I stood in a front yard with my camera looking into the face of an elderly woman as she showed me her makeshift shower. The look in her face was a weary one, but it was ever-defiant and with dignity. Her eyes were small and piercing as she stared directly into the camera channeling 25 years of pain. She had no indoor plumbing, with torn plastic bags for a curtain that lined the crude piping connected to a hose. She had but one wish, that the land titles she bought from the city 25 years ago would be honored so she would be able to pass her property on to her daughter. This was Plan 3000; a neighborhood in Santa Cruz, Bolivia, and this woman's story was far too common.

My connection to the people of that city and many of the people of Bolivia was due to my own history in the United States. I often found myself marginalized by a school system that found it better to discourage Black students rather than educate them. I met Bolivians who had worked for sweeping educational reforms that affirmed the marginalized indigenous majority and sought more equity. While I had been called a nigger on more than one occasion, the kids I lived with were berated with insults of their indigenous heritage when they went to school, hearing exclamations of kollas de mierda. They elected the first indigenous president in 2005 and were conflicted between pride, the onslaught from the conservative establishment, and the need to hold their champion, Evo Morales, accountable. These were similar to my feelings as my own country sought to elect its first Black president. Overall, beyond the similar experiences we shared, in Bolivia, I found a common dedication to the advocacy of justice and equality. For as long as I can remember I have stood up for my belief in justice and equality, and, although I often had the respect of some of my peers, I often felt alone. Yet, though I could identify with their struggle, I found that the people of Plan 3000 had to struggle far more for far less. I was inspired by their courage to stand even in the face of death for things such as clean and available water, something I took for granted. Even though I looked up to them as inspirational, they looked at me as powerful, and able to help them.

This experience in Bolivia forced me to confront my own attachment to the United States and its culture. Despite the injustices I was so desperate to escape, I could not deny the country’s influence on my life, and more importantly, the privilege I enjoyed by being its citizen. Although I felt scorned or neglected at those times when I faced discrimination, the United States fundamentally shaped the beliefs that grounded my resistance to those forces of injustice. After learning about Andean philosophy, which informs much of the Bolivian culture, I realized I could not run from my past in the United States; rather, I had to embrace it.

However, I did not know I would have to put this lesson of embracing my total experience into action so quickly. Immediately upon my return to my college I was the victim of an anonymous hate crime. Someone broke into my room and sent me a message threatening to lynch me. I went from strangers in Bolivia pinching each other because Black people are good luck, to having strangers in the United States threaten me. Despite this juxtaposition, I knew that, as in Andean philosophy, one incident does not define a lifetime. The positive and negative are positioned within a greater narrative.

My greater narrative is that despite what a stranger sends me in a box, whether I am discouraged, or even praised, I will always stand for justice. My Plan 3000 experience forced me to confront the pain of my past as well as its privilege, because both the pain and the privilege give me the strength to stand. So I will stand in the ways that I can, law school being a critical pathway. I want to study international law and human rights so I can devote my skills not only for documenting struggles, as I did in the Plan 3000 study, but for advocacy through the law.
Senior Reflections and Advice

Ruty Gebreab ‘10

Hi! My name is Ruty Gebreab, I am a senior (class of 2010) International Relations/ Political Science major with a certificate in Spanish. I am currently studying for my LSATS and will be taking the year off before I go to law school. During those two years, I plan on working at the Chicago School of Psychology conducting research, taking additional preparatory classes for the MCATs, and enjoying my temporary freedom. My future career goals are to get my M.D. to become a surgeon and obtain my Masters in Public Health (MPH). My advice for underclassmen and future Carleton students is to make friends and maintain close relationships with them. I’ve befriended so many wonderful individuals that I will never forget and will maintain a long friendship with. My challenging experiences here at Carleton has been very rewarding because of the friends I have met here. Another piece of advice that I would give is to take advantage of Carleton resources, professors, and peers. Looking back at my four years at Carleton there is nothing that I would change. I enjoyed every minute of it.

