated to this country, doesn’t wear lederhosen.

So, who *does* decide what an “Indian” is? We all do. The government has a very specific definition. Each of us who have Indian blood in us makes that decision. The many groups and organizations that help American Indians make that decision. Even the folks who do not have a drop of Indian blood in them make that decision. We could have a lengthy, and perhaps heated discussion about the Florida State Seminoles and the Atlanta Braves. But that’s small potatoes and distracts us from the important questions. Or perhaps it is merely one of a million follow-ups to the important questions.

When I worked as a writer for my tribal newspaper, I naturally emphasized in my writing the value of education. I wrote articles about why education is important, how to apply for college and scholarships, what to expect when you get to college, etc. After writing one of these articles, I found myself on the reservation visiting with relatives I hadn’t seen in years and meeting new folks. I began to feel a bit like a celebrity because everywhere I went, once they learned my name, people recognized me as “the lady who writes about education.” I encountered story after story and received invitation after invitation that all went something like this: “You *have* to come talk to my son. He doesn’t think it’s important to stay in school or go to college. According to him, Indians don’t go to college. I

myself never finished high school and I see how important it is that my son gets an education, but you can't tell kids anything. Maybe he'll listen to you."

As educators and people who work at a community college, this is probably an experience you've had many times over the years. But it was particularly poignant to me this time because there were so many individuals approaching me with the same message: "My child doesn't think he should stay in school because he's an Indian." We need to change not only how we talk about Indians, but how we think of them. If they remain in our minds as the stereotypical folks who only live on reservations and gather in longhouses, then how can they possibly see themselves any differently? American Indians belong on our campuses just as they belong in our society, because they are intelligent American citizens. If we continue to treat them as "others" they will continue to *be* others. We need to remind them by our actions and our words that it is entirely congruent to be an Indian *and* a student, an Indian *and* a nurse or doctor, an Indian *and* an educator or scientist. This is especially important for those of us with Indian blood, but it's a duty we all must share. And we need to make sure that our new longhouse doesn't become a place to "house" our Indian students, assuring that they remain "others" on our campus.

# Momentary Baggage

## Excerpts from *Baggage* (a work in progress)

*Mark Harris*

When you meet a stranger, or when two strangers meet, it is not just two people in the present; present also is the baggage, from your pasts. If you decide to journey together, that baggage should best be examined, unpacked as it were, to find whether it is still useful to carry it.

I listen to dramatic stories for a living, and have my share of my own, relatively less dramatic, but still compelling. I had been practicing an obscure form of addictions practice called cultural recovery, wherein, you develop a sober lifestyle into a “lifeway,” an entire pattern for living, counter to the mainstream culture of addiction. I discovered an association of like-minded people, the Association of Recovery Schools, and they invited me to a conference in D.C. All I had to do was put up my faculty development money, and they would compensate me for the hotel, etc.

I hadn’t been to D.C. in nearly a decade, since my days in the national prevention training system, and was kind of burnt out on the whole national consultant number I’d been doing before taking my current job, but I’ve always liked the District in an American touristy kind of way. Of course my love of my country is as complicated as that with an unfaithful ex-lover you still hold a torch for: though you know you’re going to get burned, you’re hopeful.

The trip out to, and the stay in D.C. was wonderfully synchronistic, enthralling, and affirming. It’d seemed like in my home state I was a pariah dawg among sheep, trying to herd them away from the wolves. A maverick radical iconoclast, practitioner outcast, though as my 19-year-old observed, “It’s a thin line between radical and common sense.” Though I am often acknowledged to be outstandin’ in my field, I hadn’t been feelin’ loved or welcome in massa’s big house. More like one of the field niggas as it were. So I was suspicious, and surprised at my reception by this new (to me) crop of folks at this conference.

I liked how the “new” science was confirming what I had been saying all along and been considered crazy and iconoclastic for: Treatment works, but it could work better if you adopted culturally valid technology, pharmacology, neurochemistry, in other words combine indigenous wisdom with 21st Century science to produce better treatment outcomes, especially for minority and youth populations who aren’t being reached or helped by a strict generic 12-Step approach.



So to find out that the science backed me, and not my hidebound colleagues in Oregon, was a vindication of sorts. I felt great, rejuvenated. Thus justified in recreating a little bit.

So, last day in D.C., I played tourist, hit the Mall museums: African & American Indian Museum. I took the Metro to Reagan to catch the plane out and then the adventure started. Hey it's a subway right? Lotsa commuters, and colorful characters like the homeless brotha' hustling pennies from the rush hour suits, to be able to get off the train, so he said. I left in plenty of time to make my flight, what with 18 minutes to the airport from the Grand Hyatt. I even padded it for 30 minutes in case of delays. Then two hours to get through security, as recommended. The best laid plans often go right into an adventure.

If I hadn't gone through it, I wouldn't have believed it myself.

• • •

Get there, with the train delays about an hour and a half before the flight . . . pushin' it, but not bad right? The baggage of the past, reassuring me, even though I've got bad baggage with this particular airline.

• • •

So, I'm there in line, on an airline that I once watched kick a black man off a plane, for not putting his carry on luggage up in the overhead bin. Their corporate motto at the time was "Our name begins with You." Yeah right. As in the We the People kinda you. As in when they say We, they really mean Them. And when they say Justice, they really mean Just Us, and only Them. Ain't no You in We, is what they mean. And that may seem mean, it may seem paranoid, like the antinomy of black folks rejoicing for Obama, but still worried about him being killed, because this is America after all . . . but you'll see when I unpack my memory bags.

It's the early '90s. Me an' Randy Rowell, (Us both Federal Trainers on our way to a gig in Fayetteville, North Carolina) are in the second row in one of those li'l Dash 8s. We're in the Charlotte, North Carolina airport on our way to a Fayetteville IAAM (Institute for African-American Mobilization). The IAAM was a federal culturally specific prevention meeting, and we were on the taxpayers' dime to get there. This was our last connecting flight for the day. We get on in our assigned seats in the front. Some brotha' from New York, gets in 3B, cross the aisle and one back. Has a leather case that kind of musically clunked, like with a wooden sound as if filled with African statuary. I've heard that sound, I've made it myself, coming back from D.C. visiting Zawa the black bookstore once in Adams-Morgan, (brotha who owned it moved to Ghana, I found on this latest trip) and buying African statuary in some of the tourist traps down there. And I know, you don't want random stuff happening to your people's art.

But this is the South, and not only do they not appreciate or care that their city is named for a Black Woman sitting on the throne of England, they don't really care about treating black people badly, even if they are well-dressed, well-heeled paying customers. I'm about to really get the lesson of what being Black in the South means. ("Joke" told by a North Carolinian Obama's movement for Change . . . Change means *Come Help A Nigger Get Elected*).

So I know exactly what's going through his mind when the brother puts the bag under his seat, with the length of it protruding between his feet, his feet firmly yet gently planted, as if both protecting and caressing the Goddess or ancestor statues from random kicks. Preserving their venerated yet vulnerable selves from the unobserved chaos of the overhead bins. Contents will shift during flight. Concrete certainty will turn to quicksand overnight.

The flight attendant, a pale Miss Ann brunette with a severe bun, and tight blue officious uniform, walks by and kicks the bag, missing brotha' man's protective feet. Without so much as a word, she continues on back. Hmmm not, "Sir, you'll have to put that in the overhead bin." Not "Sir let me see if I can find a safer place for that." Just kicks the bag, between his feet, and moves on.

Brotha man is making outraged frequent flier, otherwise first class passenger sputtering noises, light profanity, like shit, under his breath. He stuffs the bag farther under the seat, but it really doesn't go under. The overhead bin is probably packed, but it isn't a totally full flight, but . . . He shrugs and awaits her return.

Miss Ann walks to the back, comes back up to the front, saying nothing to him, no offer to place the bag in the overhead.

She begins preflight. They close up. She gets in her jump seat. Engines rev, pushback occurs. We are on the runway, when she gets back on the phone in response to a call from the cockpit. All of a sudden, we're going back to the gate, we pull up to the gate we just left. There has been no word from the flight attendant to the passengers as to the nature of the delay, mechanical trouble...what? Engines power down, hatch opens, a white male officious ex- or wanna-be law enforcement type voice says "There's two of them, right, in the front?" Randy and I look at each other. We resemble that remark.

The flight attendant says, "No just one, 3B." Brother from New York's turn to be surprised. A beefy balding sweating cop wanna be type airline employee says "Sir, you'll have to get off the plane."

"Why? What did I do?"

"Sir you're supposed to obey the instructions of the uniformed crew."

"She didn't say anything to me. She came by, kicked the bag, without a word. There's valuable artwork in that bag, it's delicate. I didn't want to put it through baggage, or the

overhead.” He goes on, ‘cause he’s on a outraged paying passenger roll. “I’m a frequent first class flyer, from New York. I have never had that kind of treatment on your airline before, or anywhere else. The stewardess always offers to place the bag, if there is a problem, or at least speaks to you. I have rights.”

He’s got a point, and got them dead to rights, with the sharpness of his logic, and the conviction, and respectful passion in his tone. He’s playing the aggrieved otherwise first class passenger, card, not the race card, which since this is the South is nearly always a joker, not an ace. He’s doin’ us proud. Randy and I are watching, to see how this will unfold. After all, this is unusual, we were on the runway, about to take off, when we came back to the terminal. Surely they couldn’t be serious, in recalling the plane to the terminal for this. But this is the South, and with the baggage of race, it’s not notoriously known for logic, or justice, as it is claimed or termed, in other climes.

Airline homeboy doesn’t know what to say, so he persists. It’s the South, so the baggage claim is to defend the flower of white womanhood, right or wrong, not customer service, especially customer service to an uppity nigger insisting on his so-called “rights,” as if he is some kind of Martin Luther King or Rosa Parks of the airways. They have recalled a flight from the runway, it’s being delayed, it has to be resolved quickly one way or the other. He’d look ridiculous if he simply did the generic customer service thing, and placed the customer’s valued art objects in a safe place . . . and that would mean, backing down to a nigger . . .

He says “Sir you have to get off the plane.”

“No, I know my rights. I’ll sue.” Uh-Oh, an uppity nigger, who is lawyering up.

At that, Homie makes as if he’s getting off the plane and then . . . turns with a “Sir, If you don’t get off the plane now you’re going to federal prison!”

Wha!!!! How does not putting a bag under the seat make you a felon? If it was that much of an issue, they shouldn’t have even closed up the plane for take-off until the baggage was properly stowed.

But they put him off sho’ nuff. Nobody said a word. None of the white people protested. That baggage of race was in the hold and in the air. Brothaman, he went under his own power. Randy and I were stunned into silence. I guess we couldn’t risk getting kicked off either, because we were on the American people’s dime . . . but damn! At the training, we told the story, to our not so disbelieving fellow black colleagues, and our white colleagues were going . . . I’ve never heard of such a thing.

So I had never ridden that airline since then. Because they lost the baggage containing my respect and belief in fair play, customer service, and belief in free peanuts and soda pop. I only used them this time to stay under a grand up front in ticket cost, coming out of my pocket.



So, there I was waiting in line in Reagan, rush hour Friday night. Fifty people in the baggage line, about that many again in self-serve check-in, 10 in the first class line. One person at the first class counter, three at baggage, two maybe three at self serve. Twenty counter positions, three people tops at the counter. Seems to take about 10 minutes per person, then 20, when one of the three goes on break, or doesn't come back. Well I figure it's gonna be still on time, they'll get to me, stay calm. Do the math, 50 people, maybe two minutes per we'll still make it. Well, I get up to the counter with seven minutes to my scheduled departure. I'm told they need half an hour before departure to put the bags on the flight. I can't get onto any plane without my bags. (This will of course figure prominently in the future total irony factor.) So since they couldn't get me on my flight, I went back in line, and then five minutes later back up the counter.

The counter person looked like Deep Roy's sister. Deep is a versatile, intelligent actor, most famous as Oompa-Loompa in the Johnny Depp *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, and the evil little midget in some *X-Files* episode. Her English was good, appropriately but clearly accented, in that British East India Company sort of way. A British accent inspires confidence and competence, quiet matter of fact efficiency. Her fingers moved over the computer keyboard from the correct position, that my seventh grade typing teacher recommended, but at the wrong speed. Kind of like, hunt and peck, but with one finger. I gave her my name and I.D. It took her 40 minutes to get me on a flight the next day, after first offering, after 15 minutes, a flight out on Sunday or Monday . . .

"Uhhh no, why not tonight, since I wasn't scheduled to arrive home until two a.m. anyway."

"That flight only goes on weekdays." So 25 minutes later she announces, she can route me the next day through Phoenix, instead of Vegas.

"Leaving tomorrow at four p.m."

"Fine. You'll be giving me hotel and meal vouchers."

She shakes her head no.

"No?! Why?"

"You missed your flight, instead of your flight being canceled."

"Yeah, I missed my flight, after getting here two hours ahead of time, waiting in line, while obviously you're short handed here." (OK, 90 minutes, but still, c'mon!)

All this in a calm tone, because I know with an Orange threat level, if I tweak out on them I can be arrested, because even attitude can be seen as a terroristic threat these days. I ain't kiddin'. Wish I was makin' it up.

She decides she can consult with her supervisor. Takes 10 more minutes, and gets me hotel and meal vouchers, my ticket, and I'm on my way to the Crystal City Hilton.

Call Baby, tell her I'll be delayed . . . just kick it, eschew movies that cost more than going to theaters, fall asleep to Cable Noise Network.

Next morning, I'm there three and a half hours ahead of the flight. Don't want no funny business, with the bags or anything, in case they got some kind of employee shortage. Get checked right in, and decide to have lunch at Legal Seafood . . . have a drink, soup, salad. Write some. Then it's plane time. Plane leaves a little late, but not as bad as the gate next to us, who've been canceled twice, crew late, crew shows up . . . checks out plane, plane don't check out, maintenance break 15, 20, 25 minutes . . . well we got our own plane to catch . . . 20 minutes late.

We get to Phoenix, which is definitely way more sprawly than when I was there in the '70s. Then there is no gate for our plane, so we're waiting in the taxiway for a gate. Fifteen minutes of that. Then we get to the gate. I check the monitor, my connection is of course across the airport, departing in 10 minutes, but it's been delayed 90 minutes.

Fine, par for the weekend so far. After dinner, I get some Man in the Maze paraphernalia, a fridge magnet, keychain, little box. The little tag says it means an adventuresome spirit. Seems like an adventure so far. We eventually get to Eugene, and my bag hasn't arrived. Doesn't arrive the next day, but Monday at 7:00 . . .

. . .

Oh well. What difference does it make in my own life mission profile? I just gotta tend my garden in sunlight, keep hope alive. Gotta lighten my load of baggage. I was just reading about that line about rich men not getting into the kingdom of heaven easier than a camel can get through the eye of a needle. Turns out the Aramaic word for camel and heavy rope are identical except for inflection. Isho is making the comparison of the riches being like a heavy rope, which of course can't go through the needle as it is...but a heavy rope can go through a needle, one strand at a time . . . meaning then, that if you gave away your wealth, you are more able to enter the kingdom of Elohim. Travel light . . . don't be carrying extra baggage.



## Cat As Map of the World

*Sandy Jensen*

Sojah's body was a map of the known world. In the calico complications of her fur I could trace the oxbows of the Wenatchee River. The sungold sandstone cliffs of Sunnyslope broke in vertical stripes down her delicate shoulders. Dark orchards crowded the crosshatched line of her spine. Our riverbend house was blocked in white fur under her chin; each patterned leg flashed the four directions. Behind one ear, the rhubarb patch; behind the other, the mulberry tree. The distance from rump to high-held tail was the long rise of Horse Lake Road. Sojah belonged to the place, and she carried its many-colored meanings wherever she went.

From the beginning, Sojah showed me her world. One day, she soft-footed up the stairs to my room, leapt onto my study desk, and stared at me. Then she leapt down, and I knew to follow her out of doors. We passed under the jeweled curtain of the willows and stopped above the culvert where Horse Lake Creek flowed under our yard.

Sojah sat on the brink, front paws together, and looked down. I lay on my belly peering over the edge. I saw a small rattlesnake, tongue listening. I threw a rock at him. The splash startled him into the water. He swam downstream as I ran alongside. I got around the rhubarb and under the mulberry tree only in time to see him slip into the railroad culvert: next stop, the Wenatchee River.

