Global Teaching and Learning Fellows 2025 Essays

Our Big Question:

How do we show up as educators in places not necessarily home to us - with students both like and unlike us, as well as local residents - all of us with our own fears and desires, to create meaningful engagements that positively shape our shared future?

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Christina Chi Zhang

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Ethical Entanglement: Teaching in a Fractured World

As an architectural educator, much of my teaching unfolds in post-traumatic contexts. My work asks students to engage with spaces shaped by war, displacement, and the long, unfinished work of recovery. We discuss cities that have witnessed genocide, neighborhoods uprooted by gentrification, and communities navigating the daily violence of exile. In these spaces, architecture is never just about construction or aesthetics—it becomes deeply entangled with human suffering, survival, and hope. Teaching in this terrain often raises an uncomfortable question: is it our responsibility as educators to prepare students to be ethical human beings, especially in a world where violence and conflict continue to sever the threads that bind us?

Last year, I led a group of students to Bosnia, a country still healing from the war that tore apart the Balkans in the 1990s. Many of these students arrived with limited exposure to global conflict, carrying assumptions shaped by distance, privilege, and unfamiliarity. The expected to study buildings and analyze urban histories. But what ultimately transformed them were not the buildings, but the people they met—survivors who shared their stories, activists still fighting for justice, and communities carrying both pain and resilience. My students listened, questioned their assumptions, and sat in silence after hearing stories that unsettled them. They returned home changed—not because they had mastered a new design technique, but because they had glimpsed what it means to encounter histories not their own, and to carry those stories with care.

It was not until my participation in the GLTF fellowship in Guanajuato that I began to fully articulate what had long been present in my teaching. Through conversations with colleagues from literature, Africana Studies, Indigenous Studies, Health, and even mathematics, I realized that while our disciplines differ, many of us wrestle with the same underlying challenge: beyond the subject matter, how do we also teach students to become better human beings? How do we help them cultivate sensitivity, humility, and responsibility toward people and places they may never fully know? In those discussions, I recognized a practice I had been building but had not yet named: ethical entanglement.

To me, ethical entanglement is the idea that we can—and must—cultivate connections to people, places, and histories that are not directly our own. It is not about ownership, nor about claiming belonging where we do not belong. Rather, it is an active practice of proximity: a commitment to approach, listen, witness, and hold space for stories that might otherwise remain abstract, invisible, or distant to us. In the context of architecture, it means teaching students to approach every site—especially those marked by trauma—not as detached observers, but as participants in an ongoing human narrative. Even when they design for places they may never visit, or communities they are not part of, they are ethically entangled in global structures that shape how space is made, who has access to it, and who is left out.

This work feels increasingly urgent in today's global climate. Wars, genocides, and many other forms of structural violence continue to redraw the maps of exile and belonging. Forced displacement and political violence constantly disrupt the fabric of cities, further fragmenting our shared human bonds. In these moments, architecture has a dual role: it can either participate in the erasure of histories and communities, or it can become a tool of resistance, remembrance, and repair. I want my students to understand that they are never neutral actors in these processes. Their drawings, decisions, and designs carry the weight of histories, even when unspoken.

Thinking back, one moment from the Bosnia trip with my students has stayed with me. I remember that on the last day of the trip, one student spent the entire afternoon sitting quietly at the corner of a small plaza, watching a group of children kick a soccer ball toward passing elders. He wept. Upon returning, he designed one of the most sensitive and thoughtful projects I have seen, later telling me he would never forget what it means to design for life. This, to me, is ethical entanglement in practice.

I do not believe that my students need to belong to these histories to feel responsible for them. The point is not to collapse differences, or to pretend we all share the same wounds.

The point is to hold space for connection even across distance, to resist the severing power of war, displacement, and indifference. It is not always comfortable, and it demands continual reflection on our own positions of privilege and limits of understanding. But in making this effort, we refuse the easy detachment that global violence invites.

