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Spring 2013

The Promethean: Spring 2013, Issue 2

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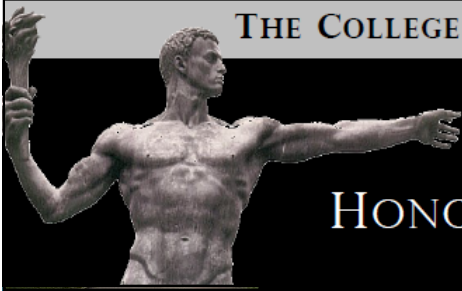
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THE PROMETHEAN

HONORS PROGRAM NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2013 ISSUE

SERVING THE HOMELESS IS MORE THAN "JUST A HANDOUT"

BY: NICOLE D'ARCANGELIS, ENGLISH MAJOR

If you go to YouTube and type in "Flash Mob," you get about 14,500,000 results. Most are performances put in place by dance schools, families, or other groups of people looking to brighten someone's day, have a bit of fun, or get a message out to the world. The majority take place in heavily populated areas and must have required several hours of rehearsal in order to come off so successfully.

Google "Manhattan" and there are 286,000,000. They range from historical articles to cocktail recipes to restaurants and tourist traps, and everything in between. There are maps, tips, how-to's, ticketing sites, and statistics.

But what about those flash mobs that come together at the most unlikely of times, with no planning involved whatsoever? What goes on in Manhattan that is so genuine a spectacle that you won't even find it through Google? The answer is something that I encountered while working with a service program called the Midnight Run.

I'll allow the program to introduce itself: *"In over 1,000 relief missions per year, Midnight Run volunteers from churches, synagogues, schools, and other civic groups distribute food, clothing, blankets, and personal care items to the homeless poor on the streets of New York City."***

So that's it. A group with too much time on their hands piles into cars and drives into Manhattan in the dead of night to give handouts to the homeless. That's it, right? No.

*"The late-night relief efforts create a forum for trust, sharing, understanding, and affection. That human exchange, rather than the exchange of goods, is the essence of the Midnight Run mission."***

By now you're thinking, "What was the point of the whole flash mob thing?" Allow me to explain.

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2010 Newsletter Award Winner

GET OUT THERE

BY: JOHN LACOURT, ENGLISH MAJOR

Being my last semester in college, I have been thinking deeply about my past experiences. There are so many things I have done, but sometimes I still feel as if something is missing. If you know me, you also know that I enjoy hiking and being outside. Taking a journey on foot is a feeling that you receive nowhere else in this world, and I guess I now wish that I took more time to partake in this wonderful activity.

I contemplated writing a powerful, moving article as my last contribution to The Promethean, but I have decided to go in the complete opposite direction. I still want to send you a message, but it is not going to be one garbled with controversial political statements or deep, dark personal thoughts (at least I am not planning on it turning into either one of those). What I want to say is "Get out there! Go hiking!" Some readers may now think I am crazy, filling such a wonderfully academic newsletter with a simple, junk statement, but I ask you to read on. It does sound simple right? Well it is! All it requires is walking and maybe carrying a little weight on your back. It can be done anywhere, and in any season. It is the universal hobby.

Some people may have given hiking a chance in the past and have realized it is not quite their bag, and to those people I say, "Hey, you gave it a shot, and that is respectable." This is a message for those who have not tried it yet, and maybe a reminder to those who have, that you may have to go out and give something a second shot before discovering its magnitude. Hiking is one of the most beautiful activities in the world, and most of you may not be aware that we live in one of the best states for beginning hiking in the country! True, we do not have the Rocky Mountains or the wonderful Sierra Nevada's on the western coast, but we do have two of the coolest mountain ranges east of the Mississippi.

The Adirondacks are the only mountains in the east that are not geologically connected to the Appalachians. They hold Mount Marcy, one of the tallest mountains in the northeast, and hundreds of other smaller mountains that are easily hiked by all people, regardless of age or physical stature. The country is absolutely breathtaking, with narrow highways winding between rock giants that block out most of the sky normally viewed from your car window. If you want to take a break, the towns and little villages that dot the region are something out of folklore. Driving through them, with their finely crafted wooden architecture and rustic feel, gives you the sense that you have stepped into a simpler and more relaxing period of time.



