“What the live creature retains from the past and what it expects from the future operate as directions in the present.”
John Dewey

Diversity / Innovation / Citizenship
Summer 2016

culture
information
communication
global sensibilities
learning through experience
listening
speaking
Contents

Communicating and Culture
With Freedom Comes Responsibility:
Internet Access for Everyone Everywhere..........................................................4
Different Languages, Common Goals .................................................................9
Working to Improve Life in Cities Worldwide .....................................................15
New Paradigm for Foreign Language Teaching and Learning:
Cultural Competence .........................................................................................18
Teaching and Practicing Conscious Wordlessness.............................................23
Alumni Career Week .........................................................................................26

A Community of Learners
Parents: Aruna Dhingra ....................................................................................28
Faculty/Staff: Susan Weingartner ....................................................................32
Alumni: Jonathan Baskin ’99 .........................................................................37

Alumni Reconnect .............................................................................................42

Class Notes .........................................................................................................44

In Memoriam .......................................................................................................50

Planned Giving ...................................................................................................53

Principal Daniel B. Frank ’74, Ph.D.
The John G. Levi Chief Advancement Officer Regina Rodriguez
Director of Communications Dominic V. Saracino
Director of Admission and Financial Aid Karen G. Fisher

Editor/Writer Jill Chukerman ’77, JAC Communications
Design Communiqué Graphic Design
Principal Photography Dominic V. Saracino and Nick Robinson

Francis W. Parker School, 330 West Webster Avenue, Chicago, IL 60614
773.353.3000 fwparker.org
An Introduction from Dan Frank

This issue of *The Live Creature* presents compelling stories and valuable insights regarding the relationship between culture and communication.

Told by Parker alumni and teachers, these accounts illuminate how culture influences Parker and how Parker influences the ways these writers work and communicate with others in the world—internationally as well as here at Parker.

Educating for democratic citizenship with global sensibilities lies at the heart of a Parker education. Speaking and listening, sharing information in word, image, number, music and behavior, as well as reflecting on feedback, are all essential cultural and psychological competencies necessary for developing the relational skills to learn through experience.

Every culture has its core commitments and its opposites. Cooperation is countered by competition. Utterance suggests silence. Inclusion wrestles with exclusion. As reflective and engaged citizens, we strive to pay attention to what we, and others, say and don’t say, hear and don’t hear, see and don’t see, do and don’t do. The vital work of cultural awareness lies in our ability to maintain an open, attuned attitude that allows us to ask ourselves about the possible intended and unintended consequences of what and how we communicate with ourselves and with others.

Within a culture, each historical moment contains an expression of the balance and tension between such polarities, and education provides us with the opportunity to know how to read and understand the shifts and variations between a culture’s core values and its struggle to engage with those opposites.

In this issue, teachers Stacey Gibson and Lorin Pritikin and alumni Amir Hasson, Jacob Koch and Marcia Occomy bring insight and understanding to the interrelated world of culture and communication and how technological and pedagogical innovations in communication can help support a culture’s core values.
“The Internet is the nervous system of our planet, and everyone should have the right to access it.”

This was the founding principle of one of the companies I started, First Mile Solutions.

While working on my master’s at MIT in 2001, I came up with an idea for bringing Internet access to the 4 billion people in rural areas that telecommunication companies ("telcos") called the “last mile” and designated as uneconomical for providing service (meaning less-populated regions where the revenues from a network may not be sufficient to recover capital and operating costs). What if we mounted custom WiFi access points on buses, motorcycles and other vehicles (even donkeys) already traveling between villages and cities to provide store-and-forward “drive-by” WiFi access? Then, whenever an access point would drive by a village, it could transmit data to and from WiFi-enabled devices there and for a series of villages, then connect to hotspots or cellular networks to synchronize with the Internet, as shown in the diagram on page 6.

After graduating from MIT, I moved to New Delhi to do a proof of concept of this technology for MIT’s lab there, and, in short, it worked. During an average drive-by session time of 72 seconds, we could transmit about 21MB of data bidirectionally each time our mobile access point (mounted on a bus) passed by a WiFi-enabled computer in a village.

The great thing about this technology is that it supplied basic Internet access at a very low cost: a custom access point cost about $150 and could provide connectivity for about eight villages on average. At an average infrastructure cost per village of roughly $19, our system was orders of magnitude lower in cost than alternatives such as satellite, wireless backhaul and underground cables.

I spun this technology out from MIT and installed these networks all over the world for multilateral agencies, NGOs and local governments in remote places that most people have never heard of, such as Ratanakiri (Cambodia), Alto Vera (Paraguay), Mburabuturo (Rwanda) and Cuttack (India). The initial applications were email and offline Web browsing for schools, some of which didn’t even have electricity—they used solar panels and bicycle-powered batteries to power their computers!
Once people in these villages realized that they could use our system to email their governor’s office, learn more about diseases such as malaria and order products such as textbooks, Kit Kats and baby formula (delivered on the same bus transporting the data), there was increasing interest in learning how to use our system, beyond the initial one or two people in each village who knew how to use it. In some villages, our system became a vital link between the village community and the surrounding towns villagers otherwise spent time and money traveling to. Villagers used our system to post about agricultural products and handicrafts they wished to sell, look for jobs available in nearby towns, stay in touch with friends and family overseas and, in one network in rural Orissa, find someone to marry!

It is important to note that we had to build specific applications and user interfaces for each of these services to demonstrate their value and enable people to use them. Simply providing raw, unguided Internet access in a village (where people had no idea how to use it) was not effective or valuable. Very few villagers could read and write in English, which constituted most of the content on the Web at that time, and even fewer knew how to use a keyboard, mouse or Windows. In other words, it wasn’t enough for us to solve the “last mile” problem; we also had to solve what I call the “last inch” problem: a service valuable and accessible enough to end users that they are willing to try something new and part with their hard-earned cash.

By working in hundreds of villages across several countries, I realized the Internet is the new “road network” of our planet: it allows us to fulfill more of our needs without physically traveling from place to place. For those of us who have grown up with the Internet in our pockets, this may sound like an obvious point; however, the majority of Earth’s population are still not taking advantage of the Internet. Despite the proliferation of mobile, satellite and even balloon-based wireless data networks (e.g., Google’s Project Loon), only a small percentage of people living in rural areas of developing countries actually pay for and make use of Internet access. The main obstacle, in my opinion, is that service providers fail to address the last inch challenge. They assume the value of raw connectivity
is enough to attract users, but often do not realize that email, Facebook and Amazon are not “killer apps” in rural areas like they are in metropolitan hubs.

To achieve truly ubiquitous and global Internet access and adoption, we must innovate new applications tailored to the needs, practices and ecosystems of rural communities as they currently exist and, in many cases, have existed for hundreds of years.

Beyond improving villagers’ lives (in the same ways the Internet improves your life and my life), I believe global Internet adoption is an essential ingredient to the mix of things that, together, can drastically reduce poverty, corruption, illiteracy, global warming and other deeply rooted social and environmental problems that stand in the way of humans living peacefully together and in harmony with the delicate balance of this magical little planet.

The most important thing I learned from my 14 years at Parker was the principle that “with freedom comes responsibility.” Earth’s gift of life is the fundamental source of our freedom, and our ultimate responsibility is to sustain this gift so that all beings may enjoy it for generations to come.

---

Amir Hasson is a serial social entrepreneur who has started four companies, raised funding from a variety of investors and built businesses impacting the lives of millions of people in the U.S., Asia, Africa and Latin America. Red Herring featured Amir as one of the “Top 25 [Entrepreneurs] Under 35,” and *MIT Tech Review* selected him as one of its “Top Innovators Under 35.”

After graduating from Parker, he earned a bachelor’s degree with honors from the College of Social Studies at Wesleyan University. He worked at leading new media companies in New York City during the “dot-com boom” and started the Web’s first search engine for holistic health, webreathe.com. He then received his master’s degree in the management of technology from the MIT Sloan School of Management.

At MIT, Amir patented a “drive-by WiFi” technology for rural connectivity and led its deployment in rural India as an MIT research project. Based on this research, he spun out First Mile Solutions (FMS) and led it to profitability, implementing wireless solutions for organizations globally. Amir then founded United Villages (UV), which later acquired FMS and built rural India’s first mobile-enabled supply chain. *Investors’ Circle* recognized UV as one the Top 20 Most Impactful Companies.

Amir has published several papers, has spoken at more than 30 events internationally and was a “First Mover” Fellow of the Aspen Institute. He is the inventor of two issued and two pending patents and has been interviewed and cited by major media organizations including CNN, the BBC, *The New York Times* and *Le Monde*.

Based in Cambridge, Massachusetts, Amir is founder and chief happiness officer of Oxigen USA, a one-stop shop for sending money, payments and gifts to India in partnership with India’s leading payment network, which took over UV in 2012. He also mentors aspiring social entrepreneurs at MIT and Harvard.
Different Languages, Common Goals

By Marcia Occomy ’78

It was February 2000. I was in my second year of an assignment as a BearingPoint consultant in Atyrau, Kazakhstan advising the local governor in developing a capital investment plan for this Western region province. At that time, a large consortium of oil companies was exploring the nearby Caspian Sea hoping to discover and exploit large offshore reserves of oil. Chevron approached the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to bring in an advisor to support the governor, and I was hired for the job.

