

Conversations on Jesuit Higher Education

Volume 37

Article 21

4-1-2010

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Recommended Citation

Luke, Clair (2010) "Student Pieces: My Generation: headed in two directions," *Conversations on Jesuit Higher Education*: Vol. 37, Article 21.

Available at: <http://epublications.marquette.edu/conversations/vol37/iss1/21>

My generation: headed in two directions

My soul for a cubicle?

By Claire Luke

As I near graduation from Holy Cross, I reflect upon the areas of study I have pursued and to what extent the knowledge I have gained during the past four years will determine my next steps. The more I reflect upon my options for next year, the more I realize the unspoken yet ever-present tension between following 'the straight path' lifestyle versus a more unconventional, risky one. And the more I strive to understand this tension, I see that at its core lies my choice of feeling either comfortable or uncomfortable.

I see many of my classmates grappling with this split, and feel that both society and one's individual spirit influence willingness to experience discomfort. I have come to recognize that my goals are indeed different from the conventional ones and I am trying to find a way to foster these ambitions.

As long I can remember, I have had a remarkable curiosity about how the world and its people interact and function. I began studying Spanish in middle school and grew up studying the culture. In high school, I enjoyed my writing and social studies classes, in addition to Spanish, because they allowed me to continue learning about the world.

In college, I chose by making interest in the course material a first priority. As a philosophy major with a focus on political philosophy, I explore the questions behind the relationship between people and government, among different cultures. International relations, international law, anthropology, and comparative politics have

inspired my desire to dig deeper. To complement my love for writing and building awareness on important issues, I serve as a co-editor and writer for *The Advocate*, a Holy Cross publication, and spent a semester in Washington, D.C. as an intern at NBC.

I also tapped more into the pillars of my faith through immersion trips to Appalachia and Kenya. These two experiences in particular opened me to the humanitarian aspect of political affairs.

Yet I hesitate to forge ahead.

Empathy and curiosity about different peoples might fuse my humanitarian experiences with personal talents into a career in international journalism or international law. The prospect of providing a voice and advocating for the afflicted and disadvantaged around the globe is exciting.

Yet, I hesitate to forge ahead with these professions because they are risky, and unconventional in contrast to the comfortable jobs in finance or government lined up for many of my classmates. Thus, the question arises- can taking the risk to enter a challenging career outweigh the benefits of a more provincial lifestyle?

For those who are interested in the more conventional lifestyle, they should pursue that. Many of my fellow students want this lifestyle for its security. Instead, I encourage my classmates to ask what will ultimately make them happy, and I challenge them to pursue a field about which they are more passionate.



My doubts are plentiful. For example, I worry that I will lean toward a more predictable field of law than humanitarian law or will succumb to a simpler profession, better paying profession. But I am finding this is not the life I desire.

Directly following my time in Kenya, I resumed interning as a finance reporter near Wall Street, and the pre-occupation with money felt odd, after spending a month volunteering in Kibera, Sub-Saharan Africa's largest slum. This job allowed me to realize that I do not want a career that serves primarily as a means to make money; rather, I want a career which satisfies me in itself. I know I would regret sacrificing my soul to a cubicle.

Personally, I would be disappointed in myself if I did not at least attempt to enter my ideal professions. As with my experiences in Appalachia and Kenya, the quest will not be easy. These experiences proved difficult and uncomfortable; yet, this discomfort yielded much reward. The meaning and vocation I found in these experiences is the same I'd like to apply to my career. Though comfort is convenient, great results follow from discomfort and risk for both the individual and society. ■

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