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Fall 2021

### The Howl - Fall 2021

Gwendolyn DeRosa

Sabra Shariani

Danny Huy

Shamim Bibi

Reigh Lee

*See next page for additional authors*

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**Authors**

Gwendolyn DeRosa, Sabra Shariani, Danny Huy, Shamim Bibi, Reigh Lee, Frank Fu, and Gabriel Atteh

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# The Howl

*Otterbein ESL Publication*

**Fall 2021**

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## ABOUT THE EDITOR



My name is Gwendolyn DeRosa. I have been teaching English as a Second Language (ESL) for nearly a decade. My favorite aspect of teaching ESL is getting to know the students and hearing their stories. I've known students who have lived through war. I've taught students who had to overcome daunting challenges to study in the U.S. I've spoken to students whose lifelong dream was to learn English.

I'm so proud of our students and their journeys. As the editor of *The Howl*, I'm excited to share their stories with you. Stories are what connect us to each other.

## ABOUT THE HOWL

The Howl is a magazine that is planned, researched, written, photographed and designed by Otterbein University's ESL and international students. The first *Intro to Journalism* class named the magazine "The Howl" to signify the struggle to have a voice in their writing (in English). The magazine serves to give students a safe space to share their cultures, experiences and lives.

Enjoy Otterbein ESL's contribution to the Otterbein community's literary scene. You can share online versions of the magazine and previous editions here:

[https://digitalcommons.otterbein.edu/the\\_howl/](https://digitalcommons.otterbein.edu/the_howl/)



# Meet the Writers

Hey everyone!

This is Shamim from Pakistan. My major is Doctor of Optometry (eye physician) back in my home university. I came to US on 14th August, 2021 through a scholarship named as Global UGRAD in Otterbein as an exchange student for one semester. Watching Cricket dramas and Pakistani TV shows, and listening to music are some activities I like to do in my spare time. I also like long road trips.



Hi, I'm Sangmin Lee and my friends call me Reigh. I was born in South Korea, but I studied in many countries like France, Switzerland, Philippines and New Zealand. I'm only doing ESL this semester as my English was not good enough at the beginning of this semester. But I'm going to start Computer Science next semester. I like to play badminton, but I'm sad that I haven't found a friend to play with yet.

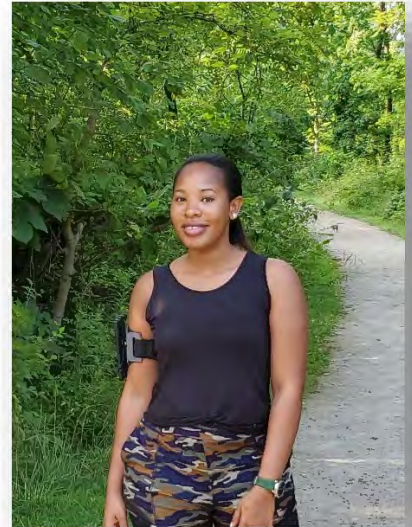


Hello, I am JiaZhen Fu from China, you can call me Frank. I'm major in art, and I transferred from SPPC, which runs a joint educational program with Otterbein in China. This is the first semester of my two years in Otterbein. I like painting and making models, and I like kittens too. I also like the dining hall in Otterbein.



Hi. I am Sabra but people call me Saby. I am an international student at Otterbein University. I am doing a Master of Business Administration and I do enjoy it. My motherland is Tanzania and I lived there most of my life before moving to the United States. I speak Swahili, English, and Tamil. I like to exchange ideas with people and create networks. I like to explore the world. I enjoy cooking new meals at least once a month and I like watching Euro football. I am a foodie, and I like working out.

Cheers everyone!!



Xin Chào! My name is Thanh Huy and you can call me Danny. I'm from Vietnam and my major is business administration, but I am a person with a passion for travel. I live and work towards the goal of reaching all parts of the world. Every year I will come up with travel plans for myself. This year we worked hard, so it's a time for us to warm up our feelings. I often travel with friends. We went to most of the famous tourist destinations in Vietnam. Our next year's travel plans will be foreign tourist destinations. Traveling helps me learn many things. Exposure to a new locality, a special culture, gives me more perspectives on life.



# Good Monday.

*By Sabra Shariani*

Sleeping is my remedy, Ooh Monday.

A shoulder to cry on is my pillow, why Monday.

My bed is like my best friend,

But how long will I lie there, a little nap.

The more I make my eyes closed

God tells me arise and shine.

Don't welcome poverty for a little nap.

When will I get up from a little nap?

Everyday it's a beautiful day

Arise, shine and cheers Monday.



