

U.V. Magazine



U.V.
Magazine
SPRING 2021

Message from the Director Marcus Watts



In one of my favorite novels, Paulo Coelho (pronounced, Qwe-low), tells the story of the journeys of a Shepherd boy and how he follows the “omens” to find his treasure. *The Alchemist* teaches us that if you are in tune to your universe, you will be guided to all of your goals and dreams.

I am reminded of the story of *The Alchemist* today because we appear to be reaching a transition point in our journey similar to the many transitions of the Shepherd boy in the novel. It appears that a new season is upon us both literally and figuratively. The sunshine and the calendar have signaled a literal transition to springtime. The relaxation of covid protocols and the vaccination news have signaled a figurative transition to being post-pandemic.

In just a few short weeks all of you will be making transitions of a more personal nature. A new season will begin whether you know it or not. Some of you will simply be moving to the next phase of your journey to complete a Baccalaureate Degree moving from being a sophomore to a junior, etc. Some of you will be completing your studies at Geneseo as you commence the next part of your journey into the workforce or graduate school.

On every part of your journey you will be brought into contact with people from far flung places much like the Shepherd boy in the Alchemist. You will develop relationships with people as you follow the omens on your journey. Some people will only impact your life on the surface and others will make a lasting impression. Just as in *The Alchemist*, none of these relationships will be meaningless. Some of the relationships you will develop will only be to teach you a lesson for a future endeavor and others will be forever. Additionally, the experiences that these relationships will expose you to will be the lessons that you will learn to help you achieve your goals and dreams.

Like Coelho, I believe that there is no such thing as coincidence. Nothing that enters your space and time is meaningless. All relationships and experiences have a purpose in your life. It is up to you to make sense of it all. Your journey through childhood and now through adolescence and into adulthood is filled with “omens” that you can choose to follow or ignore. The decisions that you make in choosing to follow or ignore the signs on your journey is what creates your reality, your life.

Just a few months ago, none could have predicted the impact that the pandemic would have on all of our lives. For most, the pandemic simply inconvenienced us. For others, the Covid-19 virus will be forever remembered as the event that changed their families forever as loved ones were lost.

The impending change of season should be seen as an opportunity for new relationships and new and exciting experiences. Embrace the new relationships and be open to the new adventures. As with the pandemic, other events will occur in our lives that we will simply be forced to manage. Do not let this deter you from your goals and dreams. To quote Coelho, “it’s the possibility of having a dream come true that makes life interesting.”

BIPOC Community Unity

By Abigail George

This past year at SUNY Geneseo we have been through an immense amount of challenges both mentally and emotionally. The outbreak of COVID and its effects on our social life, the loss of friends and family, the shared lack of motivation and stress, and social injustice, are just a few of many hardships we have undergone. However, despite all our individual challenges, we have risen to overcome them as a community and stand united as one in many scenarios. Recently, the campus Painted Tree by Sturges Quad had a painted memorial for the black lives lost to police brutality. For the second time, it was painted over with patriotic messages and malicious intent. As if these findings weren't enough, coming to the conclusion that the remodeling was done by the same individual added to the exasperated spirit of the BIPOC community.

Nonetheless, these acts of aggression did not cripple the BIPOC community and we came together to combat against these actions and voice our concerns on how this act affected our community. When the first-repainting of the tree occurred last semester, students came together and organized a peaceful protest, with an attendance of 500 people, along with sending emails to the Admin board of the school, news anchors, newspaper outlets, and more to voice our concerns. Similar steps are currently being taken as BIPOC students are conducting weekly meetings to discuss their next course of action in regards to bringing the students list of demands to administration so they hear and understand what the BIPOC student community wants and needs from administration.

A few weeks ago on March 16, the Asian American Pacific Island (AAPI) community suffered a great loss when a 21 year old white male conducted a mass shooting in three Asian Spas and Massage Parlors in Atlanta Georgia, killing 8 individuals, 6 of the victims being Asian women. The AAPI community and allies of the AAPI community here on campus came together and held various zoom meetings to organize a successful peaceful rally to address these recent events. Many AAPI students shared their personal experiences and stories about being an Asian-American or Pacific Islander individual on this campus and how AAPI hate affects them. Livingston County News wrote an article about the rally and how unified the student community was in showing their support for the AAPI community and the AAPI culture clubs. A memorial vigil event is also currently being planned as well in honor of the Asian lives lost to Asian hate. There are a variety of Asian culture clubs here on campus like the Chinese Culture Club (CCC), Japanese Culture Club (JCC), Shakti, Korean American Student Association (KASA), Himalayan Student Association (HSA), and the Filipinix Student Union (FSU).

