

4-1-2017

Now: Reflection on Furman as it is now

Noah Zimmermann '18
Furman University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarexchange.furman.edu/furman-magazine>

Recommended Citation

Zimmermann, Noah '18 (2017) "Now: Reflection on Furman as it is now," *Furman Magazine*: Vol. 60 : Iss. 1 , Article 11.
Available at: <https://scholarexchange.furman.edu/furman-magazine/vol60/iss1/11>

This Regular Feature is made available online by Journals, part of the Furman University Scholar Exchange (FUSE). It has been accepted for inclusion in Furman Magazine by an authorized FUSE administrator. For terms of use, please refer to the [FUSE Institutional Repository Guidelines](#). For more information, please contact scholarexchange@furman.edu.



(Top) Alexis Hawkins '17 demonstrates how to stitch a journal designed by one of the students. (Bottom) Listening closely to a lesson on journal-making.

ers retrieve their plates after the glaze is dry and take them to their seats. Now comes the fun part: painting the plates.

Laurie, a seventh-grader, is painting a “pirate fox” on her plate, while Stephanie (seventh grade) brushes on a rainbow, and Aaliyah (sixth grade) decorates her plate with a snowflake. “I like making the plates,” Laurie says, “I can use my own ideas and no one tells me what to do.”

Toney sees it from a different perspective. “Our school’s mission is that every student goes to and completes college, so being able to build a relationship with the Furman students is so beneficial to them.”

The middle schoolers, though, aren’t thinking that far ahead. “I love Art Club,” Stephanie exclaims, “because we can do whatever we want—and I like getting my hands messy!” ●



NOW

Reflection on Furman as it is now

The global experience is closer than you think. You don’t even need to buy a plane ticket to immerse yourself in other cultures.

That’s what I discovered when I interned with the Catholic Charities Diocese of Charlotte Refugee Resettlement Office this past summer. For the first time in my life, I, a white upper-middle-class male, was in the minority. And it was liberating.

People who did not look like me, sound like me or have a background similar to mine surrounded me. I worked with the most diverse group of clients and coworkers in my brief work history. Many of my colleagues were former refugees, and almost all of them spoke at least one foreign language, including Arabic, Farsi, Pashtu and Swahili. Our clients came from countries all over the world, including Burma, Bhutan, Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and Somalia.

I found all of this diversity without even having to leave the Southeast, where I have lived the majority of my life. Despite everything I had heard about a sudden increase in immigrants and refugees, I realized that they have been a part of our communities for years. As I learned in my American Immigration History class at Furman, every American comes from an immigrant family, myself included.

Through my time working with the refugees, helping them with job and benefits

applications, apartment bills and bus orientations, and adjusting to the culture, I saw what America can mean to an immigrant. For some, it is just a safe place away from the terrorism that dictated their lives in their home countries; for others, it is a land of opportunity greater than anything that was ever available to them before.

I doubt I would have been prepared to help our clients this summer if it weren’t for the classes I had taken at Furman before starting my internship, like Poverty Studies 101, a required course for all poverty studies minors. The core concepts of the class helped me grapple with the everyday struggle of poverty, the challenge of education, and the search for meaningful gainful employment that I saw each one of our clients go through.

My exposures to such struggles in the internship and my classes at Furman have taught me much about the world and myself. Being a student at Furman has given me the opportunity to make the most of my college experience by fully immersing myself in the areas of my interest while engaging with the backgrounds and experiences of others.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Noah Zimmermann '18 from Camden, South Carolina, is a *Politics and International Affairs and Philosophy* major with a minor in *Poverty Studies*.