

PERSONAL ESSAY

Taking my time

Keeping suburban life alive in the city.

// HANA TILKSEW

Before coming to Yale, I thought of myself as a city-adjacent suburban girl. Sure, my hometown of Fresno, California, is best known for its agriculture, and driving 40 minutes out of any populated neighborhood lands you in empty brown fields, but I didn't think it was that rural. After all, we had two Nordstrom Racks and a few bougie cafes selling \$10 matcha. When the middle-tier malls and outdoor festivals got monotonous, I could always drive three hours in either direction and end up in San Francisco or Los Angeles.

New Haven is considered a micro-city by many East Coasters. To me, it's proper urban living. Being able to walk two minutes from my room to G-Heav to buy over-

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priced grapes? Having cappuccinos ready to go downstairs in Pierson's dining hall? Living within 15 minutes of all my friends? This might as well be Manhattan.

But more than walkability or convenience, the most jarring adjustment to urban life is the way people treat their time. I'm used to savoring time. I believe in extended morning routines, in saying your daily prayers and fixing your hair and eating a real breakfast. To discover that my fellow Yalies will jump out of bed to an alarm that sounds like a demolition warning, chug coffee on an empty stomach and run to their first morning class is a revelation.

A New Yorker on my floor said she considers a 10-minute shower "leisurely." A 10-minute shower means I'm in a rush. When I sit to read at home, I like having a cup of tea at my side.

A Yale workload means there's no point in grab-

bing the tea because I'll be done skimming my 40-page reading by the time two sips go by, and then it's off to do whatever's next on the GCal.

In some ways, this atmosphere is motivating. When I'm around people who are constantly hustling, I feel compelled to hustle too. But while I've never been surrounded by more ambitious people, I've also never seen anyone more exhausted. Here we are on the most beautiful campus in the world, surrounded by some of the most interesting people our age, and we can barely look up for five minutes to take it all in.

I must admit that Yale has changed me in some ways. I've pulled out my GCal to schedule a meal. I've fallen asleep with my contacts in more than once. I've listened to my assigned readings on Spotify because I couldn't find time to sit down and open the book.

But despite how hectic my day might be, I refuse to let go of my slow mornings. I always wake up at least an hour and a half before I have to leave for my first class. Some students may find that extra 90 minutes of shut-eye essential, but what's more critical for my own peace of mind is being able to breathe before the chaos sets in. I do my skincare routine. I listen to some music. If I'm feeling responsible, I take my vitamins. For a stretch of time, I'm a human being, not a Yalie.

I could choose to put off this humanness for post-grad life, as many of us resolve to do. Once we're all grown up and don't have to juggle intense coursework with pre-professional ex-

tracurriculars, then we'll finally be able to savor our time, right? But many of us were once high-powered high school students who told ourselves college would be a breather. And in 20 years' time, we may find that full-time jobs and family obligations have us running from place to place just as much as we do now.

Maybe the people in Fresno have it figured out. After all, if we do not choose the present moment to reclaim our time, and by extension our humanity, will we ever?

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PERSONAL ESSAY

Straight from the horse's mouth

What it's like to be a rural student at Yale.

// MADIFINCH

"Did you know you are the only person I have ever met from Kansas?"

My new friends, my suitemates, my classmates, my professors — these are people whose first impression of me is my novelty. A throwaway question identifying something that doesn't seem like that big of a deal. Yet, every time I am greeted with my role as the only girl from Kansas, I am reminded of the loneliness of the sentence.

It is a common myth that it is easier to get into an Ivy — to get into Yale — coming from a rural school, an idea unsupported by the fact that I personally know everyone from the class of 2029 who also happens to be from the Sunflower State. But this idea of the rural student making it out, or not being "in Kansas anymore," leaves many rural students in an isolated position.

Coming to Yale was supposed to, or is supposed to, be a new beginning. For me at least, that beginning was quite rough. The hidden curriculum of learning the campus and its structures, unspoken social rules and even new types of friendships created situations that I had no map for. I quickly realized that being the first person from my high school to get into Yale in the past few decades also made me the first person from my high school to be at Yale in the modern era.

I am more aware than ever of these problems in the moments that I try to articulate them. For my friend Michelle Lin '29 — not the only person I have met from Missouri — and me, we are frequently burdened by not

what to say, but how to say it. The dispersion of rural students on the Yale campus is enforced by the uniqueness of the dialect we brought with us. Without intending to, I have begun to speak in code.

Rather than a simple conversation between small-town girls who have spent their lives together, our gossip now has moral and political implications. "I just feel like the way we communicate is different than the people here," Michelle told me. Regional differences in communication have been known to manifest in accents, but I have encountered a greater disparity. The very ways and things about which I seek to communicate clash along lines of rurality and urbanity. The language difference informs much of how I am able to interact with Yale.

Walking into a Yale classroom was a hurdle I wasn't entirely ready for. I didn't know assignments were in the syllabus, and I didn't know how best to phrase an email to ask the questions I needed answered. My communication hurdle didn't

stop at my friendships — it directly influenced my interactions with professors.

At a meal with my Silliman-assigned big sibling, Bella Amell '27, I had the chance to ask about her opinion on her rural origins, both as a "bumpkin" — her word to describe being a rural student at Yale — and as the chief of staff of Rural Students Alliance at Yale.

When asked for her opinion on being a rural student at Yale, she identified "an issue in academia largely where most people are not from rural areas" and that, "if you teach at Yale, you aren't from a rural area." While this may not seem like that big of an issue, considering rural students are far outnumbered on campuses such as Yale, perhaps making our problems comparatively less important, the lack of understanding about rural spaces at Yale has caused some interesting — and troubling — situations.

Whether it was being asked if I owned a tractor, or as Bella put it, "I have had people ask me if I went to school in a one-room schoolhouse," the isolation of being

a rural student is an issue that Yale doesn't seem to know how to fix. It makes sense that a school that wants a student body reflective of the world it teaches about would have similar problems to that world — that rurality comes with associated stereotypes is just one of those problems.

So where does that leave the few hometown heroes who "made it out"? What does that mean for the kids whose accents or dialects reveal their rurality?

"In my first year especially, I would tell people that I was rural or from a small town, not from a place of pride but from a place of 'I am sorry,'" Bella said, a feeling I know all too well. But as her time has progressed, she channeled that feeling into a sense of pride. Now, instead of being ashamed or uncertain of her background, she openly discusses her rurality. "I am really proud that I grew up in this way."

So, for the rural few, know that the sense of displacement that comes with coming to a small institution from a small town is not one you feel alone. You might be the only person from your school here, but you are not the only one to be the only one. Life as a rural student is certainly not perfect, but with programs like Rural Students Alliance at Yale — and the big siblings your randomly assigned residential college could randomly assign to you — they are not an unconquerable hurdle.

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