I was an American living and working in Atyrau, a former Soviet outpost. Kazakhstan, which is north of China and south of Russia, is a unique mixture of the Mongolian Asian and Russian orthodox cultures. I had befriended Svetlana Knysheva, a single mother with two daughters and a Russian translator working for the United Nations Development Program in Atyrau. I was also very close to the Kazakh family from whom I rented a quaint cottage on the banks of the Ural River and whose grandfather had discovered the great onshore oil reserves of Kazakhstan.

Svetlana’s grandmother passed away suddenly that February, and she had to go to Russia unexpectedly to attend the wake. She asked me if I would take care of her 11-year-old daughter Sasha, who was in the midst of taking exams for school.

Sasha spoke Russian. I spoke some Russian but was terrified that I would not be able to communicate with her for the week. But I agreed to keep Sasha so that Svetlana could travel home to see her grandmother laid to rest.

I started speaking my broken Russian to Sasha when we were first alone. She looked at me, smiled and started speaking English. Sasha felt so much at ease with me that she just started speaking English—a language that she had learned in elementary school and picked up from attending parties with her mother.

Svetlana returned a week later and picked up Sasha to take her home. The next day, she called and asked if she and Sasha could visit. As we drank tea in the living room of my home, Svetlana told me Sasha had something to ask me. I braced myself because I had no idea what was coming. Svetlana then said Sasha would like me to be her godmother. I said yes, then began the journey of becoming

Learning the language is one thing, but learning to live and to thrive in a totally different culture is a lifelong education.

Marcia and Sasha at a family reunion dinner in 2000 in Washington DC.
Sasha’s godmother, preparing for the christening ceremony in the one Russian orthodox church in Atyrau.

Since 1999, I have been living and working in countries in Asia, Central Europe, the Middle East and now Africa, serving as an advisor to national and local governments in transition to build the economic and financial infrastructure necessary to support a developing country. The media often focuses on elections of national leaders and the building of democracies and democratic institutions in these countries. A democracy cannot be sustainable without a functioning Central Bank, a Ministry of Finance and systems in place to raise revenues and allocate resources to deliver basic services to its citizens. While the essence of the work I do—leading teams of fiscal experts that develop the systems and institutions for public financial and begin laying the foundation for a major USAID local governance project in Iraq. I was assigned to the team in the governorate of Basrah where the British military was based. It was my first time working with the military to advise the government. We first had to reconstruct the offices of the governor, sector departments and begin rebuilding the institutions.

The Coalition Provisional Authority asked me to work with a leading member of the Basrah Provisional Council to create an audit committee to ensure the government spent the funds for their intended purpose. I had hired the former head of the southern regional office of the National Audit Committee to be on my team so he joined me in undertaking this assignment. I learned that my counterpart was a former Brigadier General in Saddam’s army who had formally apologized for his past crimes.

In 2003, BearingPoint asked me to be part of a team of experts that would go in soon after the fall of Saddam and begin laying the foundation for a major USAID local governance project in Iraq. I was assigned to the team in the governorate of Basrah where the British military was based. It was my first time working with the military to advise the government. We first had to reconstruct the offices of the governor, sector departments and begin rebuilding the institutions.

The Coalition Provisional Authority asked me to work with a leading member of the Basrah Provisional Council to create an audit committee to ensure the government spent the funds for their intended purpose. I had hired the former head of the southern regional office of the National Audit Committee to be on my team so he joined me in undertaking this assignment. I learned that my counterpart was a former Brigadier General in Saddam’s army who had formally apologized for his past crimes.

I have learned to listen and ask my counterparts about their vision for the work we must do. I relate to each counterpart as a peer and provide advice and take any recommendations for changing my proposals based on his/her feedback.

management—is technical, the ability to communicate with national government officials and convince them to allow us to facilitate these transformative reforms takes more than technical expertise. It is a matter of establishing working relationships built on trust and respecting the local culture and customs that is at the heart of the work that I do and enjoy.

In 2003, BearingPoint asked me to be part of a team of experts that would go in soon after the fall of Saddam and begin laying the foundation for a major USAID local governance project in Iraq. I was assigned to the team in the governorate of Basrah where the British military was based. It was my first time working with the military to advise the government. We first had to reconstruct the offices of the governor, sector departments and begin rebuilding the institutions.

The Coalition Provisional Authority asked me to work with a leading member of the Basrah Provisional Council to create an audit committee to ensure the government spent the funds for their intended purpose. I had hired the former head of the southern regional office of the National Audit Committee to be on my team so he joined me in undertaking this assignment. I learned that my counterpart was a former Brigadier General in Saddam’s army who had formally apologized for his past crimes.

I have learned to listen and ask my counterparts about their vision for the work we must do. I relate to each counterpart as a peer and provide advice and take any recommendations for changing my proposals based on his/her feedback.
I communicated with him through a translator. I later learned he spoke English, but he did not feel comfortable doing so with me in Iraq, particularly in the very conservative, Shia-dominated Southern region. When we were in Kuwait for an Iraq Rebuild Conference meeting, he turned to me and, to my surprise, spoke English and thanked me for my work.

Reflecting on my Parker experience, I learned the necessary discipline and focus to do my job well. When you are working in a country in transition, often in the post-conflict phase (e.g., Iraq, Afghanistan, South Sudan, Kosovo), the environment is difficult due to the weak link in communications, the poor infrastructure and lack of basic provisions. The government officials we work with are not always easy to approach and advise and often do not want our advice simply because we represent a Western country.

I have learned to listen and ask my counterparts about their vision for the work we must do. I relate to each counterpart as a peer and provide advice and take any recommendations for changing my proposals based on his/her feedback. I have also learned to be direct and state what I can do for my counterpart, then commit to delivering on my promise. I have learned to be honest if someone asks me to do something I cannot deliver. What’s most important is for me to give the impression that I am working
with and in support of my counterpart in building the institutions and capacity for the government to function. Often I am one of the few women, if not the only woman, assigned to work with such high-level officials. Particularly as a woman of color, I must take this into consideration when laying the foundation for our working relationship.

I am forever transformed having lived and worked in the far corners of the world.

What Parker taught me that has helped me to be successful in my work is to respect the opinions of others and be open to learning and living in a different way than an American might expect. While there are often differences between the cultures, it is also important to recognize that, as individuals, many of us have the same wants and desires for our families, communities and nations and to build on those shared goals for accomplishing my work. Learning the language is one thing, but learning to live and to thrive in a totally different culture is a lifelong education. I am forever transformed having lived and worked in the far corners of the world.

Marcia Occomy ’78 worked as a specialist leader for BearingPoint (KPMG) and Deloitte Consulting Emerging Markets from 1999 to 2014. She was nominated by President Obama to be the United States Representative at the African Development Bank in 2014. She is currently living and working in Tunis, Tunisia leading a USAID-funded economic growth project.

Top: Marcia, Sasha’s mother Svetlana and Sasha at the christening in 2000. Bottom: Marcia delivers a presentation on the USAID financial project in 2005 in Kyiv, Ukraine.
Working to Improve Life in Cities Worldwide

Jacob Koch ’06 lives in New York City, where he is an “urbanist” managing projects for the sustainability practice of Bloomberg Associates. He leads client engagements on a range of sustainability projects, including water management, low carbon development strategies, air-quality monitoring and strategic urban planning and public realm design. He previously worked as a strategic planner in the Office of Healthcare Transformation and Innovation of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs in Los Angeles and as an urban development coordinator for EMBARQ Brasil. He earned a B.A. in political science from Yale University and a master’s degree in urban planning at the Harvard University Graduate School of Design.

Communication and Culture

How did you become interested in urban planning?

Growing up in Chicago definitely has a lot to do with my love of cities. When I was young I had a mild Frank Lloyd Wright obsession and wanted to be an architect. Then I took a detour into politics and realized that cities were interesting to me because they are the closest level of the government to people. In college I had an internship set up in the Mayor’s Office in Chicago, but one week before I was set to start, the person I was going to work for was appointed to be the head of the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA), so I went to intern at the CTA for the summer. I got to follow the leadership around during its first few months, learning the system as they did. That really opened my eyes to the importance of transportation as a backbone of a city, and that’s when I realized cities were what I wanted to study and it was possible for me to pursue a career working on urban issues.

What led you to EMBARQ in Porto Alegre? What kind of work were you doing there? How did you come to be involved in transportation issues around the World Cup?

I studied Portuguese in college and spent time studying in Salvador, São Paulo and Curitiba. I simultaneously fell in love with Brazil and realized it was an incredible place to study cities. I wanted to live and work in Brazil after college and was lucky enough to convince EMBARQ to hire me to work in their office in Porto Alegre. We were working with a number of the cities hosting the 2014 World Cup, assisting with planning and building transportation infrastructure, primarily high-quality, high-capacity bus systems called bus rapid transit (BRT). Then I moved to Rio de Janeiro to lead a new program to insert sustainable mobility into a citywide slum-upgrading program. As part of that work, we conducted 2,000 interviews in three favelas (slums) across Rio to generate some of the first
empirical data about how residents of the favelas use transportation and get around the city day-to-day. This data was used to help improve the planning, design and engineering of projects across the city and led to the creation of the first bike lane in a favela in Brazil, in Mare in the north of Rio. I am very proud of that accomplishment.