# *Beautiful Night*

*By Danny Huy*

Beautiful night with exquisite sky

Look at the starry night

I immersed myself in it

As sinking into the stars.

# *Daddy*

*By Shamim Bibi*

The Gem of my life  
The king of my heart  
The backbone to my success  
And a true friend to me  
Always hold me up  
From evil eyes of World  
He's as beautiful as sunflower  
Has a heart like a lion

I can feel your love today  
Although, I lost you yesterday.

# **We Are Drawn By The Music**

*By Sangmin (Reigh) Lee*

**We are drawn by the music**

**The music is a drug**

**It controls our body**

**We get up and dance**

**Danny is dancing like a boat in the waves**

**Dylan is dancing like dandelion seeds flying in the air**

**Daniel is dancing like a pinwheel swaying in the wind**



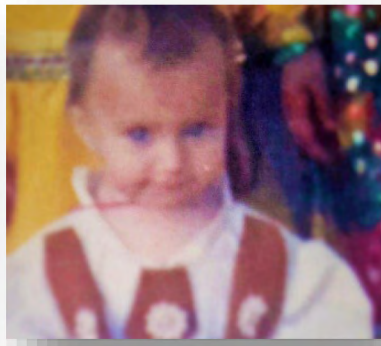
**The door is open**

**Come on in**

# BELIEVE IT CAN BE DONE!

*By Shamim Bibi*

Imagine this, a young tiny girl with brown hair and hazel eyes, I was living happily with my parents in a small village of



Pakistan more specifically a Tribal village. Apart from homework playing with toys was my only hobby at that time. My most favorite toys were barbies and kitchen sets. Life was pretty normal.

I remember, I was in grade three, and it was a happy morning like a usual. I woke early in the morning and got ready to go to mosque close to my house to learn about religion (Islam). After I finished with two hours of class here, now I had to go to school. My school was quite far from home, but we used to walk. It was a small school of only one room more like a fish market but it was the only school of the village. I was walking toward school with friends. We were so busy in talking that we might reach

to school on time, but we were relaxed because there was no strict rule about 'to be on time'.

Meanwhile, I heard my sister calling me from the other side of the road saying, "we are not going to school anymore". She was going back home. As an 8 years old child, you can imagine my happiness. I didn't even bother to ask the reason.

I came back home happily, singing and dancing on my way. My house had a huge courtyard and there were some trees one of the massive berry tree full of berries as it was the season for berries. I used to sit down under the shade of that tree because the feeling of home is like a cozy blanket after a cold day. As usual, I sat down under that shady tree while mom was busy doing home chores.

Later, when I saw my parents, they were upset with the news that my school was closed. And then, I came to know that it was the announcement made by terrorists that girl's schools will be closed. None of us could go to school anymore. All my parents could do was hire me a teacher at home. But

the situation was getting worse day by day, even home tutors were not allowed.

Finally, the danger from terrorists reached to the highest, we were supposed to leave our house and village. It was sunny afternoon of July 2007. We all, my siblings and sister-in-law said GOODBYE to our mom and dad with tears in eyes of everyone. Mom and dad had to stay home to take care of the pets and house. I would never forget that day it still so fresh in my mind as it was yesterday. It was so hard to leave a place where you have spent your childhood old good days. I hugged my mom and started crying. It was the saddest goodbye for all of us. It was Curfew, we couldn't drive so we just started walking toward another nearby place to get a car.

While we were on our way, suddenly we heard some strange sounds. It was so terrifying I never heard that kind of sounds before. The sound was shelling and firing all over our heads. People were running under the hail to find a place where they can take a breath. We were also running under the aerial bombing. I didn't know where I was going. I was just crying and calling my mom, but she was not around me. I was scared for myself but more for my parents.

After a long walk of three days, we reached the city where we can find a car. Things get normal for two days. Shelling and bombing stopped for some time. we went back home to see mom and dad. By the grace of God, they were all okay, but I could not stop crying. The situation was getting worse again, so my parents suggested that I go to Karachi with my sister-in-law to her family, because that was the only safe place for me

at that time. I spent two months there. I was missing mom and dad and my home badly, but I had no other option. After that, I came back to Islamabad, the safest city of Pakistan where my brother was working.

As an eight years old girl, I had seen the barbaric situation of 21<sup>st</sup> century. I had seen dark days of my life. Indeed, that was the hardest time, but it made me even stronger. Although it was difficult to adjust in new city with new people and making new friends, yet I motivated myself to 'Never say die'. My parents also came to the same city, Islamabad and once again we started living happily, like flowers blooming happily in Spring.

