

Profiles in Post-Collegiate Courage: Sondra Morris

postcollegiate.wordpress.com/2012/01/31/profiles-in-post-collegiate-courage-sondra-rose-morris

By PostCollegiate

January 31, 2012

Calling courageous post-collegiates! *Our interview series is back with a vengeance as a semi-regular blog feature! Want to nominate a courageous post-collegiate to be featured (including yourself)? Email postcollegiateblog [at] gmail [dotcom].*

I've lived with some pretty interesting characters over the years (oh, heeeey Tawnya!) and today's profilee is no exception. Sondra and I were classmates at R-MWC and then she had the (mis)-fortune to live with me for several months. Sondra is one of the smartest, funniest, sassiest, well-informed, and interesting women I've ever met. After graduating, she stuck it out in our college town, working away at the college, until this year, when she packed up her worldly possessions and, like so many young Americans before her, headed West.

Sondra, share a little about yourself with the blog readers:

I grew up in a military family, so my family moved around quite a bit as I was growing up. Between kindergarten and my senior year of high school, I attended nine schools in two different countries and four different states. When it was time to choose a college I said, "Fuck it; I'm going to stay at one educational institution for four years no matter what." So, I took a giant leap of crazy and attended the only woman's college I applied to, Randolph-Macon Woman's College. It was fabulous and I loved my experience there, so much so that I accepted a job on campus after graduation. Unsurprisingly, my travel-happy upbringing kicked in after six months on the job and I was ready to skedaddle. I stayed on another year and a half to save up cash and deal with some personal baggage, then I quit my job and road-tripped out to Los Angeles.



Looking professional at her first post-collegiate big girl job

For as long as I've known you, you've always given off a very put-together, organized, ready-to-take-on-the-world vibe. What was your initial life plan when you were getting ready to graduate in 2009?

Well...I didn't have one. My senior year at R-MWC was spent coming to terms with the whole "I like girls" thing, so I wasn't thinking too far into the future. My biggest concern back then was coming out to my parents and gauging if I'd have somewhere to crash if they weren't okay with it.

One of the things that we have in common is we both choose to stay in Lynchburg

following graduation, albeit for different reasons. Are you glad that you took a job with your alma mater?

In retrospect, I can see that staying in my college town was the best thing that could have happened to me for personal and financial reasons. It was cheap, I knew enough people to have a fabulous support network, and I was only a few hours drive from most of my friends. Of course, working on campus was a whole different story. No one really talked to me about the transition from student to staff, so I wasn't at all aware of how to navigate my relationships with friends who were still students. Then there were staff members I'd really offended as a student and suddenly working with them was kind of challenging. I spent my first year working getting strange looks and questions like, "Why didn't you graduate on time?"

I really admire you for handling that transition from student to staff so well – I had enough difficulty adjusting to post-college life without working there! But moving across country – that's a REALLY big step. Tell me more about that.

Now that I'm actually here in LA, my biggest fear is never finding a job and having to leave the sunny, bright, salty, hot, smoggy oasis that is SoCal. I moved out here because I was just treading water after college and I needed to do something that would help me break out of the cycle of just working to pay bills to live in a city that didn't provide me with what I need to thrive creatively and spiritually. A few of my R-MWC sisters had already made this move and when they urged me to try it too, I realized I didn't have much to lose if things don't work out. I'm hoping to get two things out of this move: (1) Fun. Like, the kind of fun that will become stories that will become anecdotes for my acceptance speech when I get the alumnae achievement award in ten years. (2) Some life experience to become a better writer.

Speaking of writing, what challenges have you faced pursuing your dream?

Do you have any advice for other aspiring writers?

My biggest challenge as a writer is specific to the fact that I'm a woman. Male mentors like to discount my subject matter or say I write with a 'weird' or 'common' voice if I say even the slightest thing about my life. It's only with female mentors that I've really felt supported in writing from my experiences. I guess this goes back to the personal always being political for women, but it sucks. My

advice for other writers—male and female—is to get into some sort of writing group with people you feel you can learn from and be supported by. It's great to get feedback from your friends, but it's usually more helpful to hear from other people who understand technique and think with that weird writer's brain. I'm a junkie for writer's groups...especially if they serve wine.



Enjoying the LA life with Sam and Lianna (click photo for Lianna's interview!)

You have a real enthusiasm and love for blogging and social media. What have you gained from these experiences?

The web is amazing. Writing for it and networking across it has taught me that it pays to be vulnerable when you write—your audience connects to your words, you get a hell of a lot more out of it in self discovery, and your writing comes from such a deeper place. I hate sharing myself though, so it's kind of ridiculous for me to be a writer because I write all this stuff and then I never want to show it to anyone. My big writing goals for 2012 are (1) Write more and (2) Stop being a pansy and get super vulnerable.

When I spoke with fellow writer Sara last year, she gave me some book recommendations for postcollegiate readers. Any thoughts?

For Writers: Read something by [Pam Houston](#). I saw her on a panel at the [AWP conference](#) in 2011 and she's simply amazing. Also, try some of [Francesca Lia Block's](#) short stories. And if you like poetry, check out [Andrea Gibson](#).

For PCs: At the risk of sounding like a hipster, *The Catcher in the Rye* by J.D. Salinger. Any of the [Roadtrip Nation](#) books. Also, *Young, Broke, & Beautiful* by [Broke Ass Stuart](#).

Finally, if you could go back to that rainy morning of your college graduation, what advice would you give yourself?

“Get over yourself and revel in graduation day: take pictures, kiss friends, and go out for brunch with everyone you know after the ceremony. Starting tomorrow, you don't have anything planned in your life, so make a list of everything you want to do and just start doing it. **Be epic.**”

Many, many thanks to Sondra for agreeing to be the first (but not last) profile of 2012. As she says, she's all up in the Interwebs – check out www.SondraRoseMarie.com for links to [Twitter](#), [Tumblr](#), etc. As always, you can leave questions for Sondra in the comments section as well!



Enjoying a pre-DC United match tailgate together for my 27th birthday