How do you think your work in sustainability and mobility made an impact on the people and culture of the communities you were working in—from the favelas to other areas of Rio and Porto Alegre?

I hope our work improved people’s daily lives, making it easier for them to get to work, to school, to the hospital, to see their families. We were trying to improve life within the favelas and also to improve the integration of the favelas with the rest of the city. The program was built upon a history of design and planning work in Rio, which posited that physical interventions can provoke cultural changes and promote social integration. Growing up in a favela in Rio still comes with some stigma attached, and people have trouble accessing jobs and schools for simple reasons like not having a fixed address recognized by the city. Favela upgrading work, or the provision of infrastructure and physical improvements, is tied to the process of regularization, or the formal acknowledgement of property rights. With property rights comes a whole host of other political and social rights, and residents of the favelas can begin the process of being fully recognized as citizens just like someone who grew up in the “formal” city, or the “asfalto,” as they call it in Rio.

How did you transition from the work in Brazil to your work on veteran homelessness in LA? Given the dramatic cultural differences from your previous work, what were the challenges to effecting change?

It was an interesting transition, though there are many similarities between LA and Rio: both are sprawling cities with lots of highways and dramatic natural areas and mountains cutting through them. My work in both places sought to create systemic change, working within complex bureaucracies, to improve the lives of vulnerable populations. Given the pace of change, it can easy for that to become abstract and faceless. The joy I got from the work at the V.A. was through personal interactions with veterans, learning from them about how to improve a system that frequently failed them.

I hope our work improved people’s daily lives, making it easier for them to get to work, to school, to the hospital, to see their families.
Talk about the work you are currently doing with Bloomberg Associates.

Bloomberg Associates is a philanthropic consulting firm that works with mayors around the world to improve quality of life for their citizens. Though I am based in New York City, I am working in Kansas City, to develop new parks and shape the future growth of the city; in Rio de Janeiro, to reduce GHG emissions from their buildings and set up a new sustainability office in the city government; and in Detroit, on green infrastructure strategy and the problem of occupied foreclosed properties.

How do you think your Parker education impacted the choices you’ve made since graduating? Were there people who encouraged you in this direction?

Parker taught me the importance of being an engaged citizen and the value and importance of service. Teachers like Mrs. Barr, Mr. Stone, Mr. Mahany and Mr. Kaplan always supported my desire to effect change in the world of concrete and politics and deepened my understanding and engagement with the world of ideas.

Jacob in Agra, India. Photo by David Henning.
New Paradigm for Foreign Language Teaching and Learning: Cultural Competence

By Lorin Pritikin, Co-Chair, Languages and Cultural Studies Department, Upper School

“An immigrant brings a lot of baggage with him. The suitcase tied together with string is only the tip of the iceberg. The rest is in his head, his heart, his glance, and his memory. He could be said to carry his culture with him. But culture includes a way of life, a longing for a home, the smell of the earth, the sound of the wind, a music, a scent, and also the perpetuation of customs and traditions and a certain order. But while an immigrant may well be steeped in those traditions himself, he may forget or fail to understand that his children, whose earliest memories and emotions belong to France, have only a vague and distant link with his own native culture.” —Ben Jelloun, *French Hospitality*

“I want to cross a small lake...For twenty years I studied Italian as if I were swimming along the edge of that lake. Always next to my language, English. Always hugging the shore. It was a good exercise. Beneficial for the muscles, for the brain, but not very exciting. If you study a foreign language that way, you won't drown. The other language is always there to support you, to save you. But you can't float without the possibility of drowning, of sinking. To know a new language, to immerse yourself, you have to leave the shore. Without a life vest. Without depending on solid ground.” —Lahiri, *In Other Words*

For many years, the focus of most traditional high school foreign language programs was linguistic competence, acquired by learning syntactic structures and lists of vocabulary or expressions. However, several years ago, following a national trend and a new paradigm in foreign language teaching, Francis W. Parker School’s Foreign Language Department changed its name to the Languages and Cultural Studies Department—acknowledging that “effective communication is more than a matter of language proficiency and that, apart from enhancing and enriching communicative competence, cultural competence can also lead to empathy and respect toward different cultures as well as promote objectivity and cultural perspicacity” (Thanasoulas, D; 2001). The name change reflected our commitment to a vision for foreign language teaching that placed equal priority on cultural elements, which are, themselves, intrinsically intertwined with language itself (Thanasoulas, D; 2001).
With the ever-increasing interconnectedness of countries around the globe, there is a need for diversity in thinking. Themes of vital national and international importance require a citizenry that can not only communicate in the language of the people with whom they are interacting but also interact with “awareness, sensitivity, empathy, and knowledge of the perspective of others” (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages/ACTFL).

**Embedding cultural competence in foreign language curricula**

When I came to Parker in 1989, I identified as a foreign language instructor—a French teacher. I had prioritized goals for my students: understanding, speaking, reading and writing in French, all skill sets of linguistic competence. However, as the world in which my students lived became more and more complex, affected by increasing global unrest, I began to consider my role not only as a language instructor but as a cultural educator who could help promote a more peaceful coexistence through cultural understanding. Language would be but one vehicle by which to gain a better appreciation of other cultures; there was much more to offer my students than mere grammatical constructs and vocabulary lists.

“Culture in language learning is not an expendable fifth skill, tacked on, so to speak, to the teaching of speaking, listening, reading, and writing. It is always in the background, right from day one, ready to unsettle the good language learners when they expect it least, making evident the limitations of their hard-won communicative competence, challenging their ability to make sense of the world around them.” —Kramsch, 1993
Thus, I began my personal journey in exploring ways to embed cultural competence in all aspects of our foreign language program at Parker, from Junior Kindergarten through 12th grade. Below are two excerpts from literature in my curriculum that provide my students an opportunity to explore the rich “intersectionality” of language and culture.

**Tahar Ben Jelloun**


Ben Jelloun came to France from Morocco for the first time at the age of 27 to complete a Ph.D. in psychoanalysis. He was the winner of the Prix Goncourt, France's highest literary honor, for his novel *L'Enfant Du Sable* (1985). Ben Jelloun writes in *French Hospitality*:

“I hesitated for a long time before applying for French nationality. When I won the Prix Goncourt in 1987, I was conscious of a double tie: I’d been living in France for sixteen years and started a family there, though I’d often gone to stay in my country. I’d been trying to strike a balance between two identities that would let me arrive at a much-longed-for state of serenity and harmony. To be Moroccan without renouncing any of the things France had given me. To be French without in any way abandoning my origins...I’m sometimes asked what language I dream in. I usually answer that I dream in color. The truth is that I dream in both languages: the vernacular Arabic of Morocco, and French. But the fact that I chose early on to write in French instead of classical Arabic is symptomatic of the need for a challenge. From the outset I invited myself to the feast of the French language.”

**Jhumpa Lahiri**

Our global studies course, Studies in Language and Culture: French, is for students with learning differences. The emphasis in this course is “culture,” while the language component is purposefully kept at “survival” level: these students' native language-based learning challenges make studying a second language in a traditional program much more difficult. This year, students are studying the latest work of Jhumpa Lahiri, *In Other Words*. Lahiri, a Pulitzer Prize-winning Indian author, offers “a meticulous reflection on the world, on languages—but above all, on identity and its diverse dimensions [playing] subtly with symbols, references, and words to draw a mosaic of human identity outside of geographic linguistic borders” (jacket cover, *In Other Words*, 2016).

