

Why College Is Important to Me

by Andrew Pavey

We live in a Snapchat, newsfeed, soundbite, tweet-filled world. The busy, connected, always-on lifestyle has made us both more informed and blind to the viewpoints of others. Attending college is important to me because I want to learn to better communicate by learning how to deeply listen to the world.

The perpetuation of shallow, fake news is not new. George Washington did not chop down a cherry tree and then tell the truth about it. President Washington did, however, own a slave who ran away escaping to freedom. Far more Americans have heard the cherry tree lie than the story of Ona Judge, the young runaway slave. Her life has been scrubbed from the collective memory because she does not fit the established narrative of our first President.

I am a senior in high school and I plan to attend Grinnell college to study history. We live in tumultuous times that cry out for a better understanding of this existence we call humanity. I do not subscribe to the tired tenet that history repeats itself. The human experience is far more complex. We live in an interconnected world where the lives of regular people with their faults and their glories must be better understood. Only with a heady knowledge of where we have been and how we have arrived here can we best move forward as a society in pursuit of lasting peace and a respect for all people.

We need a fresh approach to history. When teaching about slavery, for example, I want to tell the narrative of daily life. To explore what it was like to be an enslaved woman, I will incorporate the writing of Harriet Ann Jacobs who feared sexual assault and then feared having her children sold and shipped away. We will explore how both slaves and slaveholders used the same religion for opposite purpose. We will use food and dance and art to bring the people alive. For slaves, there was little opportunity for overt creativity and so much has been destroyed, but archaeologists have uncovered pipes and pottery with elaborate engravings full of emotion. What was it like to be a child on a

plantation the day freedom became reality? Was newfound freedom that day the end of the Civil War or only the beginning of a civil rights struggle that still rages? Let's tell the untold stories that are hiding in the shadows.

I love this country and want to foster a new way of looking at our past so it can inform our present and our future. Reviving the history of the forgotten is patriotism in the highest order and for all people. History belongs to all of us. It belongs to Ona Judge and George Washington, to Harriet Ann Jacobs, to you, and to me. History must come alive for it to be understood and I am excited to have the opportunity to learn how to better listen to the past in all its complexity.