

## Student navigates moral conundrum, cultural differences in Ghana

By Justin Kirchner  
STAFF WRITER

Here in Ghana, sound is no stranger to my ears. The constant bombardment of cars honking, goats crying, dogs barking, roosters calling, and music playing has made me accustomed to the din of Africa. One day, though, I heard a sound that was different from all the others.

Returning home from my long march through the blistering African sun, I parked



Raw cocoa in various stages of production spreads across a table at the Tetteh Quarshie's cocoa plantation — the first in Ghana, dating back to 1878.

myself next to my most prized possession: my fan. As I sat in complete stillness, I could hear my host father yelling for our family's four dogs. When I asked him why he was calling for them, he replied that he heard a dog trapped on the hill next to our house and wanted to make sure it wasn't ours.

Imagining a small dog stuck on the face of a rocky cliff, I quickly walked outside and glanced down the hill to see if there was any sign of it. There wasn't. Conscious cleared, I crashed next to the fan again and forgot all about the dog.

That night, as I lay my head to my pillow, I heard it. The most awful sound I had ever heard. My heart jumped and I scurried out of bed. My host father quickly connected my panic with the sound we had both just heard.

"The dog is still trapped" he said. "You understand what I mean by trapped, don't you?"

I shook my head like a small child, helpless and not wanting to swallow the truth.

"The dog is trapped in a bushmeat snare."

I had seen these bushmeat snares in the village where I do agricultural work. I had praised the villagers for the craftsmanship of their traps, yet I never considered the collateral damage. Tomorrow the dog would be sold in the market as bushmeat next to rabbit

and rat meat.

I ran quickly to my room to retrieve my flashlight and sandals, sprinting to the hill's edge and scanning the ground for any sign of the dog. For 30 minutes I traced back and forth with my flashlight, wishing it was a floodlight. I needed more light. I needed more time. I needed the dog to howl again.

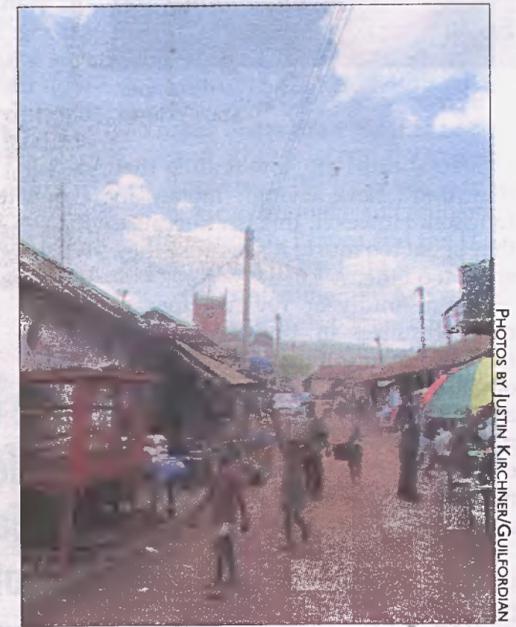
Defeated, I trudged back up the hill to my house and into bed once more. Not ten minutes after lying back down, I heard it again. The painful yell said more than deathbed good-byes ever could. It was as if the dog were ending a great song with one last heart-felt show of strength, calling out to all those around him: A final farewell.

Then I realized my surroundings. I am in a developing country. According to the World Bank, the average person in Ghana earns only \$1,098 a year. In my time at Guilford, I have learned about cultural relativism and ethno-centrism, and I confront both issues on a daily basis here in Ghana.

But this seemed different. This situation seemed irreconcilably wrong in my mind. Eating a dog for dinner? But in a country with rampant poverty, who am I to tell someone that they are not allowed to take this animal as a meal, just because in my country we consider them our best friend?

How would you end this story? Would

you get out of bed and search again to free the dog from its fate? Or would you go back to bed and allow the trapper to have his meal?



In the village of Akuapim Mampong in the eastern region of Ghana, on a typical rural street, a small girl carries a basket of plantains to her mother in the market.

## 'Dead poets society' aims to build community through art, music

By Kylie Gilliams  
STAFF WRITER

Levi's Coffin is not the first society to celebrate writing and poetry at Guilford: literary societies have been intermittently present here since 1874.

This new "dead poets society" at Guilford is a little different though. On March 24, people drifted into the living room of "the Wild Kingdayum," also known as North Apartments 754, sitting on couches and the floor until the room was almost entirely filled with only a small space in the center for people to share their music or poetry.

"Levi's Coffin is an attempt to recreate community here at Guilford College," said co-founder and junior Jamie Sisk. "It's an open forum for poetic expression, music, shouting, just togetherness. It's a place that people come to read from authors past and read their own stuff too."

Sisk and junior Hadley Davis recently co-founded the society with the goal of bringing people together from all corners of campus in order to build community between people who come from different circles.

"I think that some of the impetus for it came from conversations that Hadley had with me and others about issues of community on campus," said Max Carter, director of the Friends Center and campus ministry coordinator. "This was part of her and some of her friends' response to that concern and this is something that is wide open to people all over campus — athletes, non-athletes, jocks, hippies, you name it — so it helps address that concern ... the more we do things like (Levi's Coffin), the better we weave a tapestry of full community."

Sophomore and regular attendee Will Kimmel described the dynamic nature of the meetings.

"One of my favorite things is to just see how quickly it (the meeting) can go from a hilarious poem about smoking weed that Shel Silverstein

wrote, to really deep, looking at the core of someone's troubles or problems with death or anything like that," said Kimmel.

Members also emphasized the community aspect of the meetings.

"Whenever someone gets up to share, there's respect," said sophomore Tim Leisman "No one's talking or whispering or texting while they're reading, everyone is really engaged with each other and really ready to be connected to each other."

Some have raised the concern that in order to truly build community, people from all backgrounds and ethnicities must be invited and feel welcome.

"Something that's arts-based should be able to travel effectively across dividing lines," said Holly Wilson, director of multicultural education. "I don't think there are any issues inherent with that kind of club; but with their advertising, with sharing about the club, they would have to express that differing ideas, differing viewpoints, different styles are welcome there."

First-year Joyce Medina emphasized how a diversity of members as well as the material presented would enrich the organization as well as Guilford as a whole.

"Because of the words in the poetry, (I think) it would bring the people together because of different languages and situations," said Medina.

Despite these challenges and the society's newness, Levi's Coffin seems to have already made steps towards building community.

"The first meeting especially was really emotional; I certainly let my guard down completely, which is amazing because you're practically in a room full of strangers," said Davis. "It says a lot about Guilford and the way that we interact with each other and how we are able to really express who we are as individuals, but also as a community."

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Senate President Dana Hamdan



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This event is co-sponsored by CPFS, WGSS, Guilford Film Society and Multicultural Education Department. For more information contact Diya Abdelhadi@guilford.edu, x22140.