I looked around for Sojah. She had a mouse-sized kitten in her teeth and was briskly moving her litter out of her nesting site by the creek upstairs into my closet. Kittens were always Sojah's first priority, but she had the patience to be dressed in doll clothes. I pushed her around in my baby buggy, spotted face peering out of a ruffled bonnet. Kittens could ride, too.

When I graduated from dolls to horses, Sojah became a trick rider. She took up the confident stance of a leopardess on Lance's rump and would trot with me around the pasture as I practiced shooting under his neck. If Lance and I left the safety of the corral, she jumped off and returned to mama duty; the places we rode were not on her map.

Our growing family added another rambunctious member when Sooner the German shorthair dog came to live with us. My dad thought Sooner was the smartest hunting dog in Eastern Washington, but I secretly disliked him. If I got too close, he leapt up and gouged me with his sharp nails. He was chained to the mulberry tree in the pasture, and the beaten circle of dirt always stank of dog poo.

Sojah found a new birthing nest for each batch of kittens, indoors or out. One autumn, she nested in the twisty root ball of one of the weeping willows.



The guys had just returned from a chukar hunting trip. My dad opened the back hatch of our International Travel-All, and Sooner came flying out, long ears flapping. He ran to the nearest willow to relieve himself, then ran to the other tree.

Sojah fended him off with a screeching yowl and an all-claws slap to the nose, but Sooner was oblivious. He flipped the kittens in the air the way a coyote will flip mice out of a burrow. Sojah attacked, screaming, back arched, teeth bared, claws flying.

The screen door banged behind Mom as she charged out of the kitchen yelling, "Sooner, you get out of there!"

Daddy called, "Sooner! You come here, boy!" He ran with a chain to collar the big dog, but the damage had been done. Two of the kittens were dead; three of them injured beyond rescue.

Mom sewed some scraps of white fabric into five white shrouds. She placed a body in each one. My job was to throw them in the river. Daddy said I should hit the live ones with a rock and put them out of their misery, but I thought they would drown quickly enough in the water.

I thought drowning kittens would be easy. The day was crunchy and sweet as a fall apple. The river rapids shook foam into the air the way a Golden Delicious will spurt when you bite into it.

One by one I hurled the white packages into the river. I expected the kittens to sink, but they bobbed on the surface as the current swept them toward the Columbia River. My dad had been right about killing them first. I had thought to distance myself from their death by letting the river do the job I didn't have the stomach for.

Back home, Sojah yowled soft and low while twining about my legs. I picked her up and buried my nose in her fur. There was nothing I could say to comfort either of us.

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When I went away to college, the animals I loved seem to recede into the land of memory, but in fact, they were still living their lives in Wenatchee. When the last child graduated from high school, my parents sold the property and moved first to Richmond Beach in the north Seattle area, then a year later to Arizona. Lance the red horse went to live in the Skagit Valley. An uncle adopted Sooner the dog. Sojah the calico cat moved with the parents to the Richmond Beach house.

The family of my childhood was breaking up, but we entered a new leg of our journey through time together when we all joined a spiritual group called Emissaries of Divine Light. It was decided that over Spring Break—okay, it was 1972, if you must know—nine of us would caravan to 100 Mile House, British Columbia, for a one-week seminar at the Emissary Canadian headquarters. This trip coincided with my parents' move from Richmond Beach to Arizona.

Sojah had made it safely to the beach house, but she disappeared when the packing began again. The chaos factor trebled with the three home siblings packing not only for British Columbia, but to go our ways when we returned. Sojah went missing.

I looked and looked. I see a snapshot of myself sitting on the Richmond Beach cement breakwater, despairing into the sunset of a world so complex that a small, scared cat could be a million impossible, undiscoverable places. I couldn't find her. At the same time I was finishing my senior finals at the University of Washington. But I was also gripped by the spiritual fervor of becoming an Emissary. I'm not sure I looked hard enough for the lost Sojah. Not knowing where to look next immobilized me on the pier into doing nothing rather than that something more.

Sojah did not appear. My parents' van pulled away from the empty house and hauled away south on I-5. I crammed my red Ford Falcon to the high jams with my few worldly goods and camped out at my sister's house in Auburn, a Seattle suburb sixty miles south of Richmond Beach. I would be there for a few days while the caravan assembled for take-off.

Finally organized, we got in our cars and turned on our engines. As I backed out of the driveway, I saw a cat in my side mirror limping down the tree-lined street from the north. It was Sojah. With split-second timing, she had completed an Incredible Journey of at very least sixty miles.

Seattle is split by the Duwamish River and the Lake Washington Ship Canal. There are four lakes, seven hills and deep ravines all within the city limits. This cat crossed The Highlands, Crown Hill, Ballard, Queen Anne Hill and made her way through the port confusion of Pike Street Market, the industrial wastelands of Harbor Island and Georgetown, the suburban jungles of White Center, Mountain View, Evansville and Burien. She found us in a town and an address she had never been to before at the last possible moment of rejoining her family.

Even now I don't know well enough how to respect the love that drove her to make that distance. But somehow I or we were responsible, as if we had homing coordinates implanted in us, and she had a GPS unit in her brain. She had followed some invisible roadmap of feeling across a strange urban wilderness to find us.

I stopped the car and ran to gather her up, a fifteen-year-old cat now made ancient by distance and ordeal. Her long fur with its distinctive markings was disheveled. She cried out in welcome, relief and pain in my arms. With fingers not gentle enough, I found her broken ribs. We settled her in a box under the dashboard heater by my sister Toren's feet and smuggled her across the U.S./Canadian border.

And here's the thing: I was so caught up in the high of joining this great spiritual family of "conscious, evolved beings" that I didn't even have the conscious, evolved thought to take Sojah to the vet.

When we arrived at 100 Mile House, we settled Sojah's box in the middle of the half-finished room Toren and I had been assigned.

Word was sent of the hurt cat, and a white-haired Englishman who introduced himself as Roger de Winton appeared. He squatted in front of Sojah and held his hand over her in a gesture of healing. Eyes closed, she panted quickly, pink-and-black spotted tongue stuck out between white whiskers. She huddled in the box on the cement floor, the map of our old world matted, blurred, and bloodied. Where once the finger-scratched path of the river wound down among the shadows and lights of her spine, the way was lost. The fall of white from chin to chest that was the road through my childhood was smeared into the muddy geography of a city she now knew more intimately than any Seattle ally cat.

A younger man thumped up the sheet of plywood into the construction zone and said his name was Peter Castonguay. Eager to help the healing master, he squatted and held his hand six inches over Roger's. Sojah cried out and died.

Peter felt bad that he had seemed to cause Sojah's death. "Come with me to the barn," he said, "We'll bury her out back, and then I want to show you something."

The map of Sojah's world ended in a Canadian pasture. When the mini-ceremony was over, Peter shouldered the shovel and led us into the filtered light of the big Dutch barn. "Up here," he said, "follow me."

We followed him up a ladder into the hayloft. Peter reached his big paw down into the hay next to a mama cat and pulled out a five-week-old kitten. She was almost a replica of Sojah with her long hair and calico markings. Toren lifted her face up so their blue eyes met. "Look!" she said, "her nose is half black and half gold, exactly like Sojah's. What are the chances of that?"

"She's yours when you leave next week. She'll be six weeks old, plenty old enough to be weaned."

Toren rubbed behind the kitten's ears and made her purr. "Barn," Toren said. "Her name is Barn." And so Barn became Toren's cat and went to live with her in Arizona.

As for me, it was many decades before I earned the right to share a home with another cat. In my excitement to grow up, move away, become a more spiritually enlightened person, I neglected a loved one in my care. Yet Sojah's love was so true, so accurate that she risked her life to find me at the last possible minute before I abandoned her forever. Sojah's commitment to our lifelong love shamed me, for I had not been so true. Her Incredible Journey made me smaller, less full of myself, and yet more human, after all.





## Mrs. Brown and Africa

*Carolyn L. Litty*

Twenty-five of us sat at desks in perfectly straight rows, our hands clasped together on the top of our desks. In the front of the room, Mrs. Brown stood, walked, or sat, depending on what she was doing at the time. There was no nonsense in Mrs. Brown's third grade class—no noise, no talking, no goofing off. Her sense of confidence and of orderliness lulled me into a feeling that this was how life was supposed to be: safe, clean, quiet and managed. "A place for everything and everything in its place," said Mrs. Brown. She had many rules: wash your hands before opening a book; put your scissors, pencils, and books inside your desk when finished; do not write in books; do not write outside of the lines on the page. These were just a few of her rules.

Mrs. Brown was the embodiment of her name. She had brown hair and eyes. She wore a brown dress, brown socks, and brown shoes. She wore no makeup or jewelry. She was plain and she didn't smile much. However, she wasn't particularly unpleasant, just serious. She walked to school every day clad in her brown coat, with all her brown-covered books and carrying her brown purse. She would greet us, but she didn't engage us or interest us really. It was a far different story with our other teachers.

Everyone loved our first grade teacher, who was bubbly and energetic. She skipped with us on the playground and cheered us on when we ran. She would take our hand in her hand and pat us on the head. She *drove* a car to school! She was the only woman I'd ever seen drive a car. We'd see her driving all around town, sometimes with her children in the car, too. Being a small woman, we could see only her eyes and her hair above the steering wheel. They said she was married to a farmer and milked cows before she came to school.

Our second grade teacher was very beautiful. We often saw her combing her hair and putting on lipstick using her compact mirror as she sat at her desk. She had fashionable clothes and wore a different dress every day to school. She wore nylons with high-heeled shoes. The seams on the back of her nylons were straight, having been carefully lined up in the center of her legs. Her husband drove her, letting her off in front of the school at the big, wide stone staircase. He would get out of the car and open her car door for her. Somehow, inside myself, I knew that she knew that she was beautiful. Also, I knew that she enjoyed our treating her like she was a movie star. They said she had been named Queen of the Rodeo, or of the fair or something. They also said she married a banker, had a lot of money, lived in town in a big house, and had no children.

Everyone couldn't wait to get to fourth grade. The fourth grade teacher was into arts and crafts and interesting projects. Students painted, drew, colored, pasted, sewed, and

square danced. After putting the scratchy record on the phonograph, she would do the calling herself. "Grab you partner; dos-à-doś," she'd call out. She took students on trips in a logger's crummy. They said she took her class all the way to Honey Lake, to look at soil samples or something. I knew this teacher quite well because her daughter and I were play-mates and friends. Her husband was a logger, and he logged with my dad and my uncles. They said she was well-liked and respected in town.

No one seemed to know anything about Mrs. Brown. What was even stranger was that no one was trying to find out anything about her. I thought she was probably quite old, like the age of my grandmothers, like 42 or something. To my surprise, as the year progressed in third grade, I became increasingly taken with her. Strangely, memories of her and her classroom are still so vivid to me.

I remember the one day she tacked up a huge world map on the wall, and it was *her* personal map, as it had her name written on it. She would point on this map, showing us where we lived. I remember being shocked when she showed us there were so many places, other than our town, on the map. After all, I knew that our town was important and big. We had around 4000 people and we lived high up in the Sierra-Nevada Mountains. I had even been to Janesville with my dad, in the crummy, to buy chickens one afternoon. And, I had been to Lake Almanor for a picnic. I didn't like those places nearly as well as I loved Fourth Street.

Back in the classroom, more shocks were to come. Next, we learned that Mrs. Brown had graduated from high school and went away to *college*! In fact, she said she bought the world map at college. I didn't know anyone who had accomplished all that, and I knew just about everyone who lived on both sides of Fourth Street. One day, after we had stood and placed our right hand over our heart and said the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag and said our prayer, she had us form a line in front of the world map. One by one we came to the map and pointed to our town. Then she had us trace with our finger a passage down to the "Bulging Sandwich" shape: The continent of Africa. Then came the bombshell. Mrs. Brown let us in on her deepest yearning: She wanted to go to Africa!

Well now, I didn't even know if Mrs. Brown had cows or chickens, or children, or a logger husband. And now I knew the most intimate yearning of her soul. I felt embarrassed, in a way, to know that much about her. But, her face lit up and she became interesting. She changed when she talked about Africa. She was almost comely, as she shared her dreams.

She told us that we should all go to Africa, someday, when we were grown. She would read us stories and show us pictures from her books. I didn't know if Mrs. Brown was a visionary, a dreamer or a little weird. However, in 1948, in a classroom, in our town, talking about traveling to Africa would be analogous to talking today about purchasing a spacecraft, going to the moon, and taking a stroll.

Now Fourth Street, our school and our town were just one part of the universe for me, not *the* universe. I knew that some people went to those far away places like China and India. I had an uncle who was a soldier in World War II and he had been in China. The minister and his wife, at our church, had been missionaries in India for many years. However, Mrs. Brown didn't think one had to be a soldier or a missionary to go to far away places. She had the attitude that any one of us could have a world map or graduate from high school, or go to college, or even go to Africa. Like most people (of her day), when referring to Africa, Mrs. Brown focused on Egypt, Pharaohs, camels, pyramids, tombs and the Nile River. Of course, today we know that Africa isn't a place; it's a million places, landscapes, peoples and ecosystems.

Mrs. Brown didn't seem to have some of the present day dilemmas that teachers have. Well before thousands of paleo-anthropologists discovered that Africa was the "Cradle of Humankind," she said that man started in Africa a very, very long time ago. Before these scientists discovered that Homo Erectus expanded out of Africa into Europe and Asia, she taught us that man traveled and changed constantly in the world. All the while, she sang in the church choir every Sunday morning. Her classroom was a reflection of her—innocent, simple, naïve, good and uncomplicated.

One part of me wanted to go with Mrs. Brown on her mental travels and dreams. Another part of me never wanted to leave Fourth Street or her classroom. When I told my mother I wanted to go to Africa when I grew up, she said, "If wishes were horses, beggars would ride. It's time to wash the dishes in the sink." As I was washing dishes, I wondered how people got the money to buy a world map that big.

I couldn't imagine Mrs. Brown washing clothes or cooking or doing the dishes like we did. At school, I would see her eating an apple while she read a book. I knew that all she really needed in life was the book, not the apple. I have come to the conclusion that Mrs. Brown was a visionary, an intellectual, a well-read woman and a shy introvert. I still do not really know anything about her life. However, she remains the teacher I knew the best. She created an intimacy with her students because she shared in the most powerful intimacy of all: her ideas, dreams, yearnings and longings. Many years later, I have realized that she was the teacher who made the most lasting impact on me. For each of us, there are moments of discovery, times when our world changes forever. Mrs. Brown's classroom was one of those experiences for me.

Many years ago, Mrs. Brown went to Heaven—to that special place reserved for teachers who make a difference. I hope that the place is over-populated. While she was alive, I



never heard of her going anywhere except to her classroom on Main Street, faithfully, day after day, year after year.

I am convinced that Mrs. Brown knew that there are many ways to go to Africa. She took us there, time after time, through sharing her books, dreams, and pictures. She knew another way to go there is to inspire someone with ideas and goals that grow within that person. So, Mrs. Brown, you and I are going to Africa. I will board the plane to Rwanda in July.

# American Indian Languages: When Old and New Converge

*Carol Watt*

Start with students, students who want to study their ancestral language but have little or no knowledge of it, students who are proficient in an American Indian language but cannot earn academic credit, and students who hunger to satisfy their interest in Native languages and cultures.

Imagine a course of study that honors these desires. Imagine the spark and continuing inspiration these desires have provided for close to ten years. And imagine interactive technology joining four campuses to help realize these students' yearnings.

From Fall 2000 to now has been a remarkable journey for American Indian Languages (AIL) at Lane Community College and for the state of Oregon. It began when Jerry Hall (Biology instructor and Native Circles instructor) raised his hand at a Learning Communities meeting and asked who would like to help develop a course teaching Native languages and cultures. Some people joined right then, others flowed through, some stayed, some came later. The "some" has been greater than the parts, for through the years the AIL committee has welcomed new and returning participants from student, faculty, community, and administration sectors, advocates as well as nay-sayers. The most numerous and consistent have been faculty members, but all have provided insights and energy to reach our current landmark. *We* have needed all of *us*.

## **What's New**

A major result of these dreams and efforts is that Lane is in its third year of offering AIL 101-103. Further, successful completion of the first two terms of the course sequence satisfies Oregon universities' admission requirement for one year of a second language. And in the 2008-2009 year we have added AIL 201-203, which satisfies Oregon universities' graduation requirement for two years of a second language. To our knowledge, Lane is the first non-tribal community college in the country to offer an American Indian language course of study!

Let's take a look at the journey we took to arrive here.

