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Facing Change: Exploring Community in Northern Colorado

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Anthropology 300
Anthropology 408
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Department of Anthropology
Office of Community & Civic Engagement

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Forward

The heart of my work as an anthropologist is story. I cannot think of any activity we all engage in more than story! Story permeates every facet of our lives. We seek entertainment together or alone by reading, watching, listening, or writing stories. The events in our life are made more meaningful and sometimes more real when we can tell them to others. Song lyrics tell us stories. Our inner monologue is a story. Even in our sleep, our dreaming tells us stories.

Early in the fall of 2016, Deborah Romero, director Office of Engagement, offered me an opportunity to weave storytelling into my applied anthropology class through a National Initiative called The Facing Project. The focus of the project went through a few articulations, but ultimately we landed on “Facing Change.” The result is this book, a website, and a community event.

Over the past two semesters, students from two of my courses have gone out into the community to discover stories that represent a random sample of the voices that make up Greeley. The topic of change has been broad enough to let students move in many different directions with their community partners. These hard working students learned how to apply skills beyond the traditional classroom setting and take their learning experience out into the city that surrounds the University of Northern Colorado.

The first group of students went out into Greeley to interview volunteer participants. They met with their partners face to face over the course of a few weeks talking about change. The task was to take these listening times, and the stories that came out of it and write up a story or poem in under 1000 words that students would tell in the voice of the person being interviewed. When the students got their initial instructions, they were eager and excited; ready to go out and record these conversations and anxious to start writing them down in the first-person voice of someone else. As a class, we had talked about the role of voice in storytelling and how impactful it is to be listened to so well that someone can reflect words back to you just as you would say them. In concept, this was exciting, but in practice, it was daunting! Opening up to the partners
that they interviewed from the community and listening well allowed them to notice the details and nuances from each person’s story. This gave the students the opportunity to change their educational experience from that of a consumer of theory to practitioners of service learning.

The second group of students tackled the process of working and reworking the raw material while holding the authenticity of the original voice at the forefront of the editing process. This group also poured themselves into bringing this project to life through fundraising, promotion, developing the social media aspects, layout and publication. To celebrate and launch the project, the students have organized an event to share the work back to the community. This event focused on fostering relationships with locally owned and operated business. Because of this, many students who might not have discovered the richness of Greeley have been able to move from life centered on the University to life immersed in both the university and the town.

The pages ahead are the result of 35 hardworking, eager, brave and dedicated students; 33 undergraduates; 1 ambitious graduate student; 1 visionary graduate teaching assistant and 2 passionate faculty members, along with the voices of 16 members of the greater community. We hope that this book provides a glimpse into Facing Change.

Thank you for being a part of these stories,

Trish Jolly
Acknowledgments

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The Office of Community and Civic Engagement at the University of Northern Colorado promotes and supports academic engagement with the university and community, facilitates connections amongst faculty, students, staff and community members, and encourages partnerships that are mutually beneficial to promote community and civic health. UNC is proud to have received the Carnegie Foundation for Teaching and Learning Community Engaged Campus classification in 2015.

The Facing Project is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that connects people through stories to strengthen communities. Founded in Muncie, Indiana, by J.R. Jamison and Kelsey Timmerman, the organization has connected writers, storytellers, artists, educators, and community leaders in over 100 communities across the country. Hailed by The Huffington Post, Harlem World Magazine, and Soul Train as one of three oral history projects to watch, The Facing Project provides a model, tools, coaching, and a platform for communities to arm themselves with stories to begin crucial conversations on social justice issues—neighbor to neighbor, community to community—by discussing solutions and exploring healing through their own narratives. Learn more at www.facingproject.com.
Growing up, I believed in a few basic principles: that books are portals to other, more fantastical realities and that trees were meant for climbing. These tenets were flipped upside down when my family moved from Arizona to Greeley, Colorado just before my fifth grade year. “There’s no trees!” I exclaimed when my family and I pulled up to our new home. It was true. There were very few trees in the area compared to what I was used to. Who on earth decided to name this community the City of Trees? It was preposterous!

My younger sister and I explored the house and were dismayed when we came across the backyard, which was really a patch of dirt with some scraggily weeds than a real yard. How was I supposed to make this my new home when there were no trees to climb and seemingly no place to discover and adventure in?

I spent my fifth grade year reading books. I had no real friends to speak of, no real sense of home here in this little city. It wasn’t until summer came that I found a sense of peace here in Greeley. During summer, my family and I started a tradition of visiting the South Platte River to play on hot days. It was there that I rediscovered adventure; it was there that I felt at home. It was also there that I formed a new basic principle: That it’s not officially summer until you can go wading in the river.

When the water level was really low, I would be able to swim and explore all the little sandbars and islands that appeared only in the summer. I would catch crawdads or find, not seashells, but some kind of a weird creature in the water that has shells. One time I found a log, and my sister and I were going to ride it. At that moment, I was very inspired by Huck Finn. We rode it down the river a few paces, but the log had been covered in leeches, so we too were covered in leeches! We hurriedly
scrambled off the river and away from the log. That was the end of our adventures with rafting.

Another summer, a handful of my friends and I, along with my sister and my mom, went out to the river. I had read these books as a child about Pippi Longstocking, and a particular chapter resonated with me. She and one of her friends would go about wandering their neighborhood, wherever it was, and finding things—a coral necklace, or an old tin can, or a journal. So I too loved looking for things, especially at the river. I once found half a very muddy tube of lipstick. I also found a lot of jagged broken glass or beer can lids, mostly just litter that had been left behind by the people who visited there before me. This particular summer was different though. This time, I found treasure.

My friends and I were exploring the river, splashing in the water, and just enjoying the relative freedom that comes with summer. As I was wandering the river, I noticed something sticking out of the mud—a round object covered in a layer of filth. I went over to investigate and painstakingly dug the article out of the dirt, being careful not to break it as I dislodged it from its mud cage. The object was about the size of a cantaloupe and very, very dirty. Holding it gingerly, I took it over to the river and cleaned the mud away, revealing a small dinner plate. It was made of very fine quality, not quite a fancy china but more similar to a sturdy ceramic. The plate was thicker in the middle and tapered out to the edges, where it was thin and delicate. It was amazing that it hadn’t been broken. The ceramic was pristine white and around the perimeter there was a sky-blue border. Also on the edge was an ornate golden design, not exactly like scrollwork or filigree but intricate nonetheless. It was lovely, too pretty to be put on the table for everyday use. How did something so beautiful end up here, covered in muck? It remains a mystery that I have yet to solve. At the end of that adventurous summer day, I took my treasure home and displayed it in my room.

