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Values Essay
Ms. Garrett
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"I Came To Live Out Loud"-Emile Zola

In a world where what we value is brought to us by a political party or a TV commercial, I have decided to choose my own values, not to be dictated to by anyone. I have chosen to let what others think and feel affect me, but I have also decided to stand on my own-to value what I believe even if it is not the same as the people or groups that are part of my life. My values are important to me because they help to define me and let people know, like the famous quote by Emile Zola, "I came to live out loud." The three values that are the most important to me are adventure, humor, and hope.

I have always valued adventure. When I was younger, growing up in Alabama, I thought life was boring, but I knew that there was an exciting life out there somewhere. I knew because I read it in books, and I wanted that life. A few years after I got out of college, my adventurous self packed up everything I owned (which wasn't much) in a Ford cargo van, hit the road with my boyfriend and moved to the West Coast-to San Francisco. I continued to be adventurous by traveling around the world. I've been all over. Once in Oviedo, Spain, my spirit of adventure got me into a bit of trouble. Leslie, my best friend and travel partner, and I were bored and looking for something to do around 11pm. The town was quiet. It was during the week, and we weren't ready for bed. We were on vacation.

We stumbled on a place called 'The Sexy Nightclub.' I thought it sounded like a place where there might be music and dancing, but Les was not at all sure. The heavy velvet curtain that hung in the door kept us from seeing what was really going on in there. I got brave and threw back the curtain and found myself standing in front of a group of women in just negligees. "Que Quieres?" she asked. ("What do you want?") I quickly explained that we just wanted a drink, and she informed me that the drinks were just for "customers." Though adventure makes life exciting, it can also make for some risky situations, too. This situation, later made for a good laugh.

I am a sucker for a cheap laugh because humor is important and "Laughter is the best medicine." I find myself naturally drawn to an episode of "America's Funniest Home Videos" for a good giggle on a wet Saturday afternoon or sometimes later at night. It seems to be on in re-runs all the time. Even though I know it's coming, the crotch shot or the complete and total fall from a building, a trampoline, etc. still makes me laugh out loud. For more intellectual humor, I enjoy good satire. Back in the early 90s there was a show on TV called "In Living Color." The show did a great job of being funny and thought-provoking, making most of us think quite differently about race, politics, and society. Humor, too, can be the self-deprecating kind. When nothing is really funny and things are about as serious as they can get, I try to find a way to make them funny. Once I remember making fun of myself over a fall I took. I had the whole group in stitches. Even though I was in pain, we were laughing. Emily Saliers once said, "You have to laugh at yourself

because you'd cry your eyes out if you didn't." Loving to laugh and feeling happy also becomes important to keeping a positive attitude and being hopeful.

In the world of a teacher, hope is of major importance. If I lose hope, I can't help my students. About six years ago, I developed my own little mantra, "Hope never runs out." Even when my patience wore thin, I had to continue to hope that my students would ask me for help, do the right thing, do their work. This kind of hope is what keeps me from giving up on my students or myself as we work hard together. I also have to have hope for the bigger society. Sometimes when I watch the news, I get so discouraged. It's hard to find anything good or hopeful in all that is reported. Occasionally though, there is that story of hope. On the news day before yesterday, there was a story of a man who saved another man who had fallen on the subway tracks in a New York City subway. The first man passed out, fell onto the tracks and without thinking of his own safety, the second man jumped down on the tracks, avoiding the highly charged third rail, and picked up the man and put him back on the platform, both safely there before the next train came through. It is that kind of story of sacrifice and bravery and compassion that gives me hope.

All in all, the values of adventure, humor and hope are principles that I apply to my daily life and that I feel strongly about. It is important to take time to think about what is important to us, to take part in our humanity and therefore, know what we believe and defend those beliefs. These are not my only values;

there are many more ideas that I value as well, but these are the ones that are the most important to me.