Lahiri's parents are from India, and she spoke Bengali until age four, when she learned to read and write English. However, she writes about Bengali and English: “neither of these linguistic identities ever felt fully her own” (Lahiri, 2016), and she
decided to move her family to Rome—"a trial by fire, a sort of baptism into a new language and world" (front cover, In Other Words, 2016). Through excerpts like the ones below, students explore the complex liaison between language and culture. As we study Lahiri’s personal journey, via the study of their new language—French—students also gain empathy for the immigrant experience in the U.S. and insight into the relationship between their own culture, their mother tongue—English—and the new cultures of the Francophone world. They come to understand that the lexicon of Morocco is not that of Haiti or Senegal or France, and the vocabulary of each reflects the uniqueness of the people who utter it:

“In a sense, I’m used to a kind of linguistic exile. My mother tongue, Bengali, is foreign in America. When you live in a country where your own language is considered foreign, you can feel a continuous sense of estrangement.” —Lahiri, 2016

“I think that my writing in Italian is a flight. Dissecting my linguistic metamorphosis, I realize that I’m trying to get away from something, to free myself. I’ve been writing in Italian for almost two years and I feel that I’ve been transformed, almost reborn... By writing in Italian, I think I am escaping both my failures, with regard to my English and my success, Italian offers me a very different literary path. As a writer I can demolish myself, I can reconstruct myself, I can join words together and work on sentences without ever being considered an expert. I’m bound to fail when I write in Italian, but, unlike my sense of failure in the past, this doesn’t torment or grieve me.” —Lahiri, 2016

And so, it is in the spirit of Ben Jelloun and Lahiri that I hope to engender in Parker students a sense of reward and enrichment from their study of languages and of diverse cultures. Finally, I have come to understand that fostering cultural competence requires an integrated curriculum developed by Parker’s Languages and Cultural Studies Department that will help students of all ages:

1. Recognize the multiplicity of factors that influence who people are and how they communicate
2. Investigate and explain cultural differences as well as similarities, looking beneath the surface of stereotypes
3. Examine events through the lens of media from different countries and cultures
4. Collaborate to share ideas, discuss topics of common interest and solve mutual problems
5. Reflect on one’s personal experiences across cultures to evaluate personal feelings, thoughts, perceptions and reactions

Bibliography
Thanasoulous, D. 2001. The Importance of Teaching Culture in the Foreign Language Classroom. Radical Pedagogy. radicalpedagogy.org
Teaching and Practicing Conscious Wordlessness
By Stacey Gibson, Upper School English teacher

After several weeks of reading, wrestling with and talking through the writings and lectures of Jackson Katz, Gloria Anzaldua, Richard Orton, Haki Madhubuti and other leading scholars, my 11th grade American Literature class had these and other responses, questions and comments. The catalyst for their thinking came from the question: How can male identity be developed without embodying the silent narrative of dominating and devaluing women and those traits identified with women?

The students’ conversations crackled with complexities, personal recognitions and darting eyes. The energy hummed with carefully launched questions and evolving answers punctuated by audible grunts. One boy paced the room. The words—both in formation and succinctness—had not yet arrived. Some students started to shake a foot or rapidly bounce a knee. The hunt was on. They were prowling and reaching for the word that would supposedly usher in relief if only they could dislodge that word or series of words from the cosmos and place it inside the conversation. Just then I encouraged the students to try to “stay wordless” and hold.

“Conscious wordlessness” is a term I developed for that rare and necessary moment when the idea is energetically roiling and churning in the gut, through the meridians and on top of the pulse. The idea is swelling and taking form within and beyond the thinker. In fact, the energy to form the idea and chase that word is far more vast than its host. That same energy has not made its way to the brain for the person to sift, perhaps sanitize and eventually “word” out of the mouth. Stay wordless.

“Why haven’t I learned this before?”

“Seriously!” piped another student. “Since you told us about some of these theories and structures, I can see these ideas everywhere. I can’t even not-see it. Is that even a thing? Not-see? And it all happens so quickly. And adults do it too. All the time. It’s actually a little scary.”

“What I want to know is what am I supposed to do about all this,” another child wondered aloud, “Now that we’ve read more about these patterns and constructs, I don’t want to be the guy walking down the street knowing that so many women feel so unsafe, but not know what to do about all that tension. Tension’s not even the accurate word. It’s fear and misplaced power and role-playing and more fear and domination and all these messed-up unwritten rules that I didn’t even know I was playing by.”
At this point, I urge young people to try to claim—enjoy even?—the feeling that eclipses the spoken word, and I encourage them to use other platforms to capture the emerging idea. This kind of interior communication transcends words and is, I feel, often deeply undervalued and undernourished in the learning, unlearning and relearning processes. Labels like “the sweet spot” or “aha moment” strive to capture this profound instance. Those terms fail in part because they hinge on a set of pre-scripted words and abstract beliefs of which we are hoping to share a mutual understanding. Furthermore, we must contend with the reality that the embodied, exciting, physical feeling of creating our individual moments of knowing beyond boundaries and constructs may not yet be encased in words.

About her learning, class member Franny Weed said she has become “much more conscious of all absences, especially silence. I’ve realized how powerful and frightening it is not only for me to be silenced by others, but for me to be silenced by myself. Learning that my self-silencing was not something I was consciously doing was even scarier. As someone who gets extremely frustrated when I can’t figure out how to explain my thoughts, I initially found the class very difficult. I felt like because I wasn’t able to articulate what I saw, it wasn’t valid. Thanks to the class, I now find I can look deeper into all silences and why they occur. I had never really thought about how people in power have to silence both themselves and each other as a form of control, and

As an educator, I have tried to harness, hold and illuminate those “stay wordless” moments. I have insisted that students cherish and ferociously protect this part of the learning process. In many ways, this practice of conscious wordlessness is completely antithetical to many learning experiences. When I was in school, I quickly received repeated messages that the ability to swiftly deliver thoughts with rhetorical dexterity and verbal precision was a mark of the most valuable kind of intelligence. Many students today believe something similar. And while those skills associated with speaking well and being able to clearly express the self are deeply important, so too is that moment where the word waits.

In recent years, I have become an ardent believer in the practice of conscious wordlessness because so many students commit and practice verbal plagiarism. That type of plagiarism occurs when a student experiences a statement by a classmate, teacher or newsfeed and repeats the statement, or some rendition of it, and tries to pass off the “new” statement
as his/her own. I initially believed that type of plagiarism stemmed primarily from a type of laziness. Of late, I recognize that, while there may be some laziness at play, far more students have a deepening distrust around forming and articulating their own ideas. All the more reason for a teacher to hold the space and help to activate that conscious wordlessness. While wait time usually focuses on a teacher holding the moment so a student can arrive at an outcome, conscious wordlessness focuses on recognizing the energetic forces of knowledge creation. The two concepts, wait time and conscious wordlessness, are a mighty partnership in cultivating independent thought.

Class member Sydney Benjamin shared these thoughts: “Through our class’s work and conversation, overall I have become much more aware of the way different groups of people relate to each other specifically through the societal norms that are forced upon all of us without our permission or awareness. We have specifically discussed how people of different races respond to and perceive one another as well as how men and women interact. I think these lessons of open discussion have opened my eyes to the fact that these ‘systems’ survive through tradition and silence, and the only way to produce change is to break the silence, beginning with dialogue and analysis.”

As I listen to the students bring their ideas and thinking about gender and power into the word form, I watch what looks like a sense of triumph because they may have found the words they sought in order to share what they were thinking. I wonder how long their wonder will last and what it takes to remind them of the balance between the word and the wordless. They seek other words by Jackson Katz to which they can refer and ask if Anzaldua’s bilingual words pepper her other works as they do in Borderlands. And so they go, pulling the words out into the hallway, trailing them down the stairwells, sneaking them into the elevator when they think we’re not looking and ringing our school with those energetic remnants they just chiseled and forged.

“Studying the absence of knowledge, communication, empathy and respect, and how power dwells in these silences, has taught me more than anything else that I’ve learned at school so far.”
Alumni Career Week

Following the February recess, Parker's Alumni Association sponsored a new initiative, Alumni Career Week. This program featured several guest speakers from Parker's alumni community who volunteered their time to stop by, visit classes and share their career paths and experiences with Upper School students.

Hillary August '03 spoke to Theresa Collins’ English class about her career as an attorney for Jenner and Block. After graduating from Parker, August went to Yale and the University of Chicago Law School.

Lisa Roth '03 worked with Sunnie Hikawa's music class during her visit. She attended the University of Michigan for her undergraduate degree and Western Michigan University for graduate school. She works for Chicago Children's Choir as an in-school neighborhood choir conductor.

Meghan Stegemann '02 visited Bridget Lesinski's science class and spoke about the role of science in teaching yoga and talking about the body while leading students through a mindful meditation exercise. Stegemann graduated from Indiana University in 2006 and works as a yoga instructor at MJ YogaFit.

Dr. Sara Berg '00 visited Bridget Lesinski's science class to talk about her career at Northwestern Memorial Hospital, where she works as an internist. Science plays a big part in Berg's medical work, so sharing in a science class was a perfect fit for her. She attended Tufts University and then medical school at Northwestern University.
Matthew Berry ’99 spoke to Theresa Collins’ English class about his career as an attorney and how writing plays a big part in his work. He received his degrees from Northwestern University and works in real-estate law in Chicago as an associate attorney at Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom LLP & Affiliates.

Cynthia Avila ’02 shared how Parker influenced her path, specifically her love of science, with Bridget Lesinski’s science class. She earned her degree from the University of Chicago and works at the MacLean Center for Clinical Medicine as an ethics research coordinator.

Julian Kerbis ’70 spoke at Morning Ex about his work as a zoologist and research in Africa and later took a group of Upper School students on a field trip behind the scenes at the Field Museum.

Adam Kaplan ’00 and Justin Robbins ’97 shared in a Morning Ex how their high school internships inspired their careers.

Kori Schulman ’04 closed the Alumni Morning Ex series with a fascinating presentation about her work on Obama’s social media team and her life in Washington D.C.
Aruna Dhingra

A sense of community has been an important part of Aruna Dhingra’s life, from the family she grew up with to the family and friends she has now. Born in London, she moved to New Delhi almost immediately, then to Chicago when she was five years old. She earned her B.S. and M.S. degrees in electrical engineering from the Illinois Institute of Technology, then completed an executive management program at the University of Chicago’s Booth School of Business. For the past four years, she has been a global advisory market intelligence leader for the consulting firm Ernst & Young.

