

FRANKLY SPEAKING

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student-run news
source.

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FREE, AS IN BEER

Big Island, Hawaii

Ruby Spring
Contributor

For those of you who don't know me yet, Hi, my name is Ruby. I've spent the past 7 months in Hawaii, on the Big Island. This article is about 7 of the most important months of my life, and, whoever you are, whether you're a student, staff, faculty, alumni, martian, I'm truly honored that you're reading it, and I hope you find it interesting.

I came to the Big Island in early June. A family friend of mine, Samantha Smith, world's best chef and Queen of Jank, is running a non-profit in downtown Kailua-Kona called The Edible, and I wanted to be her side-kick. The Edible is a huge, janky and beautifully remodeled cooper-tire warehouse. It has a stage with a drum-set, an industrial-sized kitchen, local art covering most of the walls, a bar, and a small outdoor area with a garden full of basil and a 2-ton wood-fire oven for making badass pizza. I lived in a loft behind the stage. The Edible has no windows, and at the time all the lights turned on from circuit breakers. At night when I had to pee, the dark reality

of climbing down from the rickety ladder and across the maze of tables, chairs, boxes, construction tools, and the occasional cockroach or centipede just so I could piss in a toilet was incomprehensible. I used a chamber-pot.

"I spent 3 months as a welder on a construction crew, building transitional housing units out of shipping containers."

The Edible is a beautiful place with a beautiful dream, but unfortunately it turned out Samantha and I work horribly together. I ended up mostly being the resident bum, doing dishes and sweeping a lot in an attempt to offset my guilt. The human condition pressed me to do something useful with my time, and after a couple weeks of searching I found a local welding job that didn't conflict too much with my ethics. I spent 3 months as

a welder on a construction crew, building transitional housing units out of shipping containers. 8 hours a day 4 days a week in full-welding gear, in 98° weather inside or on top of shipping containers. It was the hardest work I've ever done, and not just physically. I was the only female on the crew, and the smallest person by about 150 pounds. I had very little in common with any of them, but, finding absurdity and humor in our differences, we found common ground in the universal language of laughter. I scolded them for eating fast-food and drinking out of disposable plastic water bottles, and they teased me for asking them to carry my welder up the ladder.

Welding is not easy as a woman, especially on the Big Island, where the population of women is small and mostly regarded as unskilled. It was difficult to find adequate clothing and boots (I found sturdy pants in the boys section at target, the local boot shop had 50 options for men and none for women). Surprise was the least irritating response I got when telling people I was a welder. One man said "Oh, well, welding

continued on next page

isn't that hard."

Until I came to the Big Island, I had never experienced significant sexual discrimination, harassment, or inappropriate behavior from men. On the Big Island, it happened a lot. And I'm not talking about strangers telling you you're beautiful, or cat-calls, or bad pick-up lines (that happened a lot too, but I don't mind that kind of stuff, and sometimes it's even fun). Against my consent, I've had liquids slowly drizzled into my open mouth at a bar, been squeezed and kissed sloppily on both cheeks by an alcoholic with too much saliva, and been asked by a 50- something-year-old man standing over my bed if he could please sleep with me, he missed his wife, he was lonely, and I was hot. I learned how to say 'no', a deceptively simple word that becomes very hard to say when you're feeling vulnerable.

"Until I came to the Big Island, I had never experienced significant sexual discrimination, harassment, or inappropriate behavior from men."

Meanwhile at The Edible we were holding open mic/jam sessions every Sunday

in the hopes of cultivating a house band. For the most part these sessions attracted mediocre guitarists looking for a place to butcher covers, but a few interesting people came too. I befriended a grizzled saxophone-playing intellectual hippie farmer named John Biloon, and through him I met a lot of other farmers and farm workers who lived south of Kailua-Kona. When my welding job ended, I said goodbye to The Edible, bought a \$1200 blue van named Venus the Voyager (yeah, I just found out Venus isn't blue) and moved to an off-the-grid shack in the jungle near John Biloon's farm. There I picked coffee, harvested micro-greens, lulo, jack-friut, roulinia, soursop, bananas, and pineapples, and happily lived out the rest of my days in Hawaii sans electricity, potable water, and guilt. The End.

