

*First-Year Writing Seminar: The Podcast, Season 2*

Episode Transcript: Clara Anderson-Cameron on “Striving to Learn”

Speaking now is Clara Anderson-Cameron, a first year student at Cottey College. Clara grew up in northern Minnesota, spending lots of time travelling and exploring with her family. Understanding the world around her is and has always been a driving factor of her education - and life, along with a more than healthy curiosity. Clara believes that the mysteries of those around us should be brought to light whenever possible, so that we can better understand our communities.

The power of curiosity in connecting with our community

I believe that curiosity opens the door to new worlds.

I believe that this curiosity, and the willingness to learn, can bring people together. (*Character Traits Associated with the Four Dimensions of Global Awareness, dimension two - “Striving to Learn”*).

It is looking at one another and saying, so that is why you do that! I guess we are not so different after all!

Everyone has a little voice inside their head, some louder than others, insistently asking questions. “Why is that lake blue?” “How does that plane stay in the air?” We start out with more basic questions about the world around us, but as we grow, we begin to dig deeper, we want to understand more complex things. This is where we start to open our minds, and see the world from different perspectives. When we are younger the voice does not yet understand when it is the right or wrong time to vocalize its queries. It takes a while before we learn not to ask them out loud in different scenarios, but the questions are still there. Perhaps we should start asking more of them. Specifically, the ones that have to do with the people around us. I often see someone on the street and wonder, “What is their story?” Because while they may seem like a mere extra in the movie of my life, in reality every one of us is living a complex and unique life of our own. We are all tangled together in ways that may not be visible, but every person matters. It is important that we use our curiosity to better understand the various stories around us.

Over the years, I have learned that the right question can change everything. When I was much younger, I remember being told to write down my questions instead of asking them all. My parents were tired of the constant “whats”, “whys”, and “whos”. My curiosity was unbounded. Everything was so interesting, and so much of it was unknown. My thirst for knowledge opened my eyes on more than one occasion. I was nine years old when my family packed the car and drove to Indiana. We were attending a wedding of some of my parent’s long-time friends. My young brain was surprised when I watched two men face each other and say their vows. I didn’t yet understand that the relationships I’d seen in my books and movies were not the only ones

out there. I asked my parents how this was possible. Luckily, they were willing to explain. Therefore, after a few short sentences, I had a completely different world view. I had extended my understanding of love, and all the different ways it may manifest. The question I asked allowed me to expand my understanding.

That being said, understanding others is really what brings us together. The power of knowing more about a person's story can allow us to empathize with that individual. In elementary school there was a girl in my classes who sometimes acted out in ways I didn't understand. She was often rude to teachers and other students. I was inclined to stay far away. As I grew older, I wondered what may be causing her bitterness. Giving in to my curiosity, I found an adult who she spent a lot of time with and asked about her. I discovered that she had had a very difficult home life, and her upbringing had been extremely rough. Now I was able to understand her plight, and open myself up to helping her get through each day. There are countless other moments in my memory where my perspective on someone suddenly shifted. Each time I learn about the individual stories we all carry, I find more and more reasons to fully open my heart to the people around me. It's not that I was unwilling before, it's that it has become easier, a joy instead of a duty. We can all find out more about the people we spend our time with. The knowledge that we uncover with the right questions can bring a community together.

Curiosity is what brings us closer to the people around us. Asking questions can help us to understand each other in essential ways. Who is that person? Why are they doing that? What is their story? Because we all have a story, filled with experience and knowledge and advice. Sorrows and triumphs that piece together the puzzle of what makes us, us. What would happen if more people wanted to know yours?

I believe that curiosity can widen one's perspective, and paint the world in a whole new light.