It was not a short story. This experience took two years. The thing my parents really wanted was my studies. I started my school from 6<sup>th</sup> grade the next year. I always had highest ranks in my school and in new school it became harder to maintain that position. I was so passionate about my studies and to fulfill my parent's dream. I worked day and night, so with my passion, hard work, and family support, I became "the cream" which means the best student in the school. I secured high ranks in new school and got merit scholarship from grade 8<sup>th</sup>. After a lot of sleepless nights, I got admission in one of the top colleges of Pakistan, Army Public College. I remained a scholarship holder for six years.

Things were getting good, happiness was all around, but suddenly another major loss was waiting for me and that was heart wrenching for me. It was my first year in high school and I lost my dad. The nerve-racking and the most traumatic time of life with a lot of



study pressure. It was hard to recover but I tried by making myself busy with books and friends. I remember his words “To be resilient and to be determined”. Every time I just want to say that “Dear baba! Although you are no longer with me, I want you to know how much I loved you when I was blessed enough to have you in my life. I want you to know that even though you are no longer with me, I still miss you so much”. I wish he could see me graduated from one of the top colleges of Pakistan. Life was going on. After graduating from high school, I went to the highest ranked university of Peshawar and started studying Doctor of optometry. The dream of my parents came true. They always wanted to see me as a doctor but unfortunately, dad was not with us.

Now I am living my dreams in the United States which is another huge achievement in my life because I am the first ever girl from my village and college who got US scholarship and made everyone proud. Now I am an inspiration for many young girls of my community. They considered me as their role model. They also get motivation that if she can do why not us? At the end hard work pays.

The following saying impressed me really, so I want to end with it, “A dream does not become reality through magic; it takes sweat, determination and hard work.”



# Memory Fragments in Middle School

*By Frank Fu*

After many years, when I think back to that time, I think about whether the two boys who have just entered middle school and met each other would think of what would happen here in that hot early autumn.

It was an ordinary middle school, neither good nor bad in reputation. Some of the school's architectural designs look as old as my great grandma's house. But in fact, this school is the same age as me. Unfortunately, the school was "updating" these parts for two of my three years of study, and became "almost brand new" one summer after I graduated. Although my family was just a few blocks away, my mother decided to let us move to the school - literally, I can even stand on the school playground and see my mom on the balcony of my home.

On the first day of middle school, I walked into the school and in the first hour I met someone who would become my best friend - and later my biggest problem for the next three years. Pan had the same body build as me, his face was reddish and cheerful enough, and

we happened to meet at the very beginning. I was glad that I made good friends on the first day. You know, in the whole six years of primary school, I almost didn't make anything except my nickname.

I didn't notice when he changed. I mean no harm, but he seemed to prefer some worse and worse jokes. And he played pranks regardless of class time. I tried to communicate to him, but he soon ignored any of my opinions. It bothered me because he was mainly aimed at me. I don't think there should only be students who sit in the classroom and listen carefully in middle school, but it's not fun for teachers to always misunderstand that you are a prankster. This rapidly widened the rift between our friendship. I began to wonder if he was bullying.

My class teacher, who had a shiny forehead and often appeared in a suit with sneakers. He often repeated to me, "flies don't bite seamless eggs." He always asked me to find the cause in myself, until the day he was outraged.

There are two students in my class who are different from the others. One of them is Xue. He has a rare disease, which makes his body mighty but unable to think like the other person. His mother struggled to raise him and tried to teach him to live a positive and optimistic life. But he learned dirty words from Pan in his first year at the school. This is because the target of Pan's pranks expanded. Pan soon taught Xue to make noises in class and tear up his money. Somehow he found a way to frighten Xue and began to drive him to disturb others. Until one day, I was like a Lilliputian chased by Gulliver, actually it was Xue with a long stick, and I got hit in the leg.

Although I was not injured, but I almost had a "world traveling" in the school. This makes my class teacher's shining forehead gain a few more wrinkles. My parents had a "full exchange of views" with him, Xue's parents and Pan's parents struggled about these issues for a long time. But as far as I know, it didn't work. Pan calmed down only for a while after my class teacher's rage. What was really effective was the random class adjustment of the school, so that half of the class had new students from other classes.

Today, I still wonder what this brought to our life experience. Did Xue leave a psychological shadow? Have I been influenced by that experience? Time may not bring the answer, but it will certainly make my memories more symbolic.

# 18 Days of Lockdown in New Zealand

*By Sangmin (Reigh) Lee*

Have you ever been trapped somewhere? Or have you ever lived with people you really hate? It's a relief if there isn't. I've been through both of these things at the same time and I'm going to talk about it from now on.