But wait, what about lessons? Aren't there supposed to be lessons from LOAs? Go learn your own lessons, human. No matter where you go and what you do there will always be lessons. Don't fall prey to the common belief that the best lessons to be learned are found in schools and jobs. You absolutely do not need to have an engineering internship every summer while you're at Olin, and don't let anyone tell you otherwise. There's a whole universe of skills, insights, mistakes, adventures, and discoveries to be made outside the tiny world of engineering, and I highly encourage you to fuck the

risks and try it out. And I'm not alone in this encouragement: there are a multitude of Olin students, alumni, and professors who've travelled, worked outside their field, or moved away from engineering entirely. Not because they failed, or because of unfortunate situations, but by thoughtful choice.

"I highly encourage you to fuck the risks and try it out. And I'm not alone in this encouragement."

As for myself, I bought a one-way ticket to the land of rainbows and rain with not much of a plan but to see what would happen. A lot happened and I've changed a lot. I care much less about engineering and technology. I value independence more and socializing less. I've developed a fondness for headlamps and candles. Equality lies in appreciating difference, not seeking similarity. Plants are way cooler than they used to be, and plastic is still the ultimate enemy. No, maybe money is. Whatever. I'm done writing this article. If you have any questions, wanna talk about technology, art, music, relationship anarchy, welding, anything else, or simply wanna meet me, my door's always open and I care much more about talking to you than doing my school assignments.

Keeping My Promise

Su Min Jang

Contributor

In memory of my friend

I still don't know the last of his last day.

I might, forever, want to know the last of his last day.

Nevertheless,

I wish he was loved with sincerity,

Regrets his decision,

Never had the short end of the stick,

Didn't leave in the pain of being evilly envied,

Knew how much we loved him.

I wish his last weekend wasn't a lonely one.

For the star that'd forever be shining in Princeton, I write in the words of prayer...

Death is such a heavy word. Someone once told me love is a heavy word, but that was before I felt the loss of a loved one. I could reject a bad love, but with death, I had no choice but to accept it. It feels like you'd be living in Princeton forever, surrounded by fellow "Princetonians" you loved, busking every weekend in front of the fancy school buildings that don't exist at Olin, and posting sweaty soccer pictures wearing the proud orange P on your chest.

I was eating a burger at Dunn-Gaherin's with my friends the night you left. I called you an asshole as a joke for going to an Ivy League school, being on tv shows, singing like Freddie Mercury, and being goddamn handsome on top of all of that. I couldn't feel more stupid thinking that was the last thing I said about you, thought of you as. As much as the handsome perfect asshole you were, thanks to you, I won't ever be singing the Bohemian Rhapsody as a joke. It was your favorite, thus it will hurt for all those that loved you.

Although this is not what I thought I'd be writing about, here's to our promise that one day I'd take your word for it and try publishing anything on anywhere. I will always love you. Till I see your beautiful smile again, rest in peace.

SERV Activity Update

Kelly Brennan and Justin Kunimune

Contributor

The Daily Table: Emily Yeh

Daily Table is a nonprofit organization that makes affordable and healthy food available to people with low incomes. A group from Olin volunteers at Daily Table every Saturday (time TBD). If you're interested, keep an eye out for an email to Carpe with more information!

Big Brothers Big Sisters

College Campus Program:

Big Brothers Big Sisters resumed its outings this week.

Bigs will continue to meet with their Littles every 1 to 2 weeks throughout the semester

Charles River Center:

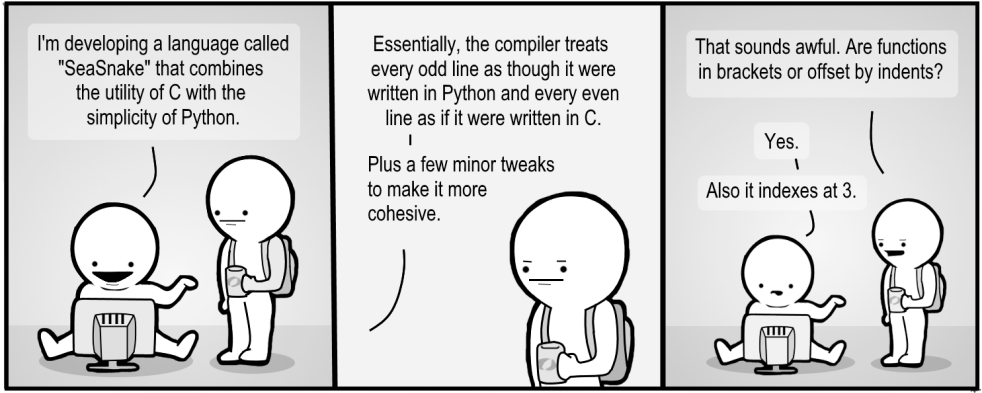
The Charles River Center is a non-profit organization based in Needham that works to improve the lives of people with developmental disabilities and help support their families. They have a

