

The Student Affairs Diversity Council (SADC) strives to cultivate an environment that embraces and promotes the broad scope of diversity within the division.

Reflection: The Importance Of Understanding

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When I first arrived in Utah, I had been out of the Peace Corps for three months. I arrived in Salt Lake City, ready to move in and start work without really having any idea of where I was headed. I had not been to Salt Lake City, let alone Utah, until I got my keys to my very first apartment. I started my first job at the University of Utah during the busiest time of the year. I had meetings to go to every day, students to please, parents to please, and a new level of autonomy that forced me to be self-reliant in ways I had not yet experienced in the work place. Feeling alone, I started to seek out friends quickly in my department. When interacting with my colleagues, discussions around social justice oftentimes came up. In some ways the discussions made me feel more alone and isolated. I could not connect with my colleagues about certain issues and I started to feel insecure; I felt I was not as passionate as they were or educated. Three months prior to moving to Salt Lake City, I was in West Africa working as a community health volunteer. I felt [somewhat] knowledgeable about diversity and social justice on a global perspective. In Utah, however, I could not connect with people the way I wanted to.

It was not so much that I could not connect with people literally from Utah--many of my colleagues were from out-of-state, it was moreso that moving to a different part of



the country made me feel like an outsider. I felt that I did not know how to share my frustrations, or my opinions because I felt like I did not have one. I was not the person that people sought out to be challenged. I felt I was good at validating others but sometimes it did not feel enough. I started to feel inadequate. It was frustrating to have gone through so much stress, so much isolation, and so many cultural faux pas in West Africa, only to come back to America and feel anything but self-assured.

The concept of social justice and diversity was embedded in the name of being a Peace Corps Volunteer, but many of my peers had no idea what to expect, and sometimes our purpose got lost. Six months into being a Peace Corps Volunteer, my colleagues and I were catching up and letting others know about our living situations--most of us lived in rural and isolated villages due to being health volunteers. In a matter of six months, I felt that the concept of social justice started to turn into a weapon. Volunteers would almost boast about how many miles they [we] had to walk to carry water, how little vegetables were available to them, or how far away from a main road people lived. It was obvious that people felt like they were proud because they were "the real volunteers." They slept in mud huts in 125 degree weather, and got sick all the time due to not having clean water or food. Those volunteers were tough and were "roughing it." Granted, I was right there with

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them. I felt proud that I could live in a place without electricity.

Looking back, I know that we let our privilege get the best of us. Many of us did live in conditions that we were not used to (like no electricity or running water), but we forgot that our host families lived as we did permanently. We forgot about the point of being a volunteer--It was not to compare, to make others feel less than, or really to make someone else's life a competition. Being a volunteer meant learning about a world other than our own, understanding social and global inequality, fighting for justice, building trust, fitting into a community in an unfamiliar place, and making lifelong friends doing it.

When I came back from the Peace Corps, I expected to come back as a new person. I was very proud about being able to problem solve without American luxuries. I wasn't necessarily humbled by my experience, if anything I was introduced to the lies that white privilege teaches us. I was excited to come back feeling like I did something challenging, and to feel a sense of independence. I loved my Senegalese family, but I was not Senegalese—I wanted to feel I belonged in a culture that was my own. For me, moving to Utah was meant to be a fresh start, something I could easily do. When I came to Utah, it was like living in a different culture.

My experiences in Senegal changed who I was drastically. I was a new person, with new insecurities, new anxieties, and a new perception of the world. I cried the first time I went on a major freeway since returning--I was not someone I recognized, and half the time I didn't have an explanation for who I had become. Moving, reminded me that I was in an unfamiliar place and that I was unfamiliar with who I was. I adopted habits that were new to me, like wanting to be around people more than an introvert should want.

Attending the modules allowed me to be introduced to people who felt like they didn't belong, who felt like they were in an unfamiliar place, and who felt that they too were once known as somebody important, who did something cool.

For me, the diversity modules became a place where I was able to reflect about the importance of understanding a system, a new culture, and a religion before jumping in and criticizing it or myself—something I now wish I was educated about before entering the Peace Corps.



[Elise Roy: When we design for disability, we all benefit](#)

"I believe that losing my hearing was one of the greatest gifts I've ever received," says Elise Roy. As a disability rights lawyer and design thinker, she knows that being Deaf gives her a unique way of experiencing and reframing the world — a perspective that could solve some of our largest problems. As she says: "When we design for disability first, you often stumble upon solutions that are better than those when we design for the norm."



[Alice Goffman: How we're priming some kids for college—and others for prison](#)

In the United States, two institutions guide teenagers on the journey to adulthood: college and prison. Sociologist Alice Goffman spent six years in a troubled Philadelphia neighborhood and saw first-hand how teenagers of African-American and Latino backgrounds are funneled down the path to prison — sometimes starting with relatively minor infractions. In an impassioned talk she asks, "Why are we offering only handcuffs and jail time?"

Upcoming University and Community Events



September 3 @ 10AM— 2:30PM

Take Care Utah Hispanic Heritage Parade and Festival
The Gateway [[more information](#)]



September 17 @ 9:30AM

Salt Lake AIDS Walk

City Creek Center [[more information & registration](#)]



September 10 @ 8:30AM—1:30PM

National Alliance on Mental Illness Walks Utah
Liberty Park [[more information & registration](#)]

September 15 @ 12-1:30PM

Dr. Moin Syed: A Developmental-Personality
Perspective On Cultural Ideologies
BEH S, Room 712 [[more information](#)]

Upcoming Seminar

Save The Date!

Wednesday, September 21, 2016

12:00-1:30pm in Pano East, Union

[[more information](#)]



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