The community she has found at Parker, where her sons are in 7th and 12th grades, is among the many aspects of the school she appreciates. “When I grew up, we had a group of family friends, and we’d rotate homes hosting dinners and other social events,” she recalled. “We’ve done the same things with families from each of our boys’ grades.”

After she married Rachit Dhingra, they lived in the Gold Coast area and then moved to Burr Ridge after their first son, Nikhil, was born. “We thought now that we were starting a family, we should move to the suburbs, but it wasn’t for us,” she said, “so after our son Rohan was born, we moved back to the city, and Nik started Parker in 2nd grade. We have felt so welcome at Parker from the beginning, we’ve never regretted the decision to leave the suburbs.” Rohan has been at Parker since Junior Kindergarten.

“Both boys are thriving on their respective paths. “Rohan loves music and Nik loves writing,” Dhingra noted. “The nice thing about Parker is they get to explore who they are. And even though my husband and I, with our engineering backgrounds, didn’t grow up with the same interests as our boys, we are enjoying the vibrancy of our kids through what they are doing at school.”

Nik has had a passion for writing since 5th grade, according to Dhingra, when he wrote a 13-chapter science fiction book, Adventures of Garion, that he wanted to get published. His 5th grade teacher Scott Turner helped edit the book during the summer, and it attracted interest from two publishers in New York. “But then the recession hit,” Dhingra said. “Both publishers let us know he was very talented, but they couldn’t do it, so we called it a life lesson and moved on.”
Although he was a little discouraged, Nik continued to write, and, by the time he was in 8th grade, he decided to self-publish the book using iBook. He caught the attention of Young Chicago Authors, which helped him continue to hone his craft. He also worked with the international organization Polyphony H.S. and Global Voices, a citizens media organization. “He worked with people 10 years older than he was, writing about South Asian human rights issues,” Dhingra explained. “He also had the opportunity to work with an international public policy think tank in New Delhi. And thanks to some of his Parker teachers, like Dan Frank, Mike Mahany, Jeanne Barr, Andy Bigelow and Sven Carlsson, Nik had the coaching and confidence to submit his application and be among those chosen from the highly selective application pool. The investment in my son by his Parker teachers has made a big difference.” (Nik also wrote “Chicago Journalism Through the Lens of a Sophomore” for the Winter 2014 issue of The Live Creature.)
Dhingra praised the College Counseling Office for their support through Nik's college application process. “When it's your first, you really don't know what to do, and they've been so reassuring.” Choosing between University of Chicago and Cornell University, Nik finally hit the “submit” button and will attend Cornell this fall.

Dhingra appreciates the different journey her younger son is taking. “Rohan has two strong interests,” she said. “He loves his music. He started playing violin when he was in SK and continues to take private lessons. He took up sax in 6th grade and plays with Parker’s Jazz Band. He loves listening to music and playing—in fact, whenever he can, he tries to replicate what he hears on his violin, including Hindi songs. He can be quite creative.”
In addition, Rohan has, according to his mother, shown great empathy and wants to be a doctor. “He sees himself joining the Molecular Engineering Committee when he is in the Upper School; until then, he has been going to senior assisted-living homes and playing his violin for the elderly through Parker’s community service program. He seems interested in Ronald McDonald House causes and plans to pursue those interests next summer, and, like his brother, enjoys Model UN at Parker. Parker teachers who have proved instrumental along his learning journey have included Dan Frank, John Novick, Anthony Shaker, Irene Quirmbach and Liz Villagomez.”

Dhingra has been involved in a variety of activities at Parker, including serving as grade chair for both sons’ grades, participating in the school’s Diversity Committee and volunteering as the 12th grade Scholarship Auction liaison. She and her family also enjoy sharing their cultural traditions with the Parker community. “For Diwali, the Indian New Year, Rohan comes to school in full Indian attire, and he and Nik bring cupcakes to their advisories, since one of the customs is to share sweets.”

She and her family also enjoy sharing their cultural traditions with the Parker community. “For Diwali, the Indian New Year, Rohan comes to school in full Indian attire, and he and Nik bring cupcakes to their advisory, since one of the customs is to share sweets.”

She is also excited about Parker’s recent focus on TIDES—Technology, Innovation, Design thinking and Entrepreneurship for Society. “Through my professional role in global market intelligence, I’m particularly pleased with Parker’s focus here,” she described. “I’ve had a preliminary dialogue with Dan Frank and [Parker’s TIDES Director] Martin Moran on a range of hot topics when this first started that included technology, innovation and societal purpose. Parker tends to find a way of turning conversations into concrete opportunities, which excites me!”
Susan Weingartner: Director of College Counseling

Parker’s “guru” of colleges and universities, Susan Weingartner, understood the value of a post-secondary education long before she knew it would be the key to her professional life. The fourth of six children in her family, she was the first to go to college.

She grew up in Baltimore and was on track for a secretarial career when, during her senior year of high school, she took woodshop and art and reconsidered her options. “That year I was told I was in charge of my own destiny,” she remembered. “Sometimes you have to know what’s possible, and if you don’t know it’s possible, you need inspiration.” She took the SAT once and applied to only one school, St. Mary’s College of Maryland, where she enrolled after finding housing. “My two younger siblings followed me there, so I started a tradition,” she said.

“I have a job that lets me make a difference every day—letting kids know that what they want to do is okay, validating their choices and helping them not give in to pressure.

Weingartner majored in fine art with a psychology minor and earned a teacher certification for 6th–12th grade. Although she received offers for two teaching jobs, she opted for a one-year internship as an admissions counselor at St. Mary’s. “Having just completed a semester of student teaching, I thought the admissions position sounded kind of glamorous and fun, driving around in a state car recruiting kids—especially compared to how hard teaching actually was,” she described. “Plus, I thought visiting high schools would help me decide where I might like to teach when I was ready to do so.” After a year, however, St. Mary’s extended her position for another year, and though she took time off to travel with money she’d saved from a waitressing job, they offered her a full-time position as assistant director the following year. During the five years she spent there, Weingartner served as an academic advisor, taught a course in marketing and attended graduate school part time, earning a master’s of administrative science degree in marketing and management from The Johns Hopkins University. She eventually worked her way up to director of admissions and met the man she would marry, Director of Athletics Tom Weingartner.

When Tom accepted a position at Manhattanville College, they moved to New York City, where Susan became director of admissions at The City College of New York/CUNY in Harlem. In 1990, after five unforgettable years at CCNY, they made the move to Chicago when Tom accepted the position of director of athletics and intercollegiate sports/chairman of the Physical Education Department at The University of Chicago. “Moving to Chicago with a six-month-old and a three-year-old, I thought it might be a good time to stay home for a year or so,” she said.

The following year, Weingartner became associate director of admissions for U. of C.’s business school, then undergraduate associate director of admissions for the next five years. “It was an interesting path,” she reflected. “Since I was following
my husband to Chicago, I wasn’t concerned about what made sense in terms of my career. But it ended up making sense when I was looking for a school for my son, and I stopped by Parker. They had conducted a national search for a director of college counseling and identified a final list of candidates. When then-Principal Don Monroe mentioned the position was open, my first question was, ‘Who’s watching your wait list?’ He instinctively encouraged me to apply, and after a couple of interviews with a rather large group of Parker faculty, they hired me.”

Weingartner’s wide-ranging admissions experience—at a small public state school in a rural area, a large urban school, a graduate school and an engineering graduate school with a large international population—had prepared her well for her role at Parker. “I had seen it from the other side,” she explained. “I had had the grad school perspective and knew what they were looking for in college graduates; it doesn’t matter where you go, it’s what you do when you get there.” She estimates that she visited perhaps 7,000 high schools in the U.S. when she was on that side of the desk and knows what is helpful to admissions professionals when they visit a high school, like Parker, or read an application. She has also toured hundreds of U.S. colleges and universities as well as a number abroad, meeting directors and associate directors and learning about their schools, their programs and the qualities they seek in a student body.

On a personal level, her children’s college experience enhanced her professional perspective as well. “My daughter transferred from NYU to Duke so I got to experience that process firsthand. My son had learning differences, so I got to see how his needs factored into the whole process. And I was on financial aid myself, so although things change every year, I am familiar with, and can still relate to, how people feel going through that process. Whenever I visited my kids
at college throughout the years, I would take advantage of the travel and visit 10 schools in the area—often on my way back to Chicago.”

Weingartner has enjoyed shaping and expanding the College Counseling Office. “When I began at Parker, I didn’t inherit any kind of program. There were no documents or forms or transcript requests—or even a computer to use! Don Monroe said I should make it what I thought would be best, so I had fun using the knowledge I had from the admissions side and creating the forms and structure—it’s kind of homegrown.”

