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Untitled 4

Acrylic paint on wood with sculpture elements around it

My time in the Oxbow School has shifted my artistic thinking for the better. My piece depicts my interpretation of the many elements that make us the humans we are today. Everyday we thrive on the world that we live in. We are always reaching to be a better human in our communities. My work shows a combination of orbs, a human, and the color blue in different shades. Blue is one of my favorite colors, and it resembles what I believe my aura looks like. All the orbs around the blue silhouette are the elements that create our ways of being. The person in the middle can be seen as anyone, so everyone is able to connect with the piece. The symbols are my interpretations of emotions in a person. They can be identified in any way possible.

A In Bond and Us



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OS50

Writer's Note:

English

This essay was made by the hands of a boy raised by an amazing mother and a spectacular father, who all once lived in the tropical paradise of Guatemala. Connecting to a place you have lived in or visited can feel a bit magical. Other times it can contain events in our lives that we try to avoid. All of this at the end, it makes us the person we individually are today.

Español

Este ensayo fue hecho por las manos de un niño criado por una madre maravillosa y un padre espectacular. Quienes vivieron en el paraíso tropical de Guatemala. Conectarse a un lugar donde vivimos o'hemos visitado puede sentirse algo mágico. Otras veces pueden contener eventos en nuestras vidas que tratamos de evadir. Todo esto al final nos convierte en la persona que todos somos individualmente hoy en día.

Have you ever felt emotionally connected to a place before? If so, then you have experienced “place attachment.” For those who don't know, place attachment applies to a person when they have some sort of connection with a distinguished location. It can vary from the buildings to the environment that surrounds them. This term is one of the many reasons that makes us humans unique. It never fails in giving us original life events in which no one else could obtain, even if they tried.

To start, for this essay I interviewed three people. I asked them a series of four questions about their experience with place attachment. All data collected in this essay was given permission to be shared here.

Let's commence with the first interviewee, Vaughn is the Environmental Science teacher at the Oxbow School. Vaughn briefly said a place he feels connected with is Lawrence, Kansas. He loves the environment, community, and there is no other place like it. Vaughn also stated that a main quality for a place to be personally special is having a reason to stay. The connections he made with college and the community were elements that started a personal bond with the place. Vaughn overall has a positive experience with place attachment. His connection is still strong due to the things that made the attachment still being there, ready to receive him with open arms. Moving on to the second interviewee, Carly is one of the cooks at the Oxbow School. Carly intrigued me when she responded. This fascinated me by how drastic of a change her life took. Carly said a place she felt connected to is Oakland, she lived there for 15 years with her family. She shared that main qualities for place attachment are family, hobbies, weather, and your job. Her friends and living there started the connection to Oakland. Although it no longer feels connected to her anymore. It's not the same as it used to be before. It's very dangerous to go and most of her family has moved somewhere else from there. She is now starting a new journey in

the community of Napa. From this interview, we can see that Carly had a big change in her life. It came down to a bittersweet outcome, which helped her find somewhere else to feel welcomed and safe.

We come down to our last and final interviewee, Bradley is the painting mentor at the Oxbow School. In the interview, Bradley mentioned that he never felt connected to a place before. Although some qualities for this to happen could be sound, memory, experience, and family. As a nomadic person, he has not felt a connection to any place. Also, he believes that nowhere is a place like any other. Bradley had an abstract response to my questions which gives us more input in different types of experiences. The outcome was neutral, because Bradley hasn't experienced some sort of bond with a place.

All of these interviews helped us understand three different types of place attachment. Seeing different perspectives in connections within a location helped us see how wide the spectrum of experiences can get. The data collected will be compared and contrasted to understand what are the most common characteristics. This will be done to see if there is a pattern of some sort and find unique attributes from our interviewees.

To begin, we will compare the different outcomes of the individuals. Carly and Vaughn have very distinguished experiences. In our evidence Vaughn stated “none of the reasons I felt connected with are gone.” Carly, on the other hand, stated that “It's not the same as it used to be before. It's very dangerous to go and most of my family has moved away from there.” Vaughn and Carly's experiences are totally different from each other. Vaughn still has a reason to go back to Kansas when Carly no longer has a reason to go back to Oakland. Even so, at the end she found a new place to start in Napa. This comparison shows that not everyone can stay attached to a place. Things change in life for everyone just like in Carly's, we all go through that at some

point in life too. That is the beauty of finding places that makes you feel welcomed and appreciated.