It is important that the BIPOC student community stand together whenever possible, remain vocal, and admit what we want. We deserve respect as students that are part of the SUNY Geneseo environment. Even though, it often feels like higher up admin overlook the BIPOC community on campus, one of the most special things about the BIPOC student community here at Geneseo that I adore and respect, is that no matter our differences and no matter our challenges, we all come together to support one another and fight for what we believe is right for our community. We still have a long way to go in developing our environment to make the BIPOC community feel like we truly matter here on campus, but no matter what, we will continue to stand as one for years to come and continue to fight for what we know we deserve as individuals and a part of this community.

AOP's Impact on Xiara Colon by Rocio Ruiz

Xiara Colon is a senior AOP student (class of 2021), who has been very involved on campus. Some of the positions that Xiara has been involved in are Resident Assistant, Peer Mentor, Admissions Intern, and Student Association Interim Director of Student Affairs and Diversity. I had the opportunity to speak with Xiara in an interview, where she discussed her college experience as an AOP student and the initiatives she has made to create change on campus. Xiara's message to other AOP students is "remember that you are a person and you are going to make mistakes and experience a lot of things in college. You do need that time to breathe and connect with yourself, but also that you deserve to be here and I feel like that is not said enough. You belong here and in this space even when people are trying to say you are not."



To listen to the full interview, check out our podcast on spotify! :

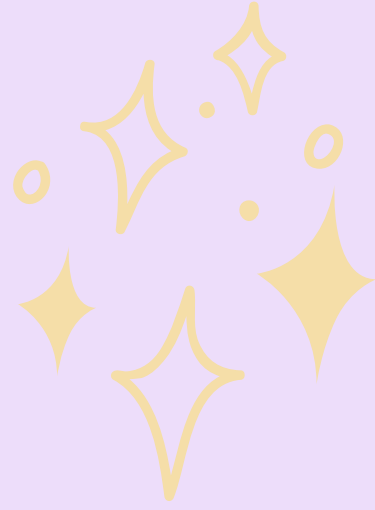
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UNITED VOICES

Relight your spark

by Patricia Figueroa



One year. One year for masks. One year of social distancing. One year of fear, frustration, anxiety. Motivation is low and tensions feel high. Take a step back and find your trail. It's easier said than done. I'm sure we have all heard all the tips and tricks to stay sane during the pandemic, at some point they all stop making sense. Like when you are staring at a word that is spelled correctly but the more you look at the more it looks wrong. Simply "staying positive" isn't an option sometimes. We've all learned that by now.

There is a light at the end of the tunnel, as cliché as it sounds. I am grateful to have re lit my spark by learning more about myself and what I want to put my heart into. Whether that is education, music, art, family, friends. I've learned to open my door to more opportunities and not limit myself to familiarities. Though it's difficult to grow during a pandemic, I believe that anything is possible. Nothing should limit one's individuality.





cafe con pan



The smell of instant coffee mixed with warm milk and the smell of perfectly baked rodillo de cristo remind me of the saddest part of the year. It's not the same anywhere else.

Abuelita and abuelito tell me to savor this moment because we never know if we'll see each other again after this. "You will always be my bebe" abuelito says. Whenever they say this I think back to when I was younger and everyone was so full of life. When abuelita could walk to the car without holding on to my arm and when tio Hugo had a full head of pure black hair. When everyone was just better. I regret missing out on that part of my life.

Unappreciative of the world I could've explored. Now more aware and educated, I know the value every moment now. Now that I can't fly into their warm embraces. There is an element of fear that grows in my heart whenever the thought of them crosses my mind. Every time I drink coffee with a piece of bread I'm reminded of every moment I didn't savor.

Every moment I was never able to appreciate.

In Ecuador, I don't wake up to the blaring South American sun or the cool breeze that comes through the "closed" windows. I wake up to the warm smell of hot milk and bread but the only kind of bread that I can't seem to find anywhere other than abuelita's kitchen. As more and more suitcases spiral down the stairs in the afternoon, my mother breaks the tension and makes a batch of coffee and takes bread out from the thick wooden cabinet. As if it were medicine, our separation anxiety temporarily subsided. As if we arrived for the first time we get asked "¿Como estas?" Let's pretend for now. My tios show up after we finish our coffee. It would be disrespectful to let them drink coffee and bread alone. Right?

