

My *Saudade*

Saudade is my favorite word in the Portuguese language. Its all-encompassing definition can be described as a longing for familiarity and a search for comfort giving a feeling of reminiscing past memories. Despite the state of feeling incomplete, my *saudade* has allowed me to become a global citizen. Walking through the streets of London during my time abroad, I smiled as I heard someone speak Portuguese behind me, I beamed with pride as I met Notre Dame alumni at O'Hare, I bonded over the frustration of overcoming the hurdles of mastering the Arabic language with my classmates, and laughed with my Guatemalan roommate at our most recent difficulty in translating a specific word.

I do not belong to a confined place, to a certain memory or to a specific time, but then I find myself settling and calling different places my home. I am a global citizen and part of a network of individuals who are eager to communicate, gather, and share our pieces of our own puzzles in exchange for adding another piece to our story. At Notre Dame, I became aware of my growing global identity, of belonging and not belonging, of my simultaneous homesickness and comfort, and the struggle of piecing my *saudade* together. Yet, I embrace my incompleteness of never fully being satisfied or content. My thirst for knowledge cannot be quenched because every place I go, I leave a piece of my puzzle behind and take another piece with me. My ever-changing identity can be consolidated by my words. My marks are my words. Notre Dame has allowed me to discover that the pieces of the puzzle that I leave behind are words and with me, I take an additional memory, a story, or a new face to add to my story.

My words permit me to adapt to new places. Notre Dame has taught me that every piece that I come across will not fit in my puzzle nor will I be able to force it into my frame. Instead, I am empowered to choose the right words for me; hence, requiring me to understand myself. As

in the words of William Ernest Henley, “I am the master of my fate, I am the captain of my soul.”

My words became sharper and more precise through my experiences. From flying to Nepal along with six other Notre Dame students, we were challenged in the ways in which we sought truth by brilliant Pakistani and Indian scholars. The Madrasa Discourse Summer Intensive program reaffirmed that peacebuilding is necessary, relevant, and feasible for this single reason: listening is the first step to healing. If we are striving to heal the wounds and damages of disputes, we must listen to cries of help and care for our neighbors. Words should be translated into selfless actions regardless of the recipient’s ethnicity, religion, or race.

Having learnt this important lesson through the words of my classmates, I realized that my words can be my passport. How will I enter a country and gather the cultural nuances that make every community unique? As a global citizen, I am encouraged to read past one’s personal identity to appreciate their values. My role as a global citizen is highlighted by those around me. Notre Dame’s Madrasa Program revealed that respect should be uncontested and that exchanging words define us as global citizens. My identity is my most treasured possession and I should examine what pieces of the puzzles I will carry. At Notre Dame, we are taught to embody the characteristics of a student beyond the classrooms walls. Listening, observing, and failing for the most part are my favorite parts of being a student. Failing to communicate, failing to find the adequate words to express myself, failing to recognize the signs around me, or failing to grasp a new opportunity are inevitably parts of our routine. However, we are in charge of presenting our narrative and I choose to use these moments as turning points for my story.

At Notre Dame’s campus in London, I was challenged with interpreting different signs of communication. During my European Union Class’s trip to Brussels, I understood the power that

the delegated representatives of the EU carry for its constituents. In Brazil, the Notre Dame Club allowed me to receive the Fighting Irish in my home country and showed me insights about my mother tongue that I had disregarded before. As one of the most famous Brazilians poets, João Guimarães Rosa said, you dominate your mother tongue if you are exposed to other languages. By removing myself from my country, I paid attention to the small elements that compose the Portuguese language and makes it unique. Even in the slightest ways, Notre Dame continues to pose me challenging questions about my passions and habits.

My *saudade* is dispersed into the pieces of the puzzles that I choose to leave behind because I want a part of me to be lost in the Wadi Rum desert in Jordan and remind my host family of their Brazilian *bint* (daughter). I left a piece of me in London's Waterloo Bridge as I walked to class and caused commotion among people hustling to work because I stopped to respond to the newspaper man's "good morning." I left my piece in Nepal with the Madrasa students as I embodied their innovative teachings of embracing difficulty in order to change my course of action. I left my piece in São Paulo as I hope to one-day return to my city and address its public challenges given my role as a member of Notre Dame's global community. Lastly, I left my piece in South Bend because my professors and classmates taught me that feeling dispersed and being aware of cultural features will turn me into a global citizen. I will make my *saudade* my biggest asset and will use it to push boundaries that require change and this will be my mark.