



# THE STUDENT VOICE

SPRING SEMESTER: April 2017

## A New Life and a Modern Family

By: Ariel Foti

It is mid-November In Upstate New York. The beautiful oranges, crimsons, and golds of the autumn foliage have now turned to a crisp brown as the season prepares to turn cold. The air was bitter, a frozen rain with a mixture of light snowflakes spread across the region. The eminent death of a season is strongly overshadowed by the anticipation appropriated for the birth of a new life. Since this is about your birthing a child, create the thesis statement to reflect that directly.

Fear of the unknown comes over the room as we await a status of the situation at hand, and even without the formal verification, we know that it is time. I sit

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quietly with my eyes locked on one of the five or more monitors. I watch the numbers rise and fall repeatedly, each time the mountain on the scans grows taller. I learn that this is measuring the contractions as they come up quickly and slowly disappear again. I am confused because it is not like you see in the movies, doctors running in and out, screaming and yelling in pain, rushing through the halls. My spouse is calm. Her eyes are closed and she is softly breathing as each mountain reappears on the monitor.

The only sound heard is that soft breath and faint beeping. I now notice that these beeps are

coming from the machines connected to her by multiple wires – almost like a spider web with each end as important as the last.

The doctor finally appears in the room. As a reflex, I automatically stand as if to welcome him – as if I am expecting him to answer the five thousand questions that are still swirling in my head but haven't managed to escape my mouth. I feel a wave of relief and he hasn't even spoken yet. She

is still calm. Her eyes are now open and she is looking at the doctor with a sense of comfort. I feel selfish for a moment in fear that I am not entitled to have a sense of relief. I am merely a witness. He examines her and confirms our beliefs. It is in fact time. Nine months that seemed to last an eternity have somehow snuck up on us faster than we can process. The preparation, the planning, the decisions made, the discussions had, the millions of what ifs. All

this time has now passed and we are here. We are about to bring a new life into this world. In that nine months, we had plenty of



time to consider the future and schedule every detail. There is a feeling of ignorance now as I watch her prepare for the unknown –questioning what the next few hours will bring – different what ifs now running through both of our heads. I hold her hand and my eyes are locked on her expressions, trying to read her thoughts trying to comfort her in any way that I can. I realize that I am

trying to do the impossible but that does not stop me from trying.

Suddenly, one of the monitors beeps again but this time more rapidly. This immediately implants a cause for alarm in me. I stay calm as they wheel her away into a different room. A nurse comes in and hands me a surgical mask and suit. I am still confused but my brain is on autopilot now just following direction. The suit is as thin as paper, but I get it on quickly without ripping it. They take me into a “middle room,” This is the only way I can describe it because it is not in the hall with the nurses, but it is also not in the operating room. Doctors are coming in one door and through the other. I feel invisible as they zip through. I can hear a commotion and then, I recognize her voice. She is no longer calm.

A nurse comes into the middle room where I have been pacing for what seems like hours. He makes eye contact, and I can tell he recognized the fear on my face. He informs me that the baby’s heartrate dropped once and they are just taking extra precaution. “There is nothing to worry about.” This statement cuts through me like a knife. How am I supposed to not worry? How am I supposed to be calm? How am I supposed to keep my composure? Then I

shake it off and remember, I can do it because I have to. For her. He escorts me into the operating room where there are a handful of doctors sitting and waiting. They are there “just in case.” The next thing I know time speeds up. Everything is moving at the speed of light. I can’t focus on one thing because there are so many things happening at once. It is like fast forwarding a scene in a movie while trying to figure out what is going on.

The emotions that embodied the room were indescribable. Everyone was there for one purpose and one purpose only, to bring a new life into the world. When I finally saw and heard that little baby let out her very first cry, my heart jumped into my throat. She was ours. She was here for us to protect. She was here for us to teach. For us to love. Holding our daughter and looking at my wife, who looked completely defeated, she suddenly looked different to me. The details on her face were more prominent. The curve of her lips, the roundness of her blue eyes. She was more beautiful than I had ever seen her before. You do so well with the sensory details and from your point of view. I couldn’t help but stare in awe as she lay there. I had a new view of her, a new respect. These two girls were the most beautiful beings I had ever had the chance to

lay eyes on. After a bit, they walked me out of the room with our daughter and I just stared long at this little face that was staring right back at me. We both have the same look of wonder on our faces. It was like the first time you are introduced to a stranger as you examine every detail to try and read them. It was during our staring contest that I noticed it. The same curve of the lips, the same round blue eyes. Time was now standing still. The feeling of joy and proudness took over my whole body and mind. I smiled from ear to ear as we introduced this new life to our family and the world. Without words, my wife and I

both made a promise to that little girl in the hospital room that day. We made a promise to always be there, always listen, always protect, and always give guidance. We also promised to always love her for as long as we are breathing, no matter what life may bring she will always have us.

The day was a whirlwind of emotions and questions but in the end, it was all worth it. That cold, blustery day in November could not hold up to the warmth in the hearts of every person in that hospital room and every person that met our perfect baby girl, Avery Rose.