The GLTF conversations helped me articulate why I insist on bringing these difficult histories into my classroom. In many ways, the classroom is where this practice begins. It is where students can encounter complexity without seeking immediate resolution. It is where they learn to sit with discomfort, to listen deeply, and to recognize that knowledge is relational. The conversations I had during the GLTF fellowship reaffirmed my commitment to create such classrooms—spaces where global learning is not simply about content, but about cultivating ethical relationships with the world. It is an invitation for our students (and for ourselves) to stay connected, to approach others with care, and to carry the stories we encounter with responsibility and respect.

Hsuan-Wei "Wayne" Lee

Hsuan-Wei "Wayne" Lee is an Assistant Professor at Lehigh University's Department of Biostatistics and Health Data Science.

From Models to Meaning: Building Human Connections Through Global Teaching

I've spent most of my career building mathematical models and computer simulations to understand how people behave, how diseases spread through populations, and how health systems respond under pressure. My models predict epidemic curves, simulate intervention strategies, and forecast health outcomes across diAerent scenarios. As someone from Taiwan now teaching in the U.S., I'm used to crossing boundaries—between disciplines, between cultures, between the clean certainty of computational models and the messy unpredictability of human experience. But there's one thing I can't code into an algorithm, and it keeps me up at night: How do you show up as a teacher in a place that isn't yours, with students who may look nothing like you, and create something that actually matters?

This question hits me because so much of what I do involves working with uncertainty and incomplete data. In my simulations, I can adjust parameters, run sensitivity analyses, and test edge cases. But when I'm teaching students from dozens of countries or working on projects in communities where I'm clearly the outsider, there's no Monte Carlo method for figuring out how to be helpful without being presumptuous. What I've learned is that good teaching isn't really about having all the variables defined—it's about building relationships based on genuine curiosity and care, much like how the best models emerge from understanding the underlying system dynamics, not just fitting curves to data points.

The Global Teaching and Learning Fellows program appealed to me because it tackled both the immediate and the bigger picture. There was the immediate stuff: walking through Guanajuato's narrow

streets, hearing Spanish conversations float past, watching people's faces when they encountered something completely new. I remember one evening when our group sat with local educators discussing how they navigated resource constraints in their classrooms—their creative solutions reminded me that the most elegant models often emerge from working within real-world limitations rather than idealized conditions. But there was also the harder work of asking ourselves what we were really doing there. What power do I carry as an educator? How do I make sure we're not just academic tourists, extracting experiences for our own growth? How do I teach students to really listen to other people's stories without turning them into simple lessons?

In my computational work, I'm always pushing students to think beyond the numbers. When we model disease transmission, I ask: whose contact networks are we mapping? When we simulate health interventions, whose behaviors are we assuming? When we build agent-based models, whose decision-making processes are we encoding? These aren't just technical questions—they're fundamentally about power, representation, and whose reality gets captured in our code. The GTLF experience helped me extend this critical approach to place-based learning and brought those insights back to both my computational research and my teaching. I also hope I contributed something meaningful to the group. My background spans computational epidemiology, network science, health systems modeling, and several other fields where simulation meets social reality. I've gotten pretty good at debugging not just code, but the assumptions embedded in our models. That kind of critical debugging—questioning whose perspectives are built into our systems and whose are missing—is where everything starts. It's how you become a guest instead of a tourist, a learner instead of someone who just extracts data points.

I was genuinely energized by experiencing Mexico in a way that went beyond the abstractions I usually work with. In my computational models, I can simulate thousands of different scenarios, but there's something irreplaceable about ground-truth data—about actually being in a place, seeing how systems work in practice, watching how theoretical frameworks play out in real communities. For many of my students, this kind of immersive learning will be completely new. Some have never left the country, others have never been in a classroom where they're the minority, and most are used to learning about the world through screens and datasets rather than direct experience. These encounters with reality stick with people in ways that simulations can't, especially when you do the computational equivalent of good experimental design— careful preparation beforehand and thorough analysis afterward. I left this seminar with practical ways to connect micro-experiences to macro-patterns, to

design learning experiences with the same intentionality I bring to experimental design, and to support students who come from all kinds of backgrounds—including those who, like me, are more comfortable with code than with ambiguity. These aren't just teaching techniques—they're acts of care that ensure global learning isn't something that happens to students, but something they actively participate in and learn from. Just like how the best models don't just describe systems but help us understand how to change them for the better.