On the summit of Giant Mountain

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Contribute to *The Promethean*!

The Honors Program Newsletter is an award-winning publication dedicated to the Honors Program faculty, students, and alumni. Articles are written by Honors students and are designed to provide information to the Honors community. Content will include a variety of topics, including research, Honors program news and events, student and professor spotlights, experiences, and creative work. For submissions or more information, please contact John LaCourt at jlaco1@u.brockport.edu or Kent Lester at klest1@u.brockport.edu

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Prometheus sculpture on cover created by Arno Breker.

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SERVING THE HOMELESS IS MORE THAN “JUST A HANDOUT” (CONTINUED)

BY: Nicole D’Arcangelis

Three years ago now, I was serving on my second Midnight Run mission trip. My youth group and I reserved the same weekend every year, toward the end of winter, when the nights were still bitter cold but the days were getting warmer. That’s the time when donations seem to slow down, when the sun is getting stronger and people stop donating their coats and blankets to those in need, because the bite in the air isn’t there to be a nagging reminder of those that have less. Our youth group spends the day making sandwiches, organizing vans full of clothes, bags, blankets, toiletries, and other necessities.

We divide up the vans by category, so that when someone says “Do you have a pair of nice pants? I have a job interview tomorrow,” we can tell them “Sure! Go to Van seven. We should have something in your size.” There’s always one car that has an electrical outlet inside, so we can keep 100-cup coffee urns and crock pots of homemade soup hot as we drive from Long Island into the city. We also like to make sure that we provide options. When you live on the streets, you take things as they come. Sometimes it’s nice to have a say in what comes. This is just one bit of humanity and dignity that we like to give back.

But I know you’re still wondering where the flash mob concept comes in. This is the story.

It comes in the form of a man named Buddy. Is that his real name? Maybe. We had no reason not to believe him. Buddy visited our vans that night and asked for a pair of pants. He told us, “I know you’re thinking, ‘Buddy, that size pants won’t fit you!’ But these aren’t for me. I’ve got a friend down the street who’s too shy to come ask for himself. But I know he would like another pair than the jeans he’s got.” We gave him the jeans, as well as a bagged meal for himself and a cup of coffee. As we interacted, he told us his story.

Sadly, it was one we had heard many times. Buddy left home when he decided his parents were ruining his life. He figured he could make it better on his own, and where else to go than the city where dreams come true? Buddy had a heck of a voice and figured he could make his way onto Broadway, but the story of the homeless guy making it big only happens once in a blue moon. He assured us that his being down on luck was no reason to stop singing, however. He broke into song (here’s where the flash mob comes into play), and we sort of watched him, appreciating his talent but also admittedly a little weirded out by the guy belting out “Amazing Grace” at two in the morning on West 51st street. But you know what they say about New York, it’s the city that never sleeps. People walking by stopped to listen. A few bolder members of our group joined Buddy, but he completely carried the group, going into the verses that no one ever really remembers. Eventually, we had quite a mob of city folk singing together in the dead of night in the freezing cold. Pre-planned? Not at all. A common cause? Not really, just a common interest in a man who could carry a tune and was willing to stand alone and sing.

When the song was over (it really didn’t even last too long), people clapped and approached our group of double parked vans. Unfortunately, this is just what the Midnight Run mission both loves and detests. The program is eager to inform others about their work and gain volunteers as a result, but the people who come to the Run for help do not want to be in the spotlight. We do not take pictures as though they are a spectacle. We provide aid, supplies, and conversation. Frequently, the individuals who seek materials from the Midnight Run treat the opportunity as if they are shopping. This is another reason we like to provide options. Many of us can go to a store and try on a variety of clothing before deciding which we like the best, perhaps even all of them. For this reason, an individual at the Midnight Run deserves the chance to say, “Any t-shirt would be great, but my favorite color is blue, do you have one like that?” But I digress. Buddy’s song was an opportunity for complete strangers to stop and realize that these people are *human*. They aren’t leeches or street ornaments. They are individuals with talents, skills, and dreams. The brief bridge that Buddy’s song built between workers, the ones they serve, and passerby, was one of those cliché, moving moments that everyone needs to have at least once in their life. Seek one out, you won’t regret it.