And like a drug it's as if we started the trip all over again.

The taxi cab shows up and my heart starts to break. I see abuelita fill the kettle with hot water. She hands me the cup of lemon grass tea. As I set the cup on the table, it's as if the lump in my throat does the opposite. I swallow my emotions with the lukewarm tea and begin to look around taking mental notes to remember exactly how everything looks this year. It never changes much but you never know. All the bags are packed in the taxi and I embrace my family. Abuelita hugs me longer and tells me "Soy viejita. You never know what can happen in a year". I simply let my tears speak louder than my words as I bury my nose into her shoulder and I give her a short "te quiero". Her rosie sent lingers as her words once again leave me weak. Hours later I wake up to closed windows and warm air. I know that there is never going to be anything quite like abuelita's cafe con pan, but I make myself a cup from the Keurig, add cream and make a simple piece of toast with jam. As I swallow a bite I am reminded of the significance of something so simplistic.




Hair Monologues




Every year, the Office of Diversity & Equity organizes a day filled with sessions that discuss topics of Diversity, hosted by members of the campus. This year's Virtual Diversity Summit, I had the opportunity to attend "The Hair Monologues". The conversation was facilitated by faculty member Kristen Gentry, Director of Creative Writing. The purpose of this session was for the campus community to learn about the value that hair holds for individuals. It also brought attention to the expectations and stereotypes that are attached to different hair textures, hairstyles, or cuts. Hair has a significant impact in the way it influences one's identity and how one expresses themselves. Most importantly hair can symbolize many things for various marginalized identities. The following Hair Monologues are from two SUNY Geneseo students:






2007 was the year of my childhood that I remember most vividly. Not because of any traumatic events that took place, but simply because of how carefree those days once were. I remember going to school just down the street from my home, playing with kids who knew my name called me their friend. But most of all, I remember the jungle gym. The jungle gym. Yes, the monkey bars, the slides, the swings, and smiles that came as a result of it. Most importantly, I remember the thick layer of sand that this structure was embedded in. Everyday you went to Berrigan Elementary, you knew you had a great time at recess depending on the amount of sand you left with caked on your shoes, the smiles on your face, and even with traces of laughter left in the air. The sand stuck me with so much that every Saturday morning, I'd be bent over my bathtub watching the memories of recess swirl down the drain as my mother washed my hair and complained of much sand she found in my scalp. I didn't mind it, though. I knew that the same fun she washed away was only going to come back the following week and the cycle would repeat itself.

2008 was different, however. My family and I had just moved to this obscure town in the middle of New York. Obama had just been elected president and I had been enrolled in Catholic school. When we went for recess that day, the play structure they had was quite sad to say the least. It was entirely made of wood. The monkey bars were five feet off the ground, the slide had nicked edges that could cut your legs, and anytime you used the swings, they screamed as if they were practically begging you to get the hell off. Oh, and to top it all off, there was no sand. That sad an excuse for childhood enjoyment sat on mulch. This was also around the time that my mom had switched up my haircare routine and started relaxing it instead of the typical wash, oil, and braid. Contrary to the name, a relaxer is not as relaxing as it sounded. After my mom would apply it to my scalp for the first time, I would sit there. Waiting, waiting, until it started to burn. The burning meant it was working. The burning meant it was straightening my hair. That burning would break the bonds that gave my hair the kink and curl that were once there. The burning catapulted me into a phase of my life that I wasn't ready for.