## Overcoming Anxieties and Chronic Pain at *Bodymind Float Center*

### Carson Evans

My husband came home with renewed energy and a skip in his step. I arched an eyebrow at him, questioning him to which he proudly proclaimed that he had just gotten done “floating”. “Oh, that’s right. I forgot you were doing that today” I remarked. He instantly launched into depicting every last detail to me – how his back hadn’t felt so good in years, how relaxed he felt and how despite concerns he hadn’t feel claustrophobic at all. Weeks passed and it came up a few more times but nothing too in depth, just lots of boasting about how well he had slept the prior night, while meanwhile I sluggishly downed the contents of a coffee cup glaring halfheartedly at him. Then the March promotional prices were released, and the next thing I knew we had appointments for that upcoming weekend. We were going to *Bodymind Float Center* in Syracuse.

I knew the benefits of floatation therapy but had never genuinely considered doing it. During the entire drive from our home in Marcy to the Syracuse location, I

prodded my husband for any detail he could give me to soothe my anxieties about getting into a pitch black tank for ninety minutes. He admitted that it was strange at first, but insisted the benefits outweighed any nervousness I might have. I turned onto Erie Blvd. in Syracuse and pulled into the parking lot, searching for an escape route – some nearby business I could take shelter in while my husband floated, just in case I chickened out. The *Tully’s* next door was my safety net, and I gazed over my shoulder at it as we walked through the doorway into the vestibule. We removed our shoes and continued into the lobby in our socks, mine adorned with the image of little fox faces on a pink background. We entered the lobby and instantly my anxieties began to fade. Before me sat a quiet sitting area, a couch and several arm chairs, and on the coffee table a bedazzled journal containing customer testimonials. To the right was the hallway I would soon be heading down and in front of it was a rather commercial looking desk behind which stood a woman who appeared more relaxed than I thought physically possible.

My husband approached the desk and signed us in. The woman asked if I had floated with them before, and I said no in an almost clinical way preparing for a questionnaire similar to what one would expect at any medical establishment. She passed me a tablet with a waiver on screen she had me read the bullet points and sign my name with my finger. The whole process took less than two minutes, and I was relieved that I didn't have to delve into every detail of my life as one normally expects from this type of situation. She handed me a different tablet and headphones, offering me an instructional video, which I gladly accepted. I took a seat in the arm chair nearest the counter and hit "play". The founder of *Bodymind Float Center* appeared on the screen. He went into detail about the experience and what to expect and the best ways to make yourself comfortable. If the calming environment hadn't already started to soothe my anxieties, having this information would have all but eradicated any concerns. The video concluded and I returned the tablet.

The woman led us down the hall showing us the locations of the bathrooms and the post float primping room. She showed us to the first float room, I saw the tank and pretended that my anxieties hadn't

returned and faked a smile as she said either of us could take this first room. I shrugged at my husband and stepped towards the door, she pointed out the location of the towels and robe and wished me a good float. I shut and locked the door.

I looked around and took in my surroundings, and not wanting to waste too much time, I immediately stripped down and got in the standup shower. At first I was a bit unnerved about showering publicly, but I pushed that thought away to try and allow myself the best possible experience. I dried off and opened the tank, staring into the dark warm depths. I surveyed the situation inside the tank, searched out the sides of the tank, the limitations I would have for movement and found that my fears of being claustrophobic wouldn't impede my enjoyment. If I got nervous, I always had the option of opening the door to the tank. I put in my ear plugs to keep out the salt water, and I grabbed the LED magnetic light from the bench alongside the tank as well as the optional neck pillow. I turned on the light and climbed in, being careful to hold on to the railings provided as the salt made the bottom of the tank exceptionally slick. I stuck the light against the metal strip alongside the base of the tank and lodged the pillow in the interior handle of the door, out

of the way but easily accessible, and I closed the door.

The blue light filled the tank as I slowly laid back, anticipating that I would have to make some effort to float. I was briefly caught off guard by how weightless I became. I tested each recommended position and found myself most comfortable with my arms at my sides. I reached over and pressed the center button of the light source and let darkness fill the tank.

I tried to wait for my eyes to adjust, but there was no adjusting. My eyesight didn't improve as time went on. Regardless of how long I waited, I wouldn't be able to see my hand in front of my face, and there was no difference between having my eyes shut tight or staring up at where the ceiling of the tank was. I gave up on trying to figure out my situation and the limitations it presented and tried rather to just stop trying. I stopped trying to float, or to see or to decide whether or not I was actually anxious, or if I was relieved that I wasn't anxious. I just allowed myself to lie there – limp.

Instantly, I began to notice that the constant tension I felt started to dissipate. All of my joints were at ease. As I write this article, I long for the effortlessness that

floating allowed. No holding my head up on straining neck and shoulders, no maintaining proper posture against the defiance of tortured joints and muscles – just weightlessness and relaxation. Eventually, I stopped analyzing the lack of pain and started enjoying it. I allowed myself to clear my mind and stop thinking intentional thoughts, and rather I let my mind wander. The only thing I would change would be that I wish I had access to a waterproof tape recorder because – I swear – every idea I had while in the tank was pure gold.