Yana Antonio ‘10

Hello, my name is Yana Antonio, I am a senior (class of 2010) Sociology and Anthropology major with a certificate in Spanish. After graduation in June, I plan on taking two years off before I go to medical school. During those two years, I plan on working at the Chicago School of Psychology conducting research, taking additional preparatory classes for the MCATs, and enjoying my temporary freedom. My future career goals are to get my M.D. to become a surgeon and obtain my Masters in Public Health (MPH). My advice for underclassmen and future Carleton students is to make friends and maintain close relationships with them. I’ve befriended so many wonderful individuals that I will never forget and will maintain a long friendship with. My challenging experiences here at Carleton has been very rewarding because of the friends I have met here. Another piece of advice that I would give is to take advantage of Carleton resources, professors, and peers. Looking back at my four years at Carleton there is nothing that I would change. I enjoyed every minute of it.
As I reflect on the past four years here at Carleton, a wave of emotions runs through my body. At the minimum all I can say is that I did it. It was not easy and there has not been a term that passed that I did not shed a tear. This is far from a sign of weakness, but a sign of perseverance. Every term it became easier and harder at the same time as I was continuously changing myself, challenging myself, improving myself and shaping myself. I sacrificed a lot being here and at the end it was worth it. As much as I can complain about this institution I cannot think of any other place I would have rather spent my undergraduate journey. I was blessed enough to have support from my family, I had my Posse and I met other amazing students, some who are now my dear friends.

The faculty and staff have been a tremendous help in my success both personally and academically. If it was not for my professors, (Professor Montero, Williams, North, Estill, Cho, Howard, Morse and others) and people in places like Posse, Calvary Baptist Church, Dunbar Vocational Career Academy, TRIO, OIIIL, The Write Place, the Career Center, Student Financial Services, I don’t know what I would have done. Many of these people saw things in me when I didn’t see them in myself and pushed me. I have no regrets. I would not have changed anything. I’ve had so many opportunities being here. I’ve been to Ghana, won awards, I’m a Mellon Fellow, a McNair Scholar, I held leadership positions in a couple of organizations and so much more. I’ve been exposed to a variety of people, personalities, opinions, and ideas and many have influenced me.

Here is my advice to multicultural students: It is difficult to be here, both academically and, I argue, even more so socially. There are a lot of flaws that we can find at Carleton. But you have a different purpose. The goal is graduation and you must get there the best way you can. You have to keep your eye on the prize. Find your niche and make it for you and embrace all the positives that you can. And never hesitate to ask for help. You’re only here for a little while, so make the best of it.

Now that I’m about to end this chapter of my life I will be working at the Schuler Foundation, helping underserved youth get into institutions like Carleton and then I’ll go to graduate school and pursue a Ph.D. in history. My Name is Chantel V. Johnson. I am a senior history major and I did it. We did it. You can do it. And I’m sending a special thank you to EVERYONE who helped along the way.
Juniors!

Sarah M. Prather ’11

To be successful at Carleton? You have to be EXHAUSTED! (In a good way, of course.) Carleton students work hard to finish all that reading and writing and may lose sleep, but it is possible not to…I refuse to ever pull an all-nighter! My hardest but most REWARDING lesson has been learning to balance schoolwork with my social life. Some of my best learning takes place among my peers as we have conversations. The best part about friendships is that I am still discovering new things about my best friends every day. People are vessels filled with wonderful insights, fascinating life stories, and questions to challenge me every day.

My time at Carleton has also been marked by my drive to get involved with anything and everything on campus. I step out of my comfort zone, and am still surprised by how much I have grown in my three years here. To be successful, you have to PUSH YOURSELF and try new things. Go to a zillion of the talks that are given here on campus, as some of them can change your entire perspective on life…and I’m not being dramatic! In conclusion, I mark my success story here at Carleton in a very simple way, by how happy I am. My equation?

A good mental stretch in class + a crazy fun game night on a Friday + being shocked at a campus music group’s amazing talent + meeting a new best friend = Relishing in the moment (read: success!)

The transition to college can be difficult. Incoming students must adapt to a new school, in a new location; they must rise up to meet new, often seemingly impossible, expectations of professors as well as learn to navigate a new set of social norms all while keeping up with school. For many students, myself included, this first year can be exciting, but also challenging.