variety of different programs for people of all ages

E-Disco: Micaela Chiang, Daniel Daughterly, Lauren Pudvan, Nicole Schubert

E-Disco has begun planning events for this semester. We started our monthly lessons at Schofield Elementary school. The theme for this past lesson was time travel! The students made Sumerian cuneiform name tags, learned morse code, and made skyscrapers.

IMPOSTER SYNDROME



Fight Ignorance. Learn.

Kelsey Breseman
Alumnus Contributor

I've heard the word "ignorant" used a lot in frustration toward 2016's election. People throw their hands up: how do you fix ignorance?

Activism is local. Make it really local: educate yourself. Find an issue you don't know a lot about, and then find a way to learn more. Maybe you know a lot about feminist issues, but not much about racial justice. Maybe you know about environmentalism, but not trans rights, or what it feels like to be an immigrant.

Find your own weaknesses and confront them. There are lots of ways to research and learn. Personally, I rely on two main sources: feeds, and books.

Justice Education Through Feeds

I get a lot of my ongoing social justice education through sources I stumble across and add to my feed

reader. Two consistent sources I love:

- Personal essays on disability in the New York Times

- Intersectional feminism & personal discussion of being trans*, queer, and polyamorous by Robot Hugs (excuse the clickbait titles added by the publisher— I subscribe to robot-hugs.com, which includes the artist's comics on these topics and others, such as cats)

Another good source is people on Twitter who are active in native rights, racial justice, penal issues, etc. . If you know of great sources, please let me know!

Seeking Perspective in Books

Books are, and always have been, my mainstay. Long-form writing lets authors show you a world— whether that's fantasy, history, or personal truth. Walk a few hundred pages in someone else's shoes.

There are some great

reading challenges going around.

Ashe Dryden's "Unpresidential" reading challenge highlights a marginalized group for each month of the year

The #DiversityBingo2017 card (shown right) is all over Twitter right now as people suggest or declare books for each category.

The basic idea is to expand your worldview by listening to a perspective you don't usually hear.

Is this enough?

Of course not. Educating yourself is a really good idea, and it does fight ignorance. But it's not enough by itself. Here's what it does:

Educating yourself— every day— keeps these issues on the top of your mind. If you build empathy education into your routines, you'll think about these issues. You'll talk about them.

Education shapes thought; thought shapes action. It's a start.

USE THE HASHTAG
#diversitybingo2017
SO WE KNOW YOU'RE PARTICIPATING
(HAVE FUN!)

THE GOAL IS TO COVER ALL THE SQUARES WITHIN THE
COURSE OF A YEAR!
@novelparadise @headinherbooks
@thesebooklions @thebooksbuzz
@rhaegardied @ohbrekker @aimalfarooq
@bookwormwanders @theauslibrary

WE ENCOURAGE YOU TO READ OWN VOICES/DIVERSE
AUTHORS FOR ALL OF THESE PROMPTS!!!