It seemed that no time at all had passed when I started to hear soft music, signaling that my time slot had ended. I seemed to wake from a dreamlike state, but I didn't feel groggy as one normally does when one first hears the alarm. Instead, I felt energized, more so than I had felt in months. I practically leapt from the tank and into the shower. I washed the salt from my hair with the vinegar solution and toweled off, rehydrating my skin with the lotion provided. I dressed and did my best to make the room look as presentable as possible and left and headed for the priming room. The priming room offered all sorts of toiletries, hair dryers and lotion, all complimentary. Another woman entered the room, and we briefly exchanged experiences, hers positive

as well. I finished my makeup as she began blow drying her hair, and I exited to the lobby.

My husband was there waiting for me by the counter. The woman asked how my float was. I mirrored her tranquil demeanor while responding that it had been good, and she smiled knowingly. We paid, myself taking advantage of the student

pricing that was running for the month of March and my husband paying full price. We exited the lobby and began swapping stories before we had even put our shoes back on. Each jokingly boasting about how the other couldn't have possibly been as relaxed as the one had been. We headed back to the car. I looked towards the *Tully's*, proud that I hadn't chickened out and also kind of craving chicken tenders.





## Essential Oils

### Amber Johnson

While I was growing up not only did my family, but also my closest friends' family shared an interest in natural home remedies. My best friend Nan and I always found it quite humorous the kind of approach our families would take on herbal remedies whether it be with food, illness, or just simply the atmosphere. We would laugh when her dad would buy all organic foods, and we thought it was strange when my own mother would put a type of oil called eucalyptus in the humidifier when we were sick.

Nan and I, as we grew older, began to notice the reasoning behind why our parents were so “organically” oriented. It was simple – the more natural something was, the better it seemed to be for our bodies. Recently, together we have taken up an interest in essential oils and come to find out eucalyptus is one of them.

On March 27, we took a one night class offered by Mohawk Valley Community College dedicated completely to

essentials oils – Introduction to Therapeutic Grade Essential Oils. We decided this class was worth our time when we discovered that it was taught by a certified Holistic Health Coach named Susan Castilla. There was not a single question that Susan did not have an answer to. It is safe to say she is very educated in her field.

Essential oils are natural compounds that are found in various parts of different plants all around the world. We learned that night that therapeutic grade oils go through a much more rigorous set of tests to confirm their purity and safety than just any bottle of organic oils. Here's a little tip we learned – if the bottle of oil doesn't say therapeutic grade, the benefits probably will not be as great. Another great way of knowing the oils you are purchasing are worth your money is if you look to make sure the oils are from the indigenous area of the world where the plant flourishes the most.

Susan taught the small class that there are three ways essential oils can be used to your benefit: aromatically, topically and internally. Have you ever smelled a certain scent that brings you back to another

place in time that gives you a calming effect? For me, that scent would be sage. I often times will now put a couple drops of clary sage oil into my diffuser at home and the aroma calms me and makes me feel very nostalgic. This is an example of aromatic use. Another example of aromatic use would be when my mom would put the eucalyptus oil in the humidifier because it works to open your sinuses and your respiratory system. Also, everyone knows that unnerving hospital smell. Aromatic use through diffusers in hospitals is increasing, helping both patients and nurses by using calming aromas such as lavender.

Speaking of lavender oil – this is the greatest example of an essential oil that can be used topically, meaning on your skin. Most essential oils that can be used on the skin need to be diluted with a carrier oil, such as coconut or grapeseed oil, because of the strong potency. Lavender is known to be the safest essential oil and is one that does not need to be diluted. It can be used for stress relief – all you need to do is place a drop or two in the palm of your hand, rub it in, cup your hands around your nose, and inhale.

I asked a question regarding a family member who suffers from Parkinson's

Disease and if there were any essential oils that could be beneficial to anyone suffering from this disease. Susan mentioned that using a couple drops of cedarwood oil with a couple of drops of a carrier oil along with a light touch massage of the hands or back gives Parkinson's patients some relief by loosening up their muscles and joints.

Susan stated several times that although a lot of essential oils are safe for topical use, you should always dilute it with water and test it on a small part of your skin to make sure that your own body doesn't have any sort of allergic reaction as you would any new beauty product you would buy from the store. Popularity of topical essential oil use is increasing because these oils can penetrate to the cellular levels of our bodies, whereas most pharmaceuticals cannot. It is well known that tea-tree oil can be used for acne. When diluted with water it can be used as a facial toner because it has antifungal properties.

Nan and I that night decided that some of the most interesting facts we learned had to do with how to use essential oils internally, meaning you would ingest them. Susan stressed to us the importance of learning how to differ an essential oil you can ingest from one you can't. There is

really only one way of knowing – if the bottle of oil has supplemental information on it or not. Certain lemon oils are ingestible and very good for you. There are also certain peppermint oils that are ingestible. It's all about looking for the supplemental information on the bottle, but Susan taught us that one single drop of peppermint oil is the equivalent to the benefits of 28 cups of peppermint tea.

That night I learned for the first time that there are essential oils made of oregano and even basil. They are both extremely potent oils and should not touch the skin, but they can be used in cooking. Susan suggested using these two oils when making sauce. Use a toothpick to get the oil from the bottles, but use small amounts.

Oregano oil has become quite important for many reasons. One being that it is antimicrobial which means it fights against microorganisms. Oregano has been used in chicken feed to wipe out disease.

