

# Goddard

CLOCKWORKS

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## Reflections on Learning

Radical, purposeful education  
is still at the heart of Goddard  
College's mission. » page 7



# On the Rise

New American Fellow Brings Silenced Narratives into Discourse

**T**wo-time Goddard graduate Mike Alvarez (IMA '10, MFAW '13) was recently awarded the prestigious Paul & Daisy Soros Fellowship for New Americans. The fellowship honors and supports young New Americans—immigrants and children of immigrants—to use their graduate training in this country to make distinctive contributions to American life.

Mike will receive up to \$90,000 in tuition support and maintenance grants over the course of two years for his PhD study in communications at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst, where he is currently enrolled. Mike is examining the representation of suicide in film and the effects of digital technologies on suicide (e.g., the emergence of online suicide pacts and live streaming of suicides over the Internet).



**BACK ON TRACK**  
A self-described “psychiatric survivor,” Mike Alvarez (IMA '10, MFAW '13) found healing through storytelling.

BENJAMIN CLEAVES

Alan Turing, and other eminently creative individuals. It is a synthesis of his BA thesis at Rutgers, his IMA thesis at Goddard, and his new writing. Mike recently signed with Jennifer Chen Tran at Penumbra Literary.

“Goddard made me realize how much I love reading stories, how much I love writing stories, and that the stories I read and write are all connected in this magical, ineffable way,” he says.

Recognizing the power of personal narratives and building on his MFAW thesis, Mike has also completed a memoir about his journey through mental illness.

“By articulating these scars,” he says, “I’m bringing silenced narratives into discourse, which can be empowering to others.” His advice to Goddard students and other alums:

“Keep on keeping on,” as he tells us one of his advisors used to say.

“I’ve had my fair share of rejections—an abundance, actually—when applying for fellowships, querying agents, submitting grant proposals, etc., and it is only reasonable to expect more in the future,” Mike says. “But never, ever despair to the point of surrender.” 

Charles Flaherty Award.

“My research on death, trauma, and suicide are driven in no small part by my own encounters with loss,” Mike says.

His current book, *A Violin in the Void: The Paradox of Suicide & Creativity*, is a humanistic exploration of the relationship between suicide and creativity, as seen through the lives of Kurt Cobain, Iris Chang,

**“My research on death, trauma, and suicide are driven in no small part by my own encounters with loss.”**

“Suicide is such a taboo subject,” says Mike, “and to be selected as one of thirty Fellows, in a national competition that drew in more than 1,200 applicants, is to me a meaningful validation of the urgency of my work.”

Mike was born in the Philippines and immigrated to the United States with

his family when he was ten years old. He grew up in a rough neighborhood in Jersey City and then attended Rutgers University, where he suffered from debilitating anxiety and suicidal depression. In his recovery, he wrote his senior thesis on the relationship between creativity and suicide, which won the



Read more about alumnus Mike Alvarez at [www.goddard.edu/people/mike-alvarez](http