

# THE CENTURY TIMES

2019 Spring Issue 2

## Living in the Margins

Press  
Humanism  
Black  
Gay  
Ex-con  
Immigrant  
Native  
Atheist  
Bi-racial  
Asian  
Hungry  
PTSD  
Womanist  
Disabled



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# Century Gets Educated on Autism

Sara Jorgensen | Staff Writer

"Helping Students with Autism Thrive: College Life on the Spectrum" took place at Century on February 21. Eric Riggensburg from the Autism Society of Minnesota visited the campus to educate people on Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and how students on the spectrum can manage it and thrive in college.

Towards the beginning of the presentation, Riggensburg defined autism. He summarized it as a disability where a person has "a lack of reciprocal social interaction skills, restricted and repetitive behaviors, and difficulty understanding nuances of communication."

Having ASD as a college student can be very overwhelming, so it is crucial that those on the spectrum have a plan for what to do. Riggensburg advises these students gather the resources they need to be successful, know where things are on campus, build and communicate with a support system and disclose what they need with their instructors and the disability services at their school.

It is important that people who aren't on the spectrum understand how to communicate with those who are. Riggensburg said that the best ways to communicate with them are to ask clarifying questions, to accept them and be nonjudgmental, and to talk about their interests.

At the end of the event, there was a panel with Riggensburg, counselor and psychology instructor Crystal de Kam, Access Center director Melissa Traxler, education instructor Christina Davis, and a student on the spectrum. During the panel, the audience asked questions about autism and what the panel suggests students with this disability do in certain situations. Some students with autism were in the audience and pitched in with some of the panel's responses and talked about their experiences in the situations mentioned.

This was a great event to have at Century since not everyone understands what autism is and how it affects college students on the spectrum. This is very important for non-spectrum students to know so they can make positive choices on how to communicate with those who are on the autistic spectrum. Hopefully more events like this will be offered at Century in the future.

*I view 'autistic' as a word for a part of how my brain works, not for a narrow set of behaviors and certainly not for a set of boundaries of a stereotype that I have to stay inside," Amanda Baggs*