Just sitting in that class for one night, listening, observing and asking questions, I learned so much more than I could fit into this article. The most important thing Nan and I learned that night is if you get an essential oil in your eyes, don't try to flush

your eyes out with water. Use a carrier oil or a cloth for less irritation.

Susan mentioned she will be offering similar classes over the summer. She offers her email for those who have questions regarding the classes, [integrativeexperience@gmail.com](mailto:integrativeexperience@gmail.com). If you're interested in moving away from typical drugstore pharmaceuticals and are looking for a more natural approach, I highly suggest grabbing a couple books on essential oils, and I strongly suggest taking a class with Susan Castilla. She shows you firsthand how to use oils and what to look for when buying them. She appreciates questions and will always have an answer. Not to mention, we all got to bring home a couple free samples of our choice. Susan mentions she will be offering essential oil classes over the summer and advises that we check the course catalog for MVCC when it is completed to see the confirmed class dates. She also mentions how flexible she is regarding small classes and impromptu meetings. Nan and I are glad we took this class together, and after taking it we understand why all this time our families have chosen to go the natural way and we will definitely choose the natural route too.

## The Heart of America



### Erika Parker

As we approached the 2016 Presidential Election, growing despair and anguish flooded the hearts and minds of American Immigrants and citizens. Constantly, the media flooded American feeds with numerous acquisitions and interpretations of people living in the United States, despite the level of truth behind them.

Immigrant families began to wonder what was in store for the nearing future. Reminiscing back to the fourth grade, I remember beginning to learn about the history and development of our country, America. Despite my ignorance and young age, I had always been instructed that America was the “melting pot” of the world.

As I made my way through school, my history teachers would always reiterate that the diversity found amongst our country is what made it so remarkable and special. I began to notice that this was true. Coming from school with a graduating class of around 80 students, I often found my classmates to be a small minded group. I would notice the way they spoke about

political and social aspects of our country in a naive and ignorant way. I thought the small minded way of thinking was just the small town stigma of my school; however, I noticed many people of America think this way as I started following the news feed and social media more.

Here at MVCC, the college does the best it can to ensure diversity and culture is instated and presented as a positive part of this school. I had a chance to meet one of my colleagues Kshaw Paw to discuss her journey in America. Kshaw is a hard working student here at MVCC, as well as a proud member of American society.

After numerous attempts to meet up, we finally had the opportunity to sit down and chat about her experience in both America and her country, Burma.

We sat down on a sunny Monday morning, and I asked her some question I had come up with regarding her life in America. The questions varied in topic; however. Kshaw genuinely took the time to answer every one.

I asked and Kshaw responded:

Erika: "Now how long have you been living in America?"

Kshaw: "Nine years I have been in America."

E: "Oh awesome! Do you have family here with you?"

K: "Yeah, I have family here. I have my mother, father, brother, and sister."

E: "So you guys all moved her together?"

You have your mom, your dad, your brother and your sister?"

K: "Yes, brothers and sisters.."

E: "How many brothers and sisters do you have?"

K: "I have two brothers and three sisters."

E: "Do they all attend college or are they still in high school?"

K: "Well all of them are in college except one who is still in high school."

E: "That's awesome that you all attend college! Do your parents work here in America?"

K: "Yes they work at the Turning Stone Resort and Casino."

E: "It's so nice there, now do you work as well?"

K: "Yes, I work part time at Notre Dame Elementary at an after school care program. We watch children."

E: "I love kids! So, let's see you moved here nine years ago. Did you move her for a specific reason or goal?"

K: "We moved here for a better education, to have a better opportunity for ourselves, and a better life."

E: "That's great for your family! Now, what's it like in Burma for your family? It is in Asia, correct?"

K: "Well uhm...it wasn't easy. My father, he had to work hard, and he had to work away from us. He came back home, like he barely could see us. He was working great amounts and my mom would stay home with us. And my dad would be busy, trying to take care of us because I mean, that was the only way to survive, you know by working. He would never get to see his family."

E: "Wow so he was dedicated. So what're your feelings towards America?"

K: "I feel it's an awesome place to get started to go where you want to go. I think anyone who comes here can have a great life if they work hard, and you know not give up and dream to be whoever they want to be."

E: "What is your major, by the way?"

K: "My major is history."

E: "Do you hope to one day be a history professor or teacher?"

K: "Yes! I want to hope someday I will be a professor. I would like to have a couple years with high school experience, but ultimately I want to be a professor."

E: "Good for you! That's where you make the big money!"

E: "So where did you go to school?"

K: "I went to Unions Springs Academy, it's about two hours away out near Auburn, close to Rochester."

E: "Is it a private school?"

K: "Yes, it's a boarding school."

E: "Your dad must've worked really hard to have been able to send you to a private school."

K: "Actually, we got a sponsor. Our parents paid a little, just a little because we can't afford it. But we had a sponsor to help."

E: "Do you practice any Burmese traditions in America?"

K: "Well we are Christian so I go to church."

E: "How about any special Holidays you celebrate here?"

K: "We celebrate Karen New Year. It's kind of like the American New Year, but it isn't celebrated the same day every year, and I can't remember what day it is."

E: "That's okay! What do you do on that day?"