The truth is, I don't have this all figured out—and that's okay. In computational modeling, we're always working with incomplete information, making our best estimates, and staying open to revising our assumptions when new data comes in. I brought that same intellectual humility to global teaching during the GTLF experience: doing the work, asking the hard questions, and showing up ready to learn. That's what I brought to GTLF, and it's what I took back to my students—along with a better understanding of how to bridge the gap between the virtual worlds we create in our computers and the very real world we all share.

Simone A. James Alexander

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Dis/Embodied Practices: Global Travel and Citizenship in a Rapidly Changing World

The Global Teaching and Learning Fellow resonated profoundly with my lived experience. I have had the good fortune of straddling the interactive teaching and learning worlds by engaging in global teaching during a recent fellowship at Wuhan University, China, where I was a visiting research-teaching faculty, and learning, as an international/foreign student in Moscow, USSR/ Russia. These embodied practices have afforded me the opportunity to embrace the construct of a global citizen or a citizen of the world. Additionally, growing up in a multicultural, multi-ethnic Caribbean society was foundational, pivotal in preparing me to be/come a global citizen. As the term suggests, a global citizen is someone who recognizes their connection to the wider world and shows interest in global and transnational issues. Analyzing the fluidity and flexibility of global or flexible citizenship, Aihwa Ong articulates: “Flexibility [resides] in geographical and social positionings.” Expounding on Ong’s insightful observation, I posit that having open minds and hearts are hallmarks of “the geography of the body.”

As a global citizen, you develop a diaspora consciousness, adopting a fluid conceptualization of home and home spaces, embracing multiple sites of belonging, and engendering relations with an “imagined community,” imagined, because according to Benedict Anderson, “the members of the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.” Bolstering Anderson’s theorization about the transformational attributes of imagined or diasporic communities, Jamaican-British sociologist Stuart Hall articulates: “Diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference.”

My travel to Guanajuato, Mexico brought this “imagined community” alive as the transformative power of communion and community was rendered most palpable. Moreover, my participation in the GTLF fellowship enlivened these characteristics of global citizenship and reignited my passion for not only tapping into different knowledge bases but also for strengthening relations for knowledge sharing. This transnational and diasporic kinship, the increasing interconnectedness and shrinking distances between people and places, the diminishing divide between spatiality and temporality, bears out in the daily experiences in Guanajuato. The knowledge sharing with fellow Lehigh scholars provided a home/space, exemplified in the mobile/virtual and physical classroom, resulting in a tangible experience of home/liness within the nation-state, but more intimately, within the cityscape of Guanajuato. My participation reminded me that the classroom is an incubator of knowledge-sharing and cultural exchange, a great place to begin conversations about awareness and tolerance and to educate students on diversity. The multiethnic and multicultural makeup of the various classrooms I have inhabited functioned as a space of intellectual inquiry of academic and experiential knowledge; the intimate experience in Guanajuato that provided a space for fruitful intellectual exchanges, was no exception.

The immersive foundation and focus of the GLTF, the interchangeable teacher-student relation, lends itself to an embodied practice requiring one not only to be attentive to (listen) but also attuned to (hear) their fellow participants. This space took on a new significance, a new form and shape as my embodied discourse was allowed to flourish through acceptance, engendering a sense of security among colleagues. This safe space permitted my uninhibited articulation of difference as I was able--even prompted--to emphasize the need for cultural sensitivity and tolerance (of difference); to remind myself and colleagues to be wary of importing and imposing Western-centered ideologies upon non-Western societies. In essence, as educators, we need to heed Nigerian Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s cautionary tale of “the danger of a single story.” As Adichie so eloquently puts it, “if you reduce a people to a single story, you render them powerless. Power is the ability to tell another’s story and make it definitive.”

Our daily interactions at the GTFL fellowship provided opportunities to reimagine and reconstruct new multi-dimensional narratives that address a multiplicity of topics and concerns, centering those historically marginalized and forgotten, and rendered second-class citizens. These invaluable exchanges became lessons in tolerance and compassion, as we seamlessly and readily employed and adopted the ethics of care and empathy.