(Continued on page 4)

SERVING THE HOMELESS IS MORE THAN “JUST A HANDOUT” (CONTINUED)

BY: Nicole D’Arcangelis

The people that we serve on the Midnight Run are gracious individuals. It is known that many have their own personal issues, and each of them have a story to tell. Sometimes, they are willing to share their stories with you. Many of them are broken in mind, body, and spirit. But there are some that are eager to respond and encourage the spirits of those around them.

The homeless population is swept under the rug in Manhattan. That’s why when you pull up that search in Google, it’s nothing that you’ll see in the immediate results. When movies are filmed in a crowded city street, police sweep the area, herding individuals like cattle away from the only known safe places that they have. It’s easy to walk past a person holding a cardboard sign or a paper cup, those are the people you see and decide to ignore. But there is a greater community of individuals that blend right in; you wouldn’t even know their situation because they hide it so well. Each plea for help removes a touch of dignity, individuality, and self-esteem. They only want to blend in.

If you get the opportunity, put yourself into the midst of a community you never considered before: the homeless, the mentally handicapped, the elderly, the sick, the imprisoned, etc. They all have stories and pasts. Recall however that the internet, while a wealth of information, doesn’t tell the whole story. Flash mobs of volunteerism, understanding, and patriotism are happening every day. Manhattan is more than just Broadway shows and cheap tickets to the top of the Empire State Building. In order to really understand the people that you serve as individuals, you need to get past the idea of simply handing out goods and start exchanging humanity, compassion, and understanding.

**To Learn More about the Midnight Run, please visit www.midnightrun.org

LESSONS LEARNED FROM DAVID HOFFBERG

BY: MONIQUE REW, LIVING LEARNING COMMUNITIES COORDINATOR

Sometimes in life, the decisions we think insignificant, have long term effects. For me, taking Professional Ethics was one of them. I was encouraged to take this class by Dr. Ken O’Brien, the former Director of The Honors Program. Although I was reluctant due to my full schedule, he insisted. So, I took David Hoffberg’s Professional Ethics during the fall 2007 semester. David changed my life, simply put. He challenged me, forced me to think for myself, and encouraged me to carefully consider others’ perspectives. Every Wednesday, when I left David’s class, I was exhausted. Not physically exhausted, but mentally. But I knew I had a week to reflect on the class before our next adventure.

Some of my most distinct memories of the class were the presentations and the guests. I remember confronting my thoughts and goals while presenting to the class my own personal ethical principles. As you can imagine, it’s a deeply private presentation, until you feel the support from David and your fellow classmates. It reinforced how it is important to stand for what you believe in, regardless of others’ preferences. We are taught in our culture that it is rude to talk about ourselves and our feelings out loud. But people forget how our personal ethical philosophy plays a role in every second of our lives. David helped me explore my personal ethical boundaries and reminded me to stand for what I feel is right.

The guests in Professional Ethics were first-class. We spoke to individuals who were professionals and experts in their fields about the dilemmas they face and why it is important to have not only personal ethical principles, but also professional. It segues into the notion that people do have different personal, versus professional, ethical principles, and the question of how this makes us feel.

After I took the class, I had the great fortune of getting to know David on a different level. He became my Senior Thesis Advisor. He helped me to improve my writing and interviewing skills, and helped me explore what my future might hold for me. With David’s help, I completed my thesis, “Can a Successful Lawyer be a Loving Mother?” I know that one can, but life is all about balance, priorities, and ethical decision making.

(Continued on next page)

David will close a fruitful chapter in his life at the end of the spring 2013 semester; his second retirement. David has and will continue to contribute in monumental ways to The College at Brockport community. I consider myself privileged to have worked with David in the many ways that I have and to call him my friend. David will be missed in The Honors Program, and the 291 students that he has had in class are lucky to have had such a humble, caring, and giving man teach them the lessons the world sometimes doesn't.

AN EXCERPT FROM *NATION NINE*

BY: M. R. BRYANT, ENGLISH MAJOR

In this post-apocalyptic, dystopian society, no one is allowed their own name. Instead, they are referred to by the number that represents their job. One of their main enemies are the lamia, an over-all term for creatures badly mutated by nuclear fall-out.