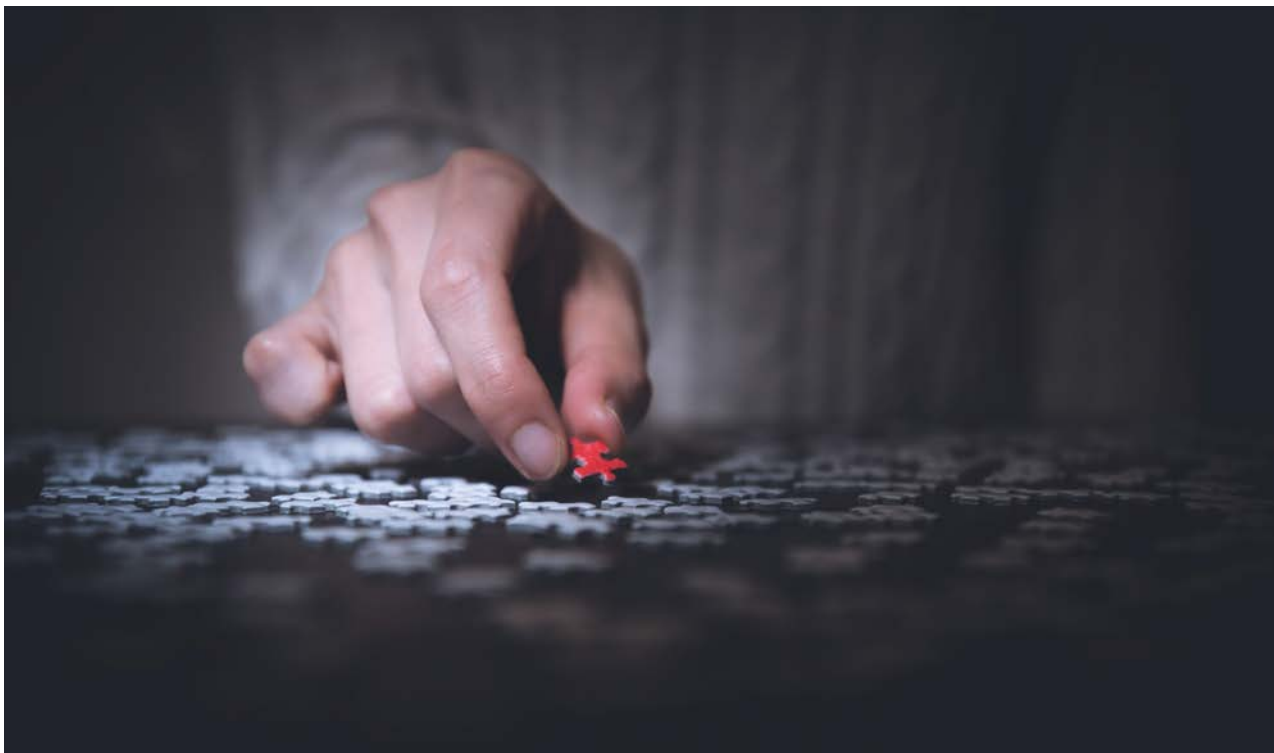


Photo by Ryoiji Iwata on Unsplash

## Mixed Chick:

### A Multi-cultural Perspective on Identity and Inter-sectionality

(Excerpt from an upcoming memoir)

Tanita Cronk| Creative Director

When I was a little girl, sometime in the second grade, I attended a Catholic private school across the street from where I lived in Saint Paul. One day during recess a couple of kids at school (white kids) came to me on the playground and called me a snow cone. Now I was confused by this; I wasn't sure what they were talking about, so I asked.

"It's because you're colored on the outside and white on the inside," one of them said. I was eight years old and not quite sure still how to feel about this, so I told my mother. She, of course, understood perfectly well and went to the school. Words were exchanged, and I put it out of my mind.

The next year, third grade at the same school, a couple of black kids approached me on the playground, and they called me an Oreo. This I understood perfectly. I changed schools, but it didn't get any easier as I was growing up.

When I look back on my childhood, this is the year that sticks out the most. This is the year that I learned that being mixed... is wrong. This is the year that I learned that my culture didn't matter, that because I was mixed I was somehow tainted- and that I didn't matter.

This was the year that while playing on a swing in Pine City, MN, where my family took me camping every weekend, the mother of a boy who climbed up on the



swing next to me told her son, "Don't play with that girl! Look at her; she's dirty." This confused me since I had just gotten there and was wearing my good "going into town clothes."

That year, I repeatedly told my teacher that he was pronouncing my name wrong. My name is an Ojibwe name. I told him, "You pronounce it Tan- ee- ta." He told me that it didn't matter; no one cared that it was Ojibwe and that I was being a stupid, foolish troublemaking little girl. In fact, there were days that he would purposefully single me out by telling the class that I was a trouble maker.



Photo by Andre Hunter on Unsplash

That year I started to notice the differences between myself, my family and the people around me. My grandparents, both on my mother's side of the family and my step mother's side, made comments in the summer about how dark my skin would get when I stayed out in the sun, so I started to wonder if I should avoid it. Now that I am older, I have finally figured out what the snickers were about when I asked for a second helping of watermelon.

As the actress, Halle Berry put it, "Being a mixed-race child, I didn't see color in people. I really didn't. It was other people that made me see the color all the time." I struggled with my identity--my skin was too

dark for white people and too "light skinned" for black people. I wondered where I fit in. It wasn't until high school when my mother signed me up for a program called Native American Education that I finally found not only a safe place to feel like I belonged, but I also found the beginning of an identity to a culture that accepted me.

As I grew older, I began to appreciate being a mixed race person more and more. Fiona Peacock, a mixed-race journalist for [healthyparenting.com](http://healthyparenting.com) says, "We all struggle with our individual identity and many people look to their cultural heritage as a way of seeking answers about who we are and where we fit in."

Now, I am able to appreciate my identity as a mixed race person. It has become a big part of who I am in all versions of myself--as a student, a parent and as a writer.

Louise Erdrich, owner of Birchbark Books and Native Arts in Minneapolis and best-selling author and poet says, "...literally there's no other way than this that I can write. I'm writing out of the mixture of cultures."

I do this also in every aspect of my life. As a student, I use my ability to communicate across cultures to learn from others and hopefully they learn a little from me as well. As a parent, I can pass on what I've learned about being mixed race to my children, and as a writer I am able to relate and emphasize more with my readers by writing down my experiences and sharing them with others.

So, even though it was a rough beginning, I appreciate being mixed raced for exactly what it is--a mixture of cultures and history.

In the words of guitarist, Slash, from Guns n' Roses, "I thank my parents for being who they are. They exposed me to environments so rich and colorful and unique that what I experienced made a permanent impression on me."