To this day, I still have this plate. It rests in one of my dressers, in a drawer buried under a pile of halfway used notepads, sticky notes, and fall leaves that I collected and never finished pressing—things that I just didn’t have the heart to throw away. It's just a reminder
of the crazy little fantastical things that happen. Things like discovering adventure in a place with no trees and finding home in a place that’s so unlike the home you once knew. To me, it was evidence that beauty can be found anywhere, even in filth and mud, so long as you are looking for it.
The Evolution of a Small Agricultural Town
As told to Adam Swanson

The sheer size of Greeley has really changed. When I was a kid, 35th Avenue was the city limit, and now it’s out by Windsor. As far as a city goes, it’s huge. I think the population has been about eighty thousand for a while now. Of course with students coming in, it grows another ten thousand every year.

Aims, the community college, was just a small deal, out on Fourth Street. Then they moved out here and it started to grow by leaps and bounds. It’s a great college, I got two degrees from there.

The biggest difference between Greeley now and Greeley back when I was younger, was how people made a living; the way of living used ‘old money’, now it has been replaced by ‘new money’. The Monforts and the Farrs were the reasons for the use of ‘old money’, this was the agricultural money that provided a living for the people of Greeley. Have you heard of the JBS meat packing plant out here? Well Monfort has been one of the big beneficiaries at UNC, and he started a meat packing plant a long time ago and Farr supplied the cattle. When I was a kid, if you worked at Monforts’, you were upper-middle class. You were a blue collar worker, you were essentially a butcher, however you made a lot of money. I never worked there when I was a kid. The Union came and broke the whole thing up beforehand, and it looked like they ruined a good thing for the workers there. The agricultural money had been in place for a long time until it changed.

When Monfort ran the factory years ago, I was in high school, people were graduating school and getting jobs at Monfort and being real happy about it. I think at the time people started at fifteen bucks an hour, and back then I think minimum wage might have been a dollar twenty, or something. Monfort paid really well. On top of that, Monfort would let them take as much meat as they wanted home for
their families for free. I don’t how it all worked out, but the union ended up coming in. After that, Monfort said, "Well guys, no more free meat. You got to pay for it now”. 

One thing that has gone away has been lot of “mom and pop” kind of stores, you know? - Little places downtown. Like we would have a specific shoe store and a fashion bar, or a JC Penney, and a bunch of little stores. All that stuff has now moved out. Now we have Wal-Mart and Target, big market stores. I guess JC Penney is still around, but it has sort have been taken over by Wal-Mart. In a way, some of those small places have been coming back. But there are still a lot of big companies here.

One of the big stores was Kodak. When Kodak moved in, there were a lot of good paying jobs. Kodak also moved into Windsor and it was a real good place to work. If you got a job at Kodak, you knew you had insurance and decent pay. The huge factory in Windsor was where they made film for cameras. Now nobody uses that anymore, so they’re almost out of business. I think now they mostly just make x-ray film.

Now, the ‘newer money’ is from marijuana. All of the sudden there were all these new jobs, and everyone wanted to move here. People are flocking to Colorado. I mean, Greeley was always a real conservative city, where they wouldn’t even let people sell liquor until about 1974, or ‘75. Everything was over in Garden City, roughly around 11th Avenue and the bypass, pretty much everything for the next six blocks, maybe even before Evans. It’s just a real small area, and it’s noticeable if you’re driving south on 8th avenue, it’s just liquor store after liquor store, bar, bar, bar, more liquor stores and all that. All the pot growers are down there and all the marijuana stores are down there too. Since that has been the area of vice, Greeley has tried to “keep the vice out of Greeley”. Years ago, I heard tales of brothels being down there and actual tunnels where ‘higher-up’ people from Greeley could sneak up on in there. Pretty crazy stuff!

I guess over the years, I have seen more Latin influence; from individuals to the culture. When I was a kid going to school, there
might be one, or two Hispanics, you know. I don’t think I saw my first black person until I was, maybe, twelve. It was a very white, very conservative town. Now, the culture and the population has really grown. Somali refugees, I think are being taken in too. So you’re seeing a lot more cultural diversity.

But my god, Greeley is really different. It almost looks nothing like the small place that I knew before. Just everything, the people and the businesses and everything is so different now. I don’t know if it’s all good, or all bad - I guess we just have to wait and see.
Family is everything to me, family represents home and strength. However, when those you love are taken from you through injustices, change becomes a challenge.

When I went into work that day, I had no idea what was coming…no one did. When the bell rang for break, it bounced off the walls and faded to a distant echo as we headed towards the cafeteria. Lines began to form beyond the doors and soon fear started to spread across everyone’s faces, as the realization hit: we were being led to our judgment. Herded like animals, one by one, they checked each and every one of us, deporting hundreds, including my friends and family, back to Mexico. Just like that, they were gone. Lives were changed as families were separated, leaving tear-stained faces everywhere, and there was nothing I could do to stop it.

I felt helpless watching it all play out. I was mocked and made fun of throughout the whole process, overlooking fear and sadness across seas of worn out faces. Planned from the start, it’s no coincidence that the day they happened to show up “unexpectedly”, was a day of honor and celebration, a Mexican national holiday picked specifically to make a statement. The words are still etched in my mind; I’ll never forget the officers saying, “This is your special day. Now you’re going to go celebrate in your country,” and “Don’t worry, the trip is on us,” all with smiles on their faces, as they attacked our heritage. None of us felt safe.

Aside from the many empty chairs around the factory, work the next day went on as usual, as if those missing had never existed. Many friends were lost that day, people I had known and worked with for years, just gone. It was heartbreaking and sad to realize that in the blink of an eye, they were gone forever.

In the end, immigration was to blame. Not only did they deport
my friends and co-workers, but they took my husband and had him deported. My husband was gone when I needed him the most; I was pregnant. How else are you supposed to provide and make money when you’re already eight months along? They didn’t understand, and I don’t think they ever would’ve. When asked to share my story for my citizenship test, I remembered the factory, and I told them exactly what I thought, “You guys are to blame. You could have helped me, but you didn’t. I didn’t matter. None of us workers did, illegal or not.”

Through the change I endured with the loss of the people around me, I began to realize that my family was keeping me strong. Without family, there is nothing; without family I’d be lost. Family is home to me because even though I may have been born in Mexico, my home is where I have everything. This is where I have everything, and for that, I am blessed. Life can be hard, from watching people that surround you return to a life they had fled from, to having the one you love missing from your life. But at the end of the day, to have overcome so many struggles and kept going…that’s love. Family makes this place home, and home is where my story begins.
Art Alley, Downtown
Always Latina
As told to Raúl A. Torres

I was born in Mexico and I will never let go of that. My family and I immigrated here from Chihuahua, Mexico when I was 6 years old. The fact that I call Greeley home does not mean that I deny my roots. I will always be Latina. I still celebrate Mexican culture and what Mexicanos celebrate.

My parents started out in the fields in Mexico. I recall that when I was six years old I’d go out to the fields with my parents and they would be picking or planting onions and cucumbers and all of that. We looked to establish a home and my parents wanted to provide a better future for my siblings and I. My father has always had the hard worker mentality to make sure that our family was stable and always had what we needed. Not necessarily wealth, but just making sure we had good living conditions.

