


Malik F. Coburn

"Integrated Marketing & Sustainability"

Advisor: Sara Schoonmaker

Sara Schoonmaker  3/2/15

Malik Coburn  3/2/2015

"Learning is a result of listening, which in turn leads to even better listening and attentiveness to the other person. In other words, to learn from the child, we must have empathy, and empathy grows as we learn."

- Alice Miller

Sitting in Daytime Java, where I did my first school project for my Cultural Anthropology course on ethnography, I am doing some sort of introspective-ethnographic. I am also drinking grapefruit juice — perfect for writing about the bittersweet experience of graduating. I feel my name has been established well throughout the Johnston community as well as the greater university; some good things, some not so good. The double-edged sword of life — a large realization I had, especially after being abroad. Through the many experiences that I have had, inside and outside of the classroom, I have built onto the [base] person I was in August 2011. Through it all however, I am still the same Malik F. Coburn (F is not for "fucking") but for Franklin, but I think both work.

Matriculation

the art of "moving in"

Adaptation

how I settled in

Living/learning

where I dig within

Interdisciplinarity

what the traditional folks see as a sin

how can I get a job? and why and when —

would I want to do such a thing

Kinship

becoming more than a friend — community

Frantic

but "finessing" the situation regardless

Courses

to do it how I want through consensus

or to follow the rules

Oaxaca

what I didn't initially choose

that brought about an experience I'd never lose

Bringing it back

to Redlands where a large societal aspect is — booze

Understanding

this is my life and yours

and we both choose

Rhetoric

ebonics combined with these Univers(ity)/(al) rules

Nurturing

what I saw and who I was blessed with at this school

Hailing from Chicago and its many diverse environments, it was hard to switch gears to this visually narrow environment, but this did not stop me from exploring. I often venture to new places with people I barely knew, just to see what's going on. Coming from a big city, there is a lot of exploring to do, as there is here. I had no choice but to do so, especially choosing to live in Williams Hall and be a Johnston Student extraordinaire. Two very different environments, but they meshed nonetheless through my excursions to complex to spend time with my fellow Johnston classmates of 2015. We were all going through the same things as freshmen and needed to understand each other in-and-outside of the textbook academic setting. This was often confusing and difficult to actually achieve. Understanding ambiguity, which I learned in my First Year Seminar helped out a lot. However, I had never done that much compelling work – let alone work at all in those first four months. The Johnston experience was one to never forget and to pass the message about as well.

In addition to the great students, the majority of my professors, the greats: Kerry Robles & Theresa Area, and my wonderful advisor[s]: Sara Schoonmaker & Pat Wasielewski. All of whom contribute to my lively learning experience when on campus, encouraging me to essentially “do my thing” with respect to others and community. This led to many conversations outside of class with peers and hosting themed parties and events in Johnston. I am thankful for the spaces given to me by Johnston, as I am always gathering my thoughts and hunting for the next move. It is how I reflect on living and learning; most of which happens in Bekins, where there is unlimited learning to occur. Just look at the books; the art; the people – all of which contribute; the synchronicity is real.

The U of R website states: “as a Johnston student, you’ll design your own major, forgo traditional grades, forge graduation contracts with your professors and fellow students and live among your peers in a setting built on community and consensus.” One can take classes from three different disciplines and find ways to incorporate ideals from each – empathizing with one another, but still debating – it is beautiful. Chronologically, it gets better and more in depth (even when taking breadth courses) each time.

The introduction, first semester taught me how to focus, read, write, and ask for help. I also began to understand the CAS dynamic. There’s a mixed bag of students [and sometimes faculty] whom I were often concerned about, because there was either an extreme lack of care to creativity within coursework; then those who would overdo things. The *radical inclusion* was real through experiencing these different types of classes – CAS and Johnston alike. This continued throughout the rest of my academic and social career here at the U of R. In the year of 2012, I began to understand the crowds around me: INST classes, as well as CAS courses with INST professor and advisor, Sara Schoonmaker. This year was a funny time that led me to realizing what Johnston has to offer and how I could take advantage while making the place better for everyone moving

forward. I wanted to essentially *leave no trace* (in the environmental sense), but that did not happen in the social sense. That first May term was the cherry on top to the years applying these skills to something that is engrained in me, "Teaching Kids About Race" was a *gifting* experience for me as well as those kids.

Over time, all my classes began to mesh well, with Econ and EVST, JNST and writing, and Keith Osajima gave me outlet to take with me forever: to re-evaluate [through counseling]. Marketing opened me up to the CAS spectrum of [actual] interest in courses. ECON to clean up and understand why we do the things we do as a nation, sometimes without regard to Biodiversity and understanding how to promote the effectiveness of the economic diversity as well as the earthly side. Environmental Ethics gave purpose to do so, leading to my social "filter" being essentially removed. My *radical self-expression* began to take its organic shape. This in turn, led to the study abroad program that changed many things as far as my outlook on essentially everything, that I had no intentions of doing the first time [Sophomore year], creating a *radical self-reliance* that I did not think that I was capable of.