# The LGBT Experience: A Student, a Teacher, and a Parent Chime in

Cas Pilon|Staff Writer

Though they may be “hidden in the shadows,” as it were, there are many LGBT people on campus here at Century. There are LGBT teachers and LGBT students alike, and their experiences are critical to highlight in the modern world. Other voices that need to be raised up are the voices of parents of LGBT children.

As for students, I, myself, am one. I identify as a bisexual woman-loving nonbinary woman, meaning that, while I don’t identify completely as a woman, I still feel some connection to womanhood, and I’m attracted to all genders. It might be a complicated identity for some to understand, but sapphism (women loving women) has a rich history of gender nonconformity and identifying outside of binary womanhood.



Photo by Peter Hershey on Unsplash

If you were to ask what it’s like to be an LGBT student at Century, I’d be pleased to announce that it’s been going great for me so far. A lot of teachers ask my pronouns, and while I don’t always like to be that vulnerable, I think it’s a great step forward. I’ve also had many LGBT teachers, which was very comforting, as I knew I was safe in that classroom.

My interactions with fellow students have been, as a whole, respectful. I’ve never been misgendered in a class I gave my pronouns in, and nobody’s ever given me grief for being nonbinary or being into women. I’m sure there are problems here like there are in every school, but I haven’t encountered any.



Cathy Crea, a teacher at Century College, has also chimed in. Cathy identifies as bisexual, meaning she can be attracted to both her own gender and other genders. She says that she also identifies as queer, an umbrella term used quite often in the LGBT community to encompass all marginalized identities. When asked to describe what it’s like to be LGBT in the modern world, Cathy asserted that “I have a lot of privilege as a white, cisgender, gender-conforming person, so there is a lot of discrimination some LGBTQ+ folks experience that I do not.” She also states that, although she can pass as straight when she’s with a man or when people don’t know who she’s currently dating, attitudes can change when she comes



out as bisexual. In her words, “People are generally more comfortable if they can put everyone in a specific box: straight or gay. Fluidity makes many people uncomfortable.”

Regarding students’ acceptance of LGBT identities, Cathy has agreed that Century students are largely good about it, although there have been some exceptions. The same seems to be true of faculty, but again, there are exceptions, namely regarding transness and gender nonconformity. “I think our campus as a whole could use more education on trans issues and on pronouns to help

everyone feel welcome and included on campus,” she states. Cathy also thanks Max Poessnecker, Century’s Director of the LGBTQ Center, “for creating a space for conversations about LGBTQ+ issues, for educating our campus, and for bringing LGBTQ+ employees together.”

Tanita Cronk, the mother of a pansexual (a person who doesn’t care about gender) daughter, wanted to share some of her experiences with me as well. “I want to make sure that she is able to embrace all of who she is,” she said when asked what it’s like to be the mother of an LGBT child. She says that she doesn’t think of her daughter as being LGBT, just that she’s her daughter. “[A]s all parents do, I want what is best for her.” Tanita says that she hasn’t gotten flack, per se, for her daughter being who she is, but she has been asked how she was dealing with it, which angered her greatly- “This is my daughter’s identity, not an obstacle for someone to overcome,” she said.

All in all, Century College appears to be mostly a safe space for LGBT people to be who they are and not have to be afraid of pushback. As with any institution, it isn’t perfect, and there will always be homophobes and transphobes. But overall, the environment here is one that other colleges can look up to and strive to be like.