Family was always our main priority, and because of this, at a very young age I had to sacrifice playing sports or an instrument because I always had to go home to care for my younger siblings while my parents worked, which is the case with many immigrant families. Growing up, it was expected of us to go to school and get good grades because that’s what our parents brought us to this country for. I knew that I didn’t want to do any back-breaking work because I saw the struggles that my parents had to go through. I am the first and also the only one in my family to have gone to college and receive both a bachelor and master degree!

My first semester at UNC was very difficult and I just wanted to quit. I wanted to leave school and work so that I could help support my family, but I knew that for a better future it meant receiving a better education. My family was there to “support” me but there really wasn’t much that they could do to support me since they never experienced higher education. It wasn’t until I visited the Cesar Chavez Cultural...
Center on UNC’s campus that things started to feel a little better. The center is where I met my life mentor, my best friend, and now my supervisor! The center was somewhere that I could drop in and speak my language and “smell home” when anyone was cooking. Just being able to talk about problems and have someone to relate with was significant. I saw how important it was to have someone who looks like you in a space where you can find support. I don’t think I have assimilated and I don’t think I ever will assimilate, because to me, that is letting go of my culture. We still speak Spanish at home and I figured that if I taught my children Spanish they would be able to hold on to part of our heritage.

Other than family, another thing we have held on to is faith. My mom is a devout Catholic and a firm believer. She always took us to church and being part of that community always helped us feel like we belonged. To me, a community is a group of people who have shared values and beliefs. It could be individuals who identify as your allies, or individuals who come together for a common cause and support those who are in need. Community is those who you love and who you are willing to go the extra mile for.

I love giving back to my community and love helping people. We were at the center when we heard about the raid at the JBS plant here in Greeley. It was December 12th, 2006, which for us Latinos is a big deal because its el Dia de la Virgen Maria. In that situation, I was the “follower” because I’ve never been a protester because I’m kind of shy and reserved. During that time we did go and protest what was going on. The protests got us nowhere, they continued to place people in vans and buses and take them out. We got calls to the center to see if we could help because children’s parents were getting deported and there was nobody to pick them up from school.

We got involved with Al Frente de Lucha and would get names of children affected by the raids and get gifts for them. We would try to get things that they needed. It was devastating, the community was definitely hurt; they were broken. It definitely followed throughout the years because even after when people would hear, “que andaban las
redadas o que andaban los de ICE” people would shut down and retreat into their homes. Even individuals like myself, who have their documentation feared because during those raids they took even people who were documented but just didn’t have proof on them.

I believe there are small pockets of individuals trying to create change within different communities and trying to connect them and create unity. I still see a lot of hatred from certain communities towards others, but it is improving slowly. Especially as we get different restaurants popping up, I think people are definitely trying different foods and getting involved. That’s how you win people over, is with food! I like that, in the sense that, you’ll try their food and hopefully get to know the individual. I think we still have big steps to take and a long way to go, but Greeley is my home because my parents are here, my job is here, and my kids are here.

Notes
1. Day of the Virgin Mary
2. At The Fighting Front - anti-colonial organization dedicated to the struggle for the self-determination and liberation of all oppressed people.
3. “that there were raids or that there were people from ICE” (U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement)
Unity Through Diversity

As told to Nicole Temple

The first day I brought the kids down here we managed to find Glenmere Park. It was a beautiful fall day and I thought, “this is it”. It felt really wholesome. To me, community is a place where you feel comfortable living, playing and learning. I found a place of healing and belonging after a bad marriage. I now have people to rely on and trust; Why would I ever leave?

My then-boyfriend (now my husband) grew up in Greeley and kind of talked me into moving here. I was attracted to Greeley because it has such a diverse community. Especially coming from a homogenous community, Greeley had culture; it felt safe, a good place to raise my kids. I wanted them to be exposed to the different cultures and languages. I also loved the history, the deliberateness and thoughtfulness that went into building this community.

Talking about diversity reminds me of a funny story. I was looking for garlands to hang up at my wedding about a year ago. I thought it would look festive and fun. I went to every Mexican store, like the quinceañera stores, a few markets and I could not find any. No one had them. Most of the vendors were monolingual, and since I don’t speak Spanish, I took the liberty to take pictures to show them what I was looking for. Even though they did not have any garlands, everyone was still so nice and would refer me to someone else. Going to these markets reminded me of Mexican villages and I thought, “This is so cool and it’s right here”.

Yet besides all I had noticed about Greeley, it took me ten years to truly appreciate the Greeley community and all it had to offer. I belonged to my kid’s school and the UNC communities and that was it. Although we were a poor family who went to college, we did it! That was a wonderful time in my life. Now that my kids are grown up and I
work in Greeley, I appreciate the community more.

From my perspective I think the community is healthy, but I was a single white woman with certain privileges. As a single woman, it’s hard to be part of communities, but I felt safe and had an easier time in Greeley. However, if I was a Hispanic mom, I’m not sure I could say that I had the same opportunities and resources. I worry about that, and I don’t think we get enough opportunity to intermingle within one another. This causes a barrier that creates division within Greeley.

I had commuted to Denver to work for nine years, and now I work in Greeley. One of my jobs requires working with neighborhoods, such as helping them organize events, help clean-up, even helping with traffic problems, or noise issues. I just try to bring people together to solve problems. I mostly facilitate communication. I am very passionate about social justice and women’s issues; they don’t feel like work, but more of a calling. I have been a member of the League of Women Voters, a lobbyist for the homeless, I manage a community garden, volunteer for the elderly and individuals that are disabled who stay home.

My other job is with the Farmer’s Market. I was a consumer for about twenty years and am now managing the flow of the market. One thing I have noticed is that there are very few refugees that come to the market, although I’m not sure why. Perhaps they are intimidated with the variety of produce available and what to do with them if purchased.
Farmers, however, grow and sell based on what’s in demand. This is one area I would like to see improve.

Of course there are problems that need to be improved besides the expansion of produce, but for the most part, I believe people in Greeley want to live peacefully. There are stereotypes about Greeley, but it’s because people don’t know much about the city, besides the way it smells. The smell is always a problem due to the local dairy farms and meat packing plants. They’re a stinky business, but they are the largest employer of refugees, giving them a means to make a livable income and a community to belong to. So, like a lot of life, it’s the ying and yang.

I think people are just so fearful these days. We just need to turn off the TV and radios, walk outside, sit on our front porch and talk to people. We are living in a multicultural community so we need to put the money where our mouths are and really make this work. Kids are so wise and they just want to play together, and people could follow their example and talk together and interact. Interaction with one another could truly make the community a place where you feel comfortable living, playing and learning, just as it was for me.
Art Alley, Downtown
Centennial Village

Downtown, Greeley
Sarah’s Search for Identity
As told to Salima Jandali

If only I had dogs to play with,
People to share my worries with,
Family to keep me grounded,
Perhaps I would not have left Japan.
“Better life” beckoned us
But I felt unsafe,
Uncomfortable,
Anxious.

From place to place--
Utah, Parker, Greeley--
We searched for identity
But never found it,
Separated from the others by
Language and money and looks.