As educators, we must not only model but also encourage our students to be/come global citizens, to engage in acts of self-reflexivity, seeing and witnessing their experiences reflected in others, to navigate beyond their corridors of privileges and entitlements, and gain empathy for the less fortunate. Above all, they must exercise tolerance and give space to other ways of seeing and knowing, and to ultimately arrive at the understanding that there are other ways of being in the world. To echo Chinua Achebe, we need “a balance of stories.”

Justin Greenlee

Justin Greenlee is Director of Wri)ng Across the Curriculum at Lehigh University's Center for Innovation in Teaching & Learning

How do we show up as educators in places not necessarily home to us—*with students both like and unlike us, as well as local residents*—all of us with our own fears and desires, to create meaningful engagements that posi8vely shape our shared future?

When I show up, I arrive. It is a beginning. A starting place. When I show up, I am present. To show up implies where I was. This is where I promised I would be. I kept my word.

I might fail to show up. Imagine a host: “He didn’t show up to the party.” A supervisor: “He didn’t show up to work.” A child who was leD at school: “You forgot me. I was embarrassed. I needed you to show up.” Showing up is the beginning, the minimum, the least I can do.

To show up also goes beyond mere presence. Presence can be the most important thing. Particularly in a crisis when words fail. Presence can help during sickness. I keep someone company in the hospital for weeks, or at home in hospice for months. To show up may be the most comforting and powerful thing I do for people I love.

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I work in Lehigh’s Center for Innovation and Teaching and Learning. I have the privilege of hearing, day by day, about methods for faculty development and how to facilitate meaningful learning environments. There are many taxonomies, tools, and approaches to teaching. The possibilities are endless, exciting, and exhausting. In Guanajuato, our group was devoted to inquiry and a Big Queston: “How do we show up as educators in places not necessarily home to us… to create meaningful

engagements that positively shape our shared future?” It is a great question. No one knew the answer on Monday. By Saturday, there were dozens of answers. All personal. All useful to others in some way.

I found simplicity in the question. Specifically, in interpreting what it means for me to show up for my students within the TRAC Wri)ng Fellows Program at Lehigh. Our system is student-led, democratic, and rooted in reflection on the writing process. We hurry slowly (the Renaissance motto is “festina lente”); we encourage belonging in TRAC, autonomy, and competency in writing and speaking; and we trust in students’ intrinsic motivation to learn. (Learning how to clarify ad guide such a system is a career-long process.) When it comes to co-creating curriculum, we cultivate three kinds of presences: (1) the social presence we create in and outside of the classroom; (2) the cognitive presence we create based on individual and class-wide thinking; and (3) the teaching presence we create as we complete activities. Thinking about these presences in a new way with the Global Teaching and Learning Fellows — in the simplest terms, as me showing up for my students — was tremendously helpful. Really, a revelation for me as a teacher.

Austin Duncan

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Trip Reflection

1. I have already had much experience living and working abroad in foreign cultures, mostly of the Middle East and Sub-Saharan Arica. I thought this gave me advance understanding of the importance and intricacies of leading student travel abroad. But that isn't really the case, as I found in our fellowship. Rather, I learned one of the most important aspects of leading a student trip: I am not a teacher or expert, but a co-learner with my students. That sounds like jingo, but it is not. It means that I will never have all the answers about a foreign culture, even ones I have spent years studying, and I should not "teach" students about the culture as much as accompany and coach them as they discover it for themselves. Again, a bit jingoistic, but here is what that means: I will be open with students about not having all the answers. As I join them in most trip activities (except solo and small-group ones), I will be able to serve as a model openness to a foreign culture, accepting flaws that I have in my own conduct, growth as I come to learn from my mistakes, the discussions we have with people from the country, the unplanned experiences we have while there.