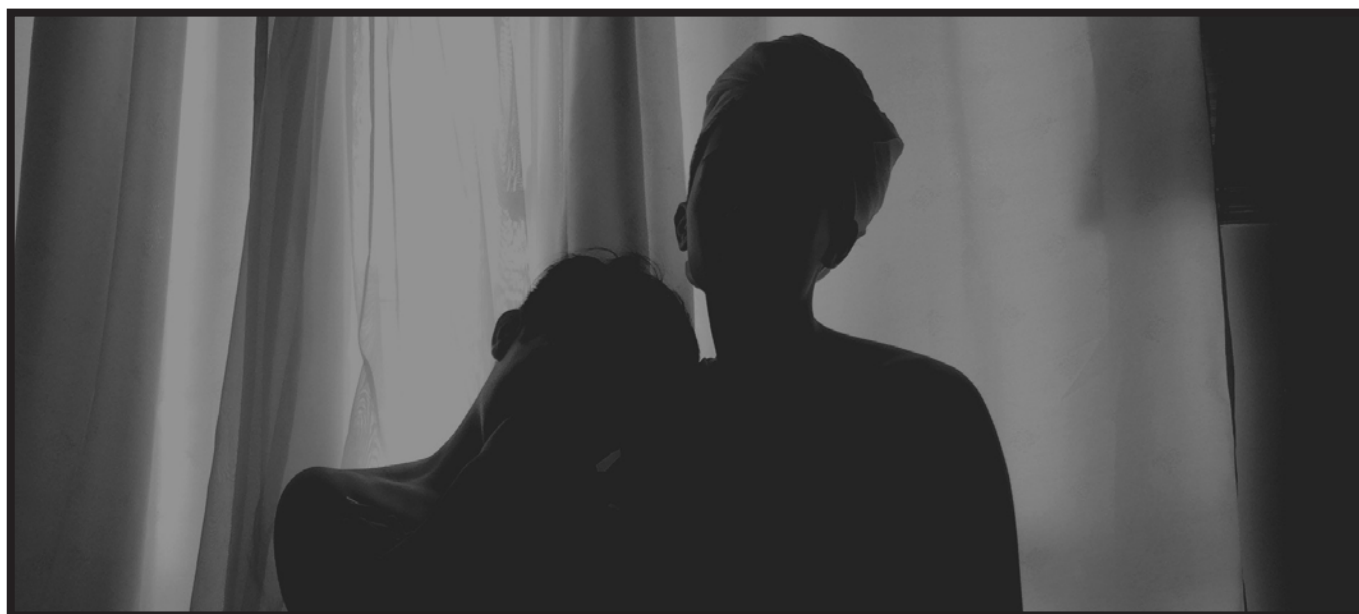


Photo by Elvin Ruiz on Unsplash



Photo by Ahmet Yalcinkayon Unsplash

## Bring Us Together Through the Art of Cinema

By Staff Manager Davis Leaf

Back in the year 1939, Hattie McDaniel became the first African-American to win an Academy Award for her role as Mammy in *Gone with the Wind*. In 1958, Miyoshi Umeki became the first, and to this day the only, Asian woman to win an acting Academy Award for her role as Katsumi Kelly in *Sayonara*. Following these wins many years later, in 2017, Rachel Morrison became the first woman, as well as the being fifth LGBTQ person to be nominated for best cinematography at the Academy Awards for her work on *Mudbound*. All of these stats attribute to the ongoing increase of diversity in American cinema. Recently, thanks to the actions of Black Lives Matter and Time's Up, popular demand has asked for Hollywood to step up their inclusivity game. There's a debate on whether or not diversity has increased in the films we watch or whether or not we're noticing it more. In either case, it's important to recognize the significance of one's work based on their ethnicity or sexuality without belittling the content.

To follow up my previous statement, let's take for example film director Ava DuVernay. In 2014, DuVernay directed the Martin Luther King biographical drama *Selma*. In doing so, she became the first black woman to earn a Golden Globe nomination and a Best Picture nomination at the Oscars. In 2016, she directed the inspiring Netflix documentary *13th* and also in doing so, earned herself a Best Documentary Feature nomination at the Oscars. That all being said, that's some impressive achievements from a black woman in America. Turn the page to her recent feature, *A Wrinkle in Time*. The film was considered less than praiseworthy by critics and moviego-

ers alike and did not meet box office expectations. Shoving all quality assurances aside, it would be unethical not to acknowledge the milestone it still achieved. Regardless of bombing at the box office, DuVernay still managed to become the first black woman to work with a production budget of over 100 million dollars. To many people, DuVernay may not have created a great film, but she has still set the bar higher than many black women have achieved in the industry. If Hattie McDaniel were alive to witness this, she would watch the film and not have a cell of disapproval in her body, but rather excitement for the doors this potentially will open for other black women in the industry.

There's no denying that film director Ang Lee has been an influential figure in Hollywood for many years now. The Taiwanese filmmaker is known for directing *Sense and Sensibility*, *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, *Brokeback Mountain*, and *Life of Pi*. Lee has some impressive features and accomplishments under his belt. The two aforementioned films both won Ang Lee a Best Director Oscar with *Brokeback Mountain* making him the first Asian to win that particular award (as well as the first person of color).