## **Guiding Principles For AIL Courses**

Early on, to clarify our own mission and to fulfill a college requirement, we articulated the American Indian Languages' core values and goals as the following:

- Work collectively and by consensus
- Offer empowerment and promote self-esteem among learners of Native languages
- Provide a sense of identity and hope for the broader community
- Help to revitalize and/or maintain Native languages and cultures
- Teach language and culture as inextricably connected
- Get state approval for American Indian Languages at the college level

In order to fulfill these principles, we committed ourselves to:

- Listening to Native community concerns
- Earning trust
- Gaining credibility
- Creating a curriculum appropriate to and respectful of Native American values
- Meeting traditional and institutional needs
- Looking for the right language
- Modifying the face-to-face teaching paradigm
- Overcoming scarcity of instructors and helping them optimize time and energy
- Enrolling adequate numbers of students

### **First Steps Along The Way**

AIL originally adopted two criteria for choosing which language(s) to teach, but the decision was not an easy one, given that well over 500 different American Indian languages existed when Europeans arrived in North America and hundreds of independent Native languages are in use today. Ultimately, we decided to focus on (1.) languages of interest to the students enrolled at Lane and (2.) languages representative of Oregon or the Pacific Northwest.

In addition, we were determined that any language we chose would be taught within the context of, and in cooperation with, a recognized Indian tribe or an existing Indian community. Through questionnaires and surveys at Lane, local pow wows, and conferences that we attended and where we sometimes presented, we found the greatest student interest was in Siouan and Cherokee languages (nationally spoken and studied, with some speakers in the NW region). However, the outcome of our discussions with local Native elders and educators was that we should focus on languages of the tribes of Oregon. Several Oregon tribes were creating language programs. Which would be best for our course of study? Which would accept us as participants?

Our next big step came in the summer of 2001 when Lane sponsored five AIL faculty members (Pam Dane, Jerry Hall, Jeff Harrison, Don Macnaughtan, and Carol Watt) to the University of Oregon's Northwest Indian Language Institute (NILI). We learned



Lane Community College  
faculty and others  
attend the 2001  
University of Oregon's  
Northwest Indian  
Language Institute



Photo courtesy of Carol Watt

about pedagogical methods for teaching Native languages and about the articulation of tribal and state benchmarks. We also met great people, two of whom, unbeknownst to us then, would become key figures in AIL's future: the director, Janne Underrinner, and the participant who was developing the Chinuk Wawa program at Grand Ronde, Tony Johnson. (See the *Community College Moment*, 2002, for a group poem written by NILI participants, "Our NILI Poem: All over America, Indian People Are. . .," submitted and introduced by Carol Watt, English instructor.)

For two years AIL worked on developing a curriculum, which culminated in receiving the official state prefix for the sequence AIL 101-103. We created a thematic structure that would anchor the content of language study in the speakers' culture. Themes such as Welcoming and Naturescapes were to be recursively introduced, reviewed and expanded during the three AIL terms.

Cultural insights nest within the lessons on vocabulary and linguistics. For example, one Native language has at least six forms of we (not counting case) to designate proximity and the inclusion and exclusion of varying numbers (Janne Underrinner, NILI lecture, Summer 2001). Another example is that the deictic center in some Native languages is not based on the speaker being the locus of here and there, but on a natural feature, such as a river or mountain (Don Addison, AIL 100 lecture Winter 2004).

The other reason for a thematic structure was that AIL could potentially teach several languages at once. We hoped to hire an instructor who would coordinate the existing computer-based language programs and the visits between students and their language mentors. Rather than a tower of Babel, we envisioned cross-lingual and cross-cultural interchanges among students and teachers.

Even though we hit snags and eddies while developing this ambitious course of study, we did gain Curriculum approval for AIL 101-103 by 2003. One difficulty is that we

lacked a department to call home. Michael Sámano, Director of Ethnic Studies, took us in. Subsequently we were adopted by Social Sciences, with our final destination being Lane Community College's Language, Literature, and Communication Division.

### **AIL's First Major Success**

In the meantime, we also created and gained Lane's Curriculum approval for what would become our first course offering, Foundations for the Study of American Indian Languages. Taught by the multilingual and multicultural Instructor of Anthropology, Don Addison, the class was a big success, starting in the winter of 2004 as Ethnic Studies 199 and later becoming AIL 100.

### **Our Next Big Opportunity**

In 2004, Lane was given a generous and anonymous endowment for a continuing Visiting Scholar position. We worked hard to apply for and secure the first award, which we did. The next step was to contact Native communities and academic circles to invite applicants. We sent over one hundred letters and advertised in tribal and local media. We then reviewed the applications, short-listed candidates, and conducted interviews. The choice was clear: Janne Underrinner, NILI director and a recognized linguist who had dedicated her professional career to the preservation and renewal of Native languages. Additionally, because of her work and her ways, she also had connections with many Northwest Native communities.

By 2005, while Janne was working on the AIL 101-103 curriculum, another part of the dream materialized: Tony Johnson agreed to co-teach Chinuk Wawa with Janne at Lane. He was already the Language Director at Grand Ronde, the reservation west of Salem. There he had created and was successfully running a Chinuk Wawa program, daytime for preschoolers and evening for adults. Over the span of many months, Susan Carkin, Dean of Language, Literature, and Communication, negotiated a contract between Lane and the Confederated Tribes of the Grande Ronde Community. Through the careful language of the contract, Lane and Grande Ronde established shared intellectual property rights, both a major cultural shift for an academic institution and an act of trust by the Tribes. Now we had the expertise and the go-ahead to teach a Native American language at Lane.

### **Chinuk Wawa—The First American Indian Language Taught at Lane**

Chinuk Wawa's history made it a good choice. It was a trade language developed long before the arrival of non-Indian fur trappers or settlers. It was spoken over a broad area, from northern British Columbia to northern California, and as far east as Idaho. It was based on the Chinuk language, an ancient and well-developed Indian language, spoken along the lower Columbia River, which was a major trade center. It accreted elements from

a variety of other Indian languages and continued to add elements of English, French, Hawaiian and Russian in historic times. The early reservation years in Oregon and Washington brought people together from different cultures and different languages. This mixing, as well as intermarriage, meant that many reservation people used Chinuk Wawa at home and in their communities, and for at least thirty years it was spoken as a first language by a new generation of children. (Tony Johnson, AIL class lecture, Winter 2005.)

We chose this language because it is of wide interest in the Pacific Northwest and because it has a good chance of flourishing for many generations. And Lane can be an important part of that success by offering young Chinuk Wawa learners an incentive to keep using the language that they learned at home and in their early grades: college credit for proficiency in the language.

### **The First Year of a Native American Language at Lane**

In the 2006-2007 school year, Janne and Tony smoothly co-taught the first AIL 101-103 sequence offered at Lane. Student response was strong, and the courses met state and tribal criteria. Some challenges emerged, however.

The polishing of the syllabus and written materials came gradually, as it always does when starting a new course. One challenge was overcome this last summer. Tony and Janne finished curricular materials for the first year. Now they are testing and refining as they teach the materials they have developed for the second-year sequence.

The need to increase student enrollment was addressed through incentives. One incentive for students to study a second language is that it is required for college entrance and graduation. As of last year, Chinuk Wawa is recognized by the Oregon Board of Education as an academic language course of study (AIL even earned a state prefix). The successful completion of the first year satisfies the entrance requirements of Oregon's secondary institutions, and successful completion of the second year fulfills the graduation requirement for a second language at the colleges and universities in Oregon.

This accreditation signifies that Native studies can be as complex, demanding, useful, and rewarding as courses centered on the Romance languages, as has long been established by the dominant culture. In an AIL context, Native American languages are as important and respected as those originating in Europe.

The hard work of Janne and Tony on the curricular materials was taking care of the first issue, and the accreditation certainly was a great accomplishment and helping to draw students, but AIL was still faced with modest enrollment and two other problems:

We would need to devise a way to integrate Chinuk Wawa mentors when Tony could not be at Lane because of his demanding schedule.



And, finally, we would need to protect a scarce and vital resource, Tony Johnson, a Tribally Certified Native Language speaker, against burnout. The round-trip drive of three to four hours was taking its toll.

This is where current technology allows AIL to continue its journey, whereas in the past it may have reached a dead end.

### **The Four Campus Distance Learning Innovation**

Multimedia and Video Specialist, Dean Middleton, recounts how he became involved with AIL and helped develop delivery of its courses using the Internet:

*In the fall of 2004 an old friend, Jerry Hall, approached me about using videoconferencing in the teaching of Native languages. I knew Jerry from the days my kids and his attended the 4J Natives program. I had heard he was one of the movers and shakers in a new project at Lane called AIL. He said that he was working on the teaching of Native American languages and, because there are so few speakers, he wanted to know if we could connect to the Warm Springs area. He knew of an elder who spoke a Native language and was thinking that the elder could present the class from Warm Springs instead of having to drive 100 miles in bad winter weather. I checked, and there was a conference unit at the tribal office. I tested the connection. At that time it was the farthest we had gone with our video conference equipment.*

*Today we connect Grande Ronde, Portland Community College, Chemeketa Community College, and Lane Community College every Monday and Wednesday. The video conferencing is built so that the participants at each location can view those at the other locations. The connection goes through Lane Educational Service District (ESD) to the State of Oregon, Department of Administrative Services' Video Conferencing Center, and then to the distant sites. This technology allows us to build to any location that has video conferencing equipment.*

*This truly is a blend of the old (Chinuk Wawa language) and the new (video conferencing over the web). Conventional wisdom held that languages could not be taught through distance technology. As the AIL classes have evolved, though, teachers and students have become comfortable with the medium. People can be seen to interact freely over these distances after only a few class periods. In fact, students in the classroom have learned to steer the camera and turn the microphone on and off as needed.*

Dean's observations about the students adapting to using the classroom interactive equipment answers one of the concerns we had while the new format was evolving. Of course, there were the usual distance-learning issues about difficulty in booking wired rooms, finding adequate late afternoon support staff at four campuses, and avoiding or reconnecting failed hook-ups.

However, we were also worried about the less tangible issues in the language-learning setting that we were proposing. Would students and teachers, looking at others and them-

selves on TV, experience alienation, performance anxiety, and/or reduced spontaneity? Further, would the distance-learning format limit or eliminate cultural lessons because of the medium's impersonality and the potential co-opting by a public institution or non-tribal participants? In spite of these concerns we moved ahead. It was heart-easing to hear from Tony at an AIL meeting last year that his worst fears had not been met and that he thought the set-up was working well.

### **Student Perspective on Taking AIL Courses**

The thoughts of two students also answer many of the above concerns. Jerome Viles, undergraduate student dually enrolled at Lane Community College and the University of Oregon, and Drew Viles, English instructor, share how these AIL classes enrich students' lives. Here is their combined perspective:

*Chinuk Wawa has been, for me, a life-changing experience. Learning an ancestral Oregon language has inspired me to study linguistics so I can become involved in the revival of Native languages. Everyone in the program has been a huge inspiration in their commitment to and their methods of revitalizing Chinuk Wawa.*

*The most rewarding part of learning Chinuk Wawa has been the enhanced connection I feel with the area I live in. It feels right to know the place names that have been used for hundreds of years to describe the area, and it gives one an understanding and respect for the land and original inhabitants that is normally lacking. It is a healthy thing to learn about how people lived in this area for thousands of years, and the most effective way of glimpsing into their worldview is by studying their language. I am glad to have made Chinuk Wawa a part of my life, and I hope that many people both Native and non-Native decide to make the same choice.*

*Learning a language rooted firmly to the soil—that's something a student of languages typically experiences via travel to Spain or Italy or France. Here, now students have had that unique experience in Eugene, Oregon, as we study Chinuk Wawa.*

*To learn any language as an adult forces recognition of the obvious: language enacts culture. It's not a surprise that we become like conduits for any number of intellectual operations when we speak a language. The surprise is when we catch ourselves enacting a particular way of seeing the world. The study of Chinuk Wawa has allowed students to learn the culture inside out, so to speak. Instead of learning about the culture, students have occasion to learn culture through language.*

*Once, for example, we worked to translate a story that described a camas skin as big as a person's kneecap. People have eaten camas bulbs for millennia in this land. And the thought of a prodigiously big camas bulb not only brought delight to our imagination but also brought home the very serious moral of the tale that we were studying, one that stressed the importance of sharing food. Now, when we students of Chinuk Wawa drive by a sign announcing any of the places*

*named after “camas” (like the one standing on I-5 between Eugene and Cottage Grove), we will remember that particular camas skin, as large as a person’s knee and the cultural imperative to share that goes with such abundance.*

*Likewise, what’s up and what’s down in Chinuk Wawa depends, we learned, on water. To speak Chinuk Wawa, we have to wrap our minds around water and the way water flows at a particular place. To a large extent, water determines human orientation.*

*The effect of learning a language of this land has resonated most strongly when we have learned cultural practices through our study. Some of us often catch ourselves humming a gambling song that Tony Johnson shared with us during Chinuk Wawa class. Maybe this song has roots nearly as deep as the use of camas as a food source in this land. Whether by song or story, we have gained greater connection to a rich cultural inheritance by learning this language in this land. This language in this land has a joyful sound.*

### **On The Horizon**

We still have much to do, but the goals are very close to being met. One area still not completed is a determination of which funding model Lane and the other campuses will use. Susan Carkin, a steady champion for AIL, has been working on variations on host-provider arrangements with CCC and PSU. The host-provider model of Distributed Learning helps share the cost of providing a class to the students who want it. The host colleges, Chemeketa Community College and Portland State University, receive tuition, fees, and FTE for each enrolled student. They then send the tuition and fees to Lane Community College, the class provider. Both schools then have enrollment for the class and receive income for the class; the costs are defrayed amongst the participating schools. And to have a win, win, win, the students at Grand Ronde may either take the class as Continuing Education or enroll as Lane students to earn college credit. Lane gains FTE, and students have choice.

From one raised hand inviting interested participants to AIL’s fully fledged two-year offerings, we have come a long way. Now, our next goal is to join with Lane’s other courses and programs that focus on American Indian interests in order to create a formal course of study, possibly as a major or minor or a certificate in Native American Studies. AIL adds to Lane’s already rich array of multicultural offerings and affirms the college’s commitment to diversity. American Indian Languages is indeed part of a new direction that gives Lane Community College a sense of pride and, we hope, offers inspiration.



# ART



For life is tendency, and the essence of a tendency is to develop in the form of a sheaf, creating, by its very growth, divergent directions among which its impetus is divided.