Even though I have studied in many countries such as France and the Philippines, my final education in Korea was my sophomore year of high school. My grades in Korean high school were not that bad. In fact, it was good enough to enter the top 5 universities. Then when I was in my second year of high school there was a big change. My family has a family meeting every month. The topic of the meeting in October 2018 was what I am going to do after university graduation.

Since Korea was suffering from a serious job shortage at the time, it was an almost impossible process for graduates to find jobs. In addition, high-wage jobs often require various certificates and even graduate degrees, so people study for three or more years after graduating from university. Also, Korean military is still a conscription system so I must be in military for 18 months. If I do all these things then I become almost 30 in Korean age system. But I really did not want to spend all my 20's just for studying, so I decided to go abroad for studying.

New Zealand is one of the most chosen countries by Korean international students, so I went there. There were many other reasons, the biggest two reasons why I chose New Zealand were that the tuition was relatively cheap and easy to go to other countries after graduating from high school. I would have been in the last grade because my English skill was not enough to study in the last grade and education system in NZ was totally different than the Korean one. I became a sophomore in Westlake Boys Highschool. Although I don't think New Zealand's education level is bad, it was lower compared to Korea.

So what I had to do was focusing on developing my English skills. However the freedom I felt in few years was enough to make me lazy. I played games more than 5 hours a day and did not do homework many times. Originally, the grades should have been low, but the grades were still high because I studied what I had learned in Korea again. I spent the first year studying abroad just like that and the next year came.

From the beginning of the year, the world was noisy because of a pandemic called COVID-19, which spread worldwide. Despite these global infectious diseases, New Zealand belongs to a government that responded well in the early stages, so people only had to wear masks. However, as time passed and April passed, the number of

infected people gradually increased, and eventually lockdown occurred. The prime minister announced a week before lockdown. She asked people to buy daily necessities or food they needed. The reason was that it would be difficult to use the mall because when lockdown starts, not only the number of people who can come out of each house but also the number of people who can enter the mall is limited. Then the lockdown started on 17th April 2020.

At the first 3 days, I didn't have any classes. Because teachers needed time to prepare for online classes and also students are not ready to do it. I had nothing to do so I just played games and watched movies all day. Woke up at 2p.m and ate a late lunch and played game before dinner. My homestay always eat dinner altogether, so I went to the first floor at 7 and ate dinner. There were 10 people in that house originally. But after lockdown homestay parents' children went to their own houses and dorm rooms so there were only 5 people; homestay parent, me, James and Berjin. Actually I didn't like them. Homestay mum is a thief. She sometimes stole my stuff if she needs it.

When corona virus started spreading in NZ, there were always out of masks. Then she stole my masks even I hid them in my closet. Homestay father is so noisy and James is so introspective so I can't easily talk to him. The main problem is Berjin. I can't easily explain what is his personality. He's sometimes like a psychopath. He is not aware that he is doing something wrong. Also, he appears to have low intelligence. The homestay mum cuts his nails and he doesn't flush the toilet after using it, so she always pull the chain. But his intelligence is definitely not low. If you look at his school grades, overall grades are higher than average and even calculus score is almost the top. Anyway, my 18days of lockdown started with them.

20<sup>th</sup> April 2020 – I had the first online classes. Using Microsoft Teams meeting is not familiar to me because I used Discord or Kakaotalk which is used by Koreans, to do virtual meeting in Korea. So it took more than 15 minutes to join the first class. I thought I was the only one to late for the class but I was on the fast side. It took almost 40 minutes for all students to join in the class. As most of student were late, the teacher just told us how to join in fast and the class finished. The remaining classes were similar, but my English and Food teacher didn't do online classes so I just had to do homework.

When I get back, I normally took a nap because I woke up 6 o'clock week days. However I was not sleepy today. Because of online class, I do not need to go somewhere and wash, so I could sleep until 8:30. I finished homework in 30 minutes and started playing game. At 6:30 the homestay mum called me to eat dinner. After dinner I always walk around or sometimes meet friends. But during this lockdown period, only homestay parents can go outside so I just came back to my room and watched some movies and played game again. Actually what I like to do is not just playing game. I like playing game with friends while we talk about many things like school life and funny stories.

24<sup>th</sup> April 2020 – Nothing special has happened so far. However one thing different in the past 4 days is that I wake up about 11a.m. Even though I have to wake up at least 9a.m after I joined in the meeting and turned off the camera and voice and then fall a sleep again. When I wake up at 11a.m, I joined in the fourth time, lying on the bed and after I had lunch. I still couldn't go out and my frustration grew. Actually, I was able to go out. The rule set by the government was that only two people could go out of the same house at the same time. So I asked my homestay parents if I could take a walk, but they always said they had to go out and



didn't let me out. I think it was because things get complicated when I go out and something happens. I understand why they are doing like that. However, they had to even try to understand me and empathize with me. So I just went back to my room and played game, listening to music.