She also has weathered the challenge of keeping up with developments in the overall practices of college applications. “We started with catalogs and VHS tapes,” she recalled. “Five years ago everything was still paper; even though there was a common application, you had to print and copy it for each school. But now it’s online. With so many changes, it is essential to make sure we keep parents updated on how the process is evolving and what that actually means for them and their children. For example, the common app and technology allow everyone from every corner of the world to have access to information and options. It helps level the playing field. But it also means that the number of applicants tends to rise. I wish I had a magic wand to take away the stress that has increased with the years.”

Weingartner noted that 20 years in the job has added up. “About five years ago I figured I’d visited more than 200 colleges, so who knows how many it’s up to now? And I think I’ve read about 100,000 college application essays!” But significant time on both sides of the college application/admissions equation has allowed her to observe the qualities that distinguish Parker students.

“Parker kids are stronger in who they are beyond their grades,” she said. “They are better writers, they have more curiosity, they’ve learned to be more collaborative, and they care about the world. When college reps visit, they always say how much they love our kids: they’re engaged, confident and not afraid to ask questions.

“Parker kids also are interested in a wider variety of schools, not just the 10 most popular ones. We’ve had alumni all over the world—at the University of Edinburgh, University of St Andrews, Quest University Canada, Durham University in the UK and more.”

Weingartner reports that Parker alumni thrive in the college and university setting—and beyond. “Our kids get to college and are immediately involved, quickly assuming leadership positions and making a difference. They are used to important aspects of higher learning—being known by their teachers, thinking critically and independently, recognizing the value of gaining others’ points of view—that are new to other kids. And after they graduate, even if they’re not working at a nonprofit or trying to ‘save the world’ through their jobs, they use their resources, time and energy to volunteer, to provide internships. They still want to give back.”

Weingartner derives tremendous satisfaction from her work. “I have a job that lets me make a difference every day—letting kids know that what they want to do is okay, validating their choices and helping them not give in to pressure. And I don’t do this job alone; we have a great team in the College Counseling Office. We live and breathe the school’s mission.” She loves connecting with students one on one, whether it’s over a shared love of Diet Coke or reviewing student art portfolios, which takes her back to her own college major in art, a passion she maintains.

“To relieve stress, I throw on the wheel—it’s my meditation,” she said. “My husband just made me go back to it at the Hyde Park Art Center. And I can connect with the kids through that, too.”
Jonathan Baskin ’99

Jonathan Baskin is co-founder (2008) and editor of The Point magazine, a twice-yearly journal of ideas, based in Hyde Park. He previously held research and editorial positions with Popular Science, Inc. Magazine and The Atlantic, as well as writing for The Center for American Progress, a progressive think tank that publishes The Nation and Washington Monthly. He graduated magna cum laude and Phi Beta Kappa from Brown University in 2003 and is studying toward a Ph.D. at the Committee on Social Thought at the University of Chicago.

I chose Pynchon because I found him to be an incredibly talented writer, but his novels were radically different from the (mostly modernist) novels I’d come to think were indicative of great literature. I wanted to understand why a writer like Pynchon would make the literary choices he did—meaning depthless characters, bizarre plots, lots of scientific jargon worked into the prose, etc. As it happened, learning why Pynchon did these things forced me to learn about the roots of the literary and philosophical movement now known as postmodernism. This knowledge, which I obtained in other ways at Brown, has been extremely valuable for helping me figure out what I’ve wanted to avoid intellectually ever since.

My internship at The Atlantic right after college was my first (and really only) experience at a serious literary magazine before I started The Point years later. My primary task was to help read through the slush pile of fiction that came in every week, so the first thing I learned was that a remarkable amount of people in America write fiction—maybe more than actually read it! The main benefit was seeing how a place like that operates and watching the process of an article from first draft until it’s ready for publication in the magazine.

I like to describe the Committee on Social Thought as a Great Books Ph.D. program. Some people use the word “interdisciplinary” to describe the program, but one of the professors likes to call it “undisciplined,” which I think is much better. The basic idea is, if one wants to be educated, there’s nothing better you can do than read the greatest things that have been written, in whatever humanistic disciplines, as closely and generously and with as much humility as possible. So in most Social Thought classes you just read one book—Plato’s
The Point began as a series of conversations with two other graduate students in the Committee, Etay Zwick and Jonny Thakkar, at the University of Chicago pub in Hyde Park. Unlike a lot of small magazines that advocate for a specific political or literary agenda, our initial conversations weren’t about “positions” so much as they were about filling some personal and cultural gaps. On a personal level, Etay, Jonny and I were graduate students in a program we really loved, which challenged us to think about our lives intellectually, but at the same time we felt somewhat constrained by the way academia expected us to write. So we wanted to create a space where it was possible to write seriously about ideas and their relevance to our lives—which meant precisely not to write about them academically.

The second gap we wanted to fill was a little harder to pin down. Looking at the landscape of publications we were familiar with, they could be divided into two categories. There were academic journals, which were incredibly intellectually rigorous but paid no attention to writing and connected with a very small audience, mostly other academics already interested in a particular journal’s main topic. On the other hand, there were the esteemed highbrow magazines—The New Yorker, The Atlantic, Harper’s, etc.—which paid a lot of attention to writing and contained articles relevant and accessible to a wide audience. We liked these magazines more than the academic journals, but were not always satisfied with them, either. In a sense, what they lacked was the kind of intellectual rigor the academic journals took to an extreme. In another sense, we felt there was something missing from both the academic journals and the highbrow magazines, which was the (basically Platonic) idea that the point of serious thinking is not primarily to impart information, or to parse language, or to tell a nice story, but to discover how to live.

The name of the magazine came in part from our desire for our publication to always keep in mind this “point” of intellectual—or philosophical—discourse. A second meaning was that each of our essays would itself have “a point”—meaning an argument, meaning it would aspire to be something more than intellectual tourism that addresses all sides of an issue; we hoped instead to challenge the reader with a surprising or unusual argument, which would have consequences (if he/she accepted it) for the reader’s life. Finally, the name came from Promontory Point, a well-known outcropping of grass.

(L–R) Parker class of ’99 alumni David Grass, Johnny Schatz and Jon Baskin.
and rocks on Lake Michigan in Hyde Park, where students from the University of Chicago hang out in the summer. We had spent a lot of time there talking about our plans for the magazine, so it had some personal meaning, and it also represented the University of Chicago culture that was instrumental in shaping the magazine’s sensibility.

I’m tempted to say this makes a good tagline because it’s suggestive in a way that gets destroyed if you try to explain it, but I’ll try anyway. The idea of life being “worth examining” refers to Socrates’s famous assertion that the unexamined life is not worth living. Our line is a response, in a way, to two assumptions that we take to be inimical to The Point’s mission: 1) Life may once have been worth examining, but today is so crass and culturally shallow that it does not reward serious exploration (we might call this the conservative position). 2) “Examining life” in the Socratic, philosophical sense is really an outdated pursuit, which has been superseded by technology, science and TED Talks (we might call this the liberal or “progressive” position).
The Point’s position is, contra the conservatives, there is nothing inherently shallow or “fallen” about modern life, and, contra the progressives, we have not developed better tools for reflecting on our lives since the time of Socrates.

Just briefly, the line also addresses a third group: academics. We would not have ever felt the need to start The Point if we did not believe that academics in the humanities had, bizarrely, given what they are supposed to care about, turned away from the task of examining modern life.

Most of my writing has been about literature and film, but one of my most enjoyable articles to research and write was about baseball. In general, I enjoy thinking about things that lots of people (including myself) care about but are not always treated as serious topics for intellectual investigation. For a long time I’ve wanted to write a piece on reality TV, although I recognized the challenges I might face in doing so when I gave a talk on The Bachelor a couple of years ago in Hyde Park, and my audience basically walked out.

Marie Stone, Mary Dilg, Bob Merrick, Amy Hebb, Andy Kaplan, Bill Duffy, Peter Barrett: these were all teachers I had in the Upper School, and they remain towering intellectual models for me. I learned from all of them what it meant to be a thinking person and to engage passionately with a subject, which means they have influenced my choices since graduation at every level. For one thing, it was my Parker education in the humanities that left me wanting so much more than the education I got at Brown, and therefore led me to the Committee on Social Thought, where I’ve once again found teachers who respect literature in the way that Stone, Dilg, Duffy and Kaplan did. I also think it’s fair to say that Parker’s faith in the pragmatic usefulness of knowledge—not in the scientific sense but in the sense that I always felt Parker encouraged us to apply what we were reading or learning about directly to our own lives—lay behind my motivation to start The Point, which is really an attempt to show how ideas are relevant to the everyday lives of our readers.

I have a bunch of traumatic memories associated with being forced to act in school plays when I was younger, but I don’t think any of those would qualify as “favorites.” I’ll never forget doing American Literature with Ms. Stone and American History with Mr. Merrick at the same time in my junior year; both courses were so difficult that at times I wanted to cry, but they both have shaped so much of my thinking about American culture ever since. Plus I remember Ms. Stone telling the class that something I said about Walden was “really smart” and feeling that probably it wasn’t going to get any better than that.