Henri Bergson

Girl



Jerry Ross

oil on canvas • 24" x 30"

*Flux*



**Kathleen Caprario**

*acrylic on wood panel • 30" x 30"*



*Lunar Moment*



**Kathleen Caprario**

*acrylic on wood panel • 10"x10"*

Winter Dance



Pat Sweeney  
fractal art • 8" x 6"



*Sun Mandala*



**Pat Sweeney**  
*fractal art • 8" x 6"*

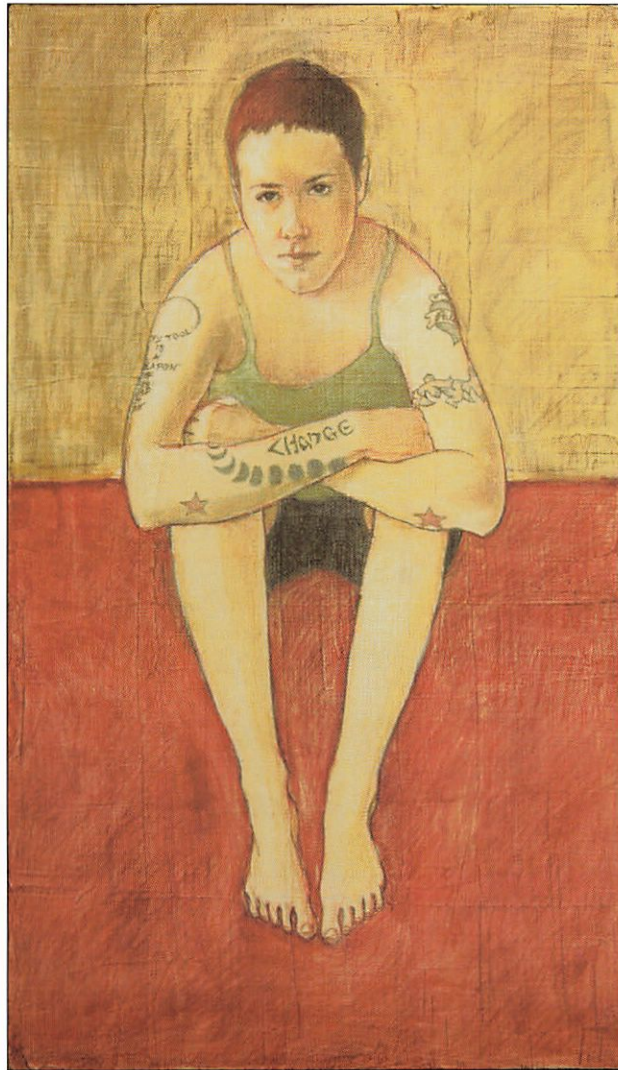


New Day



**Russell H. Shitabata**  
*photography • 1/100 sec. at f2.8*

*Change*

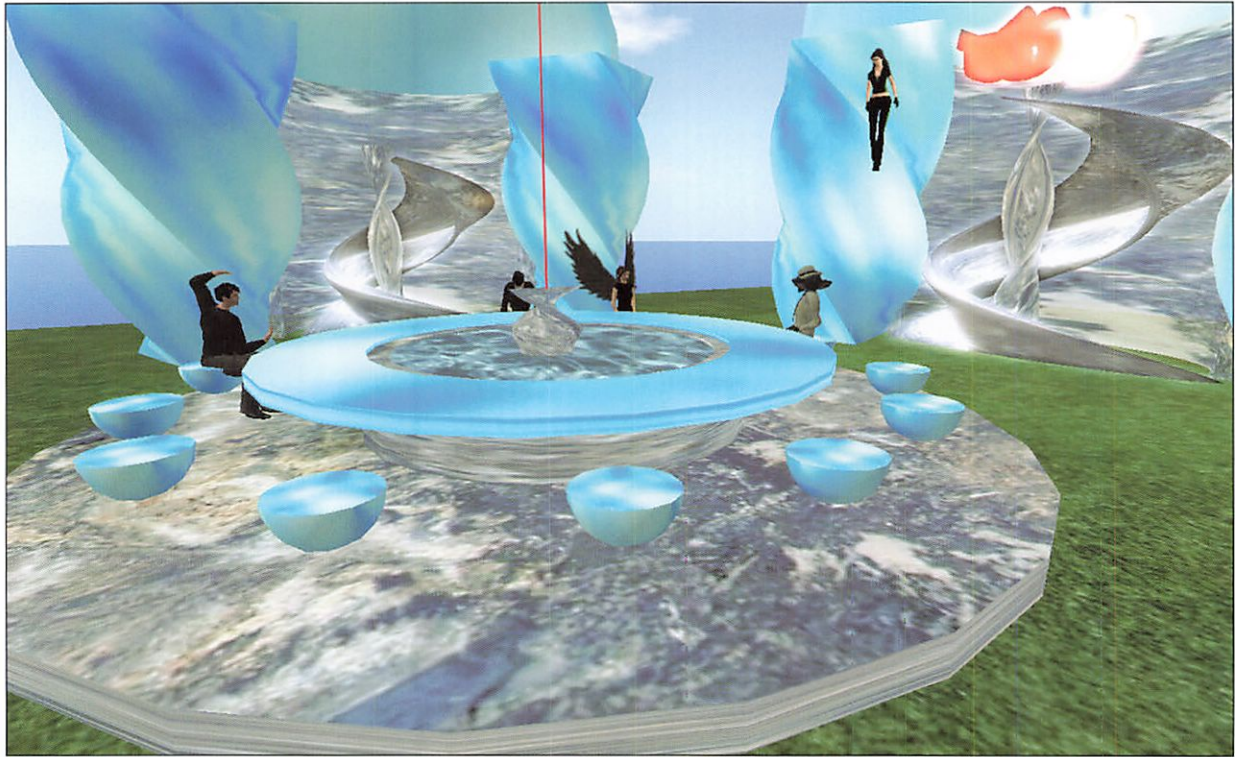


**Jan Halvorsen**

*mixed media drawing • 11.75" x 20"*



*Classroom in Second Life*



Digital structure designed by Lucas Patrick and Katie Van Meter  
*screen capture by Jim Bailey*



## POETRY AND FICTION



We are like trees; we must create new leaves, in new directions, in order to grow.

*Anonymous*

# Thirteen Grains of Pollen

---

*Sandy Jensen*

*for my colleague Lance Sparks and the Atlas Cedar outside Lane's Center Building*

1.

As when pollen rose into the wind  
spiraling—  
your hand reached out.

2.

In the courtyard of the world  
gold powder pollen climbs  
the long ladder of the wind.

3.

Look! Your eyes—  
dusted with light!

4.

When the pollen rises,  
you are surrounded in that yellow light  
you first noticed  
when you were a child.

5.

Nothing  
is more sacred  
than pollen.

6.

My brother,  
remember that dance, that dream, that great  
Pollen Promise. It still calls, you  
still may answer.

7.

Our lives are grains of gold  
blown  
from last century's Cedar cone.  
Fossil pollen in a red clay road cut  
marks where other ages breathed,  
blossomed,  
fell away.

8.

How shall we know  
the shape of air?

9.

One more cone  
blows its genetic code  
130 million years into the past.  
Cedar seeks its other half:  
Like you. Like me.

10.

We stand in that wind one moment and chance  
blows its lucky gold through our lives.  
That's the Old Way the Navajos call  
"Walk-in-Beauty."

11.

The wild little children of the wind  
play a fast pick-up game  
of Kick-the-Cone. Rough play.  
We're all left standing  
in the golden shower of their dust.



12.

Bronze wasp  
green-gold  
stumble-buzzing  
takes a bath  
in pollen.

13.

Ground fog at dawn,  
red horses rear up.  
Heads toss up  
through mist into sunlight.  
Startled Cedar  
blows gold glory  
through  
flying black manes.

## Fishing Cove, Cape Breton

---

*Sarah Ulerick*

Down the rocky trail  
steeply to the cobbled beach,  
the inlet bound by  
cliffs and wind.  
Here in confined and separate moment

I reach, palms outstretched  
to limitless sea,  
timeless waves,  
the ocean of now.

## For Sophia Rose

---

*Dan Armstrong*

Your name  
(how could they have known  
before they even met you!)  
means “flower of wisdom.”

As mother ices the birthday cake  
for unsuspecting brother Jake,  
I stand and hold you  
tight to me,

your surprising heaviness  
as you relax into my chest  
burrowing deep into my heart.

Your plundering eyes  
are wise beyond your few weeks,  
much like your mother’s eyes

thirty-six years before  
when they wheeled her to me  
from the delivery room  
on the squeaky wheel gurney,

an old soul  
recycled in a fresh little body,  
perfect in her wisdom  
just like you.

Go ahead!  
Burrow deep into me.  
Cling to me,



and with your knowing old eyes  
know me  
in your wise and wily ways

as you sink into my center  
and plant your ancient knowledge  
there.

Welcome, wise and lovely Rose,  
into my heart,  
my life.

# The Jump

*Wayne Harrison*

My six-year-old came out of his room the other morning wearing eyeglasses with no lenses. The frames are the same pillow shape as his mother's, though hers were apricot colored, and these are a red tortoiseshell like a movie star might wear. He must have gotten them from Mrs. Dugan, who watches him during the summer while I'm at work. They look like the kind of glasses—eccentric and free-spirited—that she might wear.

I was surprised to see him still wearing them at dinner. He pushed them up by the bridge after leaning in for a bite of sloppy Joe, as though he'd been wearing glasses all his life.

"They look a little big for you," I said. He shook his head no and the glasses tumbled into his lap.

"Zipper needs a bigger house," he said, changing the subject to his pet fish as he put the glasses back on.

"Tetras like little houses."

"He wants a pond. Then I could swim with him."

"What pond?" I asked.

"One we could build outside." Charlie is a debater, and this time as he pushed up the glasses I saw the articulate, reasoning young man he might become.

"If you dig and dig you hit water automatically," he said. "We don't even have to use the hose. It's automatic." Charlie loves to repeat big words.

"He'd freeze in the winter," I said.

"No, because you heat it like a pool."

"Are you ready for the diving board on Sunday?" I asked, changing the subject myself for one that I knew would trump any more talk of Zipper and heated ponds.

Charlie sat upright in his chair, his eyes shifting around the table, looking brave and afraid at the same time. His face turned solemn at the thought of delivering on his first important promise. Through the big slanted rectangles of the glasses, his eyes found mine, and he said, "I'm gonna do the new record."

• • •

It's three days later, and Charlie hasn't taken the glasses off except to sleep. We're crossing the dewy lawn at the Woodbury town pool on a cool July morning, Charlie in his trunks with a Sponge Bob towel tucked cape-fashion into his collar.

On the walkway outside the fence, an emergency hook extension pole, racked above the lifesavers where it's always been, catches Charlie's eye. He pushes up the glasses and,

still staring at the pole, walks right into an azalea bush. "Dad, quit," he says when I start to laugh. He stomps bark mulch off his sandal, and I'm impressed by the way he forgives or at least forgets me in order to refocus on his mission. His gaze sails across the deep end of the pool to the diving board.

So far Charlie has jumped into five feet of water from an Oxford dictionary and six feet from a swimmers' starting block. Every weekend a little deeper, a little higher. He swims the breast stroke his mother taught him. Saturday mornings they had their date at the pool, summers here and winters at the Y. Today would have been Sharon's birthday, her big thirty-five. Charlie's jump into the deep end is his present to her.

We pass through the chain-link gate, our sandals clapping and scraping the cement. It's nine thirty and, under the blue morning sky, webs of fog lift off the heated water.

At the steps to the shallow end he grabs on to the chrome railing. He taps the water with his toe until circles form, then dips his foot in. "OK, good," he says. A sign behind him reads NO GLASS NO RUNNING NO HORSEPLAY.

I wave up to Mark in the lifeguard chair. The climbing sun is still faint as a light bulb, and Mark wears a windbreaker he'll shed when the first high-school girls arrive. A blue nylon rope halves the pool, its Styrofoam floats riding the waves from a lone swimmer. The man, at least seventy, swims sidelong, touching the five-foot marks as if they were stop clocks in a chess game. His crown of white hair hugs his skull, and he stops only to brush sheets of water from his face, his long-fingered hand the color of an old paper bag. He notices neither my son nor me.

Charlie pushes the glasses up into his hair, and I'm suddenly relieved that there are no other kids here yet. After this jump, after Charlie has faced and overcome this last challenge at the pool, I'll talk to him about getting rid of the glasses. Maybe I'll bargain with him and buy him a pair of sunglasses he picks out, less extravagant ones that might spare him some ridicule.

Charlie finds three lounge chairs away from the others at the far end of the pool. On the center chair he sits and removes his sandals, then arranges them neatly on the concrete. He peeks at his waistband where the tie still holds. He stands once, sits, stands again, sits.

"There's plenty of time," I say. He joins me on my chair, and we lie back under the small, storybook sky. I wonder how long it will be before he outgrows the cradle between my arm and chest. A morning breeze picks up, blows his hair against my chin, and the scent takes me back to our trip to Walgreens a month ago. Charlie came over from the shampoo aisle holding a big bottle of Finesse. "I need this," he said and dropped it in the cart.

"That's not what you want," I said, fishing it out, recognizing it as the kind his mother used. "For permed hair, see? Grab some Pert. You like Pert."



"This," he said, loud enough to draw the stares of two women in cosmetics.

I could have yelled at him, but I'd promised myself never again. Breathing through the heartache I said, "Do you want curly hair?" It was close enough to a lie that my face warmed over with shame.

Charlie looked at the bottle and then right back at me. "I don't care," he said.

Now as I run my fingers through his fine sandy hair I smell them both. "We're very tired," Charlie says, sinking back. He often says this when he lies beside me. He searches the morning sky, where high cirrus clouds pass over one another like misguided angels.

Sharon and I explored religions with Charlie. The three of us attended a weekend retreat in upstate New York, where we sang chants and meditated before a Buddha statue the size of a phone booth. Sikh friends shared their faith over onion chutney. We thought we'd open all the doors for him, but when he finally needed answers, what did I do but revert to dependable, run-of-the-mill Christianity. Now Charlie imagines heaven, the dead in a fleecy white kingdom, waiting for us.

• • •

Mark the lifeguard is a family friend, paperboy, leaf raker. He turned stoner his senior year at Nonnewaug High, and I wouldn't trust him to save Charlie if it came to it, but I'm here, and Mark means well. High in his white chair, he's paging through Motor Trend, generously unaware of Charlie's worried approach to the board, though he'll be the first one clapping after he jumps. I remember Mark at my door the afternoon after the accident, without his ubiquitous Red Sox cap, one hand clamped on the other's wrist in a show of condolence as his opening sentence: "If there's anything I can do . . ."

He's old enough to mean what he says, so I hold him to it. I ask for favors. He helps to sort the clothes in Sharon's closet, picking out some for his older sister in the Czech Republic on a Fulbright, the woodsy smell of pot on him, his eyes gleaming with Visine. I sent him to Star Auto Repair and Wrecking with the signed-over title of Sharon's Celica. He brought me the receipt and her belongings from the car—a shoe box full of her CDs, a corkscrew from our wine tour in British Columbia, small things from the glove box that smelled like burnt popcorn from his having smoked on the drive back. I was nearly compelled to ask if he had any more pot to share, but instead I asked how the car had looked. As he considered this even the suntan drained out of his face: behind his patchy goatee I could see the mortified boy. With the shoe box pulled tight to my ribs I lost my balance, backed into the nearest wall, and sank to the carpet. "Don't go see the car, Mr. Pierce," Mark said.

Today his favor was coming in early to run the pool's heater.

The water is the temperature of summer rain. Treading in the deep end, I can't tell where I end and the water begins. I move out to the center of the pool as Charlie, a few feet above me on the board, glasses propped back in his hair, stops just shy of the gritty fiberglass edge. He pumps his hands and laughs nervously. His knees knock together. "How come you don't sink?" he says.

I look at the still water around me as my limbs generate circles upon circles. "I'm treading water—swimming without going anywhere."

"You look like a turtle-head," he says, venturing a small step. The board ticks with the weight of him. Beneath it, two springs are powdered with chlorine and rust, spider nests spreading from the corners. "You look like Mr. Lizard-head," he says.

"The first time is the hardest. You're OK."

Charlie looks at his feet, one hand clenched into a white fist. "You look like a dummy-dog."

"Trust me," I say.

"It's so high."

"Whenever you're ready, buddy. I'm here. You're safe." And I lie back in the womblike water, watching the sky. Layers start to peel away, the daily activities I'm either doing or psyching myself up to do: Cooking. Shopping. Facing her family. Facing mine. And finally I'm floating without a thought, and something inside me unclenches. I feel as if I'm looking into a canyon, when everything clears from your mind except the sudden, alarming impulse to jump.

A wave of water catches me in the mouth, and I cough it out. I slice my arms around until I'm treading water again.

Charlie waits for me to recover and then closes his eyes. "Marco," he says.

"Polo."

He opens them again. "I might land on your head."

"Let's see you try."

He pulls the glasses down onto his nose. I try to think through how the smack of water might affect them, if they could hurt him, but then he draws his breath and looks as if he might do it. He's only a brave second from stepping off when something happens in the sky. A low cloud pushes over the sun, and the temperature drops. Charlie's chest falls, goose flesh rising on his thighs.

"It's cold," he says.

"Why don't you throw me those glasses?" I say. "I'll hang on to them until after you jump."

"Just wait a minute," he says. "Don't make me." The old man does another lap and Charlie watches him, looking almost as if he will call out to ask him something, but what?

Something Charlie doesn't seem to trust me to answer. But then he looks at me again and stomps his foot. "I hate this." Even as the cloud passes over the sun and the light comes back, he frowns.

"We'll come back another day," I say, knowing that every subsequent promise will be a little easier for him to break. But we're still in our first year of this. We're still very tired.

"I just wish . . ." he says, and then his tears erupt, urgent, grown-up tears running off his cheeks. "I just wish . . ." Those silly glasses slip off his nose and catch on his chin, and in his swift anger he pitches them down at the water.

They hardly make a splash, then start to sink, and my heart catches; I dive under. They wobble when I reach for them, and I miss and miss again, like grabbing at a butterfly. Looking up through the water I can see my blurry son on the edge of the board, and I send up a hand that just breaks the surface, signaling, "Don't jump." I go after the glasses again, but they dodge me. Suddenly everything depends on retrieving these glasses, and I howl underwater, and then I'm out of air and too far down. I feel like I don't know how to swim anymore. I look up and wonder if I'll see Charlie plunge over me in a storm of bubbles. But there's only the frothy white sky getting farther away, and then snowy spots in my eyes before the hand of God-I-Don't-Believe-In pulls me back.

