



Globetrotter Alumni Perspectives

Elsa Whyte '16

When did you start at LILA and what year did you graduate?

I started at LILA in 2003 in Kindergarten and graduated in 2016.

How would you describe your LILA experience?

I will always be grateful for my time at LILA (I never knew any other school until college!). Growing up with essentially the same group of people for 13 years allowed me to develop the kind of self-confidence I would not have been able to find at a larger school. Our school changed dramatically during our time there (a new campus, a new administration, teachers constantly coming and going), but that group was always there. They became like my second family and together, we witnessed our school grow and change.

What is your fondest memory from your time at LILA?

My fondest memories from LILA have been the various trips we got to take as a class together. Some of my favorites have been: the Paris trip in 5th grade (we were the first class to go!), the Olympics in New York City in 7th grade, Boston in 10th grade, and Costa Rica in 12th grade.

Did you take the International Baccalaureate (IB) or French *baccalauréat* (FB)?

Describe how and why you chose the track you did.

I was really torn when it came to deciding between the IB and the FB at the end of 9th grade. Ultimately, I decided on the IB because it gave me the opportunity to choose my Higher Levels across very different disciplines. Back then, I was someone who really loved languages, math, and the social sciences. If I had chosen the FB, I would have had to choose one track and I wasn't ready to make that decision yet. My learning style was also more suited to the IB's style of long-term projects. I ended up specializing in English, French, Spanish, and History, which then helped me choose a major in college.

Where did you go to college/university? What did you study?

I just graduated from UC Berkeley with a degree in Political Science and Spanish.



How did your LILA education prepare you for college/university?

In some ways, I was very prepared for college. I got to skip out of some required classes like math and writing thanks to my IB scores. I feel like the IB prepared me especially well for writing college-level research papers. On a personal level, I also *felt* ready for college. LILA had given me the confidence I needed to succeed in my next move. Yet despite my eagerness, LILA could not have prepared me for the transition from a small, private school to a large, public university. It took me about a semester to adapt, but I quickly found my community at UC Berkeley!

No one could argue that these aren't tumultuous times, what is it like to be a Class of 2020 graduate entering the workforce? / In the midst of both a global pandemic and a global civil rights movement, how do you think your LILA education has helped you process, react and be part of the change?

This is a particularly tough time to be experiencing any kind of life-changing transition, whether that be going to college, entering the workforce, or moving somewhere new. My heart goes out to LILA's Class of 2020. We are mourning our final semester that was moved online, we are exerting far more energy taking care of our mental and physical health (and that of our families), and we are looking at dismal job prospects. On top of everything else, Black graduates are experiencing an immense collective trauma. It's a tumultuous time.

I would say most of my peers are struggling to find a job and many others have had their job offers rescinded. But both my LILA friends and my Berkeley friends are resilient people and I have faith that we are well prepared to face these challenges. I feel very grateful to have a job lined up in the legal field, starting in August.

As a recent college graduate, what advice do you have for our seniors preparing to tackle university in this environment?

This is such an unprecedented moment, I don't feel particularly well positioned to give advice! They will be the first to live through this moment in college. They get to decide how this world will look. They get to decide what works and what does not.

In fact, the best piece of advice I received was from the letter Ms. Noonan wrote to her seniors, so it's advice they have already heard. She reminded us that right now is just a pause between Before and After. We have an opportunity here to be the pioneers of social change. Graduates, I hope you keep that in mind and that you are intentional with the decisions you make - I certainly will try my best to abide by that advice!