It took seven years
For Greeley to be our home,
For us to find comfort,
Community,
Happiness.

Now, content with our present
We immerse ourselves in the past,
Museums to give us images
Of the places we left behind,
Of memories we never lived,
Of those who feel the same.

Because we know how they feel,
Because they said goodbye,
Because alienation
Is a disease we can fight.
The memories came flooding back as soon as I stepped into the school building at the Centennial Village Museum in Greeley, Colorado. Even though the small classroom was supposed to represent school life for American children in the 20th century, it was impossible to overlook the similarities between American and Burmese schoolhouses. The strict teacher, the lack of books, or the messy chalk boards all reminded me of home as a child. However, the differences between school life in Burma and America are what truly surprised me. My school house in Burma was loud. All the children were packed into the same room and I could barely hear the lessons. The lessons were never fun anyways. There were no activities, just a constant state of memorizing and repeating. The schoolhouse was built out of trees and had a leaf roof, with only one wall. It felt so open and inviting. Schools in America felt much more closed off and unwelcoming, and I am not just talking about the walls.

The hardest decision I ever had to make was to decide to leave my home country and come to America. I often heard scary stories about life in United States. One brainwashed person told me that they eat people here. That was some scary stuff to hear, but Burma was dangerous and they were running out of jobs and food in the refugee camp. We had no other options. Many of my family and friends had to stay behind, and some of my family was assigned to different cities in the United States. I arrived in Aurora, Colorado with my parents and two siblings. I did not know a single person, I did not know the language, and I did not know the culture.
However, the worst part was trying to go to high school. I went to school on the first day and they handed me my schedule. When I went to school in Burma, we stayed in the same classroom for the whole day, so I never had to worry about changing classrooms before. I was so confused but I did not know how to ask for help. I wandered the school and never said a word. It was embarrassing. I sat next to other kids at school and they never talked to me either. No one tried to be friendly and I always ate lunch alone. Even though I was the only one in the whole school who would speak Burmese, and I barely knew how to say my name in English, no one tried to speak to me. Every week, I was forced to see an advisor in order to share my feelings. I wanted to tell them how sad I was and how I would cry often, but the only words I had learned how to say were “I’m fine.” Oh my God, it was such a lonely time in my life.

I lived in the same refugee camp on the border of Thailand and Cambodia for nine years while I waited for my refugee application to be approved. When you live in such close quarters with the same people for that long, you become very close with them. Everyone in my class was my friend and we did everything together. There was such a strong sense of community there and everyone shared everything they could. The country was going through a civil war. It completely unstable and dangerous, but I at least had family and friends.

I made another hard decision to go to college after high school. I decided to go to the University of Northern Colorado. I wanted to study human services so that I could help others who are struggling like I was when I first came to America. At first, I was nervous to change cities because my high school experience had been lonely and difficult. However, being in Greeley has been a better experience.

I finally found a place that I can call home. I have found
friends, who I now consider my family. Greeley has become a place where I finally feel like myself again. I enjoy going to school and I am studying to become an American citizen. I look forward to getting my citizenship so that I can legally change my name to A’Klay. The name “A’Klay” is a traditional version of my Burmese name from a Buddhist tribe called the Karen. People always ask me if it has any special meaning and they expect it to mean something nice. While the name I have chosen does not translate to any particular word, I think it’s a really cool name. It has special meaning to me and I feel it is a name that completes my identity. I will be so happy when it’s changed.

There has been so much change in my life, but I feel these changes are leading me in a positive direction. It was difficult coming to America and trying to find myself here. However, I have rediscovered a sense of community that I missed so much in Burma. Greeley has become my new home and I am happy I can build a new life here.
I was pretty into music growing up. After I got to high school, I started playing in rock band, and we won the “Battle of the Bands”. So after that I knew I wanted to be: a rock star. I moved to Greeley with my band in 2006. A couple of us were going to UNC, a couple of us were just working up here. We did the “Greeliest” thing you can do and moved into this big old house on 11th Avenue.

When I moved here, there weren't any concerts going on. The only nightlife around here were the house parties and stuff. Nightlife is obviously very important for a city to be an actual city, and I thought that it was really important to have live music at least as one facet of the nightlife scene. So I settled in and started playing shows here. What started as booking my own band turned into booking other peoples’ bands, and it was kind of an ongoing thing from that point.

I first started off doing concerts at my church building; they really helped me out. Then the church moved to the Atlas Theater. They bought this old rundown building, and it took about six to twelve months to renovate. We built a stage up high, put in some colorful, moving lights, and bam: it was ready for concerts. That was going well for a while, but then the city caught up to us; we didn't have a “Certificate of Occupation”. Whoopdy doo. A few months after we got started, they said, "You guys can't be doing concerts in here if you don't have proper fire alarms."

I definitely wasn't making money back then; it was just a passion. When you charge five dollars at the door and don't really sell concessions, it's pretty hard to pay the security, the sound guy, promotions, and the bands; actually, it’s nearly impossible.

Just a Tiny Little Scene
As told to Joanie Finch
So I went over to a friend of mine. They knew the guy that owned Wing Shack, Brian. We went over to Brian and talked to him a bit. That’s how I started doing my concerts at AF Rays, the little bar next door to Wing Shack. That was about the time I was turning 21, and I quickly learned that having a liquor license is a big part of the concert business (before I was at AF Rays, I was just selling soda pop to young kids). Things started to get a little more serious after that. AF Rays lasted about four years, then I graduated in 2012. The economy was pretty slow at that time. I did a few interviews and no one was really hiring, so it just didn't really work out.

In 2013, I had an opportunity to sign a lease for the Moxi. At that time, it was the recently defunct Union Colony Dinner Theater. UNC had expressed an interest in taking over the building for the arts department, which kind of sucked because it slowed down the process a little bit. But then UNC pulled out, and the Wing Shack guy, Brian, and I were able to convince the landlord to lease it to me! It was definitely intimidating. I had a small child at home and not really any money. It was a risk, but it finally seems to be paying off now.

The Block Party is one of my favorite events. It’s a big back-to-school event every fall. My friends from the Atlas Theater — Erick Long and Erik Riley — and I started that back in 2007. We wanted to put a concert on that really connected the community and the UNC kids. There’s this huge disconnect: UNC students don't like Greeley. Well, at least they didn’t ten years ago. We thought, "How do we get them excited about the city they live in?" It was a challenge, since at that time, there was a stigma that no shows or anything fun was happening in Greeley. We thought, "We’re going to have a Street Fest and we’re going to have all these cool bands come and play."

It’s a really fun event and it gets more and more rewarding every year. We had a huge one this year! We had the band 888 out there, and we had The Burroughs and The Unlikely Candidates. Next
year will be the tenth year, so that should be exciting.

One time we had Tickle Me Pink show up right before they signed their contract with Wind Up Records, which was kind of a big deal. I remember one of the local reggae bands throwing eggs at Tickle Me Pink while they were playing. It was definitely a DIY, first-set sort of thing. We had a tiny little stage with no lights, and the power was cutting in and out. No one got hurt or anything, but it was a lot of fun.