My primary worry in taking this approach is that, in stepping oT the pedagogical pedestal, I will fail at this, and students may learn the opposite of what this intends. For example, I often react badly to things that I take as ableist. Of course, ableism is different in all cultures and contexts, and I am hyper-aware of and reactionary to ableism in my everyday U.S. context. As I experienced on our trip, I automatically responded badly to things that would have been ableist in the U.S. but were not necessarily so in Guanajuato. I noticed this happening, but it was largely out of my control due to my TBI-related emotional sequelae. If the same happened on a trip—especially when we are discussing

subjects of disability—this would give students exactly the wrong message. Of course, as a co-learner I would be open about this to the students, using it as a learning opportunity. However, given the teacher-student relationship that we can never fully avoid, this risks being ineffective.

2. To avoid this situation, I would plan a large variety of classes and discussions, group and solo exercises, and free time where I would suggest but nor require different activities. This variety of ways of learning and opening themselves to the people, culture, and place we travel to would help to minimize any damage one misstep could cause:

1. First, I would insist on a couple of class meetings (with pre-work) before we leave. At this time, I would give them a very thin idea of cultural norms and things they should not do in that context. I would also have them do readings not on the culture or location we will visit but on other locations, learning about the different ways that different cultures and contexts operate (specifically regarding disability).

2. Once we were in country, I would start with more traditional class-based activities, as we did in Mexico. This would ease them into the international experience while also learning key things about disability prevalence, policy, and services in the location.

3. I would break up class with individual and small group activities, including observations, exploration, and imagined embodiment exercises. These would all involve trying to see how disability does and does not exist in the location, resulting in them trying to imagine what it would be like to be disabled in certain locations, what that says about how disability is constructed there, and finally what it tells them about their interaction with the foreign culture. Following each exercise, I would require them to write or record reflections about the experience and then ask them to share and reflect on the experiences with the group. I would not require them to share, however, as not all students would be comfortable sharing with their peers.

4. I would invite members of the host location to come and give talks to the students on disability-related subjects throughout the trip, including local policies, services, and personal disability experiences. Following each talk, speakers would be invited to accompany us to meals, sightseeing, or other casual activities so that students could informally interact with and contextualize what the speakers had been telling them.

5. I would have more exploratory and un-directed activities that have students both individually and in small groups get out into the culture, explore, and conduct mini-ethnographies. This could involve homestays, personally directed projects, and creative assignments (students would have the choice of

going out to produce drawings, photographs, poetry, or story set in the location). These projects would result in a presentation of their work and reflection.

6. Finally, the whole trip would have a deliverable. In the case of my planned disability trip to Copenhagen, this would be to produce a policy recommendation on disability policy (municipal, NGO, or for-profit) for local stakeholders in response to their trip. I would ask them not to simply import foreign disability policy, but to rethink local policy because of what they experienced abroad.

3. The most fundamental rule that I would hold to in this trip is to be as flexible and tolerant as possible, and possibly more so. Especially today, when so much at home is tense and uncertain, we both need and have lost much of our tolerance for flexibility and difference. As a disabled person with a different embodiment from most people, I see this everyday. I also know from my own experience abroad that this is even more necessary in dealing with foreign cultures, places, and peoples. Or rather, I know from experience that I cannot know exactly how things look and are from diTerent cultural perspectives. This knowledge (of not knowing and having to trust and collaborate with others when we know that we do not know their perspectives and realities) is vital for intercultural collaboration—both at home and abroad. While I have understood this for years from my own experience, I have not been great at passing this along to students. In planning my study abroad experience, I now have a much better idea of how to do so. Thank you!

Ho'o Hee

Ho'o Hee is an Assistant Professor of Design - Product in Lehigh University's Department of Art, Architecture and Design, and Affiliated Faculty in the Institute for Indigenous Studies

Query

How do we show up as educators in places not necessarily home to us - with students both like and unlike us, as well as local residents - all of us with our own fears and desires, to create meaningful engagements that positively shape our shared future?

