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Lizzy Cooper, Class of 2017

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Lizzy Cooper, Class of 2017

Abstract

In this new Next Page column, *Lizzy Cooper, Class of 2017* and winner of this year's Silent Leader Award, shares which authors have influenced her interest and activism in food and environmental justice, how she prepared for the Immersion Project trip to Texas she led over winter break which focused on immigration at the U.S. – Mexico border, and the children's book character who inspired her to wear purple almost every day of second grade.

Keywords

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Next Page

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March 3, 2017

In this new Next Page column, Lizzy Cooper, Class of 2017 and winner of this year's Silent Leader Award, shares which authors have influenced her interest and activism in food and environmental justice, how she prepared for the Immersion Project trip to Texas she led over winter break which focused on immigration at the U.S. – Mexico border, and the children's book character who inspired her to wear purple almost every day of second grade.



Lizzy Cooper, Class of 2017, at Gettysburg College's Painted Turtle Farm

This fall, you were awarded the 2016 [Silent Leader Award](#). Congratulations! What book or article has recently inspired you to take action (i.e., inspired change in educational path, travel to a new place, activism, etc.)?

[La invención del desarrollo](#) by Arturo Escobar, which I read while studying abroad in Ecuador, provided me with a different perspective on conceptualizations of development in the United States, and the problematic imposition of that discourse on the global south. In addition, books like [The Coming Famine](#) by Julian Cribb and [Cultivating Food Justice](#) by Alison Alkon and Julian Agyeman have motivated me to continue advocating for food justice not only at a community level, but also at the policy level.

Do you have a favorite book or article that you have read for a class as a student at Gettysburg College?

I enjoyed [Behind the Beautiful Forevers](#) by Katherine Boo which I read for my Indigenous Peoples and the Environment course. When I was visiting the colonias along the U.S./Mexico border, I thought of the understanding present in both of these communities that they could be removed from their land at any time to make way for industrial development. I also enjoyed reading [Unbowed](#) by Wangari Maathai because she is able to combine her environmental and political advocacy to protect Kenya's forests and democracy.

As an Environmental Studies and Spanish/LACLS major, is there a particular writer who has influenced your interests and experiences in food and environmental justice?

I have been reading selections of Michael Pollan, Wendell Berry, and Rachel Carson since my freshman year, so they have definitely informed my understanding of environmental and food justice. While I was working at the Painted Turtle Farm, I read [Animal, Vegetable, Miracle](#) by Barbara Kingsolver and attempted a few of her recipes. Since I am interested in these issues on a global scale as well, I enjoyed [Hungry for Change](#) by Akram-Lodhi as well as the books mentioned above.

Over the winter break, you were the student leader for the Immersion Project to Texas which focused on immigration at the U.S.-Mexico border. How did you become interested in the issues surrounding immigration and how did you prepare for the Immersion Project experience?

My first semester at Gettysburg, I took a Spanish course with Professor Dumont that focused on immigration and I had the opportunity to do community based learning at the Painted Turtle Farm, which led to my position as a program coordinator with Adult ESL classes. In preparing myself and my participants for the experience, I used clips from documentaries like [Who is Dayani Cristal?](#) that I watched for Professor Kaempfer's Latin American Studies class and [Borderlines](#). Over the summer I read [The Book of Unknown Americans](#), which I found to be useful in framing the importance of hearing individual stories. I am currently taking Professor Cain's Immigration seminar course, and have found [We Too Sing America](#) by Deepa Iyer and [Transitions](#) by Carola Suárez-Orozco to be useful in helping me to synthesize what I learned on the trip and place it in a broader context.

Your photographs are frequently featured on Gettysburg College's Instagram feed. How did you become interested in photography?

I have enjoyed painting and drawing since I was young. When I discovered during a photography project in elementary school that I could play with light, color, and angle in a way that produced more realistic and rapid results (even with a disposable camera), I was hooked. Since then, I've tried to take pictures whenever a unique branch or reflective body of water catches my eye!

Do you have a favorite book or literary character or from your childhood?

I loved Violet Alden from The Boxcar Children. Their boxcar was the inspiration for many makeshift forts in my backyard, and I could relate to her artistic and introverted side. Plus, I think she was my inspiration for wearing purple every single day in the second grade and being dubbed "purple girl."

What do you plan to read next?

I hope to read [*Pedagogy of the Oppressed*](#) by Paulo Freire and Jane Goodall's [*Seeds of Hope*](#).

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