In the first few years, we really saw exponential growth. It was really cool to watch. Before, it had been a slow growing process, but once I got the Moxi, it was full throttle. We've been able to bring some really fantastic acts. We've had Pepper here, and we've had Boombox, Afroman, and Sno the Product.

This week, we got The Burroughs. They're a home-grown, Greeley band. I definitely get a lot of enjoyment out of local bands like Silver and Gold and The Burroughs. In The Whale played, too; they're a band from Denver, but he's one of the dudes that started the Block Party with me. It’s really cool watching them succeed as a band. They moved to Denver in 2013, and now they're touring like 200 dates a year. They're actually making it! That makes me realize that it’s no longer a tiny little scene, here in Greeley.
Doing Both?
As told to Betty Gebregzabheir

Life can be planned to an extent, but interests change. Change… If anyone asked me a year back if I would have been a wife to someone or even a mother, I would have chuckled. With many different ways I could have went with my life, I picked one of the hardest but most rewarding jobs. The blessing of being a mother is one thing and the privilege of being an attorney is another. My whole life, the idea of being one with someone was never something I imagined to do. The idea of marriage, children, and law school never occurred to me in my future plans. A husband and a baby later, I can say that it was the best thing I did not plan. The things I least expected turn out to be the most rewarding gifts in life. As I became a mother, I decided in that moment that I would keep my work life and my social life very separate. Once I became a mother, I learned the task of balancing my work life and my obligations as a mother. I am a mother first and an attorney second. I had this precious little baby boy and big attorney dreams.

After working at a juvenile detention facility for a few years, I enrolled at the University of Colorado, Boulder to attend law school and help those young children even more. Years later, I am working a job that allows me to serve the community as an attorney, and I am even still able to see the students from the facilities as their attorney. With the blessing of only working four days a week, I am able to be with my son and the community much more. Being a part of the Greeley community is a blessing I would never give up. Coming from California, I never expected to be in such a little town, but I now realize that Greeley is home. I
have gotten the opportunity to help with the building of the Atlas Theater. The Atlas is a theater and coffee shop -- many days and dollars have been spent at this wonderful place. Every Sunday, my son and I attend church service at the theater, and then I spend the rest of my time with him in the coffee shop. I love the fact that I can let my son run wild at the shop with no thought of losing him. Everyone has become family in this community; never do I fear that my son will get kidnapped with all our family watching over him.

Being an attorney was the best decision I ever made for myself, and with an amazing firm that I work for, I am able to grow professionally much sooner than I would have expected. I work for a woman who owns her own practice; in the future, she is expecting to retire, which allows me to be in her position. Before accepting the position with her firm, I was given a position in Washington, DC as an attorney. This position would have allowed me to be financially secure and allow my husband to stay at home with our son. Knowing I would be a very distant wife and mother, I turned that position down. I could not leave my family to grow without a strong mother role. Plus, I would have missed my Greeley community very much.

The birth of my son made me change as a person, and it made me realize how valuable I can be. Being a very open spirit, I found myself slowly being less open to things for the sake of my son. But, with the best community here in Greeley, I do feel that I have many eyes watching over my son, which lets me relax in most situations. Having most of my life planned out, I never imagined having my own child, but now I cannot imagine life without my beautiful son. Having my son is the most rewarding gift life gave me.
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Chapungu Park
It’s the Passion
As told to Randi Olson

We started putting on a block party a few years ago. It was a strong way to build culture in our community. Eight to ten thousand people would show up, which is crazy for a small town like Greeley. We were able to hire local bands, and people dipped in and out of the bars and shops while the bands got to play for them. But the last year we did it, it got pretty out of hand: the party ended up spilling into neighborhoods, and the police came. Fights broke out, people got tazed, and now we don’t have the block party anymore. Currently, there’s not much community building going on in town, which is a shame.

I moved to Greeley when I was eighteen to go to school. I was a voice major and ended up putting a band together with some of my other music major friends. Tin Man is what we were called. We played around, and it was fun; nowadays, you won’t find as many local bands. It’s hard, and it’s always been hard, but now there’s only a few places that will give new bands gigs. The music culture in town has been declining, just like the general communal atmosphere of Greeley.

I find local music interesting because you can talk to the person who created it. Mainstream music has a lot of great musicians, but the problem is that by the time that music reaches your ears, it’s been heavily packaged. While it’s great in the sense that each person involved in a song can take their time, go back, and perfect their part, it’s not great when the meaning of the song gets lost. When the music reaches the audience, it’s a pretty overwrought piece of art: fifty to seventy people have each had their hands on it.
Greeley can be boring, and if there’s nothing for middle schoolers and high schoolers to do with their musical talents except concert band and pep band, they never really take ownership. Places like the Moxi are great about letting new bands play there. They’ll turn the lights on for you and make you really feel like you’re doing a performance. There may not be a lot of people there, but you get the chance to hear yourself through a professional sound system instead of a speaker set up in someone’s dorm room or garage. The problem now is that people are not starting bands at the rate that local businesses would like them to be. Who cares if a band sucks or not? It’s the passion that’s important.
EVERYTHING IN THE UNIVERSE HAS A RHYTHM
Music is powerful!

A celebration with us at HAPPY times and comforts us in bad times.

It has comfort with a canvas of emotions that are hard to be known and can’t stay silent.

Music expresses what our heart feels when our minds can’t find words.

It goes inside of our very souls, creating places within the noise of life.

It transcends us to new places with new disappointments.

We can get caught up in SONGS BLUES and exercises when we surrender to it.

Music is for all COLOURS, all sets, all cultures, all generations.

It’s real, it’s and will always be ALIVE!

Even nature, wind and waves have their own melodies.

It makes us when in a crowd enjoy or is a companion when alone.

Music makes us... "we can feel it all way."
Remembrance of a Legacy
As told to Tessa Smith

The speed at which a place closes up after you’re gone is scary, regardless of what you might have done during your time there. It just doesn’t even matter.

None of it really matters. And, you know, my uncle on my mother’s side was Glenn Miller. He was actually inducted into the Colorado Music Hall of Fame at the University in Boulder a few years back. I took a trip over there one time to try and see the collection, but when we got there, the student working there didn’t know anything about Glenn Miller, and honestly, we barely even got in to see the exhibit. I can’t imagine not knowing who Glenn Miller was, and disregarding the fact that he was my uncle, he was a man who left a legacy across the nation. There’s something pretty indescribable when you realize how little people remember you when you’re gone. That feeling I experienced when I realized this was, well, it was shocking. You’re forgotten mighty fast.

Realizing that someone like Glenn Miller could be reduced to the memories of few people at such a quick and quiet pace really shaped the perspective I had of my own father’s contributions to his workplace and even perhaps his own legacy. Growing up watching him design and paint sets for his shows really helped cultivate a personal love for artistic experiences throughout my own life. He was a professor at what is now known as the University of Northern Colorado. As the youngest son, I remember different parts of my father’s involvement with the university. With that, I have come to realize the fleeting nature of remembering and how pretty much, as soon as you’re
gone, your connections and contributions are swept out into the vast space of forgotten moments.