K: "They have the string tying ceremony and the dancing ceremony with bamboo sticks. They even have it at the Jorgensen Center on campus."

E: "Do you ever attend that one?"

K: "Yes!"

E: "So when will you be done with college?"

K: "This semester!"

E: "Awe how awesome! Are you thinking of transferring?"

K: "Yes but I'm not exactly sure where to yet. I might change my mind as to where, but, yes, for sure I am transferring."

E: "Good for you! Let's see.. is there anything you dislike about America?"

K: Well, I think it's the people. I say that as in like, today's generation in America alone. People are very sensitive. How do I say this?

People become overly offensive, like as in people easily misunderstand and interpret easily. For example, like being nice to somebody and then them thinking you have a crush on them. It just like I'm trying to be nice and a decent person. I also try to be assertive.

E: "I agree you seem like a really great and genuine being! Thank you for taking the time to set this up, though I slept through my alarm once or twice when we were supposed to meet."

K: "I totally understand; it's not a problem, college does that to you. It will make you exhausted."

E: "Do you plan on going to visit Burma any time soon?"

K: "I am trying to save up. That's the only reason I haven't gone yet. I can't wait to visit my friends!"

E: "Alrighty well I think that's it! Thank you so much again and it was nice meeting you! You are so nice!"

K: "Thank you! You are too! Make sure I get a copy of the paper!"

Overall, I can say I am grateful to have met and spoken with Kshaw. Living in America my whole life, I find it hard to envision such a dedicated lifestyle such as Kshaw's; however, speaking with diverse students such as her helps to strengthen my understanding of the "melting pot of America". Not everyone has it easy like most people in America. Kshaw and her family are striving to better their lifestyle and themselves by being productive and courteous members of American society.

My advice to my fellow students is the next time Mohawk Valley Community College offers an event that will expose you to cultural beliefs and traditions, take the initiative to open your mind and learn something new about someone different. Only you can make the choice to be a genuine and open person, and we all know with today's generation, we need people like Kshaw and her family to change the stigma of the world.





Photo taken in IT by Katelynn Williamson

## Humane Society

### Kristina Tiderencel



I went on a trip to the Humane Society that is located in North Utica.

It is called the *Stevens-Swan Humane Society*. Unlike other *Humane Societies*, it is private, non-profit, and all about the well-being of the animals. They rely on donations and volunteers to take care of the animals. It is a small cozy place with separate rooms for cats and dogs. They are highly independent but successful.

On entering the *Humane Society* I was greeted by several free-range cats, and they were sitting and walking freely, with few in cages. They were free to roam the entire front area, which both surprised and delighted me. I noticed that all of the animals were



well watered, fixed, and fed. As I made my way to the back, the animals were given plenty of room to

explore and move. Initially, I had expected caged animals in a controlled and strict environment. So, I was happy to discover the treatment of the animals. I really got the feeling that they were loved and well-cared for. There were rooms for the cats and a large room with containment areas in the back for the dogs. Each dog had its own area to wander about. Each area for the dogs seemed suitable and roomy.

I also met John Treen, shelter manager for the *Stevens-Swan Humane Society*. I sat down with him for an interview, discussing the shelter itself. The *Stevens-Swan Humane Society* has been in business since May of 1910. They house roughly 150 cats and 80 dogs at most. The amount of people who volunteer at the





shelter varies and are scheduled at availability or opportunity. The amount of animals that find homes is roughly 85%. John Treen has been working at the shelter consistently for 9 years. The only times when they euthanize the animal is when it is violently ill, hence they end its suffering. This is a service offered by the Shelter for the public. If the animal is sick and dying, they provide a service for the public in that they end the suffering of animals, putting them down. Also, there is a price in accompaniment with the adoption of an animal. It is \$80 for cats and \$120 for dogs. All the animals at the shelter are spayed or neutered and up to date with vaccines. The shelter for animals is local, essentially not affiliated with *Corporate America*, hence independent, private, and non-profit. They

rely heavily on donations to stay open. Before they give an animal a new home, they do a background check to make sure a cat or dog is healthy, responsible, and is going to an animal-loving home. They take in or adopt out animals every day. I think it is a good public service to volunteer and even offer a home to a dog or cat.

The *Stevens-Swan Humane Society* is located at 5664 Horatio St. Utica, NY 13502, off of route 12 North just past the Riverside Center. They can be reached at (315) 738-4357. Shelter hours are Tuesday to Friday 11am-5pm, Saturday 11am-4pm and are closed Sunday and Monday. They can also be checked out online at <http://Stevens-Swan.org> . They are always recruiting or appointing new help in the form of volunteers and workers interested in taking care of the animals.





**Katelynn Williamson**

## **Cross Cultural Relationship**

A cross cultural relationship is when two different people who grew up in two totally different cultures come together and form a relationship with each other, whether it be platonic or romantic. Cross cultural relationships could be hard on either parties that are within the relationship because of the struggle of trying to understand the other party's culture and customs. It already doesn't help that most relationships are not easy, and having two completely different views on the same thing can make the relationship a bit tedious.

