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On lessons learned in India



GODFREY

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My name is Talia Godfrey. I am a 17-year-old from Shelburne Falls. Last fall I took a plane across the world to come study at the Mahindra United World College of India for my last two years of high school. I now study on a hill surrounded by small villages, two hours from Pune the nearest city. In a school of 240 students, over 80 countries are represented. Experiential learning constitutes an important

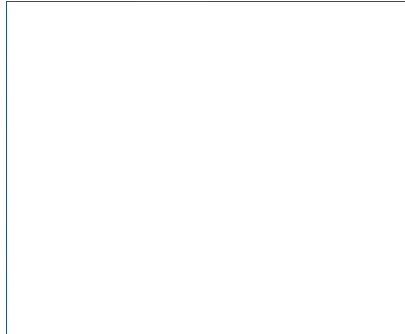
part of the curriculum, as we try to understand local and global issues through multidimensional programs. Here is a snapshot of one of the incredible ways through which I have had the opportunity to connect to the local context with others from around the world.

For our Project Week, I left home in Maharashtra to travel with a group of my 10 classmates to Chitrakoot, Uttar Pradesh in India to work with Khabar Lahariya, India's only independent rural women-led media channel.

Khabar Lahariya has been revolutionary in amplifying rural issues with a feminist perspective. We traveled for thirty hours by train and arrived at the news center to be greeted with hot chai. That first morning we discussed the challenges that these women have faced establishing themselves in this field, how and by whom the news was being reported, the local issues that KL tackles, their impact (having won well over a dozen international awards as a media channel NGO). We spent the week filming these women in action, working to understand the challenges and inner workings of the organization. We made a video to launch their month long campaign that will support the creation of 100 videos centered around this election season. We visited the homes of prominent politicians of the area, a Kol Adavasi tribe, and many small villages.

Khabar Lahariya is the voice that questions rural corruption in Uttar Pradesh. They are strong, proud women journalists listening to the voices of women. They were the ones who asked the the questions like, "How these voices going unheard when India's women make up 9 percent of the global population?"

We were filled with questions that sparked curiosity that has many weeks later still not worn off. I was deeply struck by the power of media.



Khabar Lahariya can report on a village that isn't being provided electricity and a few weeks later the government will be wiring to bring it. It made me reflect on media back home in the U.S. Whose news is being reported? What are the gender and class inequalities that are built into the media (both in how the news is reported and what is being recorded)?


It brought me to think about the importance of local news, of community. These amazing women are reporting the rural voices that are going unheard. They are bringing this news back to the community as well as broadcasting outwards. There are powerful waves that are being stirred at the grassroots level that aren't covered by mainstream media across the globe.

Coming back from Project Week my friend and I were motivated to continue the work that we had started during the week and decided to launch a fundraising campaign to nurture our school's relationship with the NGO. The funds go towards facilitation costs for my school's (UWC Mahindra College) Experiential Learning Program to keep engaging students with Khabar Lahariya.


Here is the link: <https://www.givecampus.com/schools/muwci/champion-our-changemaker-partners> (<https://www.givecampus.com/schools/muwci/champion-our-changemaker-partners>).

A deeply inspiring week, this NGO has sparked a passion and curiosity in me. I intend to carry it forward and give it forward in any way I can.

Talia Godfrey is a resident of Shelburne Falls and a student at Mahindra United World College of India.

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