

Marquand Chapel
Wednesday, August 24, 2005
BTFO Reflection

Called Home
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I have a small problem—I'm not quite sure what to do with my life. The good news is that I'm not completely without direction. I have ruled out some possibilities and, more importantly, I believe that God has a call for my life. In fact, I suspect that God is not hiding this path from me but is actively revealing it through the guidance of friends and family and my experiences here at YDS, one part of my spiritual journey. I think it's ok that I have yet to realize my call clearly, but I must actively strive to discern it.

So, I begin with what is clear. Two years remain in my degree program, and after that, I do not know what I will do. I may continue my education, return to work in the non-profit world, or pursue some unknown possibility. What I do know is that I will still be living in New Haven, as my spouse is now beginning his second year of a PhD program, a program that will take at least five years. I know where I am and I know where I will be, and that, for me, is the beginning of understanding what I am called to do.

When I decided to come to divinity school, I felt called out of the place I was living and the work that I was doing. But I was also called to this place. New Haven is not a place I was called to pass through or a place where I was called to exist as only a student but a place where I was called to live, to be engaged, to be invested. This is my home now.

As I came to terms with this idea, I struggled to feel connected to the city beyond the University. Fortunately, this summer I was blessed with the opportunity to work full-time at a New Haven non-profit that is both community-based and community-serving. It is community based in that the tiny office is located in the Farnam Courts housing project where it reaches out to residents, and community-serving because it is locally focused, developing relationships with one family at a time to permanently lift them out of poverty. There, I caught glimpses of New Haven life outside of Yale and began to get to know some other people who call New Haven home, from a lifetime resident to a recent refugee from Burundi.

This summer, I learned a great deal about the history of New Haven, its political goings-on, and its economic struggles and triumphs. Some of what I learned made sad or angry, some of it impressed me and gave me hope. All of this information made New Haven feel more familiar, more like home. As a person of faith, I believe I must strive for God's justice in the world, including right here in New Haven. To seek justice in this city, I must first understand its injustices by getting to know its particular history and people, a process I began this summer.

Friends, it is not an accident that we are gathered together at Yale Divinity School, nor is it by chance that we find ourselves in this city. A YDS education is for not only the future but for here and now. As we receive our theological education and prepare for many forms of ministry, we have the opportunity to learn to listen, seek God's justice, and minister in the

community. I invite you to listen to God's call for your life outside of the classroom and for connecting this education to your relationships and work during the coming months and years.

You have received many welcomes in the past couple of days, and I'd like to add one more: welcome home.