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Grace Pilz Culture Quilt

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Cultural Quilt Questions

2) What's the most important thing you've gained or learned from your parents growing up?

Growing up, I've become the person that I am today by learning from my father's mistakes and watching my mother's example. My dad, Steve, has no college education. His abusive father abandoned the family when he was young, leaving his mother to support three kids. Steve has labored since he was a teenager. His work ethic is unmatched, but it doesn't come without consequences. The long hours and hard work leave his body and spirit battered. He shows signs of high-functioning alcoholism and smokes too much. His worldview is often cynical or apathetic. My mother is the polar opposite. She wants to help everyone, including herself, be their best selves. In my angsty teenage days, she used to drive me crazy when I'd complain to her about someone being unfair. She always makes me consider their perspective and the reasons they might be acting the way that they do. This process has stuck with me and taught me to question the motives of myself and other people. As a result, I feel like I'm a better empathizer which helps me to improve the lives of others where I can.

3) What's the most prominent border you have experienced in your life and how has it affected you?

I think my personal borders affect me the most. They are constructed and reproduced entirely in my mind. These borders often prevent me from pursuing

opportunities offered to me. When I do decide to go after something, those same borders convince me that my effort or final product is inadequate. I often feel blinded by negative thought patterns which make me believe that I'm too socially awkward or lazy to achieve at the level that I'd like to. I've put in a lot of work throughout my time at Kenyon to break down these borders... or at least make them transparent. I used to belittle my borders based on the fact they are not structured around my skin color or economic level. I thought they should be easier to get over, but trivializing them simply gave them more power. Now, I listen to myself more and open up to others more. Combined, these efforts have begun to make my insurmountable stone walls feel more like flimsy chain link fences.

4) One thing I wish my peers knew about me.

I wish my peers knew that I struggle with mental health issues every single day. It has taken me so long to accept this part of myself. Now that I see how much better life can be, I'd want to tell them that it's okay to ask for help. It may be the hardest part, but once you do, everything starts to get easier. There are so many people in your life who love you and want you to be the best version of yourself. I want my peers to know that they don't have to be perfect. They just have to treat one another with respect and understanding.

5) What is something that you have learned about yourself while we've been doing this project?

Over the course of this project, I have learned that I'm good at working with kids. I have a good sense of when they get something and when they do not. I understand how to keep them engaged. I see the value in their connections to the lessons. Above all, I'm so inspired by their potential. I've watched them learn so much in my short amount of time at Columbia. This experience has truly piqued my interest in innovative pedagogy, educating young people, and organizing community engagement projects. I never could have anticipated that I would get so much out of this experience. Learning about the kids and, in turn, about myself has definitely left me hungry for more.

7) What values or characteristics are most important to you?

Lately, I've been thinking about how much I value humility in a person. I think given the current climate of the US (politically, socially, spiritually), it's more important than ever to be able to hold a mirror up to yourself and reflect critically. The ability to admit mistakes and consider new ideas is incredibly important. I truly pity the people who believe that they stand to learn nothing from the world around them. You might be surprised about what get when you start listening. Being stubborn has gotten us to where we are today... does it really seem like a path we want to continue on?

9) What do you like most about yourself/ what's your best quality?

Sometimes I impress myself with my sense of humor. When I'm in the right mood, I think my wit, timing, and delivery come together and make everyone around me

laugh! This side of me is both a blessing and a curse, however, because when it's absent, everyone knows that something is up with me. I love that I have the power to disarm people, lighten the mood, and even be a little sassy! I wish I could "turn it on" all the time so that everyone I met could see right off the bat just how light hearted I can be.