

In a world where capitalism, racism and social media alienates us from ourselves and others more than ever, taking this class has reconnected me back to Us - universal love, God, Truth, whatever suits you - in a very powerful way.



*Sankofa. A symbol of the wisdom of learning from the past to build for the future*

I only now realise how brave was my decision to leave everything behind at 17. At the time, I did not think things twice. I always knew I wanted to see more, to explore and escape the all-set 100%-made-in-France path in front of me. My parents and peers did not understand why I dropped a life seemingly set for the highest success and happiness for such unknown territories, and me neither honestly, but nothing had ever felt more right.

In the blink of an eye, I was on a plane to spend 2 years in a boarding school (UWC) in the middle of a forest in British Columbia.

Things turned out to be slightly different from the all-mighty American dream I had craved my whole life.

At first, the freedom of the blank state I had spontaneously jumped into was deliciously fun and playful.

But, quickly, I had to face myself fully in a brutal, almost violent way. My (very) long-term relationship ended, I gained 6 kgs and developed an auto-immune disease to gluten. Plus, of course, COVID, alone and away from home. At the time, I really regretted my decision and wished I had just stayed in Morocco.



*Nkyinkyim. The tortuous nature of life's journey and the toughness, versatility, and dynamism required to thrive in it. It is also a symbol of dedication to service*

It was - and still is - the most emotionally brutal, profoundly shedding period of my life. My best and worst memories, my highest highs and lowest lows. But through it, in the fear of the unknown and the discomfort of growth, I found myself. My heart.

People, music and cultures guided me to it. I found myself a fascination for my Moroccan roots that I had long disregarded and almost been ashamed of. I learnt about the other side of history, the truth of oppression, power and privilege. UWC provided me with a unique, magical environment to learn first-hand Arabic calligraphy, Yoruba 'Bata' dance and Chilean feminist protest-performance. I believe it is one of the most diverse places on Earth :

students came from more than 80 different countries and 90% of us were on scholarships. Many were refugees and had left their home forever. It was a magical place, where we had seemingly had nothing in common, but felt One with each other, our forest and our deers.





Leaving it for the Brown was even more painful and difficult. An Ivy League institution in the US was everything I had prayed for, I had left for. Yet, I struggled to adapt, and there was no community, no nature to hold me from drowning like in UWC. No warmth in the air, an unspoken social code I couldn't grasp, new rules, hierarchies and separations I wasn't used to. If I could be whoever I wanted in UWC, here, I felt quickly examined, judged and labelled by everybody. I went from organising a pan-african cultural show, weekly colonialism-tea-time with my Senegalese teacher and dancing Soca every day to being the white person no one wants to speak to at Brown's African Students Association. In every conversation, I felt a pressure to prove my non-whiteness.

'Yes, I know my skin is white, but I'm not white like that I swear...'

Yet, I knew from my experiences and friendships, that Africa did exist somewhere in my heart, in my body.

When I saw this class, I jumped on the occasion to reconnect with a part of me I now only kept to myself. At first, I was sceptical and very often scared of cultural appropriation. Wearing the traditional Ghanaian attire felt wrong. My skin color felt wrong, my French accent felt wrong. But it also somehow felt so right ?!! And so fun.



*Abode Santann. A symbol of the totality of the universe--natural and social creation.*

I must thank you, Martin, for creating an environment that was so similar to UWC, and that made connecting with the love at the heart of your culture and music so accessible and light. Taking the class and the final performance challenged me in so many ways, to be able to exist despite and beyond limitations imposed by society on our minds.

I left Morocco because some sort of truth wants to emerge from me. Beyond my French education, the US racial census or extremist islamic patriarchy. Beyond shame, fear, punishment. Limitations that isolate us from others and are perceived as solid, permanent and unbreakable.

Before the performance, I really didn't think I could do it. My mind's invention of the semester is that I am simply incapable of connecting with others, that I am deemed to stay shy, gauche and unliked. Taking this class, little by little, has helped me lift the veil and trust that, even if I had these beliefs, I was not alone. I was never alone, from the beginning, and that was more than enough.



*Adwo means calmness. It is a symbol for peace, tranquillity, and quiet.*