I had the pleasure of visiting Century College Professor Mike Eddy's second year filmmaking class and talking with some students about diversification and representation in cinema. These seasoned cinephiles offered not only their opinions on the inclusivity of movies in recent years, but also some well-educated suggestions for Hollywood going forward. Grant Newkirk calls for more diversity in LGBTQ com-



munity while Charles Mains suggests more “Native American films based on their heritage.” Michael Herzog added that he enjoyed the Netflix film *Roma*. He went on to add, “I want to see more movies based on cultural differences and am tired of seeing the same schlocky remakes of films. Hollywood should tackle more foreign countries in the industry or at least have more appreciation.” When asked about their favorite forms of representation, Alexander Huot mentioned – for himself. He said that “Seeing a Nazi grow a conscious and save so many Jews was hopeful.” Erica May wants to see more representation for Asians and “more recognition for women off camera.” Professor Eddy’s entire class seemed to universally agree on Jordan Peele’s recent impact on the film industry. Directing African American centered horror flicks such as *Get Out* (2017) and this year’s *Us*, Peele has reinvigorated the horror genre by adding relevant social themes that play into the suspense of his narratives. Clearly Professor Eddy has a very open-minded group of students as they have all provided plenty of suggestions for Hollywood.

I think a major demographic in cinema that is not recognized nearly enough as anyone else is those people with disabilities which that range from dyslexia to down-syndrome. A simple argument could be made that it’s unnecessary or even condescending to cater to this demographic by making it overtly known. We must remember, however, that representation is every-

thing--tasteful representation to be precise. Filmmakers should treat disabilities as commonplace, as they should be, without being exploitative or showcasing propaganda. In 2003, The Farrelly Brothers came out with a comedy called *Stuck on You* which starred Matt Damon and Greg Kinnear. The two actors played conjoined twins with different ambitions in life which served as the main premise for the film. Kinnear’s character aspired to be an actor. The film featured an actor named Ray Valliere with down syndrome who played a friend of the two twins. It was one of the most natural forms of inclusivity I’ve ever seen. Nothing about his character had to do with his disability. It’s just a beautiful (albeit underrated) film that adeptly demonstrated a form of representation.

As broad of a topic as diversity is, keeping it a part of one of our main forms of entertainment is vital. In the age we live in, no number of disingenuous attitudes or intolerant opinions will hinder the progress that we’ve made. With the biggest market in the industry being superheroes, we’re seeing the tides turn with women and people of color leading those films; inclusivity is entering a new frontier and ushering in a new generation of acceptance. I can only look forward to seeing where our movies will be with representation in the next 10 years. We must remember that as important as this progress is, treating it as the norm is absolutely essential



Photo by Omar Lopez on Unsplash

# Century's The Grapes of Wrath from an Actor's Perspective

Sara Jorgensen | Staff Writer

During the 2018-19 theater season, the Century College Theatre has put on two productions consisting of the musical, "Spring Awakening" in the fall and the play, "A Streetcar Named Desire" in the winter. This spring, they are putting together the final production of the season, which will be the play, "The Grapes of Wrath."

The play, adapted for the stage by Frank Galati, is based off of John Steinbeck's best-selling novel of the same title. It has won a Tony Award for Best Play. The story takes place during the Great Depression, starting in Oklahoma. The Joad family takes on a journey to California to find work, meeting people and experiencing hardships along the way. When they get to the camp in California where they can find work, they find out things are not what they expect them to be. "Our production of this great work is filled with sincere passion, pain, humor, and hope," says director Paul Aberasturi, "It is a play about America in the 1930's and America today."

As someone who is in this play as the camp nurse (quite ironic considering I was the nurse in "A Streetcar Named Desire") and part of the ensemble, I am able to explain what those who plan on coming to see the show should expect and what it is like being a part of it.

First off, the cast as a whole will be singing three songs, all of which are directed by composer and music faculty Shirley Mier. The songs that the cast will be singing are Dust Bowl Refugee, I Ain't Got No Home and the finale Pastures of Plenty, which are tunes by Woody Guthrie. Also, throughout the play, there will be some short folk tunes that the band will be performing. The band, consisting of a melodica, banjo, harmonica, bass, acoustic guitar and fiddle, will be performing these songs and other music on the stage. On top of these tunes, Mier also wrote music for lyrics that are already in the script. The band is going to be staying onstage for most of the show. They will be called the Traveling Musicians as they will be travelling with the Joad's from Oklahoma to California.

A very cool thing about the stage is that during the show, there will be a pit revealed front and center stage with "water". Some of the cast members will be able to go in it for some of the scenes. The water isn't actual water though; there will be a light effect that makes the pit look like there's water in there, so nobody is going to get wet when they go in it. It will be exciting to see how that looks.

