

Traditions need to be unique



Megan Archer
Opinions Editor

While helping to prepare the food for my family's Thanksgiving, I found myself texting a friend I hadn't communicated with for a while because she has been studying in Puerto Rico for the semester. I was surprised when she told me she was there celebrating with a "slightly different" kind of Thanksgiving dinner — apparently it included rice, beans and squash, in addition to turkey. In turn, I told her what it was like to celebrate Thanksgiving in a family of vegans — lots of potatoes and sweet potatoes, raw vegetables and a replacement turkey called "Celebration Roast."

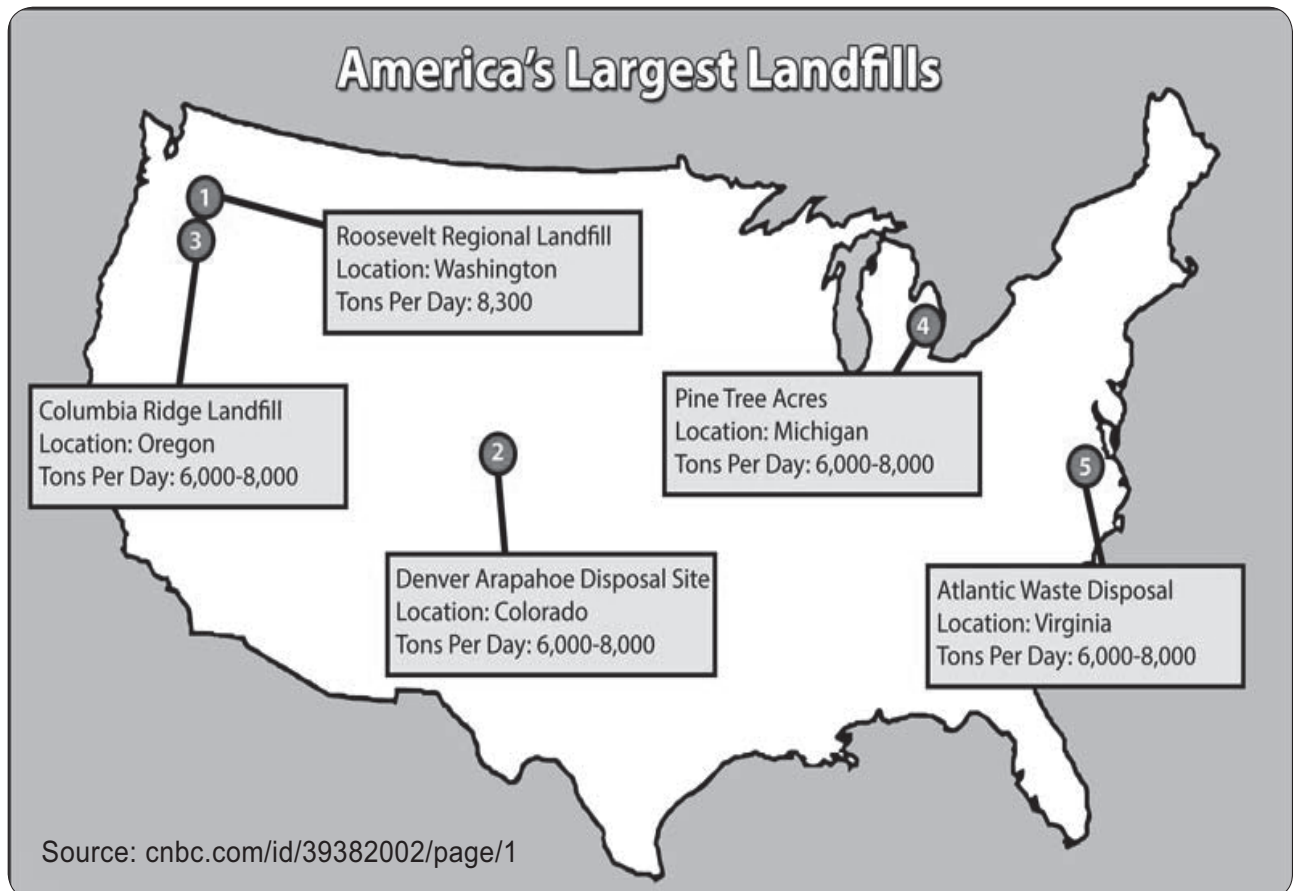
During the course of our conversation, it became clear that even though our holiday celebrations were very different from each other — and the stereotypical American celebration — we still were keeping the spirit of the holiday the same. In our own ways, we were celebrating a day of thankfulness.

Holidays involving celebrations — such as New Year's Eve, Halloween, Christmas, and yes, Thanksgiving — tend to come with a societal blueprint for how they should be celebrated. While traditions can be great, what's even better is taking a tradition and adding a personal twist that resonates with the people celebrating. Otherwise, the traditions seem forced — if it's not personal, people are just going through the motions.

I'm not trying to encourage putting twists on traditions though — I don't need to. It's a natural process. There are as many types of Thanksgivings as there are people who celebrate Thanksgiving. Just as a standard language develops dialects, traditions shift for various groups of people.

Celebrations are different for different people, which is important to keep in mind during the middle of a season marked with many different types of celebration. Be respectful of other peoples' traditions, and be proud of your own.

Megan Archer is a senior computer science major from Morrison, Colo.