• • •

I sag between the chrome rails, belching up strings of water. "You're OK," the old man says. Mark's here, too. "I thought you guys were just goofing around," he says. "Jesus." He grips my shoulder to keep me from slipping back into the pool.

"That's never happened before," I say.

"You're OK," the old man repeats, his spongy, arthritic hand on my lower back. And then his rusted voice calls over my head to the other swimmers, "He just got a swaller down the wrong pipe."

My coughing subsides, and I drop my forehead to my folded arms, slobber and snot everywhere, and the old man stays beside me, keeps his hand where it is. My head is still bent down, and I don't want to be let go of. And then Charlie's cold little hand is there with the old man's and Mark's, and he drops his face in close to mine. "You almost drowned," he says. I look up at him, and his hair is still dry, which I'm glad for. He rubs his hand over my shoulders protectively and says, "It's OK. We can go."

And the glasses? A shivering red fleck at the bottom of the pool.



# Walking Directions Home

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*Brian Kelly*

1. Place tune in head
2. Add water (optional)
3. Look up not down
4. Smile at man with blue coat and old hat
- 5.

## Cardinal Directions

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*Brian Kelly*

We are heading for  
East harried morning  
Through  
West comfort stream  
Around  
North illuminated high ground  
Back to  
South quiet vision

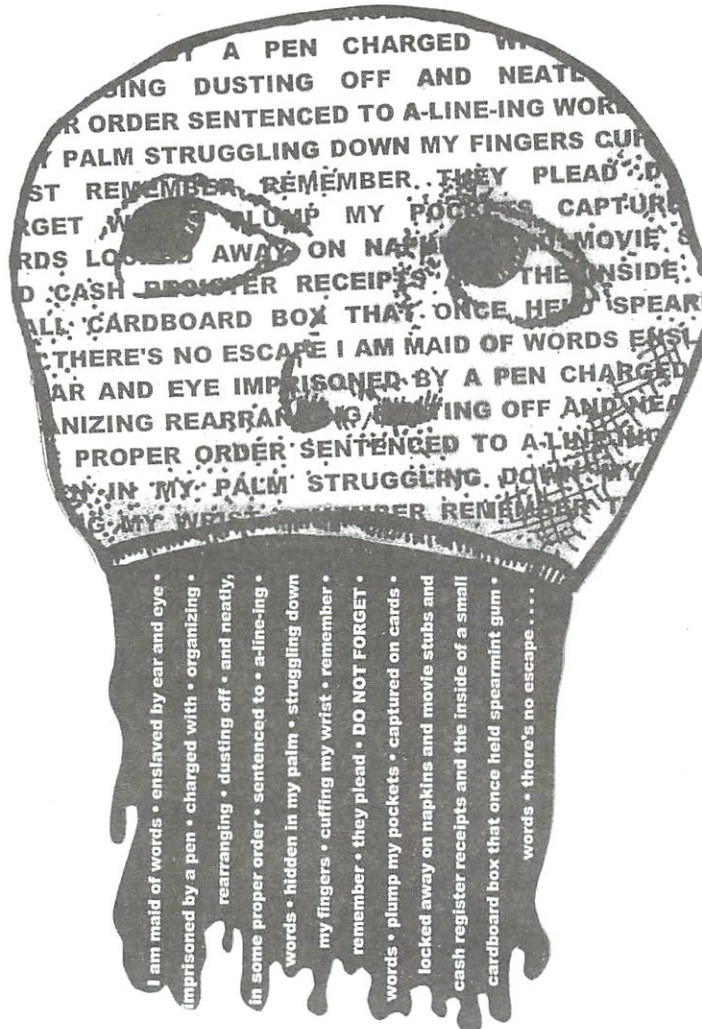
But we have not lost our way.

# Made of Words

*Wilkins-O'Riley Zimm*

Ink runs from the corners of my mouth.  
There is no happiness like mine.  
I have been eating poetry.

• Mark Strand (1968), *Eating Poetry*, "Reasons for Moving"





## Notes from Campus: What's New



We keep moving forward, opening new doors, and doing new things, because we're curious and curiosity keeps leading us down new paths.

Walt Disney

# A Sharp Eye: Making Meaning in a Multigenre World

Wilkins-O'Riley Zinn

*Images also help me find and realize ideas. I look at hundreds of very different, contrasting images and I pinch details from them, rather like people who eat from other people's plates.*

Francis Bacon

*...what is said cannot be neatly separated from how something is said. Form and content interpenetrate. The way in which something is spoken shapes its meaning; form becomes content. Actors have learned this lesson well. So, too, have poets, painters, and musicians. . . The interpenetration of content and form is a fundamental insight that the arts reveal.*

Elliot W. Eisner (2002).

*The Arts and the Creation of Mind*, p. 197

*The soul of creativity is looking at one thing and seeing another, making surprising connections between things, generating unusual possibilities.*

John Chaffee

I am an autoethnographer. I explore my personal cultures and the other cultures I encounter, seeking connections among them so that I can make sense of my world. This is a messy business, particularly if I wish to share my insights. The world—and sense-making—are not easily represented. This is why I am also a multigenre poet, artist, and writer, combining multiple kinds of representation to convey a message: a poem is captured within an image; a series of quotations set the mood for an essay; the wisdom of a scholarly article is juxtaposed with the silly drivel of reality television. Tom Romano (2000) describes multigenre writing as arising from the interplay of

research, experience, and imagination. It is not an uninterrupted, expository monolog nor a seamless narrative nor a collection of poems. A multigenre paper is composed of many genres and subgenres, each piece self-contained, making a point of its own, yet connected by theme or topic and sometimes by language, images, and content. (x-xi)

I was a multigenrist long before I encountered Romano's work. As I continue to explore the origin of my preferences, I realize that it all began at the dump.

"Keep a sharp eye out—you never know what you'll see." With these words, my Grandpa Wilkins deposited me at the edge of the dump while he searched its landscape, scavenging for barter with his best friend, Whitey, who lived in the Shantytown that had



grown up around the looming mounds of trash. There were many treasures to be found in the heaped-up leavings edged with the carefully-stacked discards of post-Depression sensibility. The denizens of the dump crafted colorful homes from broken-but-still-useable mirrors, picture frames, wooden crates, and other detritus. Flattened tin cans, their labels tattering in the wind, protected many roofs, and the mosaics of discards delighted me. I was five years old. I read books with broken backs, rescued dolls with missing limbs, and combined this with that to make something else, always encouraged by my grandpa who fixed cars and appliances, crafted furniture, revived houses, and supported grandma and me with his finds.

I learned his lessons well. I am the woman of the sharp eye. I take this; I make that. I recycle, repurpose, reuse. I thrift shop and create outfits I love. I decorate with discards, make art with the leavings of other lives. I am a *bricoleur*—a patchworker—always reviewing what I have collected with the imaginative eye of possibility. Many of my artistic and academic pursuits have grown from my desire to unite words and images, and as I work with multigenre processes, I hope to inspire the autoethnographic reflection of others. By creating *evocateurs* (Zinn, 2005) that meld word and image to evoke memory, I seek to reach a broader audience through the duality of verbal/visual appeal.

As a teacher who's taught research writing at the high school, community college, and university levels, I have translated multigenre processes into a creative research methodology called *the Collectory* that borrows from Romano's multigenre approach as well as from Ken Macrorie's (1970, 1976) first-person, interactive I-Search processes to address the ways that lifelong learners grapple with the making of meaning. As an academic, I have been encouraged to conduct research using the eye of significance, but if everything is assessed in light of its immediate usefulness, much may be lost. *The Collectory* encourages students to accumulate many kinds of information and to deliberately look for interconnections among these disparate sources, using processes that more closely mimic the ways in which research is conducted in life outside of school as the availability of information explodes. Whether a person is planning a wedding, building a home, or buying a car, input is usually sought from many sources. When this searching is formalized for *the Collectory*, I call it *pentangulation* (Zinn, 2004), an autoethnographic method that utilizes multiple kinds of sources to gain complex understandings as the learner explores his or her personal culture contextualized by the other cultures in which s/he lives and works.



## Pentangulation

*So many things fail to interest us, simply because they don't find in us enough surfaces on which to live, and what we have to do is increase the number of planes in our mind, so that a much larger number of themes can find a plane in it at the same time.*

Jose Ortega y Gasset

- Self as source of knowledge, resonance and relevance, personal and academic preferences and passions, introspection, reflective journaling, collecting of multiple kinds of artifacts, questioning, metacognition
- Observation, formal and informal
- Talking with others, face-to-face and tech-mediated; seeking out diverse perspectives and seeking to understand them
- Formal research, scholarly literature, past and present contextualization
- Informal research, popular culture of multiple kinds, past and present contextualization

The non-linear data collection of pentangulation moves back and forth among multiple sources and requires students to show evidence of the evaluation of sources as well as to take into account the historical context and multifaceted nature of issues. It makes cheating practically impossible. By asking students to incorporate multiple kinds of data and to make their explorations transparent, the research journey becomes part of the product and includes ongoing reflection on what is being found and what it might mean. It is also an approach useful with adult learners and diverse populations since it honors students' perspectives, helping them to see themselves as creators of knowledge, and allowing them to begin with topics that are personally interesting and to illustrate meaning in ways that are meaning-full to them. A *collectory* could include poetry, a copy of an advertisement, articles from magazines and newspapers, an idea from the Internet, a page from a personal journal, an interview with a professor or a friend, all united by the inquiring and connecting mind of the author who can also play around with writing in multiple genres. The research project might not even be a paper, although there is generally a written component to provide easily accessible reflective evidence.

It is tempting to limit creative/academic activities of any kind to those things deemed appropriate according to the rules of a particular genre or discipline. Those things are more easily assessed. It is easy for students to fail to make interdisciplinary connections or to link classroom theory to life outside of school. Connective and imaginative thinking are seldom taught, yet the cultures in which students live are not neatly compartmentalized, and deep and meaningful learning is seldom linear. Engaging in multigenre work promotes

resiliency as learners grapple with the challenges of making sense and creating coherence. It's a multigenre world and it takes a sharp eye to find its treasures.

*I read a lot of things. You never know where the big ideas are gonna come from.*

Melanie Griffith  
*Working Girl*

*All things are filled full of signs, and it is a wise man who can learn about one thing from another.*

Plotinus

*Anyone can look for fashion in a boutique or history in a museum. The creative explorer looks for history in a hardware store and fashion in an airport.*

Robert Wieder

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*For us, research is more appropriately thought of as "re-searching." It continually attends to and notices life, a perspective in which seeing things in different ways through different lenses is encouraged. We believe that all of us, not just formally designated researchers, engage in re-searching. We cannot assign the making of meaning or the building of theory to any one institution or group.*

Elisabeth Hayes & Daniele D. Flannery, with Ann K. Brooks, Elizabeth J. Tisdell, & Jane M. Hugo (2000). *Women as Learners: The Significance of Gender in Adult Learning*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, p. xiv.

**Editors' Note:** See Wilkins-O'Riley Zinn's multigenre poem "Made of Words" on page 73.

## Second Life: A New Direction in Online Instruction

*Ken Zimmerman*

*Editors' Note: Images from Second Life can be seen on page 58 and on the back cover.*

I'm standing on the plaza outside the Eiffel Tower. As I stroll awkwardly across the colorless bricks, I see an Egyptian Sphinx, some kiosks, tables with umbrellas, and a number of information signs in English. When I turn my vision upward, I see the framework of criss-crossing girders stretching up toward a hazy sky. I feel clumsy, unable to control my movements smoothly. Nonetheless, I eventually negotiate a stairway and narrow passage into a lobby under the tower. I see a wire-cage elevator, and work my way to its front, hoping to ride up and see the city lights. But the wire entry gate is shut, and a small sign in English reads: "Elevator closed for service." Frustrated but laughing a little, I navigate back out to the plaza. I'm getting a feel for movement now, but I still stumble into someone else moving across the plaza. Before I can try to figure out how to apologize, or to ask them for directions, they vanish in a flash of light. I'm startled, but not too surprised. This isn't Paris, after all.

"Well, how do you like it?" a voice behind me asks. It's Jim, back from a meeting and ready to continue our interview. I give him back his desk chair and re-orient myself to the real world around me: a small office crowded with books, papers, and several computers. "I was having some trouble controlling my avatar," I answer. "And the elevator was out of order." "That's Second Life," Jim laughs.

Lane Community College Computer Information Technology instructor Jim Bailey is showing me around the online virtual environment called Second Life. He is working on building LCC's first virtual reality courses inside that computer-generated world. His project, primarily supported by a National Science Foundation grant, aims to move online introductory courses in Computer Science entirely into Second Life. The first courses developed will be those taken by students in the Simulation and Gaming program. Those students are already comfortable in virtual worlds, and respond enthusiastically to the game-like environment.

The questions driving Jim's project are "How can we use immersive environments in ways that will improve education? Can we continue to utilize the best elements of the current asynchronous online environments such as WebCT and Moodle, and yet bring back some of the benefits of face-to-face classroom instruction?" Virtual environments



like Second Life allow for multi-participant activities—live lectures, discussions, and question and answer sessions—in ways that two-dimensional web-based environments don't. A Second Life classroom can have all the content richness of an online classroom environment like Moodle, including instructor notes, multi-media materials, and links out to other Internet sites, but Second Life also allows for the real-time interactions of traditional classrooms. "The best of both worlds!" Jim says. "Do you want to see Lane's island?"

The world of Second Life is organized into islands—territories owned and developed by users. Each island runs on a separate server at Linden Labs, the company that created and owns Second Life, which helps distribute bandwidth usage and heighten performance.

Jim's quick fingers on the keyboard fly the avatar I had so awkwardly controlled swiftly to Lane's island, where the environment is still under construction. I see a blocky landscape, some buildings. We enter a rudimentary classroom, with chairs arranged in a semi-circle around what looks like a whiteboard. Jim maneuvers the avatar onto a seat—not without a little difficulty, I note with some satisfaction. "You can sit in the chairs, and anyone can come to the front and draw on the whiteboard," he points out. Dynamic lectures, responses to student input, multi-media presentations, and participatory discussions are all possible in this environment.

LCC's presence in Second Life is only in its infancy, though, and Jim's project hasn't built much on its island yet. So our tour continues through several other colleges' Second Life sites. Hundreds of schools currently have some presence in Second Life. Bowling Green has a particularly elaborate virtual campus, with sloping walkways leading to graphically complex buildings, separated by green swatches of textured grass. But, not being students, we can't take a look at any classes that may be in progress. Is teaching and learning going on behind those digital walls? Are students able to navigate both this three dimensional virtual world and the depths of their course content at the same time? Jim is confident that his students will benefit from this new educational environment. He plans to have Co-op Ed students—second year students in his Simulation and Gaming program—work with him to create content and activities in Second Life for use by his introductory classes. And this method models the new direction of teaching and learning that, to Jim and many others, this virtual world represents. The students will be able to work directly with the instructor in accomplishing a job or activity within Second Life, and thus develop their skills for employment in the real world.

Jim's enthusiasm is palpable. His programming students will get to demonstrate their programs inside the online classroom. Their programs and graphics may even become part of the classroom environment. They will be creating their classroom as they learn within it. The possibilities, as Jim outlines them to me, seem endless. "Do you want to see more?" he asks. "On Vassar's island they've built the Sistine Chapel."

# Surfing the Digital Lifestyle: Staying Ahead of the Wave

*Richard Lennox*

In the physical (non-virtual, non-electronic) activity of surfing, you must maintain an awareness of the waves behind you, as well as the one you are riding, and the shore where you are heading. Finding the perfect tipping point of being propelled forward by forces is the goal, instead of being thrashed by the wave's power. The greatest dangers are being ignorantly overconfident or fearful, either of which will prevent staying ahead and above the forces churning below. The same is true with technological change.

The tsunami of technology is not often seen as significant, as long as IT works. But from my skewed vantage point (digital surfer, displaced worker, artist, educator and aspiring Macintosh evangelist) I have been tumbled, humbled and raised on high through understanding technology. I am obsessive about certain aspects . . . nobody knows ALL the aspects . . . so that I have gained enough balance to ride its waves and to 'love' what I do (and even to love learning what I want to know how to do). This article is an attempt to share some insights in order to help others enjoy their ride, as well.