But never fear, these next four years will be incredible and that’s a promise. College is one of the very rare opportunities we have in life to reinvent ourselves. We as students are meant to grow, to change and to learn in our four years here at Carleton. Because of this, my advice to all new first years is this: get out there. Meet people. Try something you have always wanted to do: sign up for a new sport, take music lessons, take an art class, dance, just do something. Don’t hold yourself back. For the first time in your life, you are in control of who you are and what you do. The campus is filled with potential and experiences you have and the friends you make will last a lifetime.

You are guaranteed an excellent education in whatever you study here at Carleton, so don’t worry about it, it will take care of itself. But it’s up to you, and you alone, to make the most out of your non-academic life. You will be surrounded by some of the most interesting, thoughtful, genuine and passionate people the world has to offer, so get out there meet them.

Like I said, I know that the initial transition to college can be stressful. But I also am certain that every new student is up for the challenges that Carleton has to offer. Your time here is short, so make the most of it.

Teddy Gelderman ’11
It's hard to write something like this without resorting to the same tired and regurgitated admonitions. "Don't sign up for too many clubs," "party responsibly," "don't run with scissors," blah blah blah. You're big people. You know all of that already. If you don't you soon will, and if you do then why waste paper? So why not write about something a bit more complicated? Using the scientific dartboard method I choose... Friends.

When you move here, you will be lonely. You've just undergone an invasive life transplant and the scars are still healing. If you have a stuffed animal, bring them along. They will represent one constant in what may seem like a severely distorted personal universe. That said, using my Junior psychic powers I can peer into your future and see you waking up one morning (creepy?) and coming to an abrupt realization. "Do I have friends?" you will ask yourself. Yes, yes, by now you're thinking, "that won't happen to me! I'm friendly, outgoing, attractive, philanthropic, can walk on water and even glow slightly." I can see how you would think this, you are of course wrong, but you may not see why yet. Allow me to explain. You see at a place like this, it is very easy to do one of the following three things.

You may take the politicians approach. You may get to know a lot of people. Strive for popularity and fame. But then on that fateful morning you will need a friend that you can call up at 1 am to give you a hug, or sit with you after your mom calls to tell you that your cat died in your absence (something about no one being around to feed it) and that your favorite stuffed animal lost a fight to a garbage disposal (it looked like a suicide, they suspect no foul play.) However, no matter how many times or how carefully you scan the 8479 contacts in your phone you are unable to find anyone that you can wake to be there with you. You will need friends, not just acquaintances. You may not immediately understand the difference between the two, but you will that morning.

Or perhaps you'll be the opportunistic friend hunter. In your best imitation of Bill Clinton you poke your head out your door, look left, look right, and then try to strike up a relationship with the person nearest you at the time. Your closest friends will be those who were literally close to you when you needed a friend. This is a bad plan for several reasons. The biggest being that if all of your friends are on your floor then why would you ever leave? And if you'll never leave your floor why even be at college? On a more pessimistic note (I know I'm just a ray of sunshine right?) it's possible that you guys aren't really compatible as friends, they just happen to be near you at a moment of vulnerable loneliness. As such, when you do eventually realize that they aren't really good for you you will face the dilemma of what to do next. They live on your floor! You cannot effectively stop hanging out with them without being obvious. The moral of this story is get out and find friends that aren't just convenient but also avoidable if necessary. At least until you realize that you guys are actually compatible friend material.

We're almost done, hang in there you're doing great thus far! There is one last thing I'd like you to ponder. When you do at last make some good friends (and it will take some time despite that glow of yours) be careful of one thing. Every year and all year you should keep making friends. Once you get your friends don't commit mass social suicide together by just jumping off into a dark abyss where no one can find or contact you. Have best friends but hang out with people outside of your social circle too. If you're a football player hang out with the anemic kid with a programmers tan. If you're black hang out with the white kids. If you're an international student don't forget that part of being in a country is getting to know some of its inhabitants. The point is to challenge yourself. You're in college! You don't have to be you! You can be the you that you've always wanted to be. Branch out,
You just got a package from the admissions office. After inspection, you convince yourself that it should contain good news, since the package is big. The excitement starts building up. You open the package, and the letter starts with “Congratulations!” You just got into Carleton. As you start thinking about life in Northfield, and the beginning of a new adventure, there are probably a thousand things going through your mind. Here are three main things that I think you should keep in mind before heading to Carleton.