CREATED BY

DIVERSITY BINGO 2017

ROMANCE W/ A TRANS MC	NON-BINARY MC (OWN VOICES)	SFF W/ DISABLED MC	PRACTICING JEWISH MC	INDIAN MC (OWN VOICES)	DISPLACED MC
MC W/ AN UNDER- REPRESENTED BODY	NEURO-DIVERSE MC (OWN VOICES)	RETELLING W/ MC BELONGING TO LGBTQIA+	BISEXUAL MC (OWN VOICES)	MC WITH AN INVISIBLE DISABILITY	MC W/ ANAPHYLACTIC ALLERGY
MC OF COLOR IN SFF	OWN VOICES LATINX MC	FREE CHOICE	NON- WESTERN (REAL WORLD) SETTING	OWN VOICES	MC WITH CHRONIC PAIN
WEST ASIAN SETTING	ARAB MC (OWN VOICES)	MC W/ WHEEL- CHAIR	BOOK BY AUTHOR OF COLOR	BIRACIAL MC (OWN VOICES)	PANSEXUAL MC (OWN VOICES)
BLACK MC (OWN VOICES)	MC ON THE ACE SPECTRUM (OWN VOICES)	LGBTQIA+ MC OF COLOR	VISUALLY IMPAIRED MC	BOOK SET IN CENTRAL AMERICA	CONTEMPORARY WORLD ARRANGED MARRIAGE
INDIGENOUS MC (OWN VOICES)	DIVERSE NON-FICTION	POC ON THE COVER	D/DEAF/ HARD OF HEARING MC	IMMIGRANT OR REFUGEE MC	HIJABI MC (OWN VOICES)

Disability is . . .

Charlie Mouton
Contributor

Disability is the rebellion against normalcy, intentional or not. To exist outside the thin frame of defined 'normalcy' and demand equal treatment is a challenge to the entire concept of normal. It is acceptable to reside outside of normal as long as you are striving to lessen this gap. To exist outside of normal happily is a front, an offense against those who have worked for their entire lives to be seen as normal.

"Society disables these individuals due to its inflexibility and unwillingness to consider these less frequent but equally important cases when design infrastructure or products."

Disability is a social and political construct. Before entering Investigating Normal, I believed that a person could only be disabled by some event that occurred in their past, or some ongoing condition. It had never occurred to me that, in fact, it was society that disables these individuals due to its

inflexibility and unwillingness to consider these less frequent but equally important cases when designing infrastructure or products. The only thing preventing a wheelchair user from entering a 1-step doorway is the designer who decided that the 1-step was necessary, but did not create a system for a wheelchair user to ascend easily.

Disability is the reminder that we are all fragile, temporary beings on this planet. Humanity collectively believes that it is immortal. Many individuals go through their day-to-day lives believing the same. They see others around them playing along and create a personal reality where there is always a tomorrow and there a few barriers to growth and happiness. However, the sight of a disabled person creates an unease within that person that is not easily sourced. I believe that one source of this discomfort is the inability to ignore the fragility of the human body; the inability to ignore the inevitability of breakdown, death, and decay that we will all one day experience. It is this flag that causes some aspect of this discomfort, and many people come to believe that this person must live a miserable life being reminded of this end everyday.

However, Disability is not a pitiful existence. Disability is only a different way of experiencing the world. As Alice Sheppard, an artist/

dancer who happens to be a wheelchair user described during her talk on her experience, many of us will never experience a wheeled existence. Many of us seek out wheeled transportation, as thrill or efficiency. She lives it. She feels every push, every bump. She is much more in-tune with the force of gravity, with the texture of the ground. She knows many feelings that walking people will never experience. There is nothing wrong with Alice's existence. It is only different.

"Disability is the reminder that we are all fragile, temporary beings on this planet."

Disability is up for debate. I remember some of discussions that arose after the last time we were asked to define what "Disability is..." , as well as the readings around Alison Kafer's Feminist, Queer, Crip, where we could discuss in-depth what disability could mean. This was another 'woah' moment for me. Disability went from a medical definition, to a socio-political one, then broadened to a unformed, personal definition. I am excited to exit Investigating Normal without a single formed definition. I am excited to engage more and continue to morph my outlook on these ideas.

Horoscopes by Drunk Editors

Aquarius (Jan. 20 – Feb. 18): Your most productive time of day for the next 8 weeks will be between 3:14 AM and 12:01 PM. Try to schedule all of your meetings and get all of your homework done during these hours. So what if your significant other is trying to sleep?

Pisces (Feb. 19 – March 20): The world is going to try and make you feel bad for being single. Guess what? You don't have to spend hundreds of dollars on flowers and chocolate and fancy dinner and gifts that your significant other wouldn't really care about anyway. Take all that extra cash and go have some fun.