I have so many other great memories from Parker but they’re sort of hard to encapsulate as individual moments. Mostly they involved hanging out on the cat boxes, talking and talking and talking.
How do you enjoy spending your free time? I watch a ton of television—mostly reality TV (see above). I’m also a fanatical White Sox fan, something I suffered for at Parker!

To be honest, I still have a hard time thinking of most of what I do for school and the magazine as work. I basically get to read and write, which has been pleasurable for me ever since Mrs. Cholden—another teacher who had a profound influence on me—challenged me to become a “great” writer in 5th grade.

Now Mr. Barrett’s Algebra class … that was work!

Jon at a party for Poetry Magazine last winter.
Alumni Reconnect

The Los Angeles Regional Gathering took place November 18 at M Street Café in Santa Monica.

(L–R) ???, Kim Kerbis ’81 and Randy Sabusawa ’74 at the Los Angeles Regional Gathering.

The San Francisco Regional Gathering took place November 19 at Paragon Restaurant.
Alumni caught up at the Holiday Gathering on November 25 at Trinity Bar in Chicago.

(L–R) Larry Kirschbaum ’62, Nancy Aries ’68, unknown person and Robert Cliche ’81 at the New York Regional Gathering on April 16 at Rockefeller Center.

Larry Miller ’99 (L), Mikhaila Woodward ’95 and Chad Taylor ’99 at the Young Alumni Holiday Gathering November 27 at Underground.
Class Notes

Parker alumni: please send your class notes to Joe Bruno, Associate Director of Alumni Engagement, jbruno@fwparker.org.

1951

Betty Heistad Barrett writes, “I live in Huntington, West Virginia eight months each year and in Naples, Florida the other four months. I will receive an award from Lawrence University’s Alumni Association this summer for outstanding service to the University. It is interesting that I did not attend Lawrence; instead I am a graduate of Milwaukee-Downer College, which merged with Lawrence College in 1964 to form Lawrence University. A few years ago I received Lawrence’s George Walter Award for community service for my work developing affordable housing and efforts to end homelessness.”

Katherine Horween Burkman directed Lost Lake, a new play by David Auburn (author of Proof) that had been on Broadway, last October in Columbus, Ohio. Auburn attended and spoke about his play. This dramatic event was judged to be one of the best of the year in Columbus and was sold out for two weeks. Burkman’s book The Drama of the Double: Permeable Boundaries was recently published.

Susan Lackritz Kaplan and Ann Lackritz Fuller ’54, during a trip to the Czech Republic and Germany, had a wonderful 10-day visit with their childhood friend, Phillip Moll ’61 and his wife, Yuko, in Berlin in November 2015.

1954

Bill Rattner writes, “Delighted that my two granddaughters, grades 9 and 7, will enter Parker in the fall.”

1956

Rick Templeton writes, “I attended FWP in 1954 for my sophomore year after a year at Hyde Park High School. My family then moved to Lake Forest where I finished my secondary schooling. I attended Wright Junior College in Chicago from 1958–59, joined the U.S. Army in 1961 and moved to Australia in 1964. Alison, my wife of nearly 50 years (golden anniversary 1/29/2016), and I now have four grandchildren, all boys from the families of two of our three daughters. Two of the boys live in the country in a town called Boonah, which is about 90 km from Brisbane. Australia has been metric since 1966. Boonah is in the
Fassifern Valley, part of the food bowl for Brisbane. My daughter and her partner raise and sell wagyu beef there and at another property called Prospect, which is about 600 km west of Brisbane in a place called Meekatharra. For those of you who may not know, Queensland is about five times the size of Texas. It has a population of about 3 million, of which nearly 2 million live in the southeast corner of the state. My other daughter and her partner (a program management consultant) live with their two sons at West End, a vibrant inner-city suburb of Brisbane, which currently is going through a building blitz with around 50 new apartment towers being built. In fact there are 134 building cranes in Brisbane currently, as there is a building boom fueled by big Chinese investment. The joke is that soon Brisbane will be like Hong Kong with thousands of people living in each square block. Gridlock will be every day all day!"

1961
Larry Garner performed as Robert, an unconventional University of Chicago math professor, in *Proof* at the Royal George in March and April. He hoped to invoke the rambunctious spirit of Barr McCutcheon for inspiration in the role.

1964
James Arvey recently retired as an administrative law judge.

1969

Joseph Flynn writes, “The transition from traditionally published novelist to indie novelist/publisher continues to go well. I’ll be bringing out a new title in my John Tall Wolf series within the next few weeks. That will make 31 titles for sale on Amazon. In February, the subscribers to Kindle Unlimited gave my books more than 4.5 million page reads. That made me a member of Amazon’s all-star authors’ team. Next up, I’ll be starting on the ninth title in my best-selling Jim McGill series. In January, the first book in the series, *The President's Henchman*, reached #6 in the Kindle Paid Store out of more than a million titles. I think of my books as smart entertainment. If you'd like to take a look at what I do and read a free sample or two, please visit josephflynn.com.”
1971
Henry Davis and his career as an educational therapist were featured in a CBS Chicago article. The article is available at chicago.cbslocal.com/2015/07/27/educational-therapist-teacher-helps-students-reach-their-highest-potential/

1972
David Marcus is keeping busy as a first-time grandpa babysitting and going on adventures with the grandkids.

David Marcus with his grandchildren, Dan (two) and twins Natalie and Eytan (one).

1977
Elise Paschen was featured in an article in Classic Chicago Magazine that detailed her career in poetry and her time at Parker. The article is available at classicchicagomagazine.com/story/poetry-in-motion

1978
Chris Bensinger writes, “I have been blessed with not only my health, but the health of my family. Looking forward to seeing my son, Jack, finish off his college baseball career as he gets his master’s degree in business as well as having my daughter, Ellie, home for a few months as she pursues television and film work. With four great productions going, we are getting ready to launch The Book of Mormon in Australia and working on a new musical that we plan on showcasing at the Victory Gardens in Chicago this summer called Song of Paradise. I have been playing tennis and won the men’s singles at my club, which at age 56 feels like I won the gold medal at the Olympics. I loved seeing some Parker folks at the LA event in November. Looking forward to a summer in Chicago 2016! Kelbe and I celebrated 30 years from when we met and just passed 25 years of marriage.”

Tony Weisman won the 2015 Silver Medal Award from The Chicago Advertising Federation.
1983

Bruno Oliver writes, “Recently hit the 20-year mark in Los Angeles, a place I never imagined living while growing up in Chicago. It’s ‘home’ now, but I still yearn for Lake Michigan, Lincoln Park, apartments with long hallways and neighborhood bars with half-lit Old Style signs that beckon safety in a snowstorm. Still acting, hopefully I’ll be on your televisions more this year than last, and teaching and consulting for actors ‘new to the biz.’ Last year I became Board President of Sacred Fools Theatre Company, one of the busiest and most important forces in LA small theatre, just in time to oversee a successful search for a new space and now the massive task of making a new, better home with an almost entirely volunteer organization. It’s insane and I couldn’t be enjoying the challenge more.”

1989

Catherine Bentivegna Adami read from her work at a Summer Soiree of art, literature and wine, featuring a wine tasting by Shall We Wine, in June at RMX Gallery in Chicago’s Bucktown neighborhood. RMX Property is home to the RMX Gallery and art lovers Mikus Kins ’91 (director, RMX Gallery; executive vice president, RMX Property) and Whitney Oppenheimer ’92 (senior associate, RMX Property), who believe art and business should always have a home together. RMX Property is a full-service residential and commercial real estate brokerage firm in Bucktown. Shall We Wine’s Owner/President Regine Rousseau ’90 is dedicated to wine education through large-scale public wine tastings at Chicago’s best restaurants and galleries, private wine lessons and in-home small group classes, and she is a wine and lifestyle writer for Chicago Suburban News and Chicago Now news outlets. Learn more at shallwewine.com.

Additionally, Adami wrote the November Billiards Digest cover article “The Epitome of Cool” (billiardsdigest.com/new_current_issue/nov_15/bb_index.php) on her late father, the author and Hall of Fame pool player Freddy “the Beard” Bentivegna and the Chicago North Side institution, Bensinger’s Billiard Academy, that he called home. Bensinger’s Billiard Academy inspired both fellow Parker alumnus David Mamet ’62 and The Hustler author Walter Tevis. She won a week-long stay at La Muse Inn artist retreat in Carcassonne, France last spring. She thanks her Parker alumni family for endless encouragement and support of her writing career!
Alicia M. Senior-Saywell is program director for Belmont Theater District—Chicago’s largest theatre district, with 30 theatres within one mile of the Belmont el.

1992
Allison Amend’s new book *Enchanted Islands*, published by Nan A. Talese/Doubleday, is available on Amazon. She gave several readings in Chicago in June.

Jeremy Sisto had a biographical article published at uinterview.com/news/jeremy-sisto-bio-in-his-own-words/

1994
Christina Ruhaak and her design partner, Kristin Rehberg, have just launched chochomylove.com, a collection of thoughtfully designed products for baby and child. The signature piece is the CHō CHō baby wrap, which allows baby and family to “Go Comfy, Go Happy, Go Everywhere.”