First, get into the habit of checking your email frequently, and reading every one you get. Especially, it is most important that you stay in touch with the Office of Intercultural and International Life (OIIL), and read everything they send you. I have myself missed once in a lifetime opportunities because I skimmed an email instead of reading it thoroughly. Make it part of your daily routine, and it won’t seem like a tedious task. Be polite in your emails, and respect form. The people reading you only know you through this written correspondence, so try to make their first impression of you the best possible.

Second, carefully read all immigration related documents and procedures you receive. A small mistake can put your student status in jeopardy, so be most careful. Hold on to your documents as you would hold on to your most precious possession. Also, you might think that you have a lot of time on your hands, but I guarantee you that you will have many sleepless nights unless you process both your passport and visa early. The saying strongly applies here: the sooner, the better!

Third, getting ready for Carleton is a little tedious, especially since you are an international student. Once you get here though, get ready for some serious fun! Of course, this word can mean different things, depending on your personality, priorities, and lifestyle. However, you will have countless unique opportunities at Carleton, and I encourage you to grasp them with both hands. It’s easy to get caught up in the library during the term, but being engaged outside of the classroom helps you take control over stress. There are many fun and interesting clubs, student organizations, and other ways to be active at Carleton, so take advantage of them!

Here is one sentence to remember during 8th week, and you are wondering how you will make it through the next two weeks (as I am right now :D) don’t worry, be happy! Life at Carleton is in fact stressful, but you have the potential to make it though, and shine like a star. Just believe in yourself, and take advantage of the wonderful support system that Carleton provides you with.

Hello new Carls, my name is Tracy Tsai, a senior economics major from Taiwan. I have 3 key advices to share with you all, and I believe you will benefit greatly from them. Plan your workload and activity commitment realistically: There are so many interesting classes and activities offered each term. You want to join them all, but you have limited time and energy. Think about your academic/career goal and major/graduation requirements, then prioritize and schedule realistically. It might seem manageable to do everything you want in the first week, but it is possible that...
you would be exhausted by all the work and commitments after two weeks.

Keep an open mind. Take classes and join activities that you are not familiar with:

You probably already have an academic and/or career goal before coming to Carleton, but you should still explore other fields of knowledge and disciplines with an open mind. After all, this is what liberal arts education is about, and being exposed to different ways of thinking will be rewarding and fulfilling in the long run.

Participate in talks and information sessions held by the career center, the OIIL office and other campus departments: Attending talks and information sessions is also a great source of education. Learning from experienced alumni and professionals, debating with and listening to students from different background with different points of view on various topics, sharing valuable off-campus and internship experiences and advice and so on will expand your horizon of knowledge and maybe even challenge your core values or old ways of thinking.

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Adonius C. Lewis ’11

I could compile a list of advice for incoming freshmen as long as the snack bar line at 11:55pm on a Thursday night. The fact of the matter is that you probably won’t remember them all. Instead of wasting space, I will attempt to put my major in Economics to work and optimize your mental retention tendencies, given my word constraint. With your best interest at heart, I will present you with three tips that I wish someone had forced upon me as a young lad entering this realm of confusion, anxiety, quirkiness and intellectual overstimulation, which many like to refer to as Carleton College.

Tip #1: Don’t be intimidated! – Students will use big words during class discussions. Everyone in class will seem to understand the material except one person – you (especially Calculus, the natural sciences and Economics). You may also learn that your new friend’s mother is a neurosurgeon, and that another friend has a father who teaches at Harvard. These instances can be especially intimidating, as they were for me. Your job in each of these cases is to remember that you are here, at Carleton College, for much the same reason as everyone else; you are gifted and oozing with potential. Nothing is deficient about your competence. In the case of folks and their infatuation with using big words, many times the words are bigger than the actual ideas that they attempt to convey (when it occurs, jot them down and look them up if you don’t believe me). The point here is that you belong in this community. You are intelligent and will be here for a while. Get acquainted, express yourself, and be confident.