26<sup>th</sup> April 2020, - On Sunday, I don't have to wake up that early. Actually 11a.m is not early but I thought that was early for me at that time. So I woke up at 2p.m and ate late lunch. The homestay mum normally put the food on the kitchen table so I just picked one of them. It was Kim bob again. I like Kimbab but if I eat it for a week, I get tired of it. I just ate 2 pieces and went to my room and started playing game again. Since then, I felt something was wrong with my body. I felt little dizzy and when I saw the screen, I felt the screen was like repeating getting bigger and smaller. So I turned off the screen, took some medicine and lay on bed. Then I fell a sleep. When I woke up, the time was almost 10 o'clock.

Homestay mum texted me that the dinner is on the table. I really did not want to eat anything but I have to take medicine so I stumbled down the stairs. There were also Kimbab and ramen. I had to eat to take medicine, but I should not have taken them. It was not that bad right after I ate them. The accident happened at night. I was just lying on bed, watching YouTube. Then I felt like little bit nauseous but I just ignored it. That was a huge mistake. While I was sleeping, I woke up suddenly and went to the bathroom and vomited. Sometimes vomiting means that the person have some problems in their body but in my case, I knew that my one is based on mental problem. Although people normally say to someone or go to see a doctor when they feel bad, I did not do it. In Korea, being sick often means being weak, so I just slept again.

27<sup>th</sup> April 2020. Today I woke up at 2p.m. I

did not even joined the online classes and didn't hear the alarm and also had a headache. I really wanted to go out and meet friends or just talk to someone. However, as I was rejected by my homestay parents many times, I didn't want to talk to them anymore. I ate lunch and joined the rest of the classes. Until then, I had been physically ill, but I had never been mentally ill, so I didn't understand how people feel about mental illness. However, since I stayed home for more than 10 days and couldn't go outside, I could feel my mind getting more and more devastated and found out that it is a symptom called mental illness. Games that I used to play for more than five hours a day have become no more fun and even it became bothersome to talk to my family on the phone. I said everything was good when I talked to my parents on the phone, but it wasn't. I didn't want to live with the homestay family anymore and I felt my room turned into a prison.

29<sup>th</sup> April 2020. It was the 12<sup>th</sup> day since I was confined in this house, and at the same time, I decided that I left this house. Anyone would have made the same decision as me if they heard what had happened in the last two days to me. The first problem occurred on the day before. It was almost the same day as before. I woke up so late like 2p.m, just ate late lunch and joined in the last class. After that, I was lying in bed watching YouTube helplessly and went down when I heard my homestay mother told me to eat. Nothing happened before her children came to the house.

It was illegal that someone came to another person's house, but her first daughter chose to have dinner with all of them at this house to say something. She came with her husband. She is over 30 years old and had been married for two years. The second daughter came with her boyfriend and the youngest son came with her girlfriend. We started eating dinner. In the middle of dinner, her first

daughter said she was pregnant. We were all really surprised and took turns praising her. I wasn't very close to her, but I congratulated her sincerely. It was noisy for a while, but we started eating dinner again. But the incident happened then. The youngest son, who usually liked to play jokes, joked to his mother, homestay mum, as usual. He told us that the homestay mother should now be called the homestay grandmother, not the homestay mother. We all laughed at it. But only one homestay mother did not laugh. She told her husband to scold him for teasing her. However, he took the side of his son and said it would be fun to be called a grandmother. Then she got up from her seat screaming and ran to her room. I've heard her scream before, but what she did this time was like a dolphin's cry.

I was so surprised that I almost spit out what I was eating. I was so astonished that I did not remember what happened after that. But one thing is for sure, it took an hour for the homestay dad to pick her up in the kitchen again. So I came back to the room, took Tylenol, and fell asleep.

However, the decisive thing that made me decide to leave this house happened on this day. I woke up early with a headache. I could take my first class and took a nap after lunch. It was a windy day, so I opened the window and my door and slept. I woke up early because I had a headache in the morning because of what happened the previous day. I could take my first class and took a nap after lunch. It was a windy day, so I opened the window and my door and slept. After an hour or two, I removed the blanket that covered my face to wake up. At that moment, for the first time in my life, I felt the feeling of surprise, anger, and fear at the same time. The Berjin was standing next to my bed. My room in New Zealand is only about half the size of the room I used in Korea. It was not very small, but it was a size that could never be

said to be large. However, there was not much space to stand because I changed my old desk to a large desk a few months ago. He was standing right next to me. I could not say anything for 5 seconds. Then I asked him why he was standing there. He muttered to himself so I could not understand what he said. He said a few more words and left my room. I was so embarrassed that it took about two more minutes for me to wake up. I didn't know what he did in my room, but the problem was that he entered my personal room. I could expect him to come in even when I wasn't in my room.