It was with these thoughts in my head that I made another trip to the University of Northern Colorado’s archives. Several years back I had dropped off some of things at the archive’s office that my father had used during his time as a professor. I visited and just left the staff with several big garbage bags full of some of his paintings, his manuscript, and slides of his theatre sets, because that was the only conveyance I had. I knew this was what needed to be done, that a university would be the most apt place where these things could be stored, at least for a while.

So, right after my uncle’s induction, I had some additional things I wanted to drop off at the archives and I went down to the basement of Michener Library and low and behold, on the wall were some of my father’s paintings! And mind you, the staff had no idea I was coming, no idea at all, and yet I walked into that library and the first thing I saw were my dad’s paintings on the wall. My first thought was, “My God, it can’t be true! The right people are aware!” And you know what, it isn’t just about my dad, who happened to make a contribution here—as I’m sure hundreds and hundreds of people do—but it’s involvement and working for an institution that values what you do. What a legacy.

Legacy. What a strange thing. What does it mean if you contribute so much to a community and a place but then, once you’re gone, space closes like a vice around any memory of that contribution? Who’s to say any one person’s contributions are any greater, or more worthy of remembrance than anyone else? I’ve traveled to many places over the course of my life, and in each, I’ve been able to find connections because of my father’s legacy. The love I have for art and expression I have because of
his work and involvement in the school. How do you hold a space open for someone who’s not around anymore but, for at least you and some others, really did make a contribution worthy of remembrance to the community around them?

Although change has happened in many of my experiences, in my life, and definitely in Greeley, ultimately this is a great place to come back to. I learned a lot here, and the time I spent here has definitely helped shape me. Besides experiencing that there are people out there who actually care, I also learned that no matter what, you take yourself with you when you go elsewhere. You take your appreciations and talents and values with you, which make you confident that you can change and find soil where these things can root wherever you go. And that is very comforting.
I've lived in Greeley for my whole career — came here in 1999 and graduated from the residency program in 2002. I've been the sole wage earner my whole career, which wasn't really the plan, but my husband just hasn't found his niche. In Greeley, that's a decent lifestyle, one professional — half income is adequate for us to maintain a lifestyle that is very comfortable for me. And I come from California, where it takes two full professional incomes just to have the comforts of any kind of real estate, so a place where I can keep my dogs, good schools for the kids, and letting them play sports and piano all on a half-income is great. It's been delightful to be in Greeley for that reason.

I'm at the point where my oldest child is a junior in high school; we're looking at having her in our home for another year and a half, which is just terrifying because she is my kiddo who has required the most intervention. She wasn’t diagnosed with ADD until third grade; then in sixth grade, we received the full diagnosis of Asperger's Syndrome, ADHD, oppositional defiant disorder, a verbal tic, and right now I have her in treatment for anxiety. Unfortunately, most of the help we've gotten has been from Fort Collins. We drive there for her social skills program even though we have PhD educational psych right here in Greeley.

My middle guy is a state champion level swimmer. He swims year round with the Greeley Loveland Swim Club. They come to Greeley because we have a competition-level pool, but everything else is over in Loveland. We drive over to Loveland three or four times a week for him to swim, so that's not so good. Again, living in Greeley is tough because we're far from
Loveland, but because we live here and my husband doesn't have to maintain a full time job, we have the freedom to do that. Greeley has given us that gift of being able to support our swimmer. And then my little guy, he's really talented in a lot of ways. He said “I want to play flute,” so I found a flute teacher in Greeley. It turns out she is a Suzuki certified instructor! We went over to her house and started flute lessons. Now my youngest is in the middle of book two, and he's tremendous.

During the time that we have been in Greeley, we have seen a huge improvement in all the things that I selfishly enjoy about my culture: the downtown music scene. It has come along so much! I've always wanted to do house concerts, and I've just started to be connected with people who organize them. I work hard to try to meet people in Greeley and do stuff here.

I wasn't planning on just doing private practice family medicine for my whole career. All family doctors treat a lot of anxiety and depression. I maybe treat a little bit more because of my interest. One reason I was interested in psychiatry was that when I was a young adult my brother, who's my only sibling, became severely mentally ill and was diagnosed with bipolar disorder, bipolar I, and really has schizoaffective disorder. He had his first big manic episode while he was in grad school in California working on his PhD in Electrical Engineering Computer Science and ended up hospitalized for three weeks. He was able to go back to school but never could finish his PhD. He was able to work for a while until 9/11. After 9/11, all the dotcoms shut down and the economy in California really took a dive, so he spent some time on disability. It's really miserable to be young, depressed and on disability. He did go back to work in 2005, and for a few years, he worked in the Bay Area and was functional.

He died by suicide in 2007. That's been a big part of my life. Initially, when he got sick and got well again, I was convinced that
psychiatry is real: there are real psychiatric illnesses, and psychiatry can take someone who is psychotic, render them able, and send them back to work. It was amazing watching what psychiatry could do for my brother. In the long run, he needed psychiatry.

He also needed other systems in place that we were never able to achieve. A young single male, how do you get him the social support that he needs to be okay? We couldn't do it for him, but there's a lot of people who aren't as sick as he was and who can still benefit from these systems. In Greeley, those systems of care are limited. We don't have enough psychiatrists. And if you're on Medicaid, you have to go through North Range, and those docs will see you for five minutes once a month. You get tired of that, and you don't go if you're a young single male trying to work.

As a family doc who does psych, it's been amazing to be able to offer psych services and to be able to diagnose and treat anxiety, depression, and some bipolar disorder — not everybody of course. I get to do well person psych. Whenever a new person is too sick for me to manage, I can say, "I need you to see a psychiatrist," and I can try to make it happen at that point. Of course, there's not great access to psychiatry, so I can't guarantee that they get to see someone.

My brother passed away in June, so my family usually spends that week of June together every year. Two years ago, my dad wrote to tell me that he and my mom were going to be in Spain, so we couldn't get together during that time. I said, "Oh! Well, you should invite my daughter for a trip with you one time before she leaves home!" They were doing a walking tour of an historic pilgrimage route across northern Spain. Usually pilgrims do it while carrying everything and going from hostel to hostel. The group they were with would drop them off, pick them up, take them to nice hotels, and arrange their meals for them, so it was a lot nicer.

While they were there, I got a phone call from the director
of the tour saying, “I don't know if you realized this, but these people are not competent to travel by themselves. Your dad has become very confused; he can't remember where we're going. I have to write everything down for him. This is not okay." So I'm like “they’re there with my 15-year-old autistic daughter…”

We got them home safely through arranging various kinds of supervision, and my dad went right to his doctors and was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s. He's a Ph.D. engineer — very smart problem solving kind of a guy, so he recognized that they needed to move to Greeley. That worked well for the first year, but in September, my mom suffered a fall and had a massive acute subdural hematoma. She's in Gracepoint in recovery, and she is wheelchair bound.