Tip #2: Seek Resources! – Carleton has many resources. However, they cannot help you if you do not use them. Unless you receive nothing less of an A on every paper you write, chances are you can improve. I highly recommend The Write Place because it gives you a chance to have one-on-one sessions with trained individuals who want to help you. Resources for other subjects are the Center for Math and Computing (CMC), TA sessions and Office Hours. These spaces exist because the college is aware of the leap in quality that they are asking your work to demonstrate from high school. As a freshman I was reluctant to use some of these resources because of fears of being thought of as unintelligent. I can assure you that that is not what is going through the mind of a TA. Chances are that they used those exact same resources themselves in their pursuit of their success. In a nutshell, if you are struggling, get help.

Tip #3: Establish your priorities and stick to them – Although there will seem to be unlimited activities to partake in and organizations to join, the truth is that most students (at least the successful ones) are taking care of their academic work first! This is not something that your peers will typically disclose to you. The vibes given off are that they spend little time doing work and that you “don’t need to spend too much time studying.” I naïvely believed them. This is partly why I ended my freshmen year with a GPA that I regretted. Don’t be me. Stay on top of your work first. Then, look at the list of priorities (that you will take the time to write down) and make decisions based on your personal interests and values. Contrary to what you may believe, everyone is not partying, drinking, or having sex. I don’t mean to discourage you from having any fun, but put first things first. Take care of your GPA; you’ll need it. Stay healthy. Then fill in the rest.
My name is Beserat Kelati, but people call me Bes. I am a sophomore (class of 2012) Sociology/Anthropology major with a concentration in Educational Studies. Carleton is definitely an interesting and quirky place where you meet different individuals that are ultimately trying to achieve the same goal, success. At the same time, there is a lack of competition and an emphasis of collaboration which provides a nice learning environment. I have been supported and encouraged by my peers, members of my organizations (BSA, COWOC, etc.), administration, and Carleton alumni. There is always a place to go when you need a pat on the back, inspiration, or simple "girl talk". If I could have done something differently it would be appreciating Carleton to it's fullest. Sometimes it can get a bit stressful and you fail to realize all the opportunities it lays out in front of you. Carleton spoils its students with resources, job opportunities, internships, study abroad options, and a worthy degree -- all you have to do is work for it. My advice for prospective students would be to think about your college decision carefully, and ask yourself, "Can I see myself waking up here for the next four years?" A liberal arts college, like Carleton College, usually provides a nice environment where students know each other and learn from one another -- so it's not to hard to wake up to the birds chirping, unless you have a 8:30am class.
Like many Carleton students’, my first-year fall term was a blast. Virtually all of the new people I met seemed bright and kind-hearted. My floor was one of the most supportive and enjoyable communities I’ve ever been a part of. I challenged myself academically and explored new things socially.

But by the time spring term of that first year came, I wasn’t so content anymore. People were still smart and nice, but I wished for something more. I began to disagree with our president’s oft-repeated line, “There is no average Carleton student.” His quote is a great rallying cry for originality and creativity, but I’d say the average Carleton student is a white, upper-middle class suburbanite, works hard to improve him or herself, expects to succeed academically, and can often make others feel awkward.

No Carleton student fits this description without exception, and many Carleton students do not fit it at all. I myself possess many of these qualities. These are not inherently good or bad traits, and this is my inevitably imperfect and biased perception. While the stereotype I’ve constructed is hardly academic and perhaps not even reasonable, it is what I see as the dominant culture at our school. My story doesn’t make sense without understanding how I feel about my environment.

After my internally turbulent spring term, I resolved that I wouldn’t transfer or go abroad as much as possible. Instead, this academic year, I would make my community work for me. To me, the average Carleton student did not represent the world as I had experienced it or as I expected to experience it. So, I tried to surround myself with an array of people I believed would better represent my world. One of the most pivotal factors in this transition was the Men of Color organization.

