

My Belief

I went through hell at St. Olaf. My first year was perilous. I thought I knew who I was, but when speaking of sanctions with a random acquaintance, I quickly found that I was “worthless.” How could I be effective in the global community if I didn’t understand the intricacies of trade? Other subjects made me feel inferior. There was so much power involved in education that I couldn’t presume that I had the ability to meet inevitable standards and expectations. Vocabularies escaped me. I had many ideas trapped inside my delicate mind because I was afraid to apply grammar to everyday situations. I blamed my emotions; thus, I thought it appropriate to blame myself.

Later, after my bi-polar diagnosis, I began to get a little reckless. Voicing my opinion became my main concern. I am who I am, God damn it. My voice got louder. I got angrier. Yet, those confusing expectations did not go away. Therefore, I was going to scream until someone noticed my intuitions. After a few brief yet lasting spectacles, it seemed as though shame was my only mediator. My inner judgments matched my fear incited by raised eyebrows or less than perfect test scores. Unfortunately, I mistook fleeting happiness for groundedness. I craved connection, but shame distanced me from my surroundings.

What happened to me? I graduated. I consider my graduation from St. Olaf as my greatest accomplishment. However, memories of the “hill” still haunt me. They shape my present conversations. My past psychosis does not allow for accurate recollections. Sometimes I cannot express myself with mere intellect. I felt so awkward

at St. Olaf. I wanted to be something more, and instead I felt as though my academic deficiencies represented my worth. I believe that people misunderstood me.

That belief extends into my global perspective. I can see how land, commodities, and family create identity through conflict. Complexity comes with simply asking for what you want. The question of worth affects diversity. As in personal affairs, shame plays a prominent role in politics. Rage ensues. When inquiring into the “evil” or “divisive” forces of the world, there will be self-examination. Charges against the “other” often place the individual at odds with their sense of self. External standards shift the individual into desperate directions. It is ok to set limits. It is ok to cry. Anger and sadness inform the individual, although they are commonly known as “unpleasant” emotions. Such orientation reveals the desire for awareness not just isolation. When I feel my tears, I want to reach out as a child to receive nutrients. When I don’t get what I want, I react. I can understand warring motivations. I want to experience healing. And so, I look at my fears cultivated on the hill, and I accept my embarrassments along with my sense of self.