

Luke Taylor
Parent's weekend Service, 2007
Spirituality and Education

*God
And I have become
Like to giant fat people living
In a tiny
Boat.
We
Keep bumping into
Each other
And
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-Hafiz (Translated by Daniel Ladinsky)

I was preparing to come to Stanford, I was somewhat anxious about the type of community I would be entering. For the previous two years, I had been committed to two things: social justice and the journey to self-realization. Having spent significant time in rigorous practice settings as well non profit organizations, I had, in a sense, become accustomed to a very particular kind of devotion, and I was unsure that my fragile box of spiritual inquiry would go undisturbed at Stanford. As I prepared to make this life transition, I was experiencing some fear. I was very attached to my lifestyle, and essentially, what my anxiety and resignation boiled down to was a simple judgment, something along the lines of “God probably doesn’t go to Stanford.”

And of course nothing could be further from the truth. God does, indeed go to Stanford. In fact, God spends a lot of time here. It would be completely silly for me to try

and enumerate the various ways in which God makes Herself present at Stanford, however, I am a silly person, so that's what I'll do. But fear not, I'll spare you my esoteric belief that God teaches my Philosophy class or that She studies Japanese next to me in Green Library, though she does. And I won't mention that God wrote my last IHum paper and took several of my midterms, because that would complicate Stanford's stringent plagiarism policy.

What I will talk about is the extraordinary capacity that Stanford students have for learning from one another and the profound impact this has had on my own spirituality. I remember showing up at the Intervarsity Christian Fellowship Table during the activities fair at the beginning of the week. My Resident Computer Consultant was having a chat with the one of the IV staff, who introduced himself and asked me about my spiritual background. We had a nice chat, and invited me to one of the large group meetings on Wednesday night. I kind of looked askance and said "I'm not Protestant," and he looked at me a bit confused and said "So?" His invitation exemplifies a commitment to diversity that can be found throughout campus, both in academic and spiritual settings. I have felt similar welcome and support by the Hindu Student Council, The Buddhist Community at Stanford, and of course, Talisman A Capella, all of whom seem distinctly more interested in joyfully sharing their traditions than in championing a particular ideology as the epitome of virtue. And this does not even begin to reveal the profundity found in individual relationships between students who may come from opposite sides of the earth. The kind of diversity I have found here honestly and passionately engages a variety of perspectives, cultures, and beliefs so that we may deeply relate with one another as a community. To my surprise, college has become as much about stimulating that visceral

connection with God *through* living in a widely diverse community, perhaps more so than learning equations, memorizing conjugations, or trying to wrap your brain around Plato.

Now, two quarters into my education at Stanford, I can feel that familiar presence of Divinity wherever I go, and I am prompted to inquire; did God really live in that tiny box I had fit Her into? It is so clear to me now that the anxiety I felt before coming to Stanford had its roots in my profound attachment to God's form and the concepts I had created about Spirit. I would be changing settings, lifestyles, making new commitments, and God would sadly be left behind in San Francisco, mourning the loss of yet another of Her children. It seems ridiculous in hindsight, but the Blessing of doubt is what allowed me to see through the box I had constructed around the Infinite, a narrow relationship to the Divine that had precluded no one else's joy but my own. Now, there is an incredible joy living in the Mystery of the Divine, and my experience at Stanford has been integral to tearing down the lashes with which I had fruitlessly tried to capture God before I got here. You see, Stanford is no different from a Monastery. We get very little sleep, and, in their own way, everyone is on a journey to knowing themselves and the Mystery of creation more fully. It is a true blessing to be on this journey with the incredible beings that create this community. Thank you for hearing me, and please enjoy your day.