I glanced over my shoulder. I could just make out the shadowy figure of the lamia crouched low against the ground, preparing to pounce. Six grabbed my hand tightly.

"We'll fight it off together."

"No, you go. You're about to pass out from blood loss. Just go as fast as you can. I'll catch up to you in a minute," I said in what I was hoping was a re-assuring tone. Six looked completely unconvinced, but I wasn't about to take no for an answer. She stumbled towards the compound. I watched her for a moment before turning to face the hulking, growling shape. The orange eyes gleamed hungrily at me as the lamia prowled closer. Gore was dripping from the corner of its mouth, a bloody pink foam fizzing around the lips and dripping down to the snowy ground. I swallowed nervously, slowly and clumsily pulling the stave out of the harness on my back. My hands fumbled against the slick dark wood, my eyes frozen on the lamia's.

"You tried to kill Six," I whispered under my breath. "You're going to die."

I saw its back haunches shuffle as it prepared to leap. I held out the stave in front of me, hoping my survival instincts would take over. I wasn't quite ready to die yet.

The lamia dashed at me with stunning speed, ramming into my chest with an impact strong enough to break bone. It sent me skittering back in the snow, gasping for breath. Lights popped across my vision as my body seized up and pain blossomed across my chest. My hand jerked forward involuntarily, whacking the stave against the lamia's head. It leapt back slightly with a squealing yelp.

I stumbled to my feet, doing my best to ignore the pain radiating through my body. The lamia shook its head vigorously before looking at me with a snarl.

"Didn't like getting your face caved in huh?" I gasped. "I think it makes you look prettier."

The monster was not even slightly impressed by my pitiful attempt at smack talk and decided to charge me again. This time I was ready. I managed to barely dodge the attack, but was able to somehow give it what I hoped was a solid whack on the kidney area. It landed with a resounding thwok and the lamia's back legs gave way. I couldn't help feeling a small surge of pride.

The lamia struggled up to its feet again a little faster than I would have liked. Its eyes had an evil frenzy to them. I had a feeling that this last charge would decide it. We had both delivered harsh blows to each other; this last one would finish one of us off. I steadied myself for the monster's charge.

Nation Nine



M. R. Bryant

GET OUT THERE (CONTINUED)

BY: JOHN LACOURT

If you are looking for a bit more mystery, the Catskill Mountains lie only several hours southeast of Rochester. Though not as high as the Adirondacks, the Catskills offer long wooded trails through the first mountains our settling ancestors came into contact with. Stories like Rip Van Winkle, and ancient folk tales of fairies, dwarves, and other mystical beings that took place in these mountains, make a trip to the Catskills feel as if you have walked into a magical past. You leave knowing that you will someday return, because you also know that there is so much more to discover in the Catskills underneath the surface.

But it is not only the beautiful scenery that makes hiking so worthwhile. The time you spend with others, or by yourself, is invaluable. Friendships are forged and strengthened on the trail, where the only thing you can do other than walking, is talk about life with those in your presence. If you hike alone, which I only recommend to very experienced hikers, you become more comfortable with yourself. But even when you are hiking with others, there are always periods of silence, where walking, and most importantly, thinking, become your only responsibilities. There is nothing like walking with your thoughts, determined to reach the top of a mountain. You discover things about yourself that you never knew before, and you truly get to know who you are as a person. I know, I know, all of this sounds extremely cliché, but it is true. And unless you get out there and give it a try, you will never know the rewards that are waiting just beyond the next bend in the trail.

If you have read this far, I am extremely pleased, because it means you are still interested. Now all you have to do is take the next step. It does not take much to get started, because another great thing about hiking is that it is absolutely free of charge! Log off of your Facebook and turn off your cell phone. Take a day away from the constant social interaction we have become obsessed with in our modern times, and get to know yourself more deeply. Instead of sending apathetic text and Facebook messages, grab a friend and put forward a wholehearted effort into getting to know them just a little bit better. I am sure that you will both learn some amazing things about one another and yourselves. Strap on a pair of solid shoes, throw some water and snacks in a backpack, and step out your door. I promise that you will not regret it. There is a lot to find out there on the wooded trails and rocky peaks, but if you never begin the climb, those new perspectives and vast summit views will forever evade your searching eyes and open mind.



