

COMMENTS LITERATURE AND MEDICINE FINAL PROJECTS 2021

thank you so much for sharing your thoughts about books, race, libraries, and the people we love (despite some problematic issues with Mockingbird, it remains one of my favorite childhood books and Atticus became my role model of what a good person should be). I was so sorry to learn of your father’s passing, but I was also so grateful that we were able to experience a small part of who he was and what he meant to you. I loved hearing you describe your heritage as a family of fighters. That was such a strong and resilient image. When you mentioned the Tuskegee Airmen, I had a flash of you in one of those pilot’s caps with goggles, standing by an old WWII plane cockpit. From getting to know you a little in class, it seems to me you well embody your family’s and father’s legacy.

Thank you so much for choosing patient/doctor stories. You were an invaluable member of the group, proactive, thoughtful, contributing your insights and supporting the insights of others. I wish you all success as your journey in medicine continues. Please don’t hesitate to reach out if you ever would like a listening ear. We are here to make that journey just a little easier. Best, Dr. Shapiro

it’s wonderful to know that the patient/doctor stories elective has encouraged your love of writing because you are a strong writer. I’m calling what you wrote a prose poem because, although it was organized as a paragraph, the language was so vivid and lyrical that it seemed highly poetic to me. I found the imagery both beautiful and poignant. Beautiful because of the vividness with which you portrayed the dawn – and poignant because in line after line you emphasized its impermanence. I felt you might be saying that it is the fleeting nature of dawn that makes it so precious. And while you denied that your work had anything to do with medicine, in my mind your close observation skills and your awareness that there are larger meanings hidden in “routine” events guarantee that you will be both a thorough and compassionate physician.

Wishing you all the best this year and beyond. Please know we are hear to support you, so never hesitate to reach out. Best, Dr. Shapiro

Hi thanks for your kind comments about the elective. They sum up so perfectly our intention to create a safe space where students can pause their frenetic forward pace, reflect on what is happening to them, and explore who they want to be as a physician. It’s wonderful to know that this happened for you.

Regarding your essay, I’d like to comment on two levels. One level is the human level of recognizing that a self-inflicted gunshot wound, no matter how exciting from a learning perspective, does not represent “luck” for anyone. In your story, the third year seems to have momentarily forgotten this, but the narrator cannot escape it, no matter how hard they try to feel what they are being told a budding physician should feel. This inability to separate from your shared humanity with the patient is one of the most moving aspects of this essay.

The second level is craft. you are a writer, and I hope you will use your talent with language, arc, and imagery to continue to comment on your experiences as a med student (and eventually as a physician). You are self-deprecatingly funny (the time spent wandering around, trying to find your proper location); but you are not afraid to let your essay take a darker turn. You recognize the power in

the third year's language ("you're so lucky!") and use it as one of the organizing themes of the essay (What does luck mean for doctors? For patients? What is the relationship between the learning of the student and the suffering of the patient?). The other organizing principle – the bare feet – is similarly compelling and is created so vividly that it lingers in the mind as the dominant visual metaphor of the essay. To the medical personnel, the feet are irrelevant. But to the narrator, they are everything. I also loved various turns of phrase you employed, such as "I had only met death one month ago" or the "metronome" of the police statements. These are just memorable.

Thank you for always being so engaged with the class, for making such great observations, and for sharing yourself. Wishing you the best as you proceed in your medical career, Dr. Shapiro

I completely loved your poem about bitter coffee and sweet tea. It was not a haiku, but it had the simultaneous simplicity and profundity that characterizes really good haiku. You took two very simple things – tea and coffee – and through them made the point that we always have a choice. It is easy to choose bitterness and anger, but maybe, as your work suggests, it is not that hard to pour a glass of sweet tea and share it with others. Your writing was truly lovely and... (yes, I'm going there!) sweet. Thank you for being part of patient/doctor stories. It's always a joy to see people like you going into medicine. I'm confident you will be the kind of doctor who reliably brings "sweetness" to her patients. Best, Dr. Shapiro

, one of my favorite quotes is from the author Barry Lopez, in his book *Winter Count*: "Everything is held together with stories. That is all that is holding us together, stories and compassion." Your project illustrated this point incredibly well. As I mentioned in class, I have known so many physicians who "carry" their patients with them and turn to them periodically as reminders of why they are in medicine and what they aspire to be as physicians. It was awesome to see you using this practice so early in your training. We say so often "It's all about the patients" that it becomes a cliché, but indeed this is where the most important rewards in medicine reside. I loved each of the stories you told, the ice chips and the homegrown tomatoes. My sense is that you will keep these patients "with you" as long as you need their guidance.

It was a real delight to have you in class. You were a wonderfully active participant and you always had compelling perceptions to share. My hope for you is a rich and fulfilling journey in medicine (I am a realist, so I'm not going to hope for easy), this year and throughout your career. Please remember that we are here to support you on this journey, so don't ever hesitate to reach out. All best, Dr. Shapiro