Human life has been changed by the technology around us. Most of us would be unwilling to retreat from the enjoyment that technology has wrought, even if we sometimes wish we weren't so damned available and connected . . . think cell phone calls at inappropriate times. But in order to find balance, we must first survey what waves are already past to determine if there is a pattern.

## **History: Foam on the Beach**

*As the sand soaks away the water on the beach, so we forget what once was.*

Forty years ago there were no personal computers, telephones needed cords, we all watched the same three network television stations, listened to the same AM radio stations (some of us listened to a new music called 'rock & roll'). Students researched in libraries that had books, articles and magazines (microfiche?) and typed their papers on typewriters. But even though we listened to the same information sources, we were in a culturally divisive war—Vietnam.

In the mid 1970s, Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak invented the first Apple computer—primarily for educational word processing and databases. Cell phones were the size of a brick and rare. We had our first energy awareness with an oil price hike. FM radio raised the quality of music, and by the 1980s Sony introduced the Walkman, which allowed portable personal music, compact discs (CDs) were launched, and IBM introduced its

personal computer for business. It was the space shuttle's maiden voyage. The Macintosh computer with a GUI (Graphical User Interface) and a mouse was invented by Steve Jobs. And with the creation of Postscript software from Adobe, and a laser printer from Canon . . . the desktop publishing revolution started. (It can now be declared officially over, as *nobody* publishes anything without a computer anymore)

Less than 20 years ago the World Wide Web was invented (really, by Tim Berners-Lee 1989) on a NEXT computer running UNIX operating system that Steve Jobs left Apple to build. Shortly thereafter, Linux, an open-source operating system was created. E-mail was becoming more popular each year. Microsoft was becoming the dominant business office software developer by encouraging divergent hardware companies to build boxes to run their software on. Ebay was started and Wi-Fi was envisioned and authorized. Cell phones were smaller and full of features hidden like a Russian egg behind menus, and moving from an emergency-status device to common place.

Ten years ago, in 1998, although last century . . . Steve Jobs returned to Apple Computer Inc. (name since clarified to Apple Inc) and coined the phrase "Digital Lifestyle" to describe his vision to build computers in support of its software. The software focus would be *digital* . . . software that would process photography, music, video and multimedia aspects of the Internet. Rather than focus on more traditional office applications of word processing and spreadsheets, the general application of database interaction between all digital formats that could talk to one another, and pass digital info back and forth, would be the aim. The strength of Unix operating system would run the new Apple Macintosh, called OSX.

The last couple of years have even exacerbated the Digital Lifestyle transformation. Cell phones take pictures, have keyboards to send instant text messages, and can even check e-mail. Video cameras are small, portable and easy enough to take everywhere prompting video sharing on the web.

The Internet has graduated to Web 2.0 which has increased social communication and modalities; using CSS templates, you can now set your own blog up in minutes without knowing a line of html code (Blogger, WordPress, TypePad . . . etc).

Last year the Apple iPhone was released, and it created yet a new paradigm as it merged wireless computer interface, touch screen, Internet capability, e-mail maintenance, music and video recording, camera, texting, calendar, address book (oh and cell phone) . . . all in a device that can fit in your hand or pocketed. It is actually a computer that also can phone . . . and now it is morphing beyond by opening up the operating system to developers who are creating software to read books, navigate, play games, and . . .



### **The Quickening Toward Now . . .**

*Roaring, frothing waves racing past, just ahead.*

Where were you when the Digital Lifestyle revolution caught you (and passed you by-riding on it or swimming in it)?

Were you seduced to try Apple's iPod? Everyone wondered at the time . . . Apple had no business going into the music business! Too expensive, too small, too trendy . . . But Apple wasn't just selling the iPod; it was selling the personal experience and control of your digital music life.

Did you get high speed Internet through cable or DSL? The experience of watching video just isn't the same on dial up. YouTube videos and bloggers self-publishing to the world without a single piece of paper. Podcasts of education or entertainment are growing like wild flowers, where now anyone can have their own radio or TV station . . . It used to be that whoever owned the (printing) presses owned the culture's information . . . Now everyone owns their own publishing/media production house, if they have a computer attached to the Internet.

Did you get a gorgeous flat-screen TV to watch the football game or the latest blockbuster (just off the slightly larger big screen)? And then you got a DVR (Digital Video Recorder) so that you wouldn't be held hostage by commercial network programming schedules, you could record movies and watch whenever you want . . . even without commercials. Or now, instead of going to a local video or dvd store, you have them mailed to you . . . but wait, you mean you just download your movies . . . right now? with Apple TV . . . or NetFlix, or Amazon.

Did you finally chuck that film camera with its expensive and slow film? Do you now take digital shots, organize them on your computer and edit them without a darkroom, beyond what even a master photographer could do? You should be! The quality is certainly as good. Once you purchase a digital camera and a card, your photography is *free* (unless you want to print it) but since most of us really just want to share our photos . . . we should be posting them for free on Picassa, Kodak Gallery, or Flickr.

### **The Inevitable Waves . . .**

*Time will bring new experience, just beyond our current horizon.*

The future is anyone's guess, and I certainly do not have a crystal ball (especially in regard to technology). But, having been an "Apple watcher" I can speculate that surprises will be part of our future, and that the meniscus of our technological ocean will continue to flow toward an acceptance of digital extensions of our own thoughts . . . as we make our wishes and dreams come true.

## Resource Connections: New Direction for Adult Basic and Secondary Education

*Alise Lamoreaux*

Lane is a commuter school; people come to campus, do their thing, and leave. Connecting students to the resources and people here at Lane is an important part of improving student persistence, retention, and subsequent success.

Developing stronger inter-campus relationships designed to assist GED students effectively transitioning to college, and devoting resources to this area, is a new emphasis for ABSE. Many students enter the GED program with the goal of entering college. According to the National College Transition web site, "Statistics tell the story. In 2001, 65 percent of adults who passed a GED exam indicated that they had earned the degree in order to pursue further education, yet only 30 to 35 percent actually did so." In my experience, academic readiness may not be the major obstacle these student face: many are first generation college students; many are working to support families while trying to change careers; many already have well paying jobs in the service sector, but want something different for themselves or their children. The GED students who seek out Lane are asking us to help them reach their goals of change. Finding ways to help them persist onto college and be resilient in their transition starts with integrating them before they make the transition from non-credit to credit students.

The goal of the class I teach—Everything You Want To Know About College, Before You Start—is to help students understand the culture of college as well as the details of the system's operation. In the 11 week class, students have the opportunity to get to know the student services available to them to increase their student success and retention. Students have a chance to "try on" college so to speak. They find out in greater detail the cost in both time and money of attending college and see if the fit really works for them and/or what modifications need to be made in order for the fit to lead to success. For example, changing the mindset that tutors are something a student uses once he/she is having academic difficulty rather than using tutor resources in a preventive/assistive manner to produce better course work; or designing a schedule that allows the student to do math homework in the resource center as a means of efficiency rather than struggling for hours at home alone with the problem. Adult learners frequently face obstacles to matriculating into college younger students may not; providing support and information for navigating the infrastructure of college smoothes the migration. Transitioning students with an improved awareness of the college and its resources produces a student who feels connected to the college.

My interest in working to better prepare my students for transition to college came through participating on the SAGA (Success and Goal Attainment) committee. SAGA has helped me as a faculty member understand the holistic components of student success. When I first joined the group, I felt like faculty and student services were parallel components of the college's infrastructure. If a student had a problem there was someone "over there" to take care of it. If a student asked me about college placement tests, for example, I would have said that is something to do after completing the GED exam. I thought it was best to finish one goal before moving onto the next. The next step was "over there" and not part of what I needed to be part of. Now I realize that I can produce a much more efficient course of study for my students by integrating the component of "over there" with what is happening "over here." By working to develop connected resources I feel able to create a more seamless transition to college. Understanding how it works "over there" helps me create a more knowledgeable and connected student who is familiar with both the infrastructure and the culture of college. *Everything You Want To Know About College, Before You Start* has become an integrated part of my college bound GED students' schedule.





## Transitioning to a Social Model of Disability

*Kathy Torvik*

A shift is gaining momentum across the country in terms of how to work with students who have disabilities. It's a shift from a medical model of delivering services to a social model, and here at Lane, we are right at the forefront of this change.

Historically, disability has been viewed through the lens of a medical model, where disability is regarded as a dysfunction or pathology, something that should be "cured" or "fixed" so that the individual can be as "normal" as possible. This focus on disability as something to be cured has often caused the individual to feel less-than-whole, or inferior to those who do not have a disability.<sup>1, 2</sup>

The social model lens, on the other hand, views disability as a social construct, the result of social practices and interactions between disabled individuals and their environment. Disability is simply a difference, and being disabled is, in itself, neutral.<sup>3</sup> The focus then shifts to examine all of the factors that affect an individual's ability to interact fully as an equal participant in society.<sup>4</sup>

Under the medical model, the approach is to accommodate disabilities through retrofitting buildings and providing special services to the individual in order to meet legal obligations.<sup>5</sup>

In this model, the doctor or provider of services is considered to be the expert, and documentation is required to meet the letter of the law. The social model takes a more expansive view, incorporating concepts such as "Universal Design," which seeks to design environments and learning experiences in such a way as to meet the needs of the most people possible, people who have diverse abilities, disabilities, backgrounds, cultures and learning styles.<sup>6</sup>

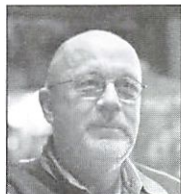
Both universal design and the social model focus on creating inclusive, sustainable and accessible environments.<sup>7</sup> From a social model perspective, individual differences become part of the diversity that individuals with disabilities bring to campus. In acknowledging these differences and recognizing that these individuals are the experts regarding living with their disabilities, we are challenged to collaborate to design ways in which everyone can participate fully in the learning environment and our campus community.

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## The Social Model of Disability: A View from the College Library

*Don Macnaughtan*



Kathy Torvik's article "Transitioning to a Social Model of Disability" draws much-needed attention to a new approach: viewing disability as a "social" rather than a "medical" phenomenon. According to this model, disability is a variation on human experience, rather than a special pathology. With this social construct, we can begin to visualize disability as a neutral function around which we construct neutral institutions. We therefore routinely develop organizations and society to meet the full range of human needs.

I have taken this approach to look at how we provide for students in the college library, and in particular those with a range of visual and visually-related cognitive disabilities. Increasingly, as a reference librarian, I have encountered students who:

- find reading difficult
- simply don't like to read or read under duress
- have a range of visual disabilities across a spectrum, from presbyopia to blindness
- respond much better to audiovisual inputs.

These students are part of a broad spectrum of people who struggle with text, especially in community colleges.

How do we serve these students in a college library? The medical approach suggests that this is a "special" situation. Despite age, misfortune or genetic inheritance, colleges expect students to engage with text, because that is what college is about. When students can't engage with text, they become candidates for the special services that the college is legally required to provide. Sometimes these special services don't really fit, especially when the "disability" may fall anywhere along a diverse and complicated spectrum.

A social construct, on the other hand, might be that the student enters the library and seamlessly encounters a range of ready-made resources that provide an alternative to the conventional printed text, if the student so chooses. These may be:

- a stack of cheap mp3 players preloaded with current books
- a selection of large-print books
- a range of cd audiobooks, which are mostly now available for a few dollars more than the print version.

Unfortunately, the student will almost never encounter that situation in a two-year or four-year college library anywhere in the US. For example, the Orbis-Cascade consortium of 36 academic libraries in the Northwest serves 211,000 students, and includes 28 mil-



lion items.<sup>1</sup> Of these 28 million, somewhere between 600 and 1700 are audiobooks<sup>2</sup>—a truly insignificant number.

Let's take a famous recent example: *The Audacity of Hope* by Barack Obama. The audio CD costs \$13 on Amazon, \$15 as an audio download, and \$16 in print hardcover. This is the number three non-fiction audiobook on Amazon.<sup>3</sup> Print copies are in virtually every college library and public library in the US. Within Oregon, California and Washington, over 145 public libraries have the audiobook, ranging from huge multi-branch library systems to tiny rural libraries. However, in the three-state area, only three college libraries have the audiobook: Pierce College, Seattle University and Bellevue Community College<sup>4</sup>. In Oregon and California, it appears that not a single college library carries the audiobook, which incidentally won a Grammy. More than 1100 public libraries in the US have the audiobook,<sup>5</sup> but you could literally drive for days to find a copy in a college library.

This is certainly a remarkable and curious situation. I think the answer lies partly in tradition. Formerly, most audiobooks were fiction, and hence considered recreational reading. However, the market changed some years ago, and now serious non-fiction is a huge and flourishing part of the audiobook market.

Of course, many typical college books are not published in audio format. It would be hard to listen to a book about calculus or photography. Nevertheless, the audiobook inventory now includes almost all recent (and best-selling) books in history, politics, travel, religion, biography, memoir, current events, popular, literary and classic fiction, drama, and poetry. Many such books do not require a close engagement with the text, and could be equally useful as either an aural or a textual experience.

Another cause for this gap may lie in the medical model that Kathy postulates. Colleges may look at the vast range of visual and learning disabilities as a special construct that can be accommodated by special services, partly because those services have already been embedded in law. Public libraries on the other hand do not have this fallback position, and thus provide the learning experience that the person wants, not what the structure dictates.

What is the solution to this odd situation? First, colleges have to find out if students and faculty truly want audiobooks, which requires a close and honest consultation with their college community. Once the need is established, colleges may have to simply invest at the appropriate level. Another possibility may be for college libraries to enter into co-operative arrangements with the local public library to share audiobook collections. There are plenty of precedents for this type of community collaboration. On a macro scale, large library consortia such as the Orbis-Cascade Alliance could set up joint shared audio collections that could float as needed within the member college libraries. Libraries are very

accustomed to these shared systems. The Orbis-Cascade Alliance, for example, already shuttles 430,000 books and dvds annually amongst the 35 member institutions.

Learning needs and desires are changing in colleges, propelled by changes in our student population. Students are older, perhaps more challenged. Many are uncomfortable with text, and may be more used to audiovisual stimuli derived from our media-saturated society. Colleges and college libraries need to keep a close and sympathetic eye on how student learning is changing, and to adapt to any new technologies that help us meet those changes.

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## Conversations that Matter: Assessing Learning Outcomes

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*Sarah L. Ulerick*

I've been working with colleagues at Lane on assessing learning outcomes for the past four years. This work has been some of my most satisfying work and relationships over 18 years at Lane. In Spring 2006 and Spring 2008, I had the privilege in co-facilitating with Mary Brau two rounds of assessment projects. In '06, we supported multi-disciplinary projects with an Assessment Seminar which provided a structured format for faculty to learn together and support one another in their work. In '08, we provided leadership for an interdisciplinary group to tackle assessing Lane's core ability for critical thinking and problem solving across the general education curriculum. This year we are embarking on a year-long general education assessment project involving the core abilities for critical thinking and problem solving, and communicating effectively.

What's new in all of these endeavors? For me, what's new is how fun and easy it is to work together when we begin with talking about teaching and learning. The perceived barriers of work groups and divisions or disciplines fall away. The conversations around "what is critical thinking?" or "how can we make this rubric easier to use" are enlivening, thoughtful, and practical. In Spring '08, the group developed some "principles in action" that made it possible to develop a working rubric and test it in less than 10 weeks: we would learn from trying things and reflecting on experience; we were piloting something new, so it did not have to be perfect; and we would be open-minded and honest in expressing our views.

While some conversations at Lane carefully tiptoe around an issue, these conversations dug right in to the heart of matters: How can we assess these broad and ill-defined core abilities across disciplines? And how can we do so in a manner that authentically engages faculty thought and participation? What gratified us all is that we accomplished our goals with commitment, ease, and joy. So much so, that many are returning to this work for the coming year.

As a leader and facilitator in these efforts, what I learned was how effective I could be if I simply provided some infrastructure and then listened to the conversations that occurred. In all these projects, it is clear to me at least, that faculty at Lane cares deeply about assessing learning outcomes because faculty cares deeply about student learning. These projects make clear to me that authentic assessment of learning is by its very nature a faculty-led and faculty-owned endeavor.



# Information Literacy

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*Kate Sullivan*

Faculty on campuses around the state of Oregon may have noticed a number of curricular changes over the past few years, some of which have originated not at individual campuses with faculty but from the state (the legislature, the Joint Board of Higher Education, and/or the Joint Boards Articulation Commission [JBAC]). As such, faculty may not completely understand what's being charged to us or why. What follows is my attempt to explain one important curricular change to which we will be responding.

