



# First-Gen Voices: Creative and Critical Narratives on the First-Generation College Experience

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## “Feel the Rain on Your Skin”

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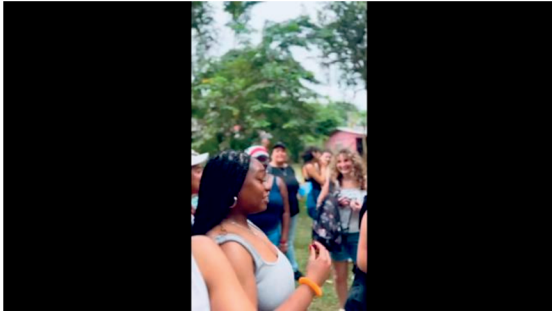
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## “Feel the Rain on Your Skin”



I always think Spirit, the Divine, Essence, God, is here when I look at them share time and energy with each other.

Each of them making a choice to let go of internal guards because they knew/know, in that moment, they were physically—and maybe even spiritually—safe. Free enough to sing catchy pop songs under humid, Caribbean rain.

In the middle of collective social devastation teetering on despair due to massive genocides (Free Palestine, Tigray, Congo, Sudan & many, many others) and the interlock of relentless racial, economic, political, environmental, and health-based epidemics, these 19 students chose to choose each other. Artistry, of the healing kind, at work.

Moving hope to imagination and imagination to creation requires more than can be described, but the faith we placed on this moment was big, big enough to refuel an exhausted responsibility to not look away (Nikki Finney).

As firsts, we can't look away. Our inner architect and cartographer (Cara Page) moves us into transformation, for the ancestry bubbling in our veins will not take anything less. Yet, my little ones—who the world has forced to grow up way too fast, for far too long—are looking down social barrels of bone-deep tiredness, of fatigued compassion (Ijeoma Oluo) that almost feels shameful to mention. Shameful not through our eyes—the ones that hold love—but through the eyes that require more, steal more, take more when *more* isn't an infinite resource to hand. To you, to anyone that will read this, let me ask this: Where can we care for *them*, our loves, so that they do not look away, not now when so much of what is being claimed as progress is being co-opted and is, in turn, becoming an illusion of safety (James Baldwin)? How do we remind them, in connection to ground, to earth, to conversation, to home-grown smiles, to wrinkles, to full bellies, and to music that moves the numbed, that they are all they need to activate the joyful disturbance, the transformative earthquake, that they are?

This trip, that was not quite a trip, but an attempt at reconnection and sources of laughter, sorrow, and movement toward numbness-breaking, was our try—our living testimony—to bring those questions above to the overly-stimulated surface. This attempt at reconnection was a call to protect whatever risk-taking, truth, imagination, and love we could collectively pool together to continue looking each other in the eyes—reaching to places of untapped emotion due to heavy mental compartmentalization.

I'll never confess with certainty that we were able to create sustained joy for the 12 days Costa Rica housed us. I don't think we did, but I do think we did do *something* a bit alchemical—we made Spirit, the Divine, Essence, God smile. The outpouring of the video above made belief and faith **smile**. So much so that I am encountering a risky need to dare in hope for we have this memory to accompany us, a reminder that we are walking liturgies to each other.

“May [what we shared] survive in us” (Cole Arthur Riley).