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Amy and George

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Amy and George

Abstract

In lieu of an abstract, below is the essay's first paragraph.

"Namaste! My name is George Payne and I graduated from Fisher in 2004 with a B.A. in Philosophy. I also took several courses in the English Department, History Department and Religious Studies Department."



George C. Payne and wife, Amy

Amy and George

Namaste! My name is George Payne and I graduated from Fisher in 2004 with a B.A. in Philosophy. I also took several courses in the English Department, History Department and Religious Studies Department.

By far my best memory from Fisher is the time I met my future wife Amy, who also graduated from SJFC with a B.S. in Childhood Education and Special Education. I am proud to say that Amy has gone on to become a superb addition to the East Rochester High School staff as a certified behavior therapist. Each day she is on the front lines rescuing children from sexual abuse, chronic depression, attention deficit issues, poor performance in the classroom, and much more, she is truly my hero!

One of my other great memories from Fisher would have to be the nights I spent volunteering at the Open Door Mission as a First Generation Service Scholar. Not only did this opportunity awaken me to the world of spiritually engaged activism, it also connected me with some of the most marginalized citizens in our city. This was more than just community service. For me, this became a calling based on the principles of compassion, respect, and purpose oriented faith. I can't say I was genuinely religious before I learned what it means to stand in solidarity with the poorest among us.

After graduating in 2004 I spent two years in seminary at nearby Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School. In 2006 I was offered my first professional job with the international social justice organization called ACORN (Association for Community Reform Now). Based out of Charlotte, N.C., I supervised an IRS Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Site, as well as engaged in traditional door to door, grassroots organizing. It

was during this time that I first began to seriously learn about the incredible history of American civil rights movements and the activists who were responsible for propelling them- men and women such as Martin Luther King, Jr, Cesar Chavez, Dorothy Day, Nelson Mandela, M.K. Gandhi, and many others. Looking back at this formative stage in my career, it is easy to see how Fisher prepared me for the many diverse challenges that came along with this work. If any lesson continues to resonate with me long after I left the friendly confines of the SJFC campus, it's that knowledge is not good enough without goodness. Without goodness knowledge is hollow and even dangerous. In order for knowledge to be applied in the proper way, it must be guided by a disciplined mind and motivated by a heart of compassion and goodness. This is the only recipe for wisdom.

That said, today I am fortunate to teach Philosophy courses at Finger Lakes Community College. I am often reminded of Mark Twain's great quote, "We should strive to make our vacation our vocation." This is exactly how I feel when I step into the sacred space of a classroom.

It never escapes me that I am being paid to creatively explore some of the most complex and invigorating questions known to humanity. I should also mention that I recently founded a non-profit called The Lower Falls Foundation in Rochester. Our mission is to make the Lower Falls Gorge a UNESCO World Heritage Site by 2020. We are always looking for volunteers who are interested in cultural preservation, oral history and eco-tourism, so give us a call!

If asked to list one or two accomplishments which I am most proud of since leaving Fisher, I would have to say my President's Award for Distinguished Community Service would have to be at the top. Moreover, as a freelance writer and independent journalist it has been my pleasure to contribute commentary, letters, essays, and photography to several different local and national publications including Rolling Stone, The Atlantic, Rochester Democrat and Chronicle, CITY Newspaper, Minority Reporter, and many more. If you are interested in reading any of my work just google my name and look around a bit. I tend to write on topics pertaining to social justice, politics and religion.

In closing I wish to thank Father Costanzo and the SJFC Religious Studies Department for inviting me to contribute this short bio to Verbum. It is an honor to be included in such a meaningful and intellectually stimulating journal. And to all of the professors and staff members who helped me along the way, please allow me to extend a big heartfelt thank you! You are all shining examples of knowledge, discipline and goodness.

In peace and light.