Back in the 2000's the show *That's so Raven*, Raven in one of the episodes starts to receive gifts from a boy that she likes. Raven, however, doesn't understand that every time that she accepts a gift from the boy, who is from a different culture from her, he sees this as Raven accepting his marriage proposal. It wasn't till later on in that episode when she had a 'heart-to-heart' conversation with the boy about all of this and that she didn't realize that those gifts were meant to be something completely

different than it actually was. This is an example of cross cultural relationships.

I, myself, am in a cross cultural relationship, and let me tell you it is something I never thought would happen to be honest, but it did and it's an experience that I feel like everyone may or may not have gone through. Of course I have friendships with people who are of different cultures from my own, but I never first-hand experienced how difficult it can be at times with my significant other.

First off I am clearly a white American girl, and my significant other is first generation Asian in America. He holds more responsibility with his family for being the eldest son, than I do being the youngest and only girl in my family. He is the head of his family, he provides and cares for his mother and grandmother and takes care of his siblings, and even though they are not children but teenagers and adults, he is responsible for them. He is more in tune with his culture than his two brothers, so respect and family mean a lot to him, something I found hard to understand at

first. I grew up being taught how to do things on my own, not to always depend on other people, even if its family. I was taught to be independent and that I can do anything on my own, and that one day, I will have to provide for myself or provide for my significant other. I am not totally family oriented, I probably will be one day after having a family of my own, but I am an independent girl. My boyfriend on the other hand, as I stated before, is family oriented and very close with his family. It is actually encouraged in my boyfriend's culture that the children, no matter how old they are to continue to live with their parents. For it is somewhat expected for the children to take care of their parents when they are no longer able to do so themselves. While in my culture, we have nursing homes to place our aging parents in because we are not expected to take care of them. Some parents may hope that their children would take care of them when they no longer can, but they do not want to interfere with their child's life.

Another obstacle that we have encountered with each other is how we view somethings. Like any other couple, we have fights. Some of our fights are pointless and just miscommunications with each other. Some of them are due to the cultural

differences that we have. What could seem like a harmless playful slap in my culture, could mean completely something else in his culture. It may seem like a harmless gesture, but it is actually a sign of disrespect in his culture.

Of course there are some differences between our cultures, but there are surprisingly some similarities that we wouldn't really know about unless we look at the two cultures closely together. Both of our cultures are male dominated. This is actually common in most, if not all cultures around the world. It doesn't make it a bad thing that it is. Of course, some males have the power gone straight to their head, and we wish that they would be taken down from power, but it doesn't dismiss the fact that most of the white culture is dominated by males, as well as other cultures. Another similarity that both of our cultures share is the fact that we are polar opposites from each other.

No cross cultural relationship will be easy. I know my own personal relationship, as I have explained above, has its own ups and downs due to the differences in our cultures. The only thing that we both can do, and anyone else who is in a cross cultural relationship, is to always keep an open

mind, be willing to learn about your significant other's culture, and don't be afraid to teach them some of yours. They may not like some aspects of your culture, but the same could be said about you with theirs. As long as you are willing to try to make it work, there should be no real difficulties with having a cross cultural relationship, whether it is platonic or romantic.





## Ellabeth Hoke

I know what you are thinking, here we go again, another article about sexual assault. It's sad that yes this is another article about sexual assault because it still happens, every day, over two hundred times day. But this article is about a non-for-profit organization that helps and educates about sexual assault.

*Jane Doe No More* is an organization founded by Donna Palomba who is a victim of sexual assault in 1993 in her own home. In 1993 she was raped by an intruder in her own home while her children were sleeping and her husband was away. After she had

## Do You Know What To Do

awoken from this unimaginable crime, she called the police, where she thought they would come and save her and give her justice. It turns out they did not believe Donna's story, and she was the one to blame. After 11 years in courts, her intruder was finally getting jail time. Donna then went on to found the *Jane Doe No More* Organization, and she used the name Jane Doe because that is what she was called during the 11 years of trial. She wanted to create a foundation where victims of sexual assault could tell their story and be believed. In fact, this year marks the organizations 10<sup>th</sup>-year anniversary.

This organization came here to MVCC to speak to students about sexual assault awareness: what it is, how to help the victim, and how to protect you and others from becoming a victim. This event took place on April 4<sup>th</sup>. Two women from the organization came and not only bravely shared their stories, but also they taught students some steps to take when helping a victim. They explained the how, when, and



<https://twitter.com/janedoenomorenp>

where details of their assault. Then explained how they even got to the point of telling people. People should realize that this topic is a trigger for those who have been raped or become a victim of sexual assault. Note; just because you are not raped, it doesn't mean you're not a victim. They told the crowd how at the head courters of the *Jane Doe No More* organization that they have graduated from one of the many programs Jane Doe has to offer victims in their recovery.

Another program they mentioned was the self-defense class to help protect and stop sexual assault from happening. They want any and all victims of sexual assault or harassment to know that their story will be believed, and they will help you on the road to recovery. They want to shorten the time of the legal process that will help the victim's recovery.

Now on to the steps of recognizing, stopping, and preventing sexual assault/harassment: step one knowing the definition of sexual assault, "any type of sexual contact or behavior that occurs without the explicit consent of the recipient. Falling under the definition of sexual assault are sexual activities as forced sexual intercourse, forcible sodomy, child

molestation, incest, fondling, and attempted rape."