As a result, I decided to leave this homestay. I talked to my agent about what had happened so far and I said I would leave the homestay. The relationship between the homestay and the agent was complicated and I couldn't go out right away. Also, it was almost impossible to find a new homestay because other homestays thought it was dangerous to accept new students because of COVID-19. However, I couldn't stand being in the homestay anymore, so I decided to stay at my friend's house for the rest of the lockdown.

3th May 2020. To tell the conclusion first, my condition had returned to normal quickly. The fundamental reason why I had a headache and bad physical condition was that I couldn't go outside the house, but at my friend's house, I could take a walk near his house and talk to them and do various activities, so I quickly got better. After my condition improved, I became curious why just being stuck at home for a long time affects my mental health.

Fortunately, my friend's mother was a psychologist in Korea, so I had many conversations with her. The amount of conversation I had with her was large enough to write a book. The amount of conversation I had with her was large enough to write a book. To reduce the long conversation simply,

I felt isolated because I had been trapped at home for a long time, which increased psychological pressure, causing problems with my mental state. Through this, I didn't usually like to go out and play, but sometimes I felt that I had to do something active.

After lockdown. My agent talked to the homestay family, which made some changes. She also recognized that Bergin's mental state was a little different from that of a normal person and asked him to use another room with a bathroom. She also told us that we didn't have to eat dinner everyday with the homestay family anymore. After 7 months, I came back to Korea.



# Becoming You!

*By Sabra Shariani*

Have you ever been told you can't do something? Have you ever been in the dark room and felt like you've been pushed around? When I started my first degree of commerce and computer applications in Chennai, India in June 2013. I was excited to meet new people and learn India culture and languages and to be far from my home in Tanzania. We all know that feeling when you have your own freedom and see yourself as a grown ass woman, you get to make some decisions by yourself without parenting.

Most of the African Mothers are the best in the world with their own rules but the funny thing is, I don't borrow any money from my mom. I just only give to her because you will never see it returned and if you will ask her for it back, she will just look at you and say, "I carried you for 9 months". She can call me downstairs to pass the remote to her. I remembered my mom once hired these cleaners to come clean our house and since she is an African mom, she made my siblings and I clean up before they got there so we don't look like a messy family and embarrass her, Hahaha I was shocked.

After couple of days in Tamil Nadu – India, I was able to speak few words in Tamil, like "*Vanakkam*" means hello. I used to say *Vanakkam!* And raised my chin and tilted my head backwards in a single thrust

motion. One day, I was lucky to have brunch with some older students from Tanzania (Mother's land) and few of them from various countries in Africa. It was enjoyable moment. They started to ask me few questions so to know each other well, give me some hints (girls talk) and enlightenment. I don't remember exactly what we were taking but I won't forgot, when they asked me, "what major are you taking here?"

I was proud of myself to tell them what I was taking, and I was the only Black girl in the class despite there were few older students from Africa in our department. Imagine the started to laugh at me and said ooh girl do you know what you are doing, or you just said it. One of them, who wished to have a summer body, but she was like Panda, with a lot of food on her plant and mouth, she said to me, "did you know Indians very well, that they are excellent at math's, computer, medicine, and accounting then you want to be with them in that department please don't embarrass us". I was like Ooh okay. And there was this 5ft girl with long black hair who cannot even solve her problems but busy doubting on other. And she said to me, "we don't think if you will be able to accomplish your degree on that department, you better change the major". I felt lost in the dark room.

Suddenly, I doubted of myself. I was crushed. Maybe I can't do this. As I took the bus and went home while I had a lot on my mind and if you are familiar in Tamil Nadu state most of their drivers hit their horns constantly and they played loud music, so I was not able to think. I decided to take along bath and listening to melody music after getting home.

Later, I called my best friend which is my mom and tell her what's going on there. To my surprise, my mom had more confidence for me than I had for myself and said, "girl be patient that's who you are Sabra". Sabra means *patience*. She started to remind me on how I used to be while I was a kid, let keep this story for the next time. At the time I called her, it was a family day. We called it Manara's day, which is our family name. In our family, we have this culture of going to our grandparents once after every 4 months to have breakfast, lunch and sometime dinner together also we get to take home leftover.