On the summit of Mount Marcy

THE PARADOX OF COMFORT IN GAY AND TRANSGENDER FRIENDLY WORKPLACES

BY: PETER RYDZEWSKI, SOCIOLOGY MAJOR

Movements for equal rights and recognition in the U.S. have achieved a great deal over the latter half of the 20th century. Conversations about equal rights have become ubiquitous in mainstream media outlets. Interested in research related to contemporary forms of inequality, I decided to focus on the workplace. I was especially interested in learning more about the experiences of gay, lesbian, and transgendered individuals in work settings they define as gay- or trans-friendly. Was inequality related to gender and sexuality absent in these work settings? If not, what new forms of inequality have emerged and how have they been studied? I was interested in learning more about the changing forms of inequality. I chose one specific location as a case study—the workplace.

My presentation for Scholar's Day was an adaptation of a paper I wrote for the Sociology of Sexualities class taught by Dr. Tristan Bridges. The following semester, we decided to develop a presentation that introduced a few new ideas, elaborating on some of the insights I made in the initial course paper.

(Continued on next page)

THE PARADOX OF COMFORT IN GAY- AND TRANSGENDER-FRIENDLY WORKPLACES (CONTINUED)

BY: PETER RYDZEWSKI,

Deciding how to *study* this topic was a challenging issue. Due to time constraints, Professor Bridges and I agreed that meta-analysis would be a good methodological approach. Meta-analysis is a method that relies on previously published research, treating previous research as data. I looked at previous research on gay and transgender experiences in the workplace, searching for common themes and patterns that cut across diverse research on the topic. The most compelling pattern I found involved emerging forms of inequality in work settings more sensitive to previous forms. For the purposes of my study, I concentrated on gay, lesbian, and transgender experiences related to appearance (dress, style) and performance (tasks, roles) at work. Both of these topics illustrate the subtlety of inequality.

Previous research on elusive forms of inequality—namely appearance and performance—was a common concern in the research I reviewed. The most consistent findings stressed how heteronormativity structures the workplace. By using the word “heteronormativity,” I am discussing the ways that heterosexuality is institutionalized in ways that frame it as “natural.” Findings related to appearance and performance norms in the workplace consistently dealt with this idea. Heteronormativity is the basis of workplace inequality, even—as I found—in spaces defined as gay- and trans-friendly. Due to these beliefs, the workplace becomes riddled with expectations of conformity to normative ideals that uphold systems of power and inequality in new ways.

One interesting focus of my research describes how gay, lesbian, and transgender individuals experience workplace inequalities differently. Although inequality exists for all parties, workplace expectations related to both dress and performance affect gay men and lesbians a bit differently than transgender employees. For instance, according to *Williams et al.* (2009), gay and lesbian workers are expected to remain “visible,” typically through norms related to appearance. Expectations and invitations to dress in ways that conform to stereotypical of gay and lesbian individuals were common among research on gay men and lesbians.

In contrast, transgender workers are subjected to expectations of “invisibility” in the workplace, meaning that both appearance and performance norms are defined by the gender expectations of their co-workers. Transgender experiences in workplaces are a profound illustration of how gender subtly structures workers experiences in the workplace. As one example of this, a man might be expected to carry boxes in a factory, whereas women might be expected to work in the office of that same factory. Subtle expectations like these are, in fact, common assumptions and they structure many people’s workplace experiences. Transgender workers are in a unique position, potentially enabling them to see these gendered norms in ways that workers who identify with their birth gender do not. Expectations of performing in gender-appropriate ways perpetuates inequality, and may prevent mobility in regard to job placement as expressed in the quote below.



“Before [transition] no one asked me to do anything really and then [after], this one teacher, she’s like, “Can you hang this up? Can you move this for me?’ . . . Like she was just, “Male? Okay you do it” (*Schilt and Westbrook 2009: 448*).

I argue that, as a result of the workplace inequalities presented above, new forms of emotional regulation are placed upon gay, lesbian, and transgender workers. From this concept, defined by *Hochschild (1985)* as “emotional labor,” I found that workers actually face a subtle form of emotional conflict that seemed to be inescapable. I define this as “the paradox of comfort.” The paradox exists because of twin pressures that face gay, lesbian, and transgender workers in gay- and trans-friendly work settings. If workers conform to workplace rules, they risk becoming alienated from their actual feelings. On the other hand, when workers decide to ignore these rules through the expression of their genuine emotions, they are subtly but continually expected to conform.