I did not join MOC independently. Descended from European Americans, I was never bold enough to claim membership uninvited. But this fall, MOC’s treasurer and my good friend, Oumar Diallo, asked me to sign up for the group’s listserv. The next week I attended the first meeting of the term. As I walked in the door to Stimson House, where I had been several times before, and saw about a dozen faces, many of them very familiar to me, I nonetheless felt uneasy. No one in the room shared my race/ethnicity.

But these young men showed me no prejudice and welcomed me enthusiastically. I valued their company because it differed from the average Carleton student’s. Of course, as with Carleton students, my generalizations do not perfectly describe each unique individual in this group, but again I’d like to offer my impressions. Instead of an eye-averting mumble of a greeting, the Men of Color would give me a firm handshake. When someone asked me how I was doing, they didn’t expect a quick, superficial answer. Many MOC members tempered their academic confidence with recognition of their privilege and the obligations that accompany it. One of the faculty involved with MOC, Professor Harry Williams, taught me more about rejecting the comfort and convenience of the status quo than any other educator. MOC group discussions encouraged us to talk about the variety of backgrounds we come from, and the different things race and gender mean to our communities.

While I needed the group’s support, I did put myself in a unique position to earn acceptance. My knowledge of black and Latino culture and history helped assure people that I was, as MOC first-year representative and good friend Chris Frills aptly put it, “down for the cause.” Also, the ambiguity of Latino identity in the United States meant that as a Brazilian citizen I could not be completely white, despite my skin tone and family history. Additionally, I have worked much of my life to resist imbalances of power and to challenge dominant ideologies. Finally, I try my hardest to treat every human being I meet with respect, interest, and empathy. I believe these factors allowed me to belong in MOC, even though it is not a community that is designed for the average Carleton student.

Despite all this, I see some truth in President Oden’s slogan. I think there is an average Carleton student in the abstract, but no real-live Carleton student is average. I hope my story can encourage my peers to live subversively and to defy norms of domination. I know we’re all capable of it in our own ways. We can all push back the boundaries of ignorance and familiarize ourselves with the many ways people live their lives. Each of us has unique components of our identity, through which we can understand what makes those around us unique. As we become better educated, we can recognize the complexity of our world and reject the ready-made interpretations that the establishment offers. We can do our best to be considerate and caring to all. This would make our community, in my opinion, above average.
“If you were like me and wondered if your acceptance into Carleton was a mistake, it isn’t.”

Sophomore Advice

Justin Jack ‘12

To introduce myself, I am Justin Jack (or J. Jack), a Political Science major from New Orleans, LA. This article is intended for the incoming freshman class. First off, congrats on being accepted into Carleton. If you were like me and wondered if your acceptance into Carleton was a mistake, it isn’t. Carleton’s admission department does not make mistakes in selecting students. You all bring a unique set of characteristics that will transform this campus. Carleton needs you! Allow this article to serve as your first-year student guide to success.

First, use the resources that Carleton gives to you. Joining student organizations is one of the best ways to make new friends and find familiar faces around campus. In addition, find a set of friends that you can call when times get rough. Realize that you cannot do it alone. You will need friends to vent with about a particular professor, cry with when times get rough, and smile with when you complete your first term finals. These people will be your support system throughout your time at Carleton. Just having people that you know and trust will ease your struggles and frustrations as you enter the town of ‘Cows, Colleges, and Contentment’.

Next, time management is key. Use your time wisely and realize that school comes first. Extracurricular activities are an important part of your academic career, but they are EXTRA. Discipline is key. Forming study groups is a great way to meet new friends and complete work in a timely manner while having fun. Procrastination is inevitable, yet the amount of procrastination that you partake in is totally up to you. Furthermore, do not be afraid to talk to your professors. I have yet to meet a Carleton professor that who is not willing to sit down and talk about my interests and goals. On the flip side, avoid spreading yourself too thin. Carleton can be stressful and in some ways unhealthy if you do not maintain a proper diet and find avenues to relieve stress (i.e. talking with family and friends or if all else fails punching your pillow!).