My grandfather asked to talk to me. He is a man of wisdom and faith. He called me by my name twice and sounded intensely, "Sabra don't ever doubt in yourself. You can do anything you wish to do in your life. All you have to do is to believe in yourself. It's okay to fail but its not okay to quit". He asked me, "Are you going to let the obstacles in your life be stumbling block or stepping stones? Choose the positive. You are the master of your attitude". He reminded me, "You are not studying for yourself but you're studying for a village here. Make sure you're coming back with a trophy for the whole village."

The day I had the call with my mom and grandpa was on Saturday, the next day I woke up with this positive mind, a smile on my face. I was energetic and I started to brainstorm my action on my pad and some

sticky notes which I used to stick on my bedroom wall and write some Bible verses on like "I can do all this through him who gives strength", "I'm the head and not the tail" and I wrote a short poem said that "Don't welcome poverty for a little nap, a little folding of the hands to rest and failure will come upon you like a robber" Arise and shine.

I had a meeting with my professor Jasmine on Monday before classes, who's the assistance head of department. I like to call her Ms Jasy. We had a great chat, and it was very productive to me. I decided to cut off some of the things which took much time on my side and invest more time on my books. I was very stubborn in the class in a good manner. I had to ask more questions and had some private time with some of the professors to assisted me in areas which I was lacking, or I did not understand well because sometimes they used their mother tongue – Tamil in class.

I am proud to be Alumna in that university which we used to call high school because its Catholic university with more principles and disciplines. It was totally difference with other Universities. Our university life was boring.

After every end of semester, we do have a short break for 2 weeks. I remember it was Pongal season. Pongal is one of the most important festival in Tamil Nadu, India. After coming back to school, the results were out, and we had a town hall with our principal whom we called our lady of Fatma. She gave word of appreciation and awards for the best students during the period. I had to go and sit next to the other elder students and waiting for the news.



Our lady of Fatma called me by my last & first name, she said first year student from B.com with CA best student award for the first and second semester goes to Ms. Sabra. I was not shocked, but my face acted surprised and blushing in front of my elder students.

After that, I felt tremendous and honored personally, I started to make new friends and became a famous student in our department. I was so happy on that day, I called my mom to tell her that I'm the head and not the tail, she was extremely happy.

Sometimes you can feel like, why am I existing in this world? What is my purpose or reason in this world? Who am I? And what is the gift of my life? Most of us we don't know why but everyone has a purpose in this world. "Life without purpose is like a body without soul". Always becoming you!!!!



# Who Am I?

By Gabriel Atteh

The first thing you might want to know is that I am from Ghana, West Africa. My upbringing was pretty much strict. For example, I wasn't allowed to go out and hang out with friends and if my parents do allow me, I have time-limited I can stay out. My parents are Christians and we all go to the same church called Presbyterian of Ghana.

Speaking about race and gender, I haven't had the chance to talk about it. Ghanaian society cares about very sensitive topic to talk about. Culture and religion also play a very big role in that as well, so it is hard to find someone opening up.

I feel like coming to the USA has shown me a different way of approaching things and how people associate and understand themselves. Coming to Otterbein has been a great opportunity for me and it has been a real struggle to finally come to achieving the dream as a student-athlete. There are sacrifices my parent had to make for me just to get here. My mum had to sell her plot of land, my elder brother also had to sell his car just to get money to get me here. And I am very grateful to have such supportive people in life. Coming here things didn't go as planned. My dad retired and it was difficult for him to raise the money to get my tuition. So I did not return



to school, this is where the real struggle started! OMG!

I feel like that has also shaped me to be strong within. Leaving school and struggling my way to come back was very stressful, with pain, tears, depression, and suicidal thoughts running from my mind. I felt empty and hopeless in life and didn't know my next moves, but I knew and hoped that someday, one day in faith I will be fine and I will get back to college. I know I am coming to a place that is a different environment, where I am going to meet new people, with different values and different accents. It was a little challenging to understand people, but as time passes by I was able to communicate and hang out with friends, with the talent. It has also helped me a lot, traveling around America playing school matches and meeting new people has been a wonderful experience.

I went to a Muslim high school called T.I Ahmadiyya senior high school. My tennis coach wanted me to stay close, that's the reason why ended up at a Muslim school

and I didn't regret the choice. It just taught me so much about Muslim culture and beliefs. I remember on Fridays, we close at 11 30am so they can go pray. Also, I got to understand why they cover their hair all the time. Even though I am Christian and going to a Muslim school, it has shaped me in a way of seeing the worldview in a different perspective, that we are all the same and does no matter the religion, race, or anything.