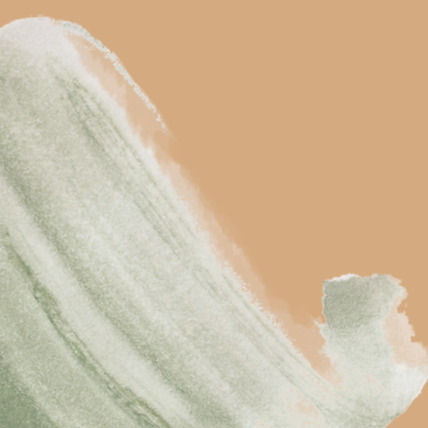




Let's fast forward to 2016, I was a senior in high school with great grades, few friends, a budding caffeine addiction, thoughts racing about what the future held for me, and weighed down by an overwhelming sadness. During the fall we had our annual school pep rally but this one ended in mayhem. There were a few students who brought bags of flour and started throwing them all over the gymnasium, causing the event to end very abruptly. My hair, thin and barely touching the nape of my neck at the time was caked in it. I rushed home, and after washing it, noticed how what I thought was good hair looked as dead and as I felt. How there was still flour left in it. In a fit of rage, I grabbed a pair of scissors and started cutting off the straight hair. Still dissatisfied, I cut off everything. I would hide my impulsive decision under head scarves and bonnets until my mother caught me without one and proceeded to tell me how disgusting I looked. How horrible I looked, how ugly my haircut was. Funny enough, I didn't feel bad at all. The feeling was familiar to me. It was almost as if I'd known it before. It was the feeling that I watched go down the drain that stared back at me in the mirror. Something that flew with the breeze . . something like sand.

It's 2021 and I'm in my final semester of my undergraduate career. I was hoping that in May, I'd be crossing a stage to reap the rewards of something that, for a while, I thought I'd never accomplish. Whether it be in front of my family sitting in chairs or in front of black boxes on a screen, I'm still celebrating a milestone. From there I hope to take hold of whatever opportunities life grants me, with a smile on my face and my beautiful black tresses reaching for the sun.

Neo Nxumalo, Mathematics Major '21





For years and years and years and years, I relaxed my hair.

AS A KID, WHEN I looked at my natural hair in the mirror, my young and impressionable brain SAID AWFUL THINGS TO ME. "YOUR HAIR IS DISGUSTING. YOU'RE SO WEIRD. WHY IS YOUR HAIR SO MESSY? You look gross.

I ASKED MYSELF AGAIN AND AGAIN, why won't my hair act like my white friends?

I grew up in Oswego, New York. And if you know anything about Oswego, YOU KNOW it's WHITE. AND IF YOU DON'T KNOW ABOUT OSWEGO, LEMME TELL YOU. IT'S whiter than the lake effect snow that buries us every winter.


IN OSWEGO, I was raised in a single parent household by a white mother. Neither of us knew how to handle my hair. It was long, thick, and impossible to brush.


I REMEMBER ONCE, MY MOTHER was trying to comb out my hair. IT WAS SO KNOTTED THAT every time the comb CAUGHT ANOTHER KNOT, MY BREATH WOULD CATCH IN MY THROAT.

EVERY KNOT, ANOTHER DEEP STAB INTO MY SCALP. ANOTHER SHARP STING AND ANOTHER MOMENT I COULDN'T BREATHE.

EVERY KNOT, ANOTHER REMINDER of how different I am, how no one around me understood me.

IT WAS EASY TO BELIEVE that me and my hair were the problem. I KNOW NOW that THE PROBLEM WAS JUST IGNORANCE. Neither of us learned how to take care of MY HAIR. BUT FOR SO LONG, I THOUGHT THE PROBLEM WAS ME.





IT DIDN'T HELP THAT all my friends were white, pretty much by default because of the demographics of the area.

I stuck out like a sore thumb. AND STICKING OUT APPARENTLY MEANS REPEATEDLY BEING asked to be pet like a zoo animal. THEY tried to Run THEIR Hands THROUGH MY WEIRD, TANGLED MESS WHILE I STARED IN ENVY AT THEIR LONG, LIGHT, SILKY LOCKS.

They COULD DO anything they wanted with their hair. THEY COULD DO ANYTHING THEY WANTED WITH THEIR LIFE. I IMAGINED THEIR MOTHERS, COMBING THEIR HAIR WITH EASE AND LAUGHING AT THE LIGHTNESS OF IT ALL.


HOW could I be anything but ugly?

And every time someone wanted to touch my hair, I felt more and more isolated. MORE AND MORE different.

AND SO, I RELAXED MY HAIR.

If you don't know what it's like to get your hair relaxed, you're lucky. Relaxing is basically putting chemicals on your hair that strip the texture from it and turn curls into pin straight hair. When I made the decision to relax my hair, I was so desperate to have perfectly straight hair and to get rid of all my curls that I wouldn't tell the hairstylist when the chemicals were starting to burn my skin.

I remember once in middle school I let the chemicals burn ME SO BADLY that I had scabs on the back of my neck for weeks. I may still have scars there. I damaged my skin and hair like this for years.