In 2005, the Oregon State Legislature passed Senate Bill 342, a piece of legislation aimed at improving statewide articulation and transfer across higher educational institutions. One of the actions mandated by this bill is the revision of the Associate of Arts Oregon Transfer degree (AA/OT). A second directive involves the development of an outcome-based framework for all freshman- and sophomore-level general education courses. JBAC anticipates releasing the final revised AA/OT in Spring or Summer of 2009 for implementation beginning summer 2010.

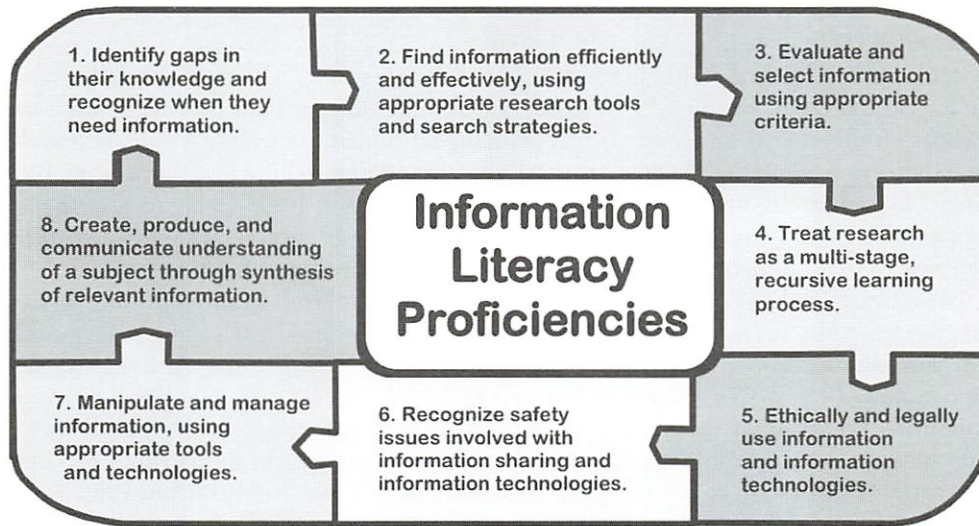
The revision of the AA/OT involved stakeholders from universities and community colleges, and focused on the development of targeted outcome statements for the four foundational requirements—Writing, Oral Communication, Mathematics, Health/Wellness/Fitness—and the three areas of discipline studies: Arts and Letters, Social Sciences, and Science/Computer Science/Math. Additionally, JBAC identified two further subjects to be addressed by the AA/OT—information literacy and cultural literacy—which will be imbedded in courses from either foundational requirements or discipline studies. Each community college will designate courses that fulfill these requirements.

Information literacy (IL) may not be a topic familiar to all faculty although I would argue that all faculty address skills intrinsic to IL to a greater or lesser degree, and most of us would agree that having a facility with finding and using information is vital for success in school and in life. In fact, IL has been identified by the Department of Education as one of the requisite and critical 21st Century literacies for all K-12 and college students. The revised AA/OT simply mandates that community colleges develop a systematic approach to providing instruction in IL, and it does so by delineating eight skill sets within a general outcome statement. A draft of this statement follows:

As a result of taking General Education courses infused with Information Literacy objectives, a student who has completed the AA/OT should be able to formulate a problem statement, determine the nature and extent of information needed to address the problem, access relevant informa-

tion effectively and efficiently, evaluate information and its sources critically, incorporate selected information into his or her knowledge base and value system, and understand many of the economic, legal, and social issues surrounding the use of information.

Obviously IL is an essential problem-solving and critical thinking skill and must be part of the larger project of general education: the preparation of students to function as responsible global citizens in our increasingly information-saturated world. Hopefully, the occasion of the AA/OT revisions will provide an opportunity for us to develop explicit criteria to determine which courses offer sufficient IL instruction and should be designated as IL courses.





## A Tattoo Maps a Student's New Direction

Jan Halvorsen

*Jo Kingman is a dear friend who has been modeling for me for the past two years. She studied at Lane before transferring on to the University of Oregon, graduating from there last spring. The story of her tattoo and what it means to her reflects so many of the conversations I have had with students. They come to education to change their lives, and face incredible pressures and challenges. As a teacher, I can't step in and calm the ocean that Jo describes, but I can try to understand . . . and listen.*

*Here is Jo's story about "Change":*

I got my change tattoo just after I turned 21. It was my third tattoo. I was experiencing a huge transition in my life, and I had decided to spend my birthday in San Francisco, by myself. I sat in a waiting room with bright red walls and sketched out the letters while the tattoo artist finished eating her lunch. David Bowie's song "Changes" actually started playing on the radio. Seriously. Everything felt so much bigger than me, like I was a tiny rowboat on this rolling and angry ocean of change. I remember feeling like there was this force that was ripping my life apart at the seams, leaving me aching and vulnerable. But I wanted to embrace it, and that is what the tattoo was about. I was trying to love the unstoppable, constant, continuous force of change. And it was also about taking a snapshot of myself in that moment, and painting it on my skin. This is me, right now. Alive.

Now, nearly eight years later, my relationship with my tattoo is different, of course. It still gives me cause to look back to that time, and remember how it felt to be so beautifully and painfully wide open. But I understand more about change now. Although change is a constant, I know that it appears in many different forms. It can feel like a hurricane sometimes, but at other times I can hardly feel its presence weaving through my days. I also know that change can be something that I hold in my hands, something I can bend and shape. When I look at Jan's drawing I am reminded of this. In my tattoos I can see the miles that I have already traveled, and in my face I see the triumph of a woman who has learned that she is capable of changing herself.

**Editors' Note:** You can see Jan Halvorsen's drawing "Change" on page 57.



# Facebook Frenzy

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Pam Dane

*Six Degrees Separation, Twenty Five Random Things About Me, Pam is -----, Send a Little Green Patch, Play Wordscraper, Post pictures, post links, what is everyone doing? What am I doing?*

Love that facebook. I'm hooked.

My niece has 366 friends. I only have 75. I need more friends! I write on her wall, she writes on mine.

What is this all about? Why am I so hooked on this silly indescribable thing called facebook? Why do I take the time to see what my "friends" are doing when what most of them are doing is their daily routine: working, eating, drinking, playing.

*Maybe I'm a voyeur. Do I want to be a part of their lives vicariously? Don't I have a life of my own? What are the 25 random things about me that I want to share with 25 friends?*

I update my status. *Pam is reading student papers.* I check to see who is online and who has sent me notifications. Did someone send me a Little Green Patch? Did someone want to race cars with me? Go Roka!

I go home and check out what's happening. I find that most of us are also checking each other's status. Again I wonder about all of this, but not for too long. I've got to see what Susanna is doing.

*Are you a fan of someone? Do you want to join a group? Let's play. Jennifer is feeding babies, Mark is cooking dinner, Bill is eating chicken wings, Lorraine is reading a book, Carolyn is full after eating a big dinner. Pam is reading her facebook.*

There's Josh, the kid who used to live across the street. He's now a headline writer for *The New York Post*. He's posting videos about musicians and artists and talks about how he knows five languages and what a nerd he was as a kid. I'm amazed! There's Jason, my friend's son who was nominated recently for a Grammy award. He's giving the lowdown on going to the award ceremony. There's Diana, who is a writer and is posting about go-

ing to the market with her new baby. (I wonder what she's having for dinner tonight? I'd better check.)

*Oh oh, what's my daughter up to? Hmmm. She wants a day off from kids. I can relate to that. I'd better call her. What about another game of Wordscraper? Whose turn is it? Colleen changed her profile. Wow, what a great picture! I wonder where she got that one? I'd better post on her wall.*

## READINGS AND REVIEWS



Natural abilities are like natural plants, that need pruning by study; and studies themselves do give forth directions too much at large, except they be bounded in by experience.

Francis Bacon





## Lane Community College Peace and Justice Conference 2008

***Editors' Note:** Lane Community College launched its Peace Center in 2008 with the first annual Peace and Justice Conference. Keynote speakers Bob Wing and Medea Benjamin opened the conference with calls for change and for citizen action to push the country in a new direction. Below are short excerpts from those keynote addresses. Lane's second annual Peace Conference will be held May 29 and 30, 2009, with the title "Peace and Collective Action: Connecting Hope to Change." For more information, see the Peace Center's website at <http://www.lanecc.edu/peacecenter/index.html>.*

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*Bob Wing (activist, writer, editor, currently works with Community Coalition in Los Angeles.)*

... You can kind of tell by looking at me that I came of age in the '50s and '60s, and I can see that a good number of you did, too. I don't know about you, but probably the two biggest lessons I learned from that period were: one, that war and racism are central to this country, and really linked as the two worst features of this country. The war in Vietnam, the civil rights movement just brought all that to the fore. And the second thing I learned was that under the right conditions, regular folks, if they get organized enough, can have a major impact on the direction of history. Over the years I've been involved in many, many struggles, and they go up and down. The '60s and '70s were obviously a highlight period, and it hasn't quite been like that recently. But now I want to tell you that I'm at one of my most optimistic periods of my life, in terms of looking forward. And in a way what I want to say is why I think that way.

I don't think that we're on the verge of a revolution that's going to change everything radically. That's not what I'm trying to say. But I think we are in a period where regular folks, once again, have the chance to significantly change the direction of the country. If you look at it, from 1968 until now there have been only two Democratic presidents. And the politics of this country have gone so far to the right. The Republican president, in 1968, Richard Nixon, if you put his policies on the map of politics today, would probably be center-left of the Democrat party. And if you took Bill Clinton, one of the two Democratic presidents we've had, and you put him on the map of politics in 1968, he would probably be center-right of the Republican party in that time. That's how far politics have moved.

And it's not just politics. That means war. That means poverty. That means doing away with the social safety net. That means there isn't healthcare. That means jobs go away. But we've had such a powerful shift to the right, and I think that for the first time in a long

time we are in a position to start a long and hopefully powerful motion in the other direction.

So I'm going to try and justify this point of view, a little bit, anyway. And really the key thing that has—I mean it's certainly by far not the only issue—but the main issue that has set these conditions has been the war in Iraq and the movement against the war in Iraq . . .

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*Medea Benjamin (founding director of human rights organization  
Global Exchange and Code Pink: Women for Peace)*

. . . We talked earlier about some of the obstacles [to peace] and the reasons that we go to war, and the issue came out about our consumption and our consumption of oil. One of the things that's very near and dear to our heart at both Code Pink and Global Exchange is the automobile industry and how they keep giving us these gas-guzzling cars when the technology is there to give us cars that get 50, 60, 70, 80, even 100 miles per gallon. So we do regular takeovers at these auto shows. Especially, we get attracted to those Hummers, and we go to do a little takeover of the Hummers. But we work very closely with the movement in this country that is trying to not only get us more fuel-efficient cars but get us good public transportation in this country so we don't have to use the automobile so much, make our cities more friendly to pedestrians as well as bicycles. With the movement that is working towards having billions of our dollars—instead of spending it on war—spending it on moving us toward the green, clean energy age that we should be in. But it is important to keep linking these issues of oil and consumption with the issue of the war.

Another area that we think is so incredibly important to focus on is the issue that we have become known around the world as a country that tortures. as a country that has sanctioned torture. And I don't know about you, but I don't want to live in a country that tortures anyone. I don't want to live in a country where the highest authorities have said that torture is okay. And so one of the things that we have been doing is going to these hearings and going to the Justice Department and saying "Fair trials for all, no torture for all." And we have been focusing on the issue of Guantanamo, which is a symbol of our inhumanity. Ninety-five percent of the people in Guantanamo were never captured on the battlefield. They were actually paid for. We paid five thousand, fifteen thousand dollars in bounty for people who were supposedly related to Al Qaida or the Taliban. We haven't charged the vast majority of them; we haven't given them fair trial. So we are part of a movement that says not only no to torture and goes into the hearings in Congress like you see in this picture. But also we went to Guantanamo—this was last year. We took a

group to Guantanamo and among them were people who had family members in prison in Guantanamo, and a former prisoner who had been held for three years until he was released—no charges, no apologies, no nothing. This family here, (the Deghayes family) their child, this woman's child, had been in Guantanamo for five years, never, ever charged with anything. We helped to highlight that case, and one of the successes we have is that, just two months ago, Omar Deghayes was finally released from Guantanamo—again, never charged with anything. And after five years of being held, he came out blinded in one eye from torture that he had received. No apologies. No nothing. But at least he is now back with his family and loved ones.

We were absolutely appalled when we would go to the hearings and hear Alberto Gonzales talk about how torture was justified. And here's one of the beautiful examples of our extreme lobbying, when we got up with that banner that said, "I have nothing to hide except the truth." And we went every single week to the Justice Department and did protests every single week outside the Justice Department, and finally had a big party outside the Justice Department when we could say goodbye to Alberto Gonzales, another successful campaign to get rid of an attorney general who sanctioned torture. Of course, now they just put another one in who sanctions torture as well. . . .



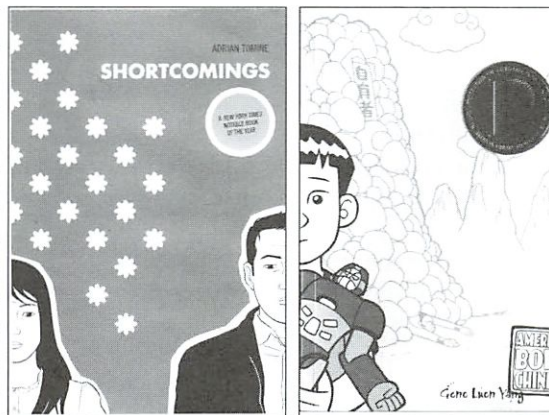
# Half Life: A Review of *Shortcomings* and *American Born Chinese*

Russell H. Shitabata

In preparing to teach Asian American Literature in Spring 2009, I have recently read Adrian Tomine's *Shortcomings* (2007) and Gene Luen Yang's *American Born Chinese* (2006), and am currently considering inclusion of one of the works as required reading. Both works are graphic novels, and given the resonance that *manga* and *anime* have within Asian American culture it seems only proper that the course cover an Asian American graphic novel. Both works have met with public acclaim. Tomine's work received praise in both *The Village Voice* and *The New York Times Review of Books*, and was listed as a New York Times Notable Book of the Year. Yang's text won the Michael L. Printz Award for Excellence in Young Adult Literature, and I believe it is the first graphic novel to make the finalists list for the National Book Award.

Oddly, I find myself compelled to begin my review in the province of what is more typically the introduction of the seventh grade book report: a consideration of the respective covers. Both texts adorn their covers with halved or split portraits of their characters. Thus, on *Shortcomings*, readers confront the stoic half faces of Ben, Miko, Sasha, and Autumn going from front to back. On *American Born Chinese*, a half-smiling adolescent named Jin Wang looks out the front cover, while a half-forlorn Jin Wang peers from the back. Fittingly, both graphic novels explore the implications of incomplete lives and bifurcated identities born from the history of racial politics in the United States.

The notion of a limited or split identity has long been an issue in Asian American discourse. In his historical overview, *Strangers from a Different Shore* (1989), Ronald Takaki writes how early 20th century sociologists like Robert E. Parks believed that Asian immigrants would never be able to exist as true individuals within cosmopolitan American cities because their racial features made them virtually unassimilable. Around the same time, in



Covers: *Shortcomings* and *American Born Chinese*



“Come All Ye Asian American Writers of the Real and Fake” from *The Big Aiiieeeee!* (1991), Frank Chin rails against what he perceives as the dual personality stereotype imposed on Americans of Japanese and Chinese heritage beginning in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and which he feels has been further perpetuated by mainstream Asian American authors. The theme of not fitting-in and the challenge it represents for maintaining a complete or unified sense of individual identity have been variously explored in such works as Jade Snow Wong’s *Fifth Chinese Daughter* (1950), John Okada’s *No-No Boy* (1957), Maxine Hong Kingston’s *Woman Warrior* (1976), and Chang-Rae Lee’s *Native Speaker* (1995), just to name a few. What Tomine brings to the table with *Shortcomings* is a discrete and intense snapshot of alienation among a handful of twenty-somethings. In *American Born Chinese*, Yang brings a semi-epic tale that weaves a retelling of Chinese myth into a boy’s contemporary struggles with identity.