I am who I am because I can be no one else. I am who I am because I only know what I have been through to get to this moment of my life. I am who I am because it draws back to how I see myself as a person and the foundation I grew up, my beliefs and values have a big role in how I see myself. When we are always ourselves, we are more likely to have focus and direction in our life. Imagine someone who is constantly conforming to other people's expectations, do you think this person has focus and direction? I don't think so. That's why I tried to live by my values and know where I am going and where I am coming from.

What or who encouraged me to become who I am today will be my mum, starting from when I was little, she used to talk to me and letting me know that someday I may not be with them forever, I should learn how to be strong without them and be independent to deal with situations that comes in my life.

My mum always finds a way to encourage me even though she is sounding angry, and aside from my mum. When I was in my dark period, she was there to motivate me to keep on going and everything would be fine with me. I felt like she came in at the right time when I needed someone to talk to, someone to open my worries, someone to at least encourages me.

Sometimes, life becomes much better when we find someone who believes in us and is always behind us when things don't go right. I appreciate everyone who has been part of my journey and supported me throughout my struggles to this time.





# Beginnings and Endings

By Gwendolyn G. DeRosa

Every ending has a beginning and every beginning has an ending. I began my time as an adjunct instructor in the ESL Program at Otterbein in the spring of 2015. As someone who spent her girlhood in Westerville, who lugged a stack of books home from the Westerville library every week, whose great-grandfather had been a professor at Otterbein, I was thrilled to be part of this historical and thriving community.

Even though I've always been "part-time," my commitment to Otterbein and my students has been full time. And I've been honored to work alongside faculty and staff in different programs and departments. Otterbein attracts the most compassionate and hard-working folks who truly care about their students as whole and complete individuals.

Every year, I wish I could participate in many of the innovative courses on campus. I'm so happy that I took the opportunity to participate in Dr. Tammy Birks' Studies in Graphic Narrative course and it was an incredible honor to participate in Dr. Shannon Lakanen's Memoir Writing in Prisons course with Piper Kerman. These experiences kept me connected to the struggles of being a student and shaped how I think about assignments and assessments. And I know my classroom environment was enhanced by the relationships I built with the amazing folks in the CTL and the Writing Intensive communities.

Over the last 7 years, I've developed and taught courses such as Creative Writing, Marginalized Voices in American Literature, Women in American History, Sociolinguistics, and Intro to Journalism. ESL courses are often perceived as remedial classes at best, but the culture at Otterbein has always empowered me to engage students in deep and dynamic ways. Helping students find their authenticity, their personal voice, through playful and imaginative writing has always been my priority. I hope you'll find evidence of this in the pages of *The Howl*.



I took on the mantle of editor for the ESL Program's magazine *The Howl* a few years ago and it is such a joy to share the poems, stories, essays, articles, and reviews written by students from China, South Korea,

Japan, Jordan, Brazil, Spain, the Czech Republic, and other countries. Doing something important is worth the hard work and sharing our stories is important.

As I reflect on the ending of my time as an adjunct at Otterbein, I am having “all the feels.” Otterbein was a safe place for me when my wife, Felicia DeRosa, transitioned publicly and became a transgender activist, in addition to being an amazing artist and educator. I want to thank Erin Johnson, the coordinator of the ESL program, my boss, and my friend. She has always had my back. I want to thank Liz McMurray and Lejla Bilal for helping me obtain the position and for being mentors. I want to thank Dr. Paul Einsenstein for supporting my work as well.

I’m thrilled about my new role at King Avenue United Methodist Church as the Director of Student Ministries and I know my time at Otterbein has helped prepare me for the next chapter in my story. But, endings are also sad and I will miss being in the classroom, learning as much from my students as they do from me.

Here’s a little piece of advice from a 41 year old, queer, mom-like person: pay attention to the little joys and pleasures, notice the uniqueness of your lived experience, be afraid and do the thing anyway, and take time to just be. This is your life, so live it fully.

You can always peruse previous editions of *The Howl* online here:

[https://digitalcommons.otterbein.edu/the\\_howl/](https://digitalcommons.otterbein.edu/the_howl/) .



# Around and About Campus (Fall 2021)



This is the picture from my country presentation. It was a proud moment and I felt ultimate honored to represent my country at International level. Today standing on the land of another country, wearing patriotic colors, and this flag realized me how much I love my country. – Shamim

The next picture I am sharing is from Christmas before Christmas with our American Host family because we are leaving before Christmas. - Shamim



This is from the International Night. Students from all over the world shared their food and celebrated their cultures together.