Step two, when helping the victim after the fact the only questions you should ask is what they want to do and how can you help. There is no need to know what they were wearing or why they couldn't prevent it. At this point the assault has happened, and all you need to do is help them on their own terms. And do not say if you were in the same situation what you would have done – that does nothing but make them feel guilty and feel like what just happened to them is meaningless to you.

Step three, knowing when you should step in to prevent a bad situation from happening. People are very good at expressing facial emotions. Read the persons face and body language, and if you can see that they are uncomfortable or giving off a scared or uneasy vibe, try to help them. But do not to it in some "Batman" big save the day kind of moment. Make it casual and unnoticeable to people around you. Yes, there might be that chance you will try to help someone who doesn't want your help, but if you didn't at least try, you never know what could happen.

Step four, know yourself – know your drinking limit, know the people you are

hanging around with, know a plan of exit for the night, and know your location. All these things seem self-explanatory. Well, the statistics are 41% of college freshmen females are raped at parties. This is an important fact to recognize and stop. Freshmen are fresh out of high school, are in a new bigger school, have new friends, want to look cool and fit in, and try to live the full college experience. That is why it is important to know your limit. When you're on campus, look around and know where your safety lamps, phones and safety offices are in case of any emergencies you might have.

Step five, if you do see something and you don't want to cause a scene, call the police, tell the bartender, or tell someone who can help that person get to safety.

If you or someone you know have experienced sexual assault please go to this website <https://www.janedoenomore.org/> or call **National Sexual Assault Hotline at 1-800-656-HOPE**. They will help you on your road to healing.

\*This articles contents were found on the Jane Doe No More website, <https://www.janedoenomore.org/> and from the event on April 4<sup>th</sup>, 2017.

## EMPOWERING WOMEN TO ESCAPE ALIVE!

Jane Doe No More and the professional team at East Coast Training Systems are proud to announce this FREE self-defense training class for women and girls ages 15 and over.

Hosted By:



**Heidi Voight**  
NBC CT



**Allyson Spellman**  
Women's Empowerment Coach  
Speaker & TV Guest Expert



**Donna Palomba**  
Jane Doe No More  
Founder

With:

<https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&ret=j&q=&esrc=s&source=images&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0ahUKEwir27TQvKrTAhUsxoMKHapHCLkQjhwIBQ&url=http%3A%2F%2Fpatch.com%2Fconnecticut%2Fberlin%2Ffree-self-defense-class-women-girls-0&psig=AFQjCNHJ-9bA7VpAr1NqV4boRC7FeN0Nlw&ust=1492483238186843>



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## The MVP Case for Russell Westbrook

### Alec Ambruso



The regular season is over. As usual, the *Warriors* and *Spurs* have finished atop the standings –despite struggles last month without

Durant on the *Warriors'* front, the *76ers* are still playing for lottery picks, and the *Knicks* are still an utter mess. Not everything this season was to be expected; however, such as the *Cavaliers'* disappointing regular season in which they lost the first seed to my *Boston Celtics*, or the trade that sent Boogie Cousins from the *Sacramento Kings* to the *New Orleans Pelicans* on *All-Star Weekend*. But the most surprising storylines come from two former teammates – Russell Westbrook and James Harden.

These two superstars have accomplished what no one thought would happen in the same season. Harden finished his season with the most triple doubles in a single season with 21, only surpassed by his buddy Russ, who had a staggering 42—more than half the games in a season and the most ever in a season, besting Oscar Robertson's record of 41. The *NBA* Community never saw even one performance of this caliber to happen any

time soon in one season, let alone two. And it makes the *MVP* voting that much more difficult. Sure, they both are having amazing seasons, but I believe one completely runs away with the award.

Russell Westbrook is without a doubt the *Most Valuable Player*. Obviously, if it were any other season, my pick would be the Beard, but you can't ignore what Russ did this season. He averaged 31.6 points per game, 10.4 assists, and 10.7 rebounds, versus Harden's 29.1 points, 11.2 assists, and 8.1 rebounds.



Why am I in favor of Russ? My answer is that Russell Westbrook is the team, period. Without Westbrook's triple doubles, the *Thunder* are a measly 15-26; with the triple doubles, they are 33-9. Sure, you can argue he takes too many shots, but he still is third in the league in dimes while also winning the scoring title, which is something Carmelo Anthony and Kevin

Durant can't say because they scored and scored only. Yes, James Harden leads the league in the assists department, but Westbrook is still third while being in the top-ten in rebounds as a POINT GUARD. Westbrook even leads his team in three statistical categories: the aforementioned points, rebounds and assists, but also steals, as opposed to Harden in points and assists.

I'm not trying to undermine Harden's season because everything he's done has been fantastic and would absolutely be deserving of *MVP* recognition, and it's really hard to downplay his accomplishments even when comparing them to better ones. But my stance remains – Russell Westbrook

should be the *Most Valuable Player*. He watched his best friend KD win in 2014, and ever since his departure to the *Golden State Warriors*, Russ has remained loyal to Oklahoma City and in-turn has played his heart out. Now, NBA fans across the world will have the privilege of watching Harden take on Westbrook in their first-round playoff series. No, I do not think the *MVP* should be determined by the outcome of the series, but I do think the better team will win – the *Houston Rockets* – because though Russ may have had the best individual season of any player in a long time, he can't carry his team alone.