Furthermore, let's compare Bradley's and Carly's experiences. We know that Bradley has no connection to anywhere. We also know Carly has a weaker connection to her hometown but has created one in Napa. How can these experiences be similar? For instance, both experiences revolve around the fact that something just didn't catch their eye for the place they have been. Carly lost interest in Oakland and Bradley hasn't gained a connection, which means that both moved on with no difficulty to other places. They thrive through the journey of life moving on from where they originated. Which is a quality that a lot of people don't have.

Moreover, I will share my experience with place attachment so we can see in more depth what place attachment can be for a teenager like me. I was given the privilege of being born in the United States of America. When I was barely one and half, my parents made the decision to move back to their home country Guatemala. Since then, my life in Guatemala has been filled with happiness and rays of sunshine. Trees swing with the help of the breeze that passes by when you least expect it. I lived in the countryside where it's peaceful and full of green everywhere you look. It just gets better and better the more you acknowledge its beauty. I had an amazing 8 years living among the people I love most. Through all of those years I never knew what life would be like in America. It was a mystery with not a single clue to start. I was legitimately throwing myself into a pit without knowing if it had an end or not. Leaving Guatemala wasn't as easy as the essay may make it sound. Luckily for me, I was going to be received by my family in the states, but I didn't know them. I had only talked to them through video call, but nothing more than that. The day of my flight I had a feeling in my gut and it wouldn't stop. So I decided to suck it up and be as strong as I can. On the plane I looked out at the clouds with their translucent

shapes. I noticed that no matter where you go, the sky looks the same. I was curious if things would be the same at my destination, Boston, Massachusetts. That's when the language and the environment tackled me, making my face bury itself on the ground. Fast forward into the future, now I understand the language and adjusted myself to the environment.

The question is, did I find some sort of connection with the United States? Well, no. I actually still have a strong connection to my tropical paradise, my heart palpitates everyday eagerly wondering when I will have the chance to go back. The environment here in the states is intimidating and hard to manage sometimes. It's busy and chaotic. There are instances that I feel like I am drowning in sorrow, stress, and on top of all, tears. It all changes for Guatemala though, since it's the place that gives me bliss even just thinking about it. No matter how far I am from it, there will be a thread holding us both together and will never be cut, torn, or snap.

The article "The Power of Place in Understanding Place Attachments and Meanings" gives us more detail on the causes of place attachments. The article makes a clear picture of where place attachment comes from and "characterizes place attachment by presenting the different emotions associated with the place" (Sebastien). It informs us that emotions play a big role in our connections with locations. We can confirm this with Carly's interview. She stated that there was a time in her life when she felt connected to Oakland. Fast forward into the future and she doesn't have a connection anymore. Respecting how emotions that she once had are no longer there for that place. This article also proves that even when having some sort of feeling towards a location can be lost, it can always be gained back. For example, it states "on the contrary, the notion of "place" in the modern world has regained its value, especially in neighborhoods, villages and small towns" (Sebastien). Leaving a clear image that everyone may lose and regain a bond valuable in their life.

Moving on to the next article “place attachment - a conceptual inquiry” shares more facts on these experiences. The article expresses “Place attachment subsumes or is subsumed by a variety of analogous ideas and place identity” (Setha M). This demonstrates that place attachment can go way beyond just a place. It's more about those little fragments that create the elements of the location. It's all also about what surrounds the place and what helps the place be the thing we connect with. For example, in the event in my life I shared that Guatemala is made up of many things. More specifically, nature has many elements that involve science and natural causes. Those two things together create this marvelous place for me that I can call home. I feel that no matter what happens something tells me that it knows, sees, and speaks to me.

In conclusion, the places we feel connected to are always in danger of change. Not saying that all change is bad, since it can bring you a sense of growth. We have to remember that we create and forget all of the time. Which opens a door for all of us, to experience and enjoy the places we love so much.

Works Cited

- Sebastien, Léa. “The power of place in understanding place attachments and meanings.”
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