

SAYF Worship Journal
January 2020 Retreat
Atlanta Friends Meetinghouse

On the weekend of January 18-20 the Southern Appalachian Young Friends met at the Atlanta Friends Meeting. This is our witness. This is our story.

Dear SAYF,

Last time I was at a retreat was Atlanta 2019, and I have to say, it's good to be back. The few months that I was gone was much needed, but I didn't realize how much I missed really long drives. This retreat was an awesome way to kick off 2020. I really enjoyed talking to my friend at the detention center, and look forward to staying in touch with him. Being able to have this experience was amazing, so thanks Teo and Javy's mom. The new faces here are like a breath of fresh air and I can't wait to see you guys grow into this community. Oh yeah, I also stayed up till 4:30am loudly whispering with patrick, david and maddie. I love you all, old and new, and I hope you newbies come back, y'all are pretty cool.

Stay awesome always, or at least until I see you next.

Love, Marissa

Dear SAYF,

This SAYF retreat was good. I liked playing uno. I might have to start missing out on sayf retreats more even though I really don't want to miss seeing you all.

When I see you next.

Love,
Sunshine Wilton

Dear SAYF,

Sorry, no picture this time. I'm too tired. Anyway, this retreat was probably one of the most meaningful retreats I've been on. Getting to go to the detention center was such a gift. I really feel like I got to know all of you better than I did before. Since there's no picture, here's a weird poem thing for SAYF.

There's a small mirror
two actually
in the room where we sit,

where we are.
A feeling of togetherness,
and love
In this room
This room where we are.
I could write a song about it
But I don't feel it would be fit
so I'll sit,
In this room where we are.
I'll hold the hand next to mine
and I'll meet the eyes
of someone across the room.
And in those eyes,
In this room,
are love,
in this room,
where we are.

Dear SAYF,

OK so ya'll are some of my favorite people, and it was awesome to see those of you I haven't in far too long, and those of you I've seen more recently. We dealt with some heavy topics this retreat, but despite that this one was full of levity. We breathed lots of spicy air, made lots of JoJo references, and learned lots about immigration. Thanks to all of ya'll for existing, and being alive in the same time and place as me, it wouldn't be quite right without every single one of y'all.

Love,
Maggie

P.S. major shout out to lesbian koala jesus for taking Israel to the cuddle side.

29 January, 2020

SAYF-

This retreat felt incredibly long to me this month. It seems that we have more new people every month, and yet our numbers keep shrinking.

I was flipping through the pages of this journal, and at one point, the notes, the poems, the drawings, they just stopped.

The pages went blank.

Every month at SAYF, I get memories of our previous retreats. At this moment, I'm remembering my first retreat, during the epistles. I got Henry's (this was before he graduated, obviously), and I felt so embarrassed because I couldn't read his handwriting. Blue ink. I'm looking around me, and seeing everybody's faces. Some are concentrated, and focused. Others have the night before on their expression. In fact, I wouldn't be surprised if a few of them were actually asleep.

There's always so much I want to say in epistles, but I can never seem to get it out right. I haven't written you guys a poem in a while, so I think I'll try that. I may end up marking it out though, so don't get your hopes up.

Look at us.

*we're laying in our conversations of the
night before.*

*Things said,
things shared,
but never spoken.*

*My words are yours, and yours mine.
The silence between us is comfortable,
and never broken.*

(but if we're being real, sometimes it is)

Much Love,

Ollie! :)

I am grateful for the community - it seemed that people were friendly with each other and no one was left out. I hope not.

People aren't identical and that helped everyone be true to themselves, I think or I hope- Going to the Detention Center is something for me to remember and not forget. It's going on still today and tomorrow. I want to figure out how I can be helpful there or other places where people are ignored and mistreated. Thank you for the great food and acceptance.

Dear SAYFers,

Taking off the blinders to the pain and injustice in the world is overwhelming. This weekend was one I want to forget - seeing the face of a young man at the Steward Detention center who was

facing deportation to a country he doesn't remember, where he doesn't speak the language, and doesn't know anyone.

I think he wanted me to help him figure out how to stop this from happening, but I couldn't. Every time our conversation came back to that fact, there was a pull in my heart to do something. It was like watching a slow motion car crash - you can see what's coming, and your adrenaline jumps into action, but you can't hit the brakes or turn the wheel.

It would be easy to be hopeless, to be despairing, to blame all the big, unmovable forces that power the broken system we live in.

But being hopeless doesn't help anyone. It wouldn't help the young man I was talking to, and it certainly doesn't help me. I remember what Marilyn said, "Just showing up makes it a successful visit." Being willing to sit with someone and love them in their pain - that matters.

Thankfully, I got to see a lot of that this weekend too. As always, you SAYFers stepped up to be present for each other, and the people we met from Stewart. I believe it makes a difference.

Thanks for building
this wonderful community,

Chris

THIS RETREAT FELT SO FULL. BUT IN RETROSPECT ALL RETREATS MAKE ME FEEL FULL BY SUNDAY SO PERHAPS THIS IS NOT UNIQUE, BUT IS A DIFFERENT FULLNESS TODAY. A FULLNESS OF SPIRIT AND A DEEP THOUGHTFULNESS. A RECKONING WITH WHAT I EXPERIENCED AT STEWART DETENTION CENTER AND WHAT I WISH FOR THE WORLD.

MY HOPE LIES IN THE QUESTION, NANCY ASKED, "WHAT NOW?" IT IS ONE THING TO KNOW ABOUT INJUSTICE AND ANOTHER TO TRY TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT.

THANK YOU SAYF FOR MAKING THIS RETREAT POSSIBLE. IT HAS ENCOURAGED SOMETHING INSIDE OF ME. THE LIGHT IN MY HEART HAS GROWN.

JENNIFER

Wow, my pen almost didn't work. Large swag. Anyways, I'm glad I got to see y'all.

- chronic absentee,
Jacob Mixson

P.S. anyways, here's some more words. I think p.s. stands for post-signature: This retreat was extremely cool, in that the people from Presencia were severely swagalicious, and that I got to see some atlanta drama up close and personal. I guess I'll sign again,

- Jacob Mixson

oh wow my hand writing is- ouch.

Looking around this room I feel nothing but love to all of you, I thank you for all giving me a welcoming safe place. You are all part of who I'm becoming, and for that I'm so grateful, I couldn't ask for kinder, brighter souls.

You are endlessly loved.

Why are things like this? and
How can I change things?
Are the two most hopeful things I
heard this weekend.
When I first heard Jesse Jackson say,
Keep Hope Alive, I thought it was a
cheap slogan because I didn't really
understand what hope is or the
importance of keeping it alive.
Hope. Is. Alive. I saw it this weekend.
Keep. Hope. Alive.

Kelly Askins

Was good safers!
Want to let everyone know I've been
coming here for 3 years now and that
everyone I have meet here in those
3 years, have been such a joy to me.
I'm extremely gald I meet ~~you~~ ^{you all} here
because you got me ready for high school



David
Kelly