Finally, have fun! You are in college, finally away from the confines of your parents. Enjoy staying out late on Fridays and waking up late on Saturdays. Take a trip to the cities or enjoy a walk in downtown Northfield to get off campus for a little while. All things considered, realize that your first year at Carleton will not be easy, be prepared for hard work and sleepless night. Yet, in the end you will be able to stand at the top of the steps of Laird and feel a newfound sense of accomplishment!

Hope this helps!

Justin A. Jack
jackj@carleton.edu
Jeweletter Johnson ‘13

My name is Jeweletter Johnson, also known as Jewel. I am a freshman for the class of 2013 and I may be a Psychology major. I enjoy Carleton very much as I have the space to try different things without doubts from a lot of people. However, like many other people, I have trouble with either homesickness or various other problems, especially during winter term. During these tough times, family, friends, trio, and one of my professors have supported and encouraged me throughout my beginning career at Carleton. I currently do not have regrets for my Carleton career so far. Why live with regrets? To incoming freshmen, I would say do not be afraid to ask for help, enjoy and take advantage of all the opportunities here. These may sound like easy things, but so many people have issues with just reaching out and exploring things outside of their norms. I would also like to say be sure to appreciate people and things in life that you have because you will need them.

I am an African American young man from the inner city of Chicago. I attended a charter school with the population of 98 percent African Americans and 2 percent Latino. In addition, I grew up in a neighborhood in which the only European Americans that I encountered were the teachers that only came to my side of town to teach during the day or the ones that gentrify my neighborhood. I am from the part of town where my family members and neighbors use words like “ain’t” and “finna”. It is a neighborhood that loves loud music from artists like Al Green and Jay-Z. It is in this very same neighborhood that criminal activity engulfed my closest friends, who all the while encouraged me to be one of the “good black Bruthas” as they live vicariously through my individual successes. The name that I am sure that they would most proudly describe me with is ‘College Boy’. This neighborhood that I am briefly describing is all that I knew how to live prior to coming to Carleton.

So this is where my transition came into play. The question that I was faced with was, how do I come from what I described above to what I now know as life at Carleton College? Not only did I ask this question of how to make it happen, but I also questioned if it could happen at all.

After close introspection, I have come to the conclusion that is it possible. This introspection that I speak of developed during my eight-month training with Posse. During those 8 months I took time to look at myself and see my role and my goals. It was with Posse that time was taken out of my day to sit down and discuss topics like race, identity, class, and gender at Carleton. I have come to realize, first off, Carleton doesn’t just let anybody in, so I must belong here. Secondly, I had to realize that the world is much bigger than the small neighborhood where I live in back home in Chicago. With this newfound knowledge about myself and this new outlook on the world, I stopped questioning if I was right for Carleton. I ultimately mustered up the strong belief that Carleton was right for me.