In crafting *Shortcomings*, Tomine chooses verisimilitude and offers up as much visual reality as can be afforded through the black and white renderings of pen and ink. At times, his technique is almost cinematic in its use of frames to imply pans, tracking shots, and long shots. And his point of view is singular, told primarily from the perspective of a theater manager named Ben Tanaka, who sees himself as being above race and politics. Indeed, Ben sees race and politics largely as mental preoccupations pursued by his girlfriend, Miko. As such, Ben mocks Miko’s Asian American Film festival and sees her interest in racial politics as a personal attack on his non-reflective approach to life. His blindness extends beyond his romantic relationship and even reveals itself through his friendship. When he poses as a date for his lesbian, Korean American best-friend, Alice Kim, he fails to appreciate the tricky politics involved in her choice to mask her sexual identity within her traditional Korean family by pretending to date a man of Japanese descent.

The irony for Ben is that his lack of self awareness is immersed in a racial politics that he is ill equipped to deal with. This is most directly manifested when Miko decides to put their relationship on hiatus, and he in turn pursues a fetishistic obsession with dating white women, first Autumn then Sasha. In the context of the novel’s Asian American themes, Ben’s desire to date and sleep with white women can be seen as a metaphor for his desire to fit in and find acceptance with society at large. Alice’s biracial lover asks him as much toward the novel’s end. That he is unable to sustain any of his relationships, including the one with his estranged Japanese American girlfriend, is arguably representative of the shortcomings referenced by the title. But one could just as easily argue that such shortcomings are rooted within a societal ideal of identity as an ahistorical and apolitical condition. After all, Ben’s inability to see the racial politics in which he is caught up at the most basic level of romantic longings is largely what dooms him. Sadly, the only use Ben has for the conscious consideration of race is as a cudgel with which to basically accuse



Miko of being a race traitor and a hypocrite when he later discovers she has moved on to a non-Asian lover.

Ultimately, the novel leaves Ben flying home on a plane back to California, while his best friend and his ex-girlfriend have for unrelated reasons opted to pursue their respective lives in New York. As is reflected in his wish that when he arrive home everything—including Miko and Alice—be exactly as it was before, he is unable to accept change. Unwilling to examine his life and the politics of his choices, Ben is alone. The frame by frame presentation of Ben's profile against the background of the plane's tiny window registering the plane's take off and flight by the change in exterior view creates a feeling of slowness, and suggests that Ben is caught in limbo. Whether it is one of his own making or one derived from accepting bankrupt standards of individual identity is for the reader to decide.

By contrast, in *American Born Chinese*, Yang's approach to the medium of the graphic novel departs from realism and is much more influenced by the historical lineage of comic books and the more fantasy oriented branches of *manga*. In perusing the colorful pages of *American Born Chinese*, the reader should not be surprised by lightning flashes emanating from a character's hair or the ability of characters to metamorphize and shapeshift. Yang presents the reader with what appear to be three separate, rotating stories: the first is that of the Monkey King and his battle to be accepted among the gods despite being a monkey; the second is that of Jin Wang and his fight to be accepted by his classmates and the Caucasian girl on whom he has a crush, despite his being Chinese American; the third is that of Danny, seemingly Caucasian, and his struggle to be accepted by his peers despite a visit by his excruciating stereotype of a Chinese cousin, Chin-Kee.

At first, a reader may find Yang's book slightly confusing in alternating between story lines that seem held together by way of parallel themes of the struggle for acceptance in the face of dealing with physical manifestations of difference. However, part of the genius of Yang's narrative weavings is that by the end of the novel it becomes clear that all three stories are really part of one integrated narrative.

Yang takes the Chinese myth of the Monkey King and uses the Monkey King's dismissal by the gods as a metaphor for racial exclusion. Where *Shortcomings* is restrained and subtle, *American Born Chinese* is much more direct in its approach to race and the politics of identity. Yang explores the way in which social exclusion based on difference breeds a hatred of that difference. Thus, on being excluded Monkey forces his monkey subjects to wear shoes and be less monkey-like; on being excluded, Jin Wang feels a desire to hit Wei-Chen Sun, the more obviously "ethnic" transfer student from Taiwan; and on being excluded, Danny ultimately picks a knock-down, drag-out fight with the embarrassing Chin-Kee. Inevitably, this hatred of difference constitutes the formation of self-hatred, since monkeys, Wei-Chen Sun, and Chin-Kee are each outward manifestations of what



Monkey King, Jin, and Danny each see in themselves and reject for being rejected by those around them.

Perhaps also in contrast with Tomine, Yang's novel is not without hope. Just as the Monkey King finds his place and accepts being monkey, so too does Jin seek reconciliation with his Chinese-ness. In Yang's perspective, an Asian American identity in crisis may hold the danger of alienation, but is not doomed to it. Where, exactly, Danny and Chin-Kee fit into this picture, I will leave for the reader to discover since that discovery is in my estimation part of what makes the novel an enjoyable read.

Both Tomine and Yang engage with important Asian American themes, and each offers his own thoughtful and engaging aesthetic, graphically and narratively. Arguably, the poignancy of Tomine's work lies in what is absent and missing from Ben's life, and the poignancy of Yang's resides in what is present and found in Jin's. For its sparse and realistic approach, *Shortcomings* will certainly appeal to readers with existentialist leanings. For my purposes as an instructor, however, it is perhaps too subtle an instrument for an introductory class on Asian American literature. Its spare style makes it too easy for a reader to merely blame Ben for his poor choices and his solipsistic personal character, rather than consider the ahistorical framework within which he tries to build his sense of self. By contrast, *American Born Chinese* engages readers in a confrontation with exclusion not just as a contemporary condition, but one that has arguably been mythologized. Granted, the novel updates the story of the Monkey King for modern audiences, but the myth lends itself easily as a metaphor for exclusions based on racial difference. As much through the personal transformations of Jin, as through Yang's use of literally metamorphizing characters, the implications for identity cannot be reduced so easily here to individualized choices. Monkey King and Jin Wang share a history and an experience. While I'm happy to have read and am pleased to own both books, come Spring 2009 I'll be teaching *American Born Chinese*.

## Contributors' Notes:

**Dan Armstrong** received his Ph.D from Indiana University and taught at the University of Arkansas, Oakland University, and Oregon State before coming in 1991 to Lane Community College, where he teaches film studies.

**Jim Bailey** is an instructor in Computer Information Technologies at Lane Community College. He recently developed Lane's Simulation and Gaming certification program, and is currently building Lane's virtual campus in Second Life.

**Indira Marie Bakshi** currently teaches English as a Second Language at Lane Community College. She has lived in and traveled in other Latin American countries over the years, but has only seen Bolivia through the words of Guillermo's story. This is her first work of translation. She enjoys exploring the subtleties of language and culture through translation.

**Kathleen Caprario:** Growing up in New Jersey, the only "canyons" I experienced were the alleys between buildings. Since moving West in 1977, I have developed my voice as both a studio artist and educator. I have exhibited my work widely including the Portland Art Museum and the Microsoft Collection, and recently was awarded an Artist Residency from the Morris Graves Foundation.

**Pam Dane:** Reading Jane Austen, writing, teaching Lane students, knitting socks, traveling whenever I can, eating good food, and family time: That's me. There's no more to be said.

**Kendra Gilds** is the mother of the most adorable boy in the world and a Psychology instructor at Lane Community College.

**Jerry D. Hall:** Tututni descendent, Ph.D. Michigan State University, 1974, M.S., 1970, B.S. Oregon State University, 1964, Biology instructor at Lane since January, 1992. Co-created learning communities: Native Circles, Ecotrails, Reconnecting with Nature. Integral part of American Indian Languages efforts at Lane; facilitated Tututni languaging learning workshops, Agness, Oregon, 2002-2006.

**Jan Halvorsen** teaches drawing and visual literacy in the Media Arts program at Lane Community College. Her professional involvement in media includes video production, photography, and illustration. Halvorsen also works as an artist in the more traditional media of drawing and painting. Her work in portraiture is grounded more in an interest in narrative than in likeness.

**Wayne Harrison** has taught at LCC since 2005. He holds an MFA from the Iowa Writers' Workshop, and his short stories have been published in *Ploughshares*, *The Sun*, *New Letters*, *McSweeney's* and other magazines. His story "Least Resistance" is forthcoming in the 2009 *Atlantic Monthly* fiction issue.

**Sandy Jensen** is an independent scholar, poet, teacher and writer. She has one book of poems, *I Saw Us in a Painting*, and a novel and a book of memoir essays coming out. Her web site is: <http://sandramardene.googlepages.com/>

**Brian Kelly** has had the wonderful experience of working at Lane Community College since 2005. He lives in Dexter, Oregon with his wife, and two of each: daughters, dogs and cats. Together they

conspire to grow vegetables, play hide and seek, read books and take long walks.

**Alice Lamoreaux** began her career at Lane Community College in 1976 as an instructional aide making \$3.10 per hour. She subsequently moved into her current faculty position when the “night” teacher quit to move to Texas and get married. She literally became faculty overnight. She prepared for her teaching position through degrees pursued at Lane and the University of Oregon. She enjoys teaching in the Adult Basic and Secondary Education (ABSE) program because of the enthusiasm of the students who come to the program.

**Richard Lennox:** B.F.A & B.S.Ed, Ohio University, 1970 & 72. M.A., University of Oregon, 1982. Taught art for 12 years (K-12). Published an integrated arts curriculum for elementary schools. Currently teaching Introduction to Web Design, and Digital Photography and Macintosh Operating Environment at LCC, and multiple continuing education courses. Evangelist for the Eugene Macintosh Users’ Group (really). Yes, I own an iPhone.

**Carolyn Litty** received her Ph.D. from the University of Oregon and has taught Human Relations classes in the Counseling Department for 25 years at LCC. She is a Psychiatric-Mental Health Nurse Practitioner, having received her M.N.S. degree from the University of California, San Francisco. She has won numerous awards. She is the mother of two sons and grandmother of six. She loves her global family.

**Don Macnaughtan** is a reference librarian at Lane Community College Library in Eugene, Oregon. He grew up and was educated in Auckland, New Zealand, and emigrated to the US in 1984. Currently he is writing a book for McFarland Publishing on the tv shows *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Angel*.

**Anne B. McGrail** teaches writing and literature at LCC. For several years, she has worked on the college’s pilot First Year Experience program, coordinating learning communities focused on student retention and success. She has developed and taught several online courses and is developing an online First Year Experience learning community.

**Dean Middleton** has been making television for 32 years. He was introduced to video at Shasta Community College in Redding, California. The family moved to Eugene when his wife was accepted into the Architecture Program at the U of O. He graduated from NCU, Magna Cum Laude with a Management in Information Systems degree, in 2007. He has a connection to both the Lane Longhouse and AIL because his wife and children are Navajo, and he has been active in the Native community for the past 20 years.

**Guillermo Portugal Durán** nació en La Paz, Bolivia. Se graduó en la Carrera de Filosofía en la Universidad Mayor de San Andrés. Él es escritor de cuentos, haikus e investigador de Metafísica y Misticismo Oriental. Actualmente estudia ingles en Lane Community College y vive en Eugene, Oregon.

**Guillermo Portugal Durán** was born in La Paz, Bolivia. He graduated in Philosophy from the Universidad Mayor de San Andrés. He is writer of short stories, haikus and a researcher of Eastern Metaphysics and Mysticism. Currently, he is studying at Lane Community College and lives in Eugene, Oregon.



**Jerry Ross:** Born in Buffalo, NY, Jerry is influenced by the I Macchiaioli and verismo schools of Italian painting. He founded the Salon des Refuses art show and served as a board member of DIVA. Jerry has won awards locally and abroad, and recently exhibited at the Springfield Museum.

**Russell H. Shitabata** earned his Ph.D. in English from the University of Oregon. Recent work includes entries on David Mura and Milton Murayama in *The Greenwood Encyclopedia of Asian American Literature* (2008). Recognitions include: Innovation of the Year Award 2003 – 2004, LCC; Outstanding Faculty Award 1997 – 1998, UO Office of Multicultural Affairs.

**Kate Sullivan** is the Composition Coordinator for the English department at LCC. She also teaches film studies classes.

**Pat Sweeney** works with Lane's Disability Resources. She tells us, "Fractals are repetitive, infinitely irregular shapes based on mathematical formulas. In addition to creating intricate artwork, fractal geometry provides new directions for mathematicians, where it is used to study nature and even to estimate the length of a coastline with its infinite irregularities."

**Kathy Torvik** has been a Student Advisor with Disability Resources since 2005. She has worked primarily in social services, working with elderly and disabled persons in Seattle before moving to Oregon where she earned a M.A. in Art Therapy, interning with Clackamas Co. Mental Health. Kathy enjoys hiking, photography and traveling.

**Sarah Ulerick** has worked at Lane since 1990. She is variously a geology teacher, poet, comedian, S.L.U.G. Queen, and occasionally, an administrator. She enjoys hiking and visiting places with great rocks and scenery. Her poem, "Fishing Cove, Cape Breton", was written during last summer's trip to Cape Breton's Highlands National Park.

**Drew Viles** lives in Eugene. He is father to five children including Jerome. Drew has taught at Lane Community College since 1999 in the English Department. The study of Native languages renews his spirit. He also likes to memorize ancestral stories, attend spiritual gatherings, and do Tai Chi in the mornings.

**Jerome Viles** is a University of Oregon and Lane Community College student studying linguistics while focusing on Native NW Indian Languages and language teaching. Currently he is enrolled in Sahaptin, the language of Washington's Yakama people, along with Chinuk Wawa.

**Carol Watt**, Ph.D., has taught writing and literature for Lane's Language, Literature & Communication Division since 1997. She joined the fledgling American Indian Languages project in 2000 and feels honored to have been an active AIL committee member since then. The people and the cause have been life-changing.

**Ken Zimmerman** is managing editor of the *Community College Moment*.

**Wilkins-O'Riley Zinn** writes, "As a multigenre, collage/montage writer, I often combine imagery and words. I am a manual artist who works old school and for me that is part of the charm of what I do." She received her Ph.D from Oregon State University, and now teaches at Southern Oregon University.

Without a trace of irony I can say I have been blessed with brilliant enemies . . . I owe them a great debt, because they redoubled my energies and drove me in new directions.

Edward O. Wilson

## Community College Moment: Call for Submissions

The *Community College Moment* invites articles, interviews, photographs, artwork, academic and creative writing, and other original work relevant to the community college mission and environment. Submissions should provoke meaningful, progressive inquiry that will appeal on a local and/or national level to an educated, but not specialized, audience. Each issue of the *Moment* may be thematically organized, all or in part, providing multiple perspectives on a given topic. Past themes have included Democracy, Technology & Society, Sustainability, and Diversity.

The *Moment* is open to a variety of submission formats, including: articles (under 5000 words; languages other than English welcome), sabbatical research summaries, plans and reflections on innovative pedagogies, artwork (paintings, photography, sculpture, choreographic projects featured through photographs, musical compositions, etc.), fiction and poetry (relevant to *Moment* audience), works-in-progress (provocative ideas not fully worked out), collaborative projects, web-based and multi-media projects. We also invite submissions of short reviews that offer insight on books and other materials relevant to our audience. Queries welcome.

### 2010 Theme: Ten Years Ago—Ten Years Ahead

We are now ten years into the twenty-first century, and the 2010 issue of the *Community College Moment* will mark its tenth year of publication as well. The theme we've chosen is a celebration of that anniversary. In addition to submissions on any topic relevant to the *Moment's* audience, we especially invite works responding to the theme, "Ten Years Ago—Ten Years Ahead." We are looking for reflections, recollections, histories, stories, and other responses to the college and the world as it was in or around the year 2000, and we are looking for predictions, visions, musings, and dreams for the community college and society ten years ahead: 2020. What has changed, what will change, and what will stay the same? How will technology have transformed teaching and learning in the community college? How will our society view the role of the community college and education in general? Where have we been, and where will we go? What lessons can we learn from the decade past, and how can we use that knowledge to prepare ourselves and our students for the future?

Submissions are accepted year-round. Check our website for full submission guidelines and further information on special themes and deadlines. <https://teach.lanecc.edu/ccm/>

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Image Capture: Katie Van Meter  
Image Content: Lucas Patrick

This screen-captured digital image displays the winged avatar of Lane Community College student Katie Van Meter. She stands inside a virtual classroom created by another student, Lucas Patrick, as part of instructor Jim Bailey's National Science Foundation grant-funded project to build a three-dimensional teaching and learning environment inside the virtual world of Second Life. Read more about this project, along with many other new directions for education, in the "Notes from Campus: What's New" section inside.