Then, I started high school

I started to question why I kept doing this to myself instead of just embracing my natural hair. But every six weeks I went back to try to achieve the long, straight hair that I saw my classmates had. Without fail.

Then, during my senior year of high school, the pandemic hit. Everything shut down. I WAS ALONE MORE THAN USUAL. I had a lot of time to think.

"I'm going to go off to college at the end of the summer," I'd think. " I'M GOING TO have a fresh start, THE beginning of my new life." A chance to express myself in ways I never had before.

AGAIN, I CONSIDERED letting my natural hair grow out. I STILL COULDN'T TAKE THE PLUNGE. BUT THE NEXT TIME I SAT IN THAT SALON CHAIR, IT DIDN'T FEEL THE SAME.

Then, I watched George Floyd die on TV. I WATCHED HIM SUFFOCATE TO DEATH under the knee of that cop dozens of times.

Then, I watched the protests that started in Minneapolis, spread across the country, and then across the world.

I saw hundreds of thousands of people my age in the streets fighting for racial justice and equality. I saw the speeches, and the protest signs, and the vigils.

I'LL BE HONEST, I felt most empowered by watching the things others condemned: the burning buildings, the smashed windows, the damaged police cars. And as I watched those buildings burn, I thought of all the years I let my neck burn to erase the part of myself that I never embraced. I wanted so badly to support those in the streets that were willing to risk physical harm to fight for racial justice, but how could I do that when I wanted to hide the part of me that wasn't white?

So, I made my decision.





On August 7, 2020, I got my first protective style.

And now, every time I wash my hair, every time I look in the mirror, every time those curls I once called weird and messy stare back at me, I feel... sad.


I wish that my head was full of those curls. I want so badly to see how they'd frame my face, thick and bouncy, full of the part of me I was never comfortable showing. How funny it is that I now want nothing more than to be able to flaunt what I was once so insecure about.

But because of my choices for years and years and years and years I have to wait.

At least now, I'm excited about what I'm waiting for.

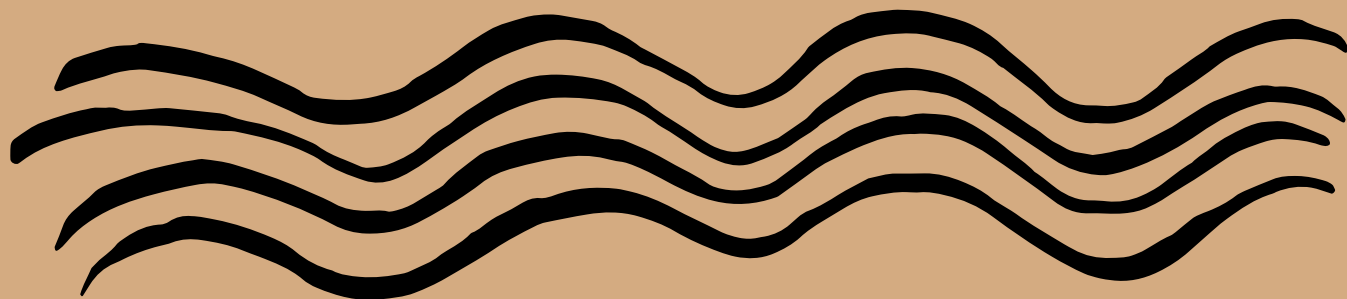
Victoria Tripp, Communication Major '24





"Hair is just hair. I've gone from having a honey blonde fade to purple butt length box braids to a beautiful jet black afro that I wear without a care in the world. The value lies in what it is you do with it that makes it authentic to you. My journey with my hair has been especially important because of how long I've spent trying to define my identity as a black woman and tried to make it palatable for others. Unfortunately, I've discovered that I can't accomplish both. Those who don't think of you as being too much to handle all at once will never get tired of you or think of you as being too much. My biggest goal when I signed up to participate in this reading was not to be accepted, but simply for those to understand that I accept myself regardless of what anyone else thinks. Acceptance of one's hair takes a long time. It's taken me four years and I'm still not where I'd like to be when it comes to my hair. So, to answer this question, the importance of accepting different hair textures and cuts is that you should do it on your own time without regard for the opinions of everyone else." -Neo