Losing my brother was probably the worst thing that's happened to me, but having my dad diagnosed with this sent me on an existential freefall such as I have never experienced before. I've been glad that they moved to Greeley, and I've been glad to spend time with them. But, mixing them with my kids, who are kind of needy and high-stress, never really works well. What can we do? Their apartment is pretty small; our house is pretty chaotic. My conclusion is that we need to buy a seven-person multigenerational house. I'm not sure if that's the wisest thing. I don't know. But that's the only way I can see that I'm not going to be absolutely torn apart.

I wish that they had come a little bit sooner and in time to buy a little house that would have worked for them forever, but now I can't put them in a house by themselves. They really wish they could have a house by themselves, too.
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What is snow, you might ask?
Pretty, cold, and hard.
Yes, to drive in.
In Myanmar there is no snow.
I saw snow in a refugee camp.
Thought, “Oh my God,”
Americans might make us a snow cone.
Maybe I can just grab it and eat it.
For us who live where it snows,
it is simply snow.
For others, a mystery.
Not taking for granted,
little things in life that give us joys or sorrow.
We had a dictator in our country,
We all are pretty poor,
our houses burned,
mines blew up.
A new experience in Colorado
Some people are nice.
Some people are mean,
Screaming, “Stay off our grass!”
When all the children want to do is play.
Different cultural views in this nation.
Don’t lose sight of others around us,
Be open and welcoming,
Remember the unity.
Remember the snow.
Halimo and I

As told to Codee Pfleiderer

The one thing I feel very strongly about is that every citizen must have command of our language: English. We grow up with it, we speak it, we write it, and we read it. And every refugee and immigrant needs to know it if they’re going to succeed. If they’re going to be able to reach out and grab that American dream they’ve got to have control of that language.

I grew up with people of other cultures in my life back in California. That changed when we moved here to Greeley, where there were not as many immigrants. At that time, Greeley was mostly a farming community, with a lot of German background within the area. Obviously though in the last decade, we’ve had an influx of refugees and immigrants travel to Greeley. And I wanted to reach out to this community in the best way that I could.

I work, so I don’t have a lot of free time to help as many individuals as I would like. I work for Animal Health International, which is owned by Patterson Companies, a Fortune 500 company. After they purchased us a year and a half ago, they closed down a corporate office in Massachusetts that handled their vet portion of their corporation, and they moved most of those functions here to Greeley. So, I manage a lot of account services for the animal division, such as managing licensing and sales tax for the entire animal site of the corporation.

But, I found some time to volunteer. When I went to help with some of the refugees, I was paired up with this little gal named Halimo. Before coming to America, she had lived in a refugee camp in Kenya for her entire life. She knew nothing but a refugee camp until she came here. When I met her, she was
married and had a little girl, and she wanted to learn how to speak English. She had gone through some initial English courses when she first arrived, but she was working at JBS, which limited the amount of time for more classes. JBS is the meat packing and distribution plant here within Greeley. It’s a big part of our community, and it employs a lot of the local refugees. With the limited resources that many refugees have here in the United States, it’s one of the few places they can obtain employment while having very little grasp of our language.

Halimo wanted somebody to come to her home and help her with English to prepare for the citizenship test. She and her husband had been doing well in their citizenship classes, but she felt like she really needed additional help with the naturalization tests. I was tasked with going to her home twice a week to help her with her English. She asked me if we could just focus on the test for a while because she was so afraid that she wouldn’t be able to write for the test; you have to write some sentences, read and answer these questions, that kind of stuff. So we’ve really just been focusing on helping her with her writing, reading, and American History content.

Working with Halimo has made a large impact on my life. She’s awesome; I love having the chance to meet with her at home. Now that I know someone from this community, I’ve gained a connection to it. Now when I see someone in a Burka or a hijab, I see Halimo. Instead of seeing the images on TV of people shouting about death to America, I see Halimo. And I see her husband, and I see people I know personally. And I hear her little girl calling me “grandma” in Somali. Halimo has changed my view of all of it.

Suddenly, you’re like, “She’s no different from me. She’s so proud of the fact that her daughter is an American citizen.” I asked her why she wanted to be a citizen. She goes, “I love this country!” You know, it just changes your view on them. They’re just like us: they want to live in peace, and they want their children to have an opportunity.
In some ways, Greeley has done well trying to embrace the refugee and immigrant populations, and in other ways, we’ve just put our heads in the sand and ignored it. I don’t know that as a community we’ve done a good job embracing them. Everybody has their own talking points on the refugee population to scare everybody, right? So whatever side you’re on, you’ve got your talking points.

What I hear is people saying, “They’re taking our jobs.” What I say is, “Really? Would you work on the kill floor at JBS? I would love to see you do that. I would like to see you out there in the fields pulling weeds, because I don’t think you would be doing those jobs. They are not taking our jobs! They are taking the only jobs available to them when you can’t understand the language. If JBS closes down because nobody works there, it affects our community drastically in a negative way.

My hope and my dream is that we as a community can reach out to the refugee communities as a whole and convince them that we care about them, that we want to see them succeed in our community. We don’t just want them to continue working in the fields or at JBS. We want them to succeed like I want my children to succeed. I hope that we’ve found a way to give them what they need to succeed with language. They have to have it.
Halimo would love to have another job. Sadly, I can’t hire her because she doesn’t have command of English; otherwise, I would hire her in a heartbeat. Language is absolutely the gateway, and we as a community can better ourselves by helping them through that gateway. With English, they can get better jobs, and buy homes, and pay property taxes. It would make them totally committed to the community because they would then be a part of it; that’s what we need to figure out how to do. So hopefully in ten years, we are further along with that than we are now. But I think it will take a lot of work. I feel like there are so many people in Greeley that are committed to it, but the general populace just doesn’t care. They don’t see it as impacting them directly, and I think if — say, 20 years from now — we don’t figure out how to do this, we’ll have some of the same problems that the European countries and just pull away. And I don’t want that happening to anyone like Halimo.
One Day at a Time
As told to Jessie Mitchell
I would say it started in the year 2000, when my niece called me and told me my mom had fallen. By the time I got to my niece’s, where my mom was staying, she had already been taken to the hospital. I went to the hospital, and the doctors told me she did not have long to live. So, I called my brothers and sisters and told them to get to Greeley. She made it through the night. And many more nights after that.

After a while, she had bed sores, and her kidneys were not doing very well because she hadn’t been doing anything since my father died. She had been very depressed. She stayed in the Greeley hospital for about two weeks before they moved her to Aurora, where she stayed for a couple of months. I remember making the trip to Denver a couple of times a week. I didn’t get any help or support from anyone, so I had to do everything on my own. Later, she was sent to South Denver to a nursing home that doubled as a rehab facility. She couldn’t stay there. She was not a permanent resident. We went back to Greeley.