Discover where trash is



Adam Rollins

A dump is either my room or a place where all of a town's trash goes. However, only one of those places could be described as a landfill. What's the difference between a dump and a landfill? Waste management agencies use "landfill" to describe the modern method of disposing refuse, which is to pile it all in a big hole in the ground and then cover it with dirt. A "dump" basically is the same thing, except without the hole or the dirt.

This summer, I got a bird's eye view of an active landfill at the bottom of a quarry in Champ, Missouri. As the quarry is mined out, the trash is filled in. Huge trailers hauling about a dozen trash trucks-worth of garbage line up to dump their loads for bulldozers to push into organized piles. Special lining and the natural rock surrounding the garbage tends to retain water, meaning few nasty trash juices leak out into the surrounding soil.

As dirt is filled in over the trash, pipes are installed to siphon away gases emitted by the decaying matter. This is an important step for reducing unpleasant

odors and preventing minor safety hazards — you know, little things like underground trash fires that burn for years and threaten to ignite the radioactive material in the landfill nearby, according to a July 22 St. Louis Post-Dispatch article. Boy, the things people dump out!

The sheer scale of these operations boggles my mind. The quarry I visited was nearly a mile long and about a third as wide. In a relatively small corner, a lone little bulldozer tirelessly pushed newly dumped trash up a slope of garbage large enough to bury Baldwin Hall. Based on the steady volume of trash deposited as I watched, I assume this vast pile of rubbish represented only a few days' work. Five years from now there might be enough to engulf an entire baseball stadium without much trouble, given the current rate of waste production in America, according to a WiseGeek.org article.

What really blew my mind was finding out the pastoral green hill just south of the quarry actually is a landfill that was already "finished," and now looks like it could be developed into a park or a neighborhood. It makes me wonder what other scenic landscapes secretly are the buried dump site of a million discarded Walmart bags and last decade's leftover tacos.

My final thought about the matter is this — if you were living atop a literal mountain of trash, would you want to know about it? Or would you prefer to think the only dump in your life is the mess you make in your room?

Adam Rollins is a senior communication major from St. Charles, Mo.

Consider the situation before speaking



Conor Gearin

As my family drove to my grandparents' house in St. Louis for Thanksgiving, knowing the protests and rioting in Ferguson and throughout the country would be an inevitable discussion topic, I thought about the Greek idea of kairos, or timeliness. Thinking about Ferguson discussions in terms of kairos helps me decide when it is right to bring up the topic.

There are times when ideas from books are not just valuable for their own sake but also have a direct practical application, and this is one such time. In classical Greek rhetoric, kairos means the right or ideal moment to give a speech, according to Phillip Sipiota, author of "The Ancient Concept of Kairos."

This simple idea has complex consequences. Understanding kairos for a particular occasion requires evaluating all the circumstances surrounding a particular discussion or speech and adapting language to fit the occasion.

In other words, kairos means thinking about whether your partner has had a bad day at school or work before bringing up an old argument. It means you think twice before starting a tense discussion about Israel and Palestine with a friend who has three tests the next day. It means our language changes based on what room, what city and what season in which our conversations take place.

Kairos operates on large and small scales. If I were giving a persuasive speech about why people should read daily newspapers, I would choose different events to illustrate the value of newspapers depending on whether I gave the speech during 1974 or 2014. I would have different icebreaker comments about the weather to connect with my audience depending on what month it was. Times change and we need to adapt our language to connect with our occasion.

A healthy appreciation for timeliness can help avoid many of the

misunderstandings which result in controversial discussions that fail to allow all parties to share thoughtful reflection about the topic.

Sometimes people resist kairos, choosing to avoid discussions whose time has come. Marcia Chatelain, Georgetown University history professor, argued that K-12 teachers should discuss Ferguson with their students, according to an Aug. 29 PBS article. While some educators replied that it was too early to talk about the controversial events with young people, Chatelain claimed with careful preparation, teachers could lead constructive discussions with students troubled by the events. Furthermore, she provided recommendations for different age groups, taking into consideration that students are ready for different levels of discussion based on their maturity level.

I think kairos has come for discussions of race in America. Protests about the police shooting of an unarmed black teen brought to the forefront topics of systemic injustice many people I know have sought to avoid discussing. Now the protests, which have spread throughout the United States, according to a Nov. 28

New York Times article, ensure that we cannot ignore the topic anymore.

But that is the large-scale consideration of kairos. I also know there is a particular kairos for each person. I try to be careful and evaluate when someone is ready to talk about a topic.

I chose to engage some of my friends and relatives but not others about Ferguson during Thanksgiving. Some, I could tell, were ready to talk thoughtfully and respectfully about it. Others were not.

I suppose as a white person, I had the luxury of deciding when to talk about this painful issue. However, my participation in protests alongside black people have taught me a simple but unforgettable truth — black people in the United States do not get to pick and choose freely when to talk about race. Day-to-day injustices, small and large, force thoughts about race for black people every day of their lives. White people need to realize that discussions about race and racism in our country are long overdue.

Conor Gearin is a senior biology and English major from St. Louis, Mo.

AROUND THE QUAD

Is there a particular topic you debate with your relatives?

Yes, we debate the evils of capitalism.

Will Chaney
Freshman



Mostly where to eat. Sometimes we debate things on the news.

JoJo Hudgings
Sophomore



No, it's not really a thing we do.

Blaine Shepherd
Freshman



My extended family is extremely conservative, so debates often come up.

Caitlin Cobb
Senior