1996
Alok Appadurai’s American-made organic clothing company Fed By Threads just crossed 515,718 meals fed to Americans in need. He drives a 1995 pickup truck and is loving raising his four-year-old son Sequoia.

Jonathan Feldman writes, “I’m excited to announce the launch of my memoir entitled *Turka Bella*, exclusively on Amazon. *Turka Bella* is about my personal experience joining the U.S. Army a week after September 11, 2001 to help make a difference in the world. While on that journey, I fell in love with a beautiful Turkish-Muslim woman. I hope you enjoy my story and I appreciate your support.”
1997

Annika Iltis and her partner, Tim Kane, co-directed *The Barkley Marathons: The Race That Eats Its Young*, a documentary about a prison-escape-inspired race that has had only 10 finishers in the past 25 years. The documentary has received numerous awards, including the Audience Award for Documentary at the Austin Film Festival, Best Feature Documentary at the Kansas City FilmFest, Gold Award for Best Running Film and Silver Award for Best Film at the Sheffield (England) Adventure Film Festival. The film was screened at the Gene Siskel Film Center in Chicago in late January. More information and reviews are available at barkleymovie.com. An interview with Iltis and Kane at Toronto’s 2015 Hot Docs Film Festival is available at youtube.com/watch?v=TvCn54a2NGQ.

2000

Rachel Terp writes, “I am happy to report the birth of my son, Leo T. Poindexter, on December 24, 2015.”

Rachel Terp and son Leo.

2004

Ariana Venturi appeared in the Steppenwolf production of Tracy Letts’ *Mary Page Marlowe* this past spring.

2007

Timeica Bethel wrote, “Same Yale Struggle, Eight Years Later,” an article that discusses racism and discrimination at her alma mater, Yale, in the Huffington Post. The article is available at huffingtonpost.com/timeica-bethel/same-yale-struggle_b_8555618.html

Brian Levi with Arianna Huffington.
Cynthia J. Avila was one of 57 graduating seniors in the state of Illinois to receive the Lincoln Academy of Illinois Award for academic excellence and community service during her undergraduate career at the University of Chicago. She was to present her senior thesis, *Sanctifying Medicine: The Evolution of Religious Pedagogy in U.S. Medical Education*, at Harvard Medical School last April.

Ivan Parfenoff paid homage to how Parker’s social justice education shaped his ongoing commitment to build a more peaceful Chicago, available on the Chicago Peace Corps’s blog, chicagopeacecorps.org/blog

Markeith Wherry studied in China last summer and spent time with Parker AFS student Vladislav Gazin.

In Memoriam

Haskell Wexler ’40 was renowned as one of the most inventive cinematographers in Hollywood and an outspoken political firebrand, according to an obituary in *The New York Times*. Wexler attended the University of California, Berkeley, but dropped out after a year and joined the merchant marine. During World War II, the ship he was on was sunk by German torpedoes, and he spent nearly two weeks in a lifeboat with 20 other people. After a stint making industrial films, Wexler became an assistant cameraman. He worked on documentaries and short subjects, the 1959 docudrama “The Savage Eye,” the classic sitcom *The Adventures of Ozzie & Harriet* and other television shows. In the mid-1970s, he and a friend, the cinematographer Conrad Hall, founded Wexler-Hall, a commercial production company. With two Academy Awards and a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame, he was a prominent member of the artistic elite. But he was also a lifelong advocate of progressive causes, whose landmark *Medium Cool*—a fiction film shot during the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago—demolished boundaries between documentary and fiction, reflecting his refusal to recognize limitations in either art or politics. Wexler received the last Oscar for black-and-white cinematography, for *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (1966). He won again a decade later for *Bound for Glory* (1976), a biography of the folk singer Woody Guthrie (whom Wexler had met during World War II, when both served in the merchant marine). He had five Oscar nominations in all, over a career that began more than auspiciously: His first genuine credit was on an Oscar-nominated 1953 documentary short, “The Living City.” Among his many other honors, Wexler received an Independent Spirit Award for *Matewan* (1987), the first of four films he would shoot for the director John Sayles and the
producer Maggie Renzi. In a note to the Parker community, Principal Dan Frank ’74 wrote, “On many occasions, Haskell mentioned to me that it was his Parker education that influenced his life and work.” In addition to his wife, the actress Rita Taggart, and two sons, he is survived by a sister, Joyce Isaacs; a daughter, Kathy Wexler; four grandchildren; and one great-granddaughter. He also was uncle to Parker alumna and film director Tanya Wexler ’88 and step-uncle to Don Hannah ’77, Daryl Hannah ’78 and Page (Hannah) Adler ’82.

Geraldine Lind Gilbert ’46 was a much-loved classmate who left Parker after 8th grade, according to classmate Herbie Loeb.

Susan Mesirov Loeb Guthman ’55 moved to Highland Park in 1962 and immediately immersed herself in the community, according to an obituary in the Chicago Tribune. She was a founding leader of Community Nursery School, raised money for countless charities and brought inner-city kids to Highland Park to teach them to swim. For 53 years, she treasured the beautiful surroundings, cherishing her many walks to the beach and becoming an avid gardener. She was devoted to many local businesses, especially Sunset Foods, where she went almost daily, chatting with everyone along the way. Her infectious smile and warmth will be missed by all who knew her.

Pauline Dubkin Yearwood ’59, the longtime managing editor of the Skokie-based Chicago Jewish News, was a prolific and award-winning journalist who covered topics from arts to health care to personal profiles, according to an obituary in the Chicago Tribune. “She was an excellent reporter and beyond that a very graceful writer,” said Joseph Aaron, editor and publisher of Chicago Jewish News. “She could handle any subject. For us she wrote a 2,500-word cover story almost every week—something like 900 cover stories.” She moved to the home of her daughter, Lagusta, in New Paltz, New York, last year after being diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. After Parker, she got a bachelor’s degree from Bryn Mawr College in Pennsylvania before returning to the Chicago area to get a master’s degree in journalism from the Medill School of Journalism at Northwestern University. By the mid-1970s, she was married and living in Phoenix. She later divorced but remained in Phoenix, where she raised her children and began writing for newspapers including the Phoenix New Times and the Jewish News of Greater Phoenix. “She reviewed plays and was a theater critic,” her daughter said. Yearwood moved back to the Chicago area in the late 1990s and was soon writing for the Chicago Jewish News, work she continued until early December. “Her writing and reporting were both very impressive,” Aaron said. “I would give her an assignment, and she would know exactly who to call, how to pursue it and how to do the research.” Yearwood won a Chicago Headline Club Peter Lisagor
Award for Exemplary Journalism in the category of Best In-depth Reporting in a Community Newspaper for her October 2008 story, “Obama and the Jews,” examining the relationship between the then-soon-to-be president and the Jewish community. She also won a 2014 American Jewish Press Association award for a 2013 profile of Chicago Teachers Union President Karen Lewis. Yearwood's play, *The Natural History of Mozart Street*, was based on her father's efforts to become an expert on nature in the city and was presented in 2010 as a staged reading by Chicago's Genesis Theatrical Productions. She is also survived by her son, Leonard.

**Marlene Davis Firestone ’73** was a respected psychotherapist and practiced for more than 30 years.

**Gina Fried ’80** was a woman of boundless energy and deep compassion and warmth, according to an obituary. After high school she moved to Israel, where she studied theatre at the Hebrew University and met her former husband, Ted Miller. After working as a stage manager in New York, she settled in Boston, where she raised her children, Zach and Zoe Miller. Here she found her true passion and gift, teaching, both as a high school English teacher and in Jewish congregational schools. In 2001, she met her spouse, Rabbi Toba Spitzer, and together they created a loving home first in Lexington and then in Waltham. She had a huge creative spirit, evidenced not only by her teaching, but also by her intricate Sculpy creations, blog writing, blanket-making, complex birthday cakes and countless published letters to the *Globe*. But her true legacy, in addition to her children, was her teaching. She offered her students both learning and love, and that love was reciprocated in fullest measure throughout her career and in her last days. She taught not just literature or Judaism but critical thinking about the world in which we live. She inspired her students to become their best selves and to work for a world free of oppression. For the past 15 years at Weston High School, she was devoted to the METCO program, and she worked to make both her classroom and the school community inclusive of diverse views and identities. Her fierce love of her children, deep partnership with her spouse, devotion to her extended family, ability to delight children of all ages and passionate friendship with so many who loved her will live on.
Planned Giving

As members of this special community, each of us has a story about how Parker has impacted our lives or those of our children. For many of us, neither time nor distance weakens the bond we have with the school. That’s the measure of Parker’s impact—that connection that remains present in the day-to-day aspects of each of our lives. Like so many before us, that bond has compelled us to give back to Parker in a meaningful way. For some, that means giving in a way that is lasting.

The Anita McCormick Blaine Planned Giving Society was established in 2001 to recognize members of our community, past and current, who have committed to ensuring that Parker thrives, now and for generations to come.

Including Parker in your estate plans through a planned gift allows you to make an impact on the lives of students, creating a bond that, in turn, they will nurture throughout the course of their lives.

There’s no better time to share your story and give a lasting gift to Parker.