As conforming to or ignoring heteronormative workplace rules are the only two options, these forms of emotional regulation affect gay, lesbian, and transgender persons in ways that appear unavoidable in contemporary work settings. Thus, even as equality is increasingly supported, my research illustrates the ways that inequality is not necessarily disappearing. It would be much more accurate to say that contemporary workplace inequality is taking new, less obvious forms.

THE CREATIVE HONORS STUDENT: POETRY

Momma

By: Candace Brown

My world turns because you're in it

Someday my world will stop

And I will fall

I pick up the phone to call ten times a day

Because I got an "A"

I had a bad day

Just to say

Hey

Are you proud of me momma?

Do you love me momma?

I have your chin momma

Someone described you as serious momma

I'm serious too

When I grew inside you

Your body kept me safe

Your body kept me warm

But I can't remember momma

You didn't protect me momma

You couldn't keep me safe

I got really, really hurt

I love you, love you, love you

Anyways

I have your spine momma

The way it curves in

Chiropractors try to fix it

Extreme lordosis they say

I have your hair momma

Curlier than yours

But I have your color momma

And I hope mine fades the same

(Continued on next page)

Our bike ride while the rest of the world was sleeping

By: Mark Sutherland

Last photo before my battery rot.

I felt so recharged this matters not.

Just above freezing,

a bike ride up hill

to chill my fingers, nose,

ego— Only lonely to find

me at the top. It has already

been hours since you rose

me with Your call and I thank

You for inviting me to Your house

each morning. These places that

place me where I ought to be

are Yours. You keep me from

where I can be led astray.

I sometimes wish someone that's

she could be among me, with me and these

things called blessings. But, You rode

with me, You Guide me, Friend.

We were at the park

while the rest were sleeping.

You beat me there and met me

with a warm cup of Creation.

You've been busy and I've been

lazy. Now there's nothing but You

with me. Happy in solitude if

you dig within. Mark, Mark,

Mark my words—

you are longing for a Friend.

Let go. And, no sooner do You

wrap my heart, it's Your heart

now. Pray, dry my selfish

tears and take my stubborn

sadness. Transform me into being

with You and I cannot imagine

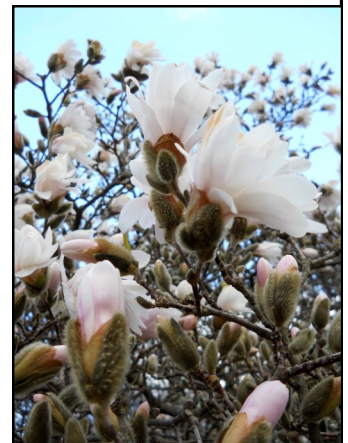
being with anyone else.

Back home, legs pushing, heart

racing, it's all downhill and not

nearly as cold

with your Love.



THE CREATIVE HONORS STUDENT: POETRY

Dad

By: Candace Brown

I see him standing there
I know his mannerisms, his language, his gestures, his
tones

I can hear his voice ringing in my head
“Slow up!” and “watch the curb!”

I can recount all his stories
I already know the ending, but he loves to tell them

I see his annoyance, his frustration, his impatience
His forehead wrinkles as he twirls the string from deep
inside his pocket

I know his moods, mostly silly, sometimes stressed
He makes us all laugh, always a comedian

He is kind, like his mother
He is brilliant, like his father
He has secrets, I don't know them

I can hear his advice delivered with emphatic tones
The same advice he gave us all

He is loving, even when mistreated
He is generous, never wants for himself
He wants the best for all of us

When he smiles it's a little crooked and his teeth a little
tiny

It's a smile I couldn't love more

I see the special bond between my brother and him
There is an uncanny similarity in their humor and style

I see him pat my mother's head and ask us all
Isn't mom cute?

He is loyal
He is faithful
He is reliable

He is the ying to my mother's yang

I know every expression, every smile,
Every pearl of wisdom
I can see it all...

But I still look at him and wonder
What's he thinking?