## The Wildfire

### Jaimmie Sublet

It was a nice warm sunny day. My husband, the kids and I were making breakfast, listening to music, and having some laughs when our phones went off with loud beeps around 8:30am. I looked at my phone to see there was a wild fire nearby and that we may have to evacuate and be ready if needed. My heart dropped as I have never in my life gone through something scary like this. As my husband was trying to keep me calm, we came up with a plan as what we needed to do just in case we had to leave.

Around 8:45, we finished eating quickly and started packing all our very important belongings into our car and truck. It was so scary to see the fire coming our way. The wind was very strong that day and it made the fire spread fast. We could hear the tire factory go up in flames. The sky was filled with black smoke. They had airplanes going back and forth dropping water on the fire and planes dropping lines of fire resistant powder to try and keep the fires away from the houses that it was heading for. Everyone in the neighborhood was scared and running around to gather

everything they needed. All you could see was panic in their eyes.

Around noon we were all forced to evacuate. As we all left our homes, we could see how everyone was scared with tears falling down their faces. It was by far the saddest day in my life. When we were driving down the road, we could feel the heat from the fire. Most of the roads were blocked off so the fire crews could get to the fire quicker. There were lines of cars from everyone trying to leave at once. Many people didn't even know where they were going to go. The state sets up places for people to go and places to bring your animals if needed. Thankfully we went and stayed with family in California until we got the ok to go home.

It is a four-hour drive there. I couldn't stop thinking about losing our home and everything we owned. I have never prayed in my life, but I found myself doing just that. I didn't want to go home to everything we worked hard for gone. I just looked out the window the whole time praying for the best. We stopped for dinner on the way at a restaurant where they had a TV, and of course, the news was on the fire. They called it the Red Rock fire. At this point, the fire burned thousands of acres and

a few hundred houses. They were having a lot of trouble controlling the fire since the winds were so high. We sat there in disbelief and sad that so many houses were already burned to the ground. Firefighters were even hurt and needed food, water, and help. There were fire departments from all over including other states coming to help. As we finished our dinner, we looked at each other and told ourselves at least we were alive and safe with a place to go as many people didn't.

When we reached our families home, we decided to check the news again. The fire was about 20% contained. More acres burned, more homes burned, firemen lost their lives, the sadness I felt literally made me sick. I shut the TV off as I didn't want to hear any more about it and hoped for the best outcome. We all got ready for bed and went to sleep.

It was around breakfast the next day when we got word that people in our neighborhood could return home. We all got packed back up and decided that it was time to go home. We had no idea what we were going to see on the way back. We stopped for lunch on the way. We could see smoke from the fire even though we were miles away and could smell it. The smoke was

carried over to Ca from NV from the wind. It made it very hard to breathe. There were even warnings out for the elderly and anyone with breathing problems to stay inside and out of the smoke it was so bad.

About 15 miles from home we could see all the land around us was burnt. Trees were completely black and roads were still blocked off. Planes were still flying above dropping water and fire resistant powder. The winds died down which made it easier for them to fight the fire. The fire was than 60% contained. We could not believe when we were driving down the roads looking at nothing but houses that were once million dollar houses that were now burnt to the ground. The sight made us sick to our stomach as we came closer to our neighborhood.

When we reached our neighborhood, we were pleased to see that the firefighters did an awesome job protecting our houses. It took us a while to get to our house, but we still had a home. As we unpacked all our belongings, we knew that we had to help the families who lost their homes and the ones who still could not return home. The plan then was to figure out how we could help. My husband and I decided to go help an old man who owned a farm on the hill. We

figured that he could use all the help he could get knowing the fire was headed his way and he had a lot of animals. So, we took the truck and headed his way. It was around 6pm when we arrived to find him in pure panic trying to get cattle and other animals out of the fires path. The look in his face is something I will never forget. We told him we were there to help him and would make sure they were safe. That is when we had 4 firetrucks show up. The fire was very close and we needed to leave immediately. We had no choice now but to leave. As tears fell down my face, I felt so had for him. As we had to literally pull him out of there as he was trying to refuse to leave his home. We took him to our place with his dogs and his trailer loaded with more of his animals. We let him stay at our house until he had the ok to go home.

As we waited to hear for the ok to take him home the next day and it never came, we decided to take a drive to see if we could make it to his house. As we got closer to his house it was a very sad sight to see that his cows never got out. You could no longer see the barn that was once there. When we got closer, we realized that his house was no longer there either. To see the look and hurt on his face was the worst. By that time the fire was contained and we no longer had to worry. Needless to say, he had to go live with family until he could have his house rebuild. It was by far the worst days of my life. From then on, we always made sure we had a plan just in case we had to ever go through this again.



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Taught by Dr. Alina M. Treis.

We accept articles for this paper. Please send your articles to [atreis@mvcc.edu](mailto:atreis@mvcc.edu).

**Congratulations Graduates!!**



## **May Commencement**

Fri, May 12 at 4:00 p.m.

Utica Memorial Aud.

400 Oriskany Street West

Utica, NY 13502