My favorite part of being in the show is the square dancing that takes place when the Joad family arrives at Weed-patch Camp. I have never learned how to square dance and have been wanting to learn it for a while, so I was very excited to find out that it was in the show. I have had a great time learning the dance, and practicing singing and danc-

CENTURY COLLEGE THEATRE COMPANY PRESENTS:

**GRAPES  
OF  
WRATH**

**TICKETS:**  
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before each performance.  
For more ticket information,  
contact: BoxOffice@century.edu

April 26 - 27 at 7:30 PM  
May 1 - 4 at 7:30 PM  
Special Matinee Performance:  
May 4 at 2 PM





ing with the cast during this scene.

I read the book my junior year of high school, and to be honest, I had a hard time following along with it. Now that I am in the play, I have a newfound appreciation of the story and the messages that it shares. I have realized that these messages are relevant to people today.

"From birth to death, we spend our lives hoping. We hope for a better tomorrow. We hope for peace in our world, in our families, and in our minds," says Aberasturi, "Throughout our lives, we encounter many hardships; we witness cruelty and unfair actions inflicted upon others, and we suffer many losses of loved ones and possessions. As each of these painful moments in our lives are experienced, an instinctual self-preservation mindset emerges: HOPE. In this telling of Steinbeck's classic American novel, we meet the Joad family. Each member of the Joad family is confronted with many hardships but continues to move forward because of hope. The Grapes of Wrath can be looked at as a very sad story as we witness great wrongs being inflicted upon people because they are different, outsiders, or simply are in need of help from others. We see people who have money and power taking advantage of others who do not, just as with immigration today. However, embedded within all of these sadness, hardship, and injustice in The Grapes of Wrath lies an inspiring statement of humankind: It is only when we give up hope that there will be no possibility of making tomorrow better for one self, one's family, and our world."

Although the camp nurse and ensemble are small roles in the show, I still had a great experience being in another show at Century College. I have been able to work with some of the same people as I did when I was in "A Streetcar Named Desire" and got to work with quite a few people I haven't met prior to the show. We have been very supportive of each other, helped each other out when we were stuck on something, and shared many laughs during rehearsals. I strongly encourage everyone to come see this play. The Century College Theatre has put on lots of amazing shows in the past, and this one isn't going to be any different in this case. We have many talented cast and crew members in this show, and we don't want anybody to miss out on seeing them, especially Century students, staff, faculty and administrators since it's FREE (and who doesn't like free stuff?!). Anyone who doesn't attend nor work at Century but wants to attend can get their tickets on [www.showtix4you.com](http://www.showtix4you.com) or at the door. Students from other institutions and seniors pay \$10, and general admission is \$12. They can also make reservations by emailing the Office Box manager Paul Young at [paul.young@century.edu](mailto:paul.young@century.edu). Be sure to at least once come see us perform at the Century Theatre on April 26, 27, May 1, 2, 3 and 4 at 7:30 pm and May 4 at 2:00! Nobody will come out of the theatre regretting seeing it.

## *The Life of a Reader by Emily Egemo*

Dull grey, dark and twisted  
This world of ours isn't enough to keep us satisfied  
To fill our bellies with the things we so crave  
Adventure or action, comedy or romance, science fiction, fantasy  
Something outside of the ordinary to break us from the hundred shades of monotony

We dig books from the ashes of humanity,  
Our grubby hands tired with the effort  
Eagerly we brush off our trophies  
Greedy eyes devouring the sight of a new treasure  
Of a new life to slip into, or tag along with

Kindred spirits we offer our hearts to  
Precious and sacred to us

The black and white pages fill us with warmth  
Restocking the kindling in our hearts, breathing the tiny flames larger  
Setting our chilled souls ablaze

Like hot air balloons, we swell with the fire, the warmth  
We take it in, then take to the skies.  
Rising out of our daily lives, our heart ache, our pain

With the last page reached our flames dim  
The balloons deflate and we crash back down to earth  
To scavenge the ruin and wreckage, once more  
Bones aching, muscles sore  
We don't stop searching

It's in our veins, our blood, our very being to find a world more fantastical than our own

We know it's out there: bound in paper, painted with ink  
Alive and flourishing.

Waiting to be found, dusted off, and read.



## *The Flower by Emily Egemo*

You call me a long-stemmed flower  
A ruby red rose  
A blooming daisy

A plant  
To be cut off from my home of warm earth  
And placed into a cold, glass arena  
Filled to the max with other beautiful flowers you have plucked

Made to compete with them  
All vying to be the loveliest,  
Most graceful,  
The most important to you.  
Seeking attention and praise from the one who cut us down  
Took away our potential to grow.

You watch as I wither,  
Shrivel up.  
My slow demise for the sake of a pretty thing  
To be looked upon.