Response

I am a Kanaka ʻOiwi (Native Hawaiian) product designer. The formative half of my life was spent in Hawaiʻi at a notable school for kānaka, while the adult half of my life has been spent on the continent at various renowned western institutions of higher education and industry design firms. As kānaka we are raised to understand that we have a kuleana (responsibility) to serve our lāhui (people). Some reminders come gently through subtle changes in tone and looks over the course of a conversation. Others are quite direct: “How come you teaching them and not our people? [sic]” Moving to Lehigh from main stream industry positions was my attempt toward fulfillment of this kuleana by refocusing my studio practice on the creation of playful objects that support perpetuation and dissemination of Native Hawaiian language, knowledge, and culture. But as the question was posed it did give me pause that perhaps serving the lāhui through my research alone was not enough. In my two years at Lehigh I have only met one kānaka student, and he was not in any of my classes. So if I cannot directly support the lāhui through my teaching are there ways to do so indirectly?

I went to a kānaka gathering recently in NYC and met a teacher formerly of my high school. I was surprised (and if I am honest, a little dismayed) to find that he was now teaching at an exclusive

preparatory academy in NYC for the “financial (extremely) comfortable”. I inquired about his decision to leave the kānaka school of which we were both alumni. I know it was an uncomfortable question, delivered at an especially uncomfortable time since all parties gathered were alumni and representatives of the school in question. After a few playful responses to break the tension, he diplomatically responded “I wanted to see if I was as good (a teacher) as I and others thought I was.” To my surprise, here on the continent he has continued to center his choral teachings around Hawaiian musical traditions and concepts, thus bringing aspects of our language and culture to a new coast.

The illegal overthrow of the Hawaiian Monarchy in 1893 was backed by members of the US Navy and perpetrated by children of East-Coast American missionaries seeking to grow their wealth by removing taxes on sugar though the US annexation of Hawai‘i. (The term illegal is important to note since the vast majority of the Hawaiian population supported the monarchy and the Hawaiian monarchy held treaties with various foreign governments including the US.) This act marked the beginning of a nearly century long ban on the use of the Hawaiian language in schools and government, which resulted in the near extinction of ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i. As such, there is a bit of irony to ‘olelo Hawai‘i now being taught to children of wealthy East-Coast American (and non-American) families.

Currently my courses are comprised of making-intensive design studios. While I can imbue them with Hawaiian thoughts and things as the choral director has, I feel a responsibility to prioritize the ethos and culture of the Lenape people before my own since it is their homeland upon which Lehigh sits. The only physical place I feel pono (right) about heavily injecting my culture into the curriculum is in Hawai‘i. Since my area of expertise is design and making, a broadly termed “Indigenous Ways of Knowing and Making” study abroad course seems to be on brand, but what would the programming accomplish? How could it be anymore than a glorified Hawaiian arts and ‘āina (land) course when traditional apprenticing takes years and information only shared when a student is ready to accept the kuleana of the knowledge bestowed upon them? Do I trust the students to appreciate the time and wisdom gifted to them or will they see this course as simply a fun opportunity to go to Hawai‘i on their parents’ or Lehigh’s dime? Will they behave in a pono way or will they ruin the deep relationships I would tap into to create this experience? And how would teaching these foreigners our ways actually help the lāhui?

The term “Local Residents” is difficult for me. What makes one a “local”? In Hawai‘i three terms are currently used to describe a person’s relationship to the ‘āina of Hawai‘i: kānaka, kama‘āina, and malihini. The term kanaka, short for kanaka ‘oiwi or kanaka maoli, refers to one whose ancestral bones

are of this ‘āina, an indigenous person of Hawai‘i (dating to before the arrival of Captain Cook in 1778). The terms kama‘āina and malihini are where things get fuzzy. These terms have been co-opted by the government and tourism industry to mean local and visitor, respectively, with one’s residential address being the only point of differentiation. However, if we decolonize the terms, definitions with deeper connection to ‘āina emerge. The term kama‘āina directly translates to “land child”; one who is acquainted with/accustom to (the ways of the land). A malihini, on the other hand, is a stranger, foreigner, newcomer, tourist, guest, company; one unfamiliar with a place or custom. Thus, the Hawaiian epistemological difference between a “local” and “visitor” goes beyond a physical connection to place into the cerebral and spiritual. Kūha‘o Zane, respected cultural practitioner and president of the Edith Kanaka‘ole Foundation, summarized this as “(A foreigner is) somebody that lacks observational skills; that is not able to work within the existing cycles of a local.”