This past semester was a rebooting stage. It was time to cap things, where I took all classes for evaluations as my parents were set on the GPA element ensuring my post-graduation success. These courses gave me freedom to exert experiential and social buildup in academic form. There were setbacks within classes, but everything worked out. I appreciate both my "advisors" - Pat and Sara for keeping me calm and building on the *de-commodification* in my spirit. I am currently finding balance and making my next moves with *immediacy* which is crazy because I feel like I care less than I ever have about academics, psyching myself out about the next move, but in a "chiller" (SoCal vocabulary) manner than I ever have. More doors have been opening up on shorter notice than ever before. I am thankful for those. Bekins Hall has been keeping me grounded, thankfully — I cannot express this enough.

The Johnston Center has given me the platform to being with people who understand this and embrace it, offering alternatives to *how we learn, individually, to create a holistic environment of those who can provide the platform of understanding for others*. Similar to a caterpillar that slowly moves and is often confused, to a butterfly that lives and fizzles out quickly (referring to time at college), but it is beautiful and can touch many people. I had to stick to this place after freshman year and have ever since.

Oaxaca as the place for my study abroad experience sort of fell into my lap. An old roommate, 2 years removed, Monty Aguilar experienced this trip and advised it, I learned many things; built on kinship amongst a very different group of individuals and became a reformed individual. Being outside of my comfort zone where I did not speak the language — fo[u]r an extended amount of time proved to be a test. Per my newfound (circa 2013) radical(s) of self-expression and self-reliance, this created bumps with the group that loosened — unlike the ones on my physical back. Every process took time: my digestive tract, Spanish immersion, and

understanding my position as a man of color in the land outside of the United States. There are countless experiences in Oaxaca that contributed to my character. Per my grad narrative, Oaxaca was not on the list, but I shot to have an experience surrounding “emphasis on sustainable and ethical lifestyles and businesses.” The ability [per my Oaxaca self-eval] to:

“Always create a comparison – sometimes loose – to integrate all of the elements together. It was easy for me to do this in writing as well with our writing reflections, where I diversified my writing skills. I am aware they did not come out clear at times – but that was because my thought process was slowly changing in-between.”

This would sometimes distract the class focus as well as make or break relationships with those in the city. Oaxaca taught me how to learn, have patience, and to just be more of myself.

My classes this past Fall gave me the opportunity to put these into place, and luckily my patience has been elevated to a new level. Group projects in academic settings and social interactions had changed. They had become more honest and brash, and the truth usually came out in a language that people could hear, or not hear (per “Day[s] of Silence” with BLACC). The social involvement along with those in academic settings helped a lot to propelling the immediacy that I now have in making the next moves. Being the co-president of BLACC (Brilliant Leaders Advocating Color Consciousness) left me with no choice as well, but to be honest, or “keep it one-hundred” as we say in Chicago. This has led me to take further control of my situations, which recently involved dropping a couple of classes that I did not need and could not focus on. So, I have more time to focus on aligning housing and work in Oakland this coming June 2015.

The rhetoric acquired through Johnston and the greater University has provided me with the platform to create and advise others' platforms to take their path, leaving a maximum impact and minimal footprint. I will continue to nurture the lessons taught in and outside of the classroom – using them in my life on a daily basis [as I do and have no choice to], they stuck like no other. I would like to send a special thanks to all of the faculty, staff, students, and the community of Redlands, who provided me with knowledge and encouraged collaboration, collectively and efficiently - constantly.

“A lot of people schemin’ – some real, some of ‘em frontin’//but I’m a big dreamer, so watch me come up with something”

- Nas

Courses

Fall 11

FS-100 39 "Next Stop: The Twilight Zone"
INST-0001 "Straight"
INST-000N 01 "Salon"
SOAN-102 01 "Intro to Cultural Anthropology"

Spring 12

CRWR-104 01 "Non-Fiction Workshop I"
INST-000H 01 "Infinity: Big #s, Ideas"
SOAN-100 02 "Intro to Sociology"
SPCH-115 01 "Business Speech"

May 12

REST 260 01 "Teaching Kids About Race"

Fall 12

BUS-369 02 "Organizational Communication" (*helping me become more concise)
CSAC-380 01 "Community Service" (Garden)
EVST-340 01 "Green Business"
REST-235 01 "Hip-Hop & Racial Politics"

Spring 13

ECON 250-01 "Principles of Microeconomics"
EVST-335 01 "Environment & Development"
INST-000E "Interdisciplinarity: Thinking through Writing"
PEAC-OFE-01 "Dynamic Fitness: Strength & Power"
REST-220-01 "Ending Oppression"

May 13

THA-260-02 "Commedia/Camera/Solo Workshops"

Fall 13

BUS-136-02 "Global Marketing"
ECON 251-02 "Principles of Macroeconomics"
EVST 230-01 "Biodiversity"
INST 079-39 IS: "Promo Intern"
PHIL-330-01 "Environmental Ethics"

Spring 14

INST-000D-01 "Integrated Semester-Oaxaca"

May 14

INST-000C-01 "Revisioning Oaxaca"

Fall 14

BUS-344-01 "Brand Management"
EVST-260-01 "Green Design"
INST-000A-01 "Senior Workshop"
INST-000E-01 "The Body in Theory"
SOAN-321-01 "Gender and Emotion"

Spring 15

EVST-360-01 "Environmental Non-Fiction"
INST-000D-01 "When Diaspora Meets Fusion"
SPAN-452-01 "Hispanic Theatre"