I wonder what he feels, what emotions are within him
I wonder what he thinks of us, are we what he expected?

I wonder how he feels about his life
if he is scared about death?

I wonder if he has favorites; do we all make him proud?
Or maybe none of us at all?

I wonder what his secrets are and if I'll ever know

I know everything about him and nothing at all

Momma (continued)

By: Candace Brown

I'm really sensitive momma
It sometimes gets in the way
But I know you can relate

I am a perfectionist momma
It makes failure hard to swallow
But I'm glad I have that trait

Because that's how I know you love me
Even when you failed
Because I can relate

And that means you didn't fail
Maybe that means I'm not failing

I love you too

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT: LESSONS FROM DAVID MEERMAN SCOTT

BY: JAMES MIGNANO, COMMUNICATIONS MAJOR

Foreword: I'm a "Junior – and – a – half" (graduating in December) at The College at Brockport, State University of New York. I'm often discouraged and even amazed at the level of student engagement and excitement among not only students at my school, but all colleges. I hope the following post does not offend anyone, as it is somewhat strongly worded. The topic is simply one that I am very passionate about.

As a college student, I recognized that my classmates and I are a part of something bigger. We are not always going to be students and we will not always be entry-level professionals. Rather, we are the future. We are the next generation, one that will be responsible for continuing the growth and development of our community, our country, and our world.

That is a scary thought to me because I know what the typical college student looks like and what their abilities are.

I'm not talking about grades. College courses are difficult and it's perfectly fine to not be a 4.0 student. What concerns me, though, is the level of student engagement that I see across college campuses.

I love college because I literally view my campus as my playground. There are opportunities for me everywhere. Between the clubs (Brockport PR Club) and honor societies (Lambda Pi Eta) that I am a member of, room for independent studies, and the support from faculty and administration to find internships with organizations in the area, I am able to design and craft my own undergraduate education specifically tailored to my interests and skill set. Nobody will ever go to school and have the same education as I have had; how cool is that?

College is my playground because I can join clubs and decide what I really want to do. Then, I can make it happen with my peers. Faculty doesn't have the ideas, nor do professors guide me through the process. In short, I really can do anything I put my mind to.

But college isn't a day-care program. Nobody has ever offered me the opportunities I have had. Instead, the responsibility to have an outstanding college experience is on each and every individual. And quite frankly, not enough people take that responsibility seriously enough.

If you're a student, what do you say when someone asks you, "What are you doing at school this semester?" If your first instinct is to tell them what courses you are taking, you're doing college wrong. No, really, trust me. You were misinformed somewhere along the way. Classes are important, sure, but aren't you bored? I'm willing to bet your grades aren't spectacular, either... because you aren't engaged.

How many students are studying the same thing as you at your school? Or even in this country? What makes you any better than the rest of them? It certainly is not the single decimal difference in GPA that you boast on your resume that will get you hired after graduation. Instead of looking at your campus like a classroom, look at it like a playground. What are you doing that sets you apart? What are you doing that you truly enjoy that will be the difference between you and everyone else? Ask yourself each and every day, "Why would someone hire me?"

Until yesterday, I was afraid to graduate from college because I thought I would miss having the ability to look at my life like a playground and having the ability to really experience and do all of the things that I wanted.

Then, I met David Meerman Scott. If I look at my college campus as my playground, this guy looks at the globe as his. Just like calling me a student doesn't capture everything that I do at school, calling Scott an author doesn't capture everything that he does in his career. He's an author, sure. But he is also an internationally recognized speaker (soon to have spoken on all 7 continents), a blogger, a marketing strategist, and even an actor among other things.

David Meerman Scott is in the position to pick and choose the experiences that he has and the people that he works with each and every day, just like I can. The difference is that he does it on a world-wide scale.

Everyone needs to ask themselves where they want to go in their lives. If you think about your destination in this world as a cubicle on the third floor of an office down the street, working for a company you don't love, performing a task that essentially anyone could do, please continue skipping half of your classes, getting mediocre grades, and not doing anything that sets you apart from anyone else.

But, if you have ambition and aspiration, if you want to look at the country or the world as your personal playground, the time to start that journey is right now. Join clubs, plan events, meet professionals, learn new things, start a blog, read books, teach others, and never stop.