"To me, it was very important to accept my hair the way it is because of how it's connected to my racial identity. Growing up with a white family, I spent years erasing my racial identity so the decision to grow out my hair was extremely empowering. Embracing different hairstyles also fights the white-normative standard of beauty that we are subjected to in America. To me, my hair is everything. It's a very emotional topic for me to talk about. It's been my insecurities for the past 18 years of my life. It's the side of my family that I will never meet. It's the generational trauma that affects me. It's the years of microaggressions and outright racism that I've experienced. It's every painful experience, every moment of self-confidence, everything I hate about myself and my life, but also everything I love about it. My hair is everything good and bad simultaneously. But over the years I've come to love my hair." - Victoria Tripp



Self-Portrait in Canyon Hues



"This piece is composed of chalk pastels on light blue paper. The self-portrait serves as a study of artificial light and color and the way it provides the subject with luminescence. The piece also marks the artists return to this medium, a medium the artist loved to work with while in high school. "Self-Portrait in Canyon Hues" is a reflection upon myself as an artist and my physical body, and the nuanced relationship between the two."

-Rosa Mesbahi
English Literature
Women's and Gender Studies
Class of '21

RECOGNITION TOWARDS OUTSTANDING AOP SENIORS 2021

CONGRATULATION CLASS OF 2021!!! I'm so, so proud of you! It's amazing to reflect on your growth from the apprehensive freshman you were when you stepped onto campus for the AOP Summer Scholars Program four years ago to the confident, independent, accomplished students you are today. It's been my privilege to watch you grow academically and personally as you've learned how to master the material in your classes, take on leadership roles in your clubs/organizations, participate in research opportunities, study abroad, work, and volunteer. With your resilient spirit, you've persevered and overcome obstacles big and small to get to the graduation stage. Thank you for allowing me to be part of your journey and for all that you have taught me. I will miss you but I am so excited to see what's next for you. You have bright, exciting futures ahead of you!

- Courtney Havens
EOP Counselor

I want to take a moment to highlight two seniors in particular who have not only done very well academically during their time at Geneseo, but who have also contributed significantly to the campus community.



Rachel Arauz will be graduating this May with a major in sociomedical sciences and a minor in anthropology. Rachel embodies women's empowerment, having held major roles within the Women's Leadership Institute and being a member of the Jewish Foundation for Education of Women (JFEW) SUNY Global Affairs Leadership program. Rachel participated in the Women's Leadership Institute all four years of her Geneseo career and has been on the program development team for the last three years. As a member of the program development team, she has created and facilitated a variety of programming that has positively impacted the lives of many young women on campus. As a JFEW scholar, Rachel has learned a lot about leadership in global affairs. Through that opportunity, she was able to intern with the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation last summer. Rachel has also served as a teaching assistant for INTD 188: First Year Seminar and is currently a teaching assistant for ANTH 238: Ethnomedicine in Latin America and the Caribbean. Additionally, Rachel served as a Geneseo OverKnight host and was a member of Geneseo's gospel choir. Upon graduation, Rachel plans to pursue a master's degree in public health and work to support women's health.

Catherine Echavarria Mata will be graduating this May with a major in biology. Catherine has worked extensively with Residence Life at SUNY Geneseo earning increasingly more responsibility in the residence halls. She began as a Resident Assistant her sophomore year and moved up to the position of Assistant Resident Director. Catherine has also been very involved with AOP, having served as a peer mentor for the 2018 AOP Summer Scholars Program and an academic year peer mentor as well. Already a natural leader, Catherine honed those leadership skills by participating in the Women's Leadership Institute. In addition to being a leader on campus and in the classroom, Catherine is also a talented dancer. As such, she has been a member of Geneseo's Original Xpression (OGX) dance team and a choreographer for the Caribbean Student Association (CSA). After graduating from Geneseo, Catherine plans to pursue a career in dental health.





To: Rae Ortega
From: Ms. Lofquist

"Be proud of your accomplishments! You made it! Congratulations upon your well-deserved success and I look forward to hearing more about your journey. Always here for you Rae!"

"I am so happy to share in the excitement of celebrating and honoring your graduation from Geneseo. Keep dancing Melisha! With love and pride today and always."

To: Melisha Gatlin
From: Ms. Lofquist

U.V. Magazine

spring 2021

We aim to uplift the
voices of the AOP and Geneseo communities alike
through creative expression.

A special thanks to our editors

Rocio Ruiz

Patricia Figueroa

Abigail George

Get involved!

- reach out to our editors or Marcus Watts
- Follow us on Instagram @unitedvoicesaop
- All submissions are always welcome