You say I'm a flower  
An object for your viewing pleasure  
Beautiful, precious, delicate

A thing- I am not.

I am a woman.  
I am not a flower.

## Increase in Karens in Minnesota & Century

Yusanat Tway | Student Submission

It was September 2007, and Ta Pay Pay and her husband Ngae Lay were awaiting to board the plane to go to the United States with her eight children. Thinking back on her childhood, she reflected on how she was a country girl born in Kayin State, Myanmar in 1971. She came from a family of twelve children that would later on be left with only five due to sickness and lack of access to hospitals. She did not attend school like the rest of her siblings. She chose to stay home helping her parents out in the farmland to earn profit even though her parents insisted that she should go. Her parents also never went to school. Everything pertaining to life was a big privilege such as education, food on the table, family, and safety. She remembered having to hide for days cramped into a hole dug by her father in the

ground when the military ravaged through the village killing, raping, stealing, and hurting the community. The land, wealth, and family she had was earned by an endless amount of sweat and tears. In her early twenties, she met the love of her life and moved to a refugee camp in Ban Mae La, Thailand, where she would again build her family with sweat and tears. Separated from her families who lived all over Burma and Thailand, she had little to rely on as her husband also left to find a source of income. Every day she woke up at four in the morning making rice noodles to sell around the village, and once every couple of months she'd take her kids to go hide in the forest when the opposing military came up to destroy everything in their path.







This was not the life she wanted her children to grow up in. There had to be more. So on September 2007, Ta Pay Pay, her husband Ngae Lay, and their eight children boarded the plane to go to the United States in hope for a brighter, safer life. Ta Pay Pay's family is part of the growing vast Karen community in Minnesota who started immigrating to the US in the early 2000's. Today more than 10,000 Karen immigrants reside in Minnesota, according to scholarly writer Koumpilova from *The Star Tribune*, compared to only 4,500 immigrants in 2012, as stated by Kathleen Lytle, a philosophy doctor from the University of Minnesota in her qualitative research about the resettlement of Karens in Minnesota.

The Karen people, pronounced (kah-ren), are an ethnic group from Southeast Asia who have their own culture, language, and lifestyle. They are the second largest ethnic group in Myanmar, comprising around 6-7 million people in that nation alone, as stated by Artem Cheprasov. Due to the ongoing civil war that has been going on for about the past

68 years and military oppression from the Burmese government, many Karens are internally displaced people (IDPs) in the surrounding areas. They are forced to run and hide in the forests when the military comes during the dry seasons to destroy villages. "Persecuted by the military government in Burma (South 2012), Karen refugees have endured systematic human rights violations including torture, extrajudicial killing, burning of villages, displacement, forced labor, and rape" (quoted in Shannon). Many have fled to Thailand to live in refugee camps along the borders as Ta Pay Pay's family had also done.

Although the refugee camps were a great help to the Karen people, life there was not promising. There was no future in education, families had to live recklessly, and the military was still able to gain access to the camps. The Karen people still lived in fear every second of their lives.

"With the implementation of the Refugee Act of 1980, a formal refugee resettlement program was created nation-wide," (Lytle). With this act created,

Karen people started immigrating to the United States in hope for a better future and safety for their families. In the early 2000's, the first group of Karen people started arriving to the United States, and continuously today. The history of the Karen immigration to the US is barely 20 years old. The Karen people are a relatively new group addition to diversity in the US community. They are an ethnic group that has barely been heard of before and are often mistaken for Koreans.

With Karen people immigrating more and more each year, the state with the biggest community of Karen people is Minnesota with about more than 10,000 Karen immigrants living here today. Why Minnesota you may ask? "Minnesota has had an active refugee resettlement program since the late 1940s following World War II, when thousands of displaced people in Europe who had no home to return to came to the United States," (Lytle). Minnesota is one of the many states, including Texas and New York, that has many immigrants, but each year as time went on, more and more Karen immigrants settled in Minnesota, and they also resettled from other states. Because so many families reside in Minnesota already, this condition causes future immigrants to settle more in Minnesota to be with family and surroundings of familiarity after all the stress from the change.

The increase of Karen immigrants coming to Minnesota comes with many effects. When Minnesotans look around, they see that there are more Karen grocery stores opening, more Karen people at events, and most importantly there are more Karens at Century. There are also more people advocating for their families back in their home country. On November 7, 2017, about 5,000 Karens went to Washington DC to hold a peaceful rally advocating for their families back in Myanmar and Thailand. "They rally to bring attention to the human rights violations towards religious and ethnic minorities in the Burma region, in front of the U.S. Capitol building" (Koumpilova). This recent event supports the trend by showing that such an event can only happen with certain amounts of people and due to the increase of the Karen immigrants.

