

Bryan,

As you quoted from R. Watkins, "Words are the ultimate abstraction." I truly believe anything I could write would take away from the beauty of your work. If I could only say one thing, you have a gift and I believe you have accomplished much with even more to come in your life. "This is just the beginning."

I absolutely loved the way you flipped the script starting with the end. There are so many aspects of this presentation that was wonderful that I don't know where to begin, but my favorite pieces were "Boxes," "I love to believe in hope," and "Darkness."

I am truly sorry to hear about the loss of your friend, James A'Kech "A Pie" Mangui. What happened is terrible...here again, words are only limiting. The tribute to his memory was pure, amazing, and extremely heart-felt.

About the presentation itself...I have always been an advocate for multimodality since the concept was introduced to me, and I believe even before I knew what it was. My favorite teacher in AP English and I got close by beginning with the question, "Can you understand the feeling if you don't have the words?" This was something we argued the entire year, and I always, always, always argued yes. A player of the violin for years, a journaler, a kid who loved to dance and sing, a painter and drawer...all of those aspects of my life held such different meanings of expression and I knew some things just could not be expressed through words. I let him win, but I was never satisfied with the answer. Only through your presentation, even after all the "multimodality" research and conversations I've had, did I finally understand why my teacher was wrong and why I knew he was wrong. What you did with your project, from art to the videos to the pictures to the voice over (by the way, props to the vocals of Patrick Murphy!) allowed everything to come full circle in a way that a manuscript can not possibly hope to achieve. I love the concept of teaching beyond the written word and I agree that on occasion, we should throw the textbooks of academia "six feet under and call it a day."

I'm so glad the Sudanese culture is being brought into the light. There are two men at my church who are lost boys and I have a friend from LeMoyne, Gabrielle Deng, who has started a project (H.O.P.E. for Sudan) to raise money and build a school in the village where he was born. I have spoken with all three at length about the importance of education in their lives and it amazes me how much they cherish it when there are people here who take the opportunity for granted (as my students at ESM discussed). I laughed when A Pie asked why you were wet and talked about how silly running for exercise was. When the two men from my church first came to America, they watched a football game with my pastor's son, Dale, on Thanksgiving- their first experience with the sport. As Dale explained the game play-by-play, one of the young men asked "So only the black men are allowed to play?"

This truly was wonderful and I honestly can not wait to see where your life brings you. If this is what you are presenting in Kentucky, then no worries.

By the way, I absolutely died laughing when I saw you prancing around in the "think outside of the box" outfit. Too funny.

Thank you so much for letting me see this. Embrace this piece...you should be proud.

-Rhiannon

My apologies for writing you a novel!! I tend to be somewhere between long-winded and exhaustive when I write after midnight, but this was well deserved.