I found Kent Manor where she stayed for four years. She would do well and then regress and repeat. Eventually, she ended up back in the hospital. In 2005, my uncle — her last living sibling — and I went to the hospital to visit her. On October 10, her doctor told us she had six months to a year to live. I told myself that there was no way in hell she had that long to live. But I didn’t tell anybody that. I told my siblings, nieces, and nephews exactly what the doctor had said and that if they wanted to spend time with her, then they should do it now.

She passed away thirty days later.

My father has never been in the picture, so my mom and I were very close. And while I have four other siblings, I got no help from them in anything. I had to plan the funeral, and I had to pay for everything. Everything is always on me, and everyone expects it. That made it even harder to lose her.
And it has never gotten better. It has been 11 years since her passing. Every day is hard, but November 9 is always the toughest. Still, I have learned to just deal with it. Some days are better than others.

Eight months or so go by before I get another phone call.

My epileptic nephew was home alone on this particular day. He was cooking. He loved to cook. While the food was getting ready, he decided that he wanted to take a quick shower. During his shower, he had a seizure and fell out. His head hit the ground, and he suffocated on the bathroom floor. They found him between the shower and the toilet.

His younger brother, maybe 15 years old, came home, saw smoke pouring out of the house, and got inside. He found his older brother’s body in the bathroom. He had just celebrated his 21st birthday.

I remember getting the news. I had met up with an old buddy from college at a Rockies game. We were about to be seated to eat some food. I remember getting the call and hearing my sister ramble on, but I couldn’t really understand. I eventually heard her say her son had passed away. I left immediately, but I don’t remember the drive back to Greeley.

I always try to keep my family tight. It has always been something I had to do. I am the only one of five kids who graduated, so everyone expects me to decide what to do and what not to do.

Some days are better than others.

**Text Message Received**
As told to Marissa Pacheco

About a year ago—well, a little less than a year ago, in May of last year, there was this new cadet on patrol and he was just about to graduate cadet school. He was in the car with another patrolman, coincidentally whose father I worked with in the Sheriff’s department. Well, both of them were hit while trying to stop a suspect during a high speed chase. The new, just about to graduate, cadet was hurt. His name was Taylor, but they called him T-Fo. There was a lot of media stuff about what happened, and I didn’t… Well, I don’t want to say I didn’t pay attention to it because that doesn’t sound right, but I guess I really didn’t. I didn’t know him, but I knew of him. I knew it was a tragedy, and I knew it was a new kid that got hurt. That’s all.

Probably a month later, maybe a little more than that, I got a new phone for work with a new number. I didn’t think anything about it: I mean, why should I? Until I started getting these weird texts:

*Text Message Received*
Unknown:
I love you

*Text Message Received*
Unknown:
I miss you

I didn’t recognize the number so I just didn’t say anything. I told my wife, but we just kept going on about our business. It was quiet for a few days.

*Text Message Received*
Unknown:
Hey kid, I miss you
*Text Message Received*
Unknown:
I just really wish I could talk to you.

*Text Message Received*
Unknown:
I wish you could come home.

Now I thought, “this is obviously a person who’s really missing someone right now, it must be a soldier and the person texting must be their father.” I don’t know why I thought that. I went to my wife and talked about possibly texting back. I just hoped this person’s son would let them know they’re okay. Then it happened again:

*Text Message Received*
Unknown:
I want you home. The urge to text you is strong tonight. I miss you. So much. I just want to see you feel you and hear you. I don’t want you gone from me. I’ll never understand why kid! I hope your [sic] doing well. I don’t really know how I can do life without you.

This time I texted back right away, and let this person finally know who I was. The person texted back telling me she was T-Fo’s mom. As soon as I saw that, I thought, “Oh God, I know who he is.” The new number I had gotten for work was the number T-Fo had grown up with. That’s how I figured out what the texts were about.

He was killed at the scene telling a tow truck driver to, “get out of the way,” so he wouldn’t be hit by the suspect. That tow truck driver got to go home to his little one. Meanwhile, she was texting the number of her own little one, begging for a response or a sign. I wasn’t the response she wanted, but I think she was glad
there was a life on the other end. Someone listening. A friendship blossomed.

I guess the reason this is all so important is because… I’ll be 60 years old this next March, and I’ve been a police officer for 34 years. Before all of this happened, I planned to retire by age 60. I didn’t care that I would have to work two jobs afterwards just to support my family, I was done. I fell into the stereotypical, cynical, “cop mode”. You know, it’s just one thing after another. It’s always our fault, “We can’t do anything right,” but then I started thinking about it, and it was like, “this kid was talking to me.”

I think that’s why that connection impacted me so strongly. It was because that’s not the way that Taylor looked at it. Taylor looked at it fresh, new, exciting, and I’d already done all that and looked at it for a long time in my early years, but I had done this for so long that I just didn’t see it that way anymore. Taylor reminded me why I got into this job in the first place, and it’s a really great career.

Even when I wake up to go to the gym. I’ll say, “I’m not going today, I’m just going to blow it off,” and he pops in my head like, “No, no, no, no, we got to go, we got to go.” He loved the gym and that kind of stuff. It’s like his young spirit is keeping me alive and keeping me working, but more importantly he reminds me why I want to be a police officer in the first place.

Taylor reminded me of the very, very first time I was a police officer and worked patrol; mingling and interacting with the public every day. And that’s really what being a police officer is all about.

In a way, he’s both a lightning rod and a grounding rod. He’s kind of a saint.

*Text Message Received*
Anthropology 408 Scholars - Spring 2017

Anthropology 300 Scholars - Fall 2016

Photographers:

Kayla Anders
Alondra Carranza Arroyo
Joan Finch

Natalia Henselman
Marissa Pacheco
Kelsey Rogers
Two Semester Scholars
Students who participated for the entire academic year of 2016-2017

Undergraduate Students
Kayla Anders
Ryan DeMuth
Joan Finch
Natalie Hatcher
Salima Jandali
Briana King
Randi Olson
Marissa Pacheco
Kelsey Rogers
Adam Swanson
Raúl Torres
Cierra Wilkerson

Faculty
Patricia Jolly

Graduate Student
Tyler Bedell
Holly Zell-Irell

One Semester Scholars
Students who participated for one semester during the academic year of 2016-2017

Undergraduate Students
Alondra Carranza Arroyo
Kitsya Cordova
Jennifer Durbin
Jack Fuqua
Betty Gebregzabheir
Kiana Green
Taryn Hall
Shelby Hart
Natalia Henselman
Abby Hopper

Julia King
James Letchworth
Jessie Michell
Janae Miller
Codee Pfleiderer
Nadia Rascon
Tessa Smith
Nicole Temple
Felicity Valdez
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Carissa Walker
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Department of Anthropology, University of Northern Colorado

Office of Development and Alumni Relations, University of Northern Colorado

Office of Community & Civic Engagement, University of Northern Colorado

Campus Compact of the Mountain West

The Facing Project

The Kress Theater, Greeley

Chipotle, Greeley

Roma Restaurant, Greeley

Cafe Mexicali, Greeley

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