With more conflict still occurring for the Karen people back home, that means that more are

expected to flee and come to the US. The numbers will always be going up; diversity is the new trend and Karen people are the new diversity added to the Minnesotan community.

Due to the increase of Karen immigrants in Minnesota, there is also an increase in the Karen student body at Century College. Tam La is a Karen student at Century who states that from his first year in 2015 to now he has seen a significant amount of more Karen students on campus than before. His family immigrated to the US in 2007 and came to MN because of the great government assistance provided.

The Karen students at Century College have recently established the Century Karen Club because of the significant increase in the amount of Karen students at Century throughout a couple years. It was created to educate the community about a big student body group in their community and also to share their culture and celebrations. All students are welcome to join the club, and they do not have to be Karen. Members meet every Thursday from 3-4 and work on teambuilding and connections with each other. They have so far partnered with the Karen Organization of Minnesota whose mission statement is *enhancing the quality of life for all refugees from Burma in Minnesota* to work together for student and community services. They plan on having sessions and meetings to teach about the Karen history, culture, and language.



Staff Photo



## A Native Student's Legacy

Tanita Cronk| Creative Director Emeritus| The Century Times

As a Century College student and a Native student, I wondered if there was some way that I could help others find a way to learn a little bit more about Native culture. I wanted to find a way to promote cultural awareness, and to help others give some respect to the Native community and to raise cultural competency. I have found a way. I decided to write this article after many lengthy discussions with friends, family, professors, co-workers and classmates about word choice. Words have power; they are what let me share my stories with you. They help me write essays, articles and poetry about change. Words give me strength to write this article right now about something else words can do--they can hurt. The words and phrases that we choose to use can also demean, devalue, trivialize and erase entire cultures. I have decided to take a stand against this use of words; which is why I am writing this article.

I grew up in a multicultural home, one that tried to let me discover and embrace all aspects of myself (at least my mother did.) And as I grew up I did learn to do this, but something else I learned was that my Native culture is learning with me. Cultures, traditions, and ways of life are being relearned by communities

of people that are historically traumatized because of forced assimilation, genocide and the power of the government. Today, the Native American people are the only people whose culture is socially acceptable to appropriate and offend. In this article you will find a handful of examples of this behavior and hopefully learn a little bit in the process.

- 1) Words that trivialize and devalue: do a rain dance, let's have a pow-wow, what is your spirit animal, low man on the totem pole, hey chief.
- 2) Anything that starts with Indian- giver, burn, time, summer (In fact, just like you would ask someone their pronoun ask if they even want to be called Indian. Some prefer Native American, Indigenous or American Indian).
- 3) Historically offensive language- circle the wagons, hold down the fort, off the reservation, savage.
- 4) The denial and erasure- Columbus references, we're all immigrants, using past tenses when talking about Natives, claiming you are a 1/16 Cherokee Princess, referring to Native or Indigenous people as ancient civilizations.
- 5) Last but not least (What kind, enrolled, casino money.... Get over it)

Last thoughts--you may be wondering why I gave you no explanation for this list, no reason and no definitions. You may look at it and say to yourself



Tanita celebrates her Creative Writing Certificate with professors Ruth Wollersheim and Amy Fladaboe (photo credit: Dennis Cronk)

"Oh, wow, I never knew that!" or it may just make you think twice. And here you find the true importance of your words. Why word choice matters...

Here are some ways in which you can help raise awareness and things you can do to increase cultural competency.

Ask questions. When you hear something, say something. If you are someone reading this that has privilege, use it! Privilege comes in many forms and if you have it use it.

Decolonize your thinking--indigenize, revolutionize, and most importantly, remember we exist.

# Festival of Nations: A Student Celebration of Diversity

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# USING GENDER INCLUSIVE PRONOUNS

Common Personal Pronouns:  
She/Her, They/Them, He/Him

Example of Use:  
They are a nice Person.

## TIPS:

- It's important to not assume someone's pronouns--just ask.
- Correct pronouns = respect
- Anyone can use they/them pronouns
- Personal pronouns are different from sexuality. They are words we use to describe ourselves.
- They/them pronouns are easy to use, polite, and don't assume a person's gender
- Singular they/them pronouns are grammatically correct and appropriate to use in MLA format