My goal for students is to use the Hawaiian framework to kilo (observe and examine) and begin to build the connections to ‘āina that are necessary to transform from a foreigner to a local. To view and connect with place and people beyond the ubiquitous colonizer/settler framework that centers on the individual. “There’s ways of observing these natural cycle that have been happening for generations. [sic] Then you can figure out a way to insert yourself and at the same time have reciprocity and benefit”. Part of this transformation is transitioning from an imposing or extractive position to one of symbiosis and service. This metamorphosis is not a solitary endeavor but requires direct interaction with natives and locals alike. Within capitalistic design (and other commercial areas) too often extractive practices lead to cultural and terrestrial appropriation. By making strides to become “local,” students will hopefully be able to better empathize with the needs and desires of different lands and peoples, and move through the world in a more open, gentle, and generous way.

Stephanie Powell Watts

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James Baldwin was a writer seeking the fulfillment of promises the world unknown to him could offer. In 1948, with the help of the help of the fellow writer Richard Wright, Baldwin received funds to move to Paris to write. His travel was meant to give him the time and space to create, but also a reprieve from a climate of American segregation and racial subjugation. Baldwin writes, "In Paris I didn't feel socially attacked, but relaxed and that allowed me to be loved." I find it moving and remarkable that Baldwin discovered that he could be loved when he could live on different terms than the ones that had been negotiated for him in his homeland. What an amazing gift of his journey. Travel and immersion in another place can't always promise love or lovability, but the benefits can be myriad as evidenced by Baldwin--energized and enlightened--by the ability to see himself in new ways. This travel allowed him both literal and figurative distance to see his own life with fullness.

In 1866, thirty-one-year old Mark Twain convinced several newspapers to sponsor him on a trip abroad. In the over five months that he traveled, Twain would visit many countries in Europe, the Middle East including the holy lands. He would report back to these newspapers with his characteristic wit and wisdom about his many adventures. These funny, irreverent, satirical writings would in 1869 become Twain's bestselling book, Innocents Abroad, or the New Pilgrims Progress. This book was a phenomenon from the start, selling over 70,000 copies in its first year of publication. The familiar image of the "ugly American", the name for the boorish, foolish, unsophisticated clod who might be guilty of chipping off ancient ruins to take home a souvenir (Twain writes about this very action), features prominently in his writings. Twain's readers found his ugly Americans both loathsome and hilarious. The traveler is an American innocent, an uncultured dolt, but Twain implicates us all in his

assessment of these Americans: “the gentle reader will never know what a consummate ass he can become until he goes abroad.”

I’ve thought of both of these travelers, Baldwin and Twain, during and since my time in Mexico. What were my own expectations of the place? Of the people? Was I looking for a place and people much like the ones I left in Bethlehem, PA. Was what I wanted stage craft, a shifting scrim behind me, while I strutted and fretted on the stage the same as always? These ideas beg the questions to me, if travel opens up our thinking and broadens our sight lines, as it is so often reported, can it also further narrow our vision? If the traveler is not vigilant can we become too secure in our rightness to benefit from what the world is open to teaching us? Can we be too comfortable in our own vision of well, of what is appropriate and true to learn anything? These are the questions I posed to myself and that I want to pose with students on future journeys.

There’s a famous quote from Twain that extols the benefits of getting away from home and the familiar: “Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry, narrow mindedness, and many of our people need it sorely…Broad wholesome charitable views of men and things cannot be acquired by vegetating in one little corner of the earth all one’s lifetime.” This is a lovely quote and I agree with it to a large degree, with two caveats. Firstly, some of us possess imaginations that will allow us access to a world we ourselves will never see. I know these people. I come from such hopeful and far-seeing people who believe despite all contrary evidence that better times can come. Secondly, mental expansion is not stamped on a passport. It is not guaranteed. Growing takes work and while travel can give us a great head start, it is up to us to accept the challenge to examine and reexamine our circumstances and ourselves. We can’t let stale thinking keep us intellectually stagnant. If we do, we stayed moored in place, never stepping foot off the metaphorical boat, never exploring different new-to-us worlds.