With all that said, the advice I am giving to the incoming freshmen is simply this – Carleton has already accepted you, so accept it back. Carleton is a place that recognizes that you are a layered individual with a unique story. Please understand that I am in no way saying Carleton is perfect. However, I am saying if you invest yourself in Carleton the return is plentiful in terms of intellect, creativity, and ultimate self-satisfaction in your choice of the place you will call home for the next four years.
Hey its me,  
I was wondering if we could talk at Starbucks at 11:15  
Call me back okay.  
Man I just want to talk, take that long walk  
And just stroll down memory lane,  
Go back to those days when I could look at you  
And you could look at me  
And we just knew exactly what one another was thinking.  
I wish I could go back to those days in high school when  
we made up our own language.  
You know,  
Beautiful meant ugly,  
Sexy meant ugly,  
You look so fine meant you were ugly,  
And ugly meant ugly.  
It made sense to us,  
But to everyone else it was just jargon.  
The cool thing about it was back then we knew we had a  
connection  
But as time progresses I’m forgetting who you are,  
Back then we knew that there was no secret language,  
But just mask to hide our feelings.  
I wish we could just talk.  
Where grown up know and the mask should come off.  
A rose is only as bright as the water and sunlight it re-  
ceives,  
Without these sources of nourishment, a rose would wilt  
and cease to be.  
I want to build a relationship,  
But like a rose it needs two things.  
It needs love and trust, and that just can’t come from me.  
I know I’m feeling you  
And I think your feeling me,  
But unless we respect one another our relationship will  
never be.  
A rose creates oxygen and allows the world to breath,  
And I know your mad at me need your own space to  
breathe,  
But I also know we could have something special  
And I don’t want that to cease to be.  
Communication is the key to the heart  
Like a key to a door, or a key to some just having uni-  
imaginable treasures.  
Just like a rose will not bloom if it is planted in poor soil,  
A relationship will never grow if it starts of with lies and  
deception.  
I’m not trying to talk about roses  
I’m trying to talk about us  
To speak, you must first listen to the words spoken  
To be fixed, a heart must be broken  
In order to be picked up, you must first fall  
To truly value something, you have to lose it all.  
Today too many men are leaning on a block  
Sayin hey shorty  
Trying to please their cock  
Concerned about who wears the pants  
Always barking out demands  
Not concerned about the head on their shoulders  
Acting like if you don’t get any before your 18  
The world is over.  
I don’t mean to get on my gender,  
I’m just trying to be respectful.  
Just tryin to show that moms raised me right  
Want you to know my pimp hands tight,  
But women aren’t hoes  
And real man don’t hit women  
So I keep my pimp hand tight by studying to get a degree  
Keep it strong by opening a book to read  
And keep it tight by staying off the streets.  
I’m not trying to talk about mankind  
I’m not trying to talk about roses,  
I’m talking about us.  
I don’t want you to hear me  
I want you to listen  
Standing hear spilling my convections  
I’m letting you know that I’m taking off my mask  
Letting you know that you are the rose in my life  
And that I will always love and trust you.  
Letting you know that my game is tight  
Because I’m not another stereotypical man  
And won’t treat you like an owned item  
All because  
Communication is the key to the heart.
In light of the 2010 Census and stressing importance on having proper representation of the Asian American population in the United States, the Midwest Asian American Students Union (MAASU) Conference held in Ohio State University was one filled with great enthusiasm and active discussions towards this year’s theme “Make it Count”. Over 600 participants attended and engaged in the various workshops that advocated the importance for Asian American voice, identity, and leadership in the public sphere and larger community.

This year, the Coalition of Hmong Students (CHS) have eagerly been fundraising to send six of its members to have a first time MAASU experience that could enlighten them as individuals and network with other Asian Americans from the Midwest. CHS also received funding from various organizations and departments. On behalf of the Coalition of Hmong Students, the members would like to give a warm thank you to CSA, OIL, and the Departments of Asian Literature and Languages for their contribution and support in making this experience possible. Below you can read about several of the members’ personal experience from the conference.

**Where are you from?**

Kuv Niam thiab Kuv Txiv.
MY PARENTS.
From the inner mountains of Laos.
A place of oppression, poverty, and sickness.

My parents crossed the strong Mekong River to escape from the poverty of Laos but to only disappointment. They flew to the United States in hopes for freedom and success.
A place where my parents found comfort and safety.
A place to provide their children with happiness.

Kuv Yog Hmoob. I AM HMONG.
From the inner regions of Minneapolis.
"The dangerous, dark, chaotic region," outsiders will say.
But to me, to my parents, the place I’m from is beautiful.
ZOO NKAUJ.

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Me Nyuam. CHILDREN running, loving, enjoying the warmth of friendship.
Enjoying the sweet melodies of the QEEJ,
Mixed with a beat of rap.
To me, this place is perfect.
This home is ten times better than the oppression of Laos.

Kuv Yog Hmoob. I AM HMONG.

-- Andrea Vang

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“One of the workshops I attended was focused on leadership in the Asian communities how its grown. The speaker in this workshop touched upon not only on cultural and ethnic issues that the conference overall framed, but he also addressed the importance of self identity in the work force.”

-- Lor Vue, Sophomore ‘12
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