Aries (March 21 – April 19): Your best friend is going to try and make you feel bad for not being single. They wish things could go back to how they were before you "fell in love." Pity them, but then remember you're in a very happy and loving relationship and go have a good Valentine's Day.

Taurus (April 20 – May 20): It has been said that diamonds are a girl's best friend, that the only way to show a woman that you love her is with a million karat rock that's at least three month's salary. Why

does it seem like everything about love always comes back to money? Are we really that shallow?

Gemini (May 21 – June 20): According to legend, St. Valentine was executed shortly after healing the daughter of his jailor and writing her a letter signed, "Your Valentine." That's a happy an uplifting message: do something nice for your tormentor, and you'll still die. Happy Bloody Valentine's Day.

Cancer (June 21 – July 22): You should inform Taurus that yes, we are really that shallow. Ten thousand years ago a declaration of love may have been getting to eat the first bite of wooly mammoth brain. Now it's a shiny rock and a mortgage.

Leo (July 23 – Aug. 22): Roses are red,
Violets are blue,
I didn't know you were severely allergic to chocolate!
What- what do I do?

Virgo (Aug. 23 – Sept. 22): Greek gods and goddesses used to put their dead lovers in the stars for the world to see. What have you honestly done that's even half that impressive?

Libra (Sept. 23 – Oct. 22): This holiday is arguably more red-centric than Christmas. Starbucks will probably have blue cups just for the 14th. Let's not read into it too much, ok?

Scorpio (Oct. 23 – Nov. 21): Do you remember when you used to be required to make a valentine for everyone in your class, and at the end of the day you walk out of school with a box of candy and maybe a single mass produced card stock character valentine that your crush had written both of your names on? Ah, those were the days.

Sagittarius (Nov. 22 – Dec. 21): The 14th is on a Tuesday. Let's see what the most romantic thing you can come up with when you and your significant other both don't have weekend Wednesday is. Please remember: be safe, be respectful.

Capricorn (Dec. 22 – Jan. 19): Can you imagine being dumped on February 13th? I can't think of anything more painful. Thankfully, stores are normally only sold out of chocolate and roses this time of year; pints of Ben & Jerry's might actually even be discounted because the shop owners feel bad for you.

Out of the Ashes

Leon Lam
Contributor

The following is another installation of Out of the Ashes; however, instead of Chapter 8, this is part of a series of interludes. Interludes 1 and 2 were published on Carpe and can also be found on franklyspeaking-news.com.

Interlude 1 recounted the protagonist's first kill during the war between Imvarr and the Clansmen. Interlude 2 depicted the same war from a clansman's point of view.

Interlude 3

The camp is noisy as usual. Soldiers joke and swap stories as they dine, breaking out into sporadic bursts of laughter. They make merry with a quiet desperation, the melodies of a dozen songs unspooling into the night sky – songs of home, of lovers and family awaiting the victorious soldier's return.

The songs are familiar but irrelevant – nothing awaits you back in the Tower. Nothing save another mission and old memories, best forgotten.

Metal clanks on metal as some soldiers maintain their gear; sharpening swords and spears, tightening straps on shields, polishing armor till it gleams softly in the firelight. A young man scribbles on grubby parchment with borrowed quill and ink, tongue sticking out as he works on a home-bound letter.

To whom? You wonder. A parent? A sibling? A friend? A lover?

He breaks into a grin as one of his comrades yells encouragement and pats him on the back, and you realize he can't be older than eighteen—

The cost of victory is always death, you think. The tiniest of sparks – disagreement over gods, money, land, I know not which – ignites the fires of war, and we are all burned...

But it matters not why we fight – there is no righteous cause capable of stopping an arrow or turning a blade aside, no justice that can put a man's blood and entrails back in him as he writhes in the mud.

Men and women embrace under the night sky, heedless of discipline or consequence – there are rules against fraternization, but tonight no regulation will be enforced.

Let them find comfort, you think to yourself. Nobody will begrudge a little joy before the horror; a little calm before the storm. There will be no joy or calm tomorrow.

You've seen the reports. The invaders are converging in hordes – archers on sturdy horses, lancers on armored stallions, infantry and mages... Castle Rubinsk is small, but its position atop a hill overlooking the Volgrad's waters has made it a thorn in the side of the plainsmen for the past months. Now sixty thousand of them are descending on the province to

pluck it out.

Rubinsk's fields are heavy with golden wheat, but there are no farmers for the harvest here. Only soldiers. *Gold will soon become red, you think. Lord-Commander Reynar has made his intentions clear.*

~~

You feel a tension in the air when you wake – a heady mix of alertness and apprehension of men and women preparing for battle. Patrols tramp past your tent as you dress and don your armor, and the ever-present murmuring of soldiers has faded to silence.

The enemy is here.

Soldiers and horsemen pour from the camp's wooden palisades in steel rivers, standard-bearers calling out a marching cadence. Spears and swords gleam in the morning sun as the First Army maneuvers into position, the very earth trembling under the thunder of boot and hoof as you fall in alongside a column of pikemen.

How many will die today? How many men and women will fall to sword or lance or arrow, never to see another dawn?

Forty thousand of Imvarr's finest soldiers stand ready to repel the invading plainsmen, but you're not sure if they'll be enough. The Lord-Commander's strategy is unconventional – his infantry has been divided into homogenous blocks

of a thousand men, each a miniature army capable of fighting on when encircled. Mounted archers equipped with stronger bows will beat the plainsmen at their own game, and the heavy cavalry will be held in reserve for a decisive hammer-blow...

But the Second Army paid a heavy price for underestimating the swiftness of the plainsmen's horses and the deadliness of their arrows. *If the infantry folds too quickly or our mounted archers fail... we lose everything.*

Ten thousand Imvarri and two of your Order gave their lives last summer, pierced by arrows and butchered by scimitars. *Krakov was a grievous loss that will take years to replace, you were told. Failure at Rubinsk is unacceptable.*

It will be different this time, you tell yourself, standing at the head of a thousand men on the left flank. We will prevail. Reynar has more soldiers, more horsemen, more Knights. Twenty of your kind – the finest warriors of your Order – have been assigned to his command. A huge risk to take, but the plainsmen must be stopped.

Lord-Commander Reynar and his personal guard make their way to the front of the army on horseback. One of his companions makes a gesture with her hands, and Reynar's voice echoes like thunder.

"Men and women of Imvarr! The Great Khan is on his way here as we speak – he leads forty thousand of

the savages on their damned ponies, with twenty thousand more on foot. The horsefuckers seem to have taken a liking to fair Rubinsk," the Lord-Commander booms. "I say we *bury them here.*"

A roar rises from thousands of throats, going on and on like the crashing of waves, and Lord-Commander Reynar waits for it to subside.

"They have the advantage of numbers, but I have faith in Imvarri steel! Not just the swords and spears and arrows which will soon be tasting the enemy's blood, but your training, your discipline, and your bravery. Hold firm, follow orders, and fight well. That is all." Another cheer from the army, and the Lord-Commander and his entourage take their place at the center.

A fine speech, you think. But words mean nothing on the battlefield. Steel will decide.

~

The First Army advances across the plains, halting on Reynar's command – blocks of men arranged in a checkerboard formation, loose enough to minimize damage from arrows but close enough to support each other.

You feel the army's tension again, stronger than before. Soldiers shift uneasily in their armor, resting man-high shields in the mud. Archers plant bundles of arrows into the dirt, and mages begin pulling defensive walls from the ground.

Then—

A sharp intake of breath as the plainsmen's first banners crest a distant hill. "Here they come," someone mutters, and you hear faint clanks as the soldiers' fidgeting becomes more pronounced.

Then the horde comes into view – a dark stain of men and horses that bleeds across the golden hills. From this distance they look like ants swarming from a disturbed nest, united in violent purpose.

"God preserve us," another soldier whispers. *"There's so many of them."* As the plainsmen gallop towards you, murmurs break out in the ranks – half-hearted jokes, promises, prayers for salvation...

You draw your sword and take a few steps forward, leaving the First Army's front line behind. And as the light of the morning sun bathes you in warmth...

You raise your sword, its blade a sliver of golden radiance against the blue sky, and out of the corner of your eye you can see your fellows doing the same.

"**IMVARR,**" you shout, and forty thousand soldiers take up the call.

~

"We stood across the battlefield, him and me, gambling the fate of two peoples on the events of one afternoon.

I won."

– Lord-Commander Reynar

A Longer Explanation

Jayce Chow
Editor

What follows is another tale of a student who took an LOA and wasn't working for a fancy engineering company.

I try not to publish my own personal stuff on Frankly Speaking and that's just my own weird thing. I'm not sure at what point I'm oversharing or just talking about stuff that no one really wants to read.

But when people ask me "how was your LOA" or "what did you do for your LOA," in most cases, I don't really want to get into explaining exactly what I did, either because I don't have time to sit down and walk through the process or because I know that they'll just be like "oh, cool" without really knowing what I'm saying. I say that it was good and that I took some AHS classes. Sometimes I'll even include that my parents moved and I had to build a steel cable fence around the entire perimeter of the yard. But I stop there, and I've finally realized I'm not doing justice to the last 8 months of my life.

My name is Jayce Chow. I'm 22 years old, I'm a junior majoring in Mechanical Engineering, and I'm a transgender man.

For those of you that don't know, transgender is the term for when you don't feel like your gender (typically man or woman) is aligned with

your sex (male, female, intersex). In my case, I'm female by birth but feel like a man. Many trans people socially transition by dressing differently, going by a different name or pronoun, and physically transition through hormone replacement therapy (HRT) and/or surgery. One thing to note is that none of these changes are required for someone to be trans.

"My name is Jayce Chow. I'm 22 years old, I'm a junior majoring in Mechanical Engineering, and I'm a transgender man."

I began socially transitioning the summer following my freshman year. I sent out a school wide email letting everyone here know what was going on, asking them to use a different name and different pronouns. (For those that are curious, there was no problem with the name, but humans are remarkably steadfast in their pronoun usage).

Anyway, on to the LOA. By March last year, 6 months of hit or miss pronouns had really started getting to me. I began talking with an LGBT HRT clinic near my parents' house, and found out that

they would need me to be frequently available for various blood tests over the course of a 6 month period. That ruled out starting hormones over the summer.

And so it was in a hotel room in Seattle that I called my mom and asked how she would feel about housing me for the summer and then some.

That was the plan. Go home, hopefully be able to start hormones. But I'm also very old for my grade and wanted to graduate before I was 24 (I started preschool a year late because my mom thought I was too antisocial, and I got waitlisted at Olin and took a gap year). The solution was to take summer classes.

Thankfully, one of the colleges near my house had a decent set of summer classes. I took Intro to: Intellectual Property Law, Children's Book Illustration, History of Children's Literature, Writing for the YA Reader, Screenwriting, and Creative Writing. I even got my AHS concentration out of it.

While taking these classes, I was cleared to begin hormone therapy. That involves injecting .5mL of "depo-testosterone" into a muscle in my thigh every week. Testosterone can change the pitch of your voice, metabolism, body fat distribution, body and facial hair, blood pressure, head hair, and mood. Any and all of these are fairly arbitrary, but most guys see some moderate improvement

in most, if not all, areas.

And it took a few months to see any changes. During that time, I was waiting for September to roll around to meet with a surgeon for a top surgery consultation. Top surgery refers to removing breast tissue from a patient's torso. This can be done as easily as lyposuctioning out a small bit of fat to a full double incision mastectomy (what I had).

This was the change that I had been looking forward to for the longest, so getting a surgery date was an incredibly happy moment. Aside from having a general fear of needles being in my veins (just needles anywhere else are fine) and my anesthesiologist telling me the anesthesia could kill me, surgery went off without a hitch. (side note: many trans men fundraise to cover the cost of top surgery because their insurance doesn't cover it. Mine does, but it's also a "disaster plan," which means that the deductible is designed for someone going through cancer and is rather high).

The feeling of not having something on my chest was incredible. And it wasn't strange for me. It didn't give me pause; I wasn't self-conscious about stand up paddle boarding with my shirt off a few weeks later.

I got to wear shirts that I had given up on for how dysphoric they made me feel. I was able to literally roll out of bed and leave the house having overslept for an appointment without having to bother to take the time

and bind my chest.

I finally physically felt like me.

The last big hurdle I crosses on my LOA was getting my name and gender legally changed. If anyone has ever experienced a legal name change, you know it's ridiculous. There is so much paperwork and so many forms, and most American citizens have 3-4 forms of identification that all have to be handled separately.

"I got through one of the strangest periods of my life, and I came out a lot happier."

Going to court and getting a form signed by a judge was easy. 3 different DMV visits because of unacceptable photocopies and the fact that their website doesn't give you actual information is hard. Getting a new passport when you can only make an appointment via phone call and the lines are perpetually busy is hard. Updating your birth certificate when you literally have to send away for the form because God forbid you print it off the Internet is hard.

But I did it. That's the biggest thing, for me. I got through one of the strangest periods of my life, and I came out a lot happier.

People still occasionally use the wrong pronouns. There are still days where I

look at my body and wish it was different. I'm still a little hesitant when there's 'guys' and 'girls' and 'me' and I don't quite know which group I'm supposed to be in.

These things will become less prominent issues as time goes on, but they'll probably always be there.

So. What did I get out of my LOA?

I got a new name. I got voice cracks, acne, and body hair. I got a new chest.

I learned that while time waits for no one, waiting for time isn't an option either. And as many middle-aged adults will tell us (though generally in regard to travel), we're not gonna have the time to do this stuff later.

I needed to get on with my life without the setbacks of my body. It only took 8 months and some make up school work. Just a really long sick day.

If you have any questions and are vehemently opposed to Google, feel free to come talk with me. I'm happy to tell you about my experiences while reminding you that I do not speak for the entire trans population.

*What I will **not** talk about: whether or not I'll have more surgery; if I'm "done" transitioning; my sexuality. Maybe someday I will, but for now, I'm happy saying that some parts of my life are private.*

Thank you for reading. I hope some of what I've said has at least caused you to think.

Science

Isn't

Truth

Zachary del Rosario
Alumnus Contributor

We're living in a time of falsehood. Between 'alternative facts' and a disturbing preponderance of fake news, the lack of common ground truth precludes productive conversation. I don't have the solution to this. But I believe a small part of the solution is understanding the logical framework for separating science from untestable, irrefutable claims. To that end, dear reader, I'd like to tell you about the philosophy of science.

If your secondary education was anything like mine, then you were probably (implicitly) lied to about science. For me, science was presented as a 'body of truth' -- equations and facts to memorize and regurgitate for the exam.

In college this view got a bit more nuanced -- the equations we worked with were good approximations in particular settings, but lacking compared to some underlying truth. My mental model of science was still one of verification though -- propose a hypothesis, then confirm it through experiment or rework if necessary. This model, however, is totally wrong.

This Verificationist perspective on science trips on a very old philosophical issue: the Problem of Induction. To illustrate -- Europeans used to believe that all swans are white. They had observed many swans, found

only white samples, and drew a generalized conclusion that all swans are white. But when they eventually explored Australia, they made a discovery which caused their theory to crumble: black swans. The problem is in thinking a theory confirmed by limited observations; a 'proven' theory purports to hold for an infinite set of cases, but experiments are necessarily limited to a finite number. How can we logically place trust in scientific theory?

"We're living in a time of falsehood."

Enter Karl Popper with his 20th century work "The Logic of Scientific Discovery", where he laid out (among other things) the idea of Falsification. He argued that science should not be conducted by attempting to prove theories true, but rather by attempting to show them to be false -- to falsify them. In this approach, a theory is never accepted as truth, but instead gains more credibility as it fails to be shown false.

Practically speaking,

why does this matter? First, it gives a logically sound formulation for doing science. Second, it allows us to separate science from 'pseudo-science'. Popper was a contemporary of Freud, and noted that Freudian Psychology was flexible enough to incorporate any new observations; Freud claimed to be able to explain any behavior of a female in terms of penis envy. This sort of theory is not falsifiable, and therefore does not deserve to be called science. A scientific theory disallows particular behaviors (e.g. perpetual motion); such a theory has some predictive capability.

Admittedly, this doesn't solve the problem of outright falsehood. If we don't agree on what observations were made, then the inferences we draw will be completely different. But understanding Falsification allows us to determine what kind of claims can be refuted, and separate out junk purporting to be science. If I've piqued your interest in the subject, I recommend both Popper's book (a dense read) and the Crash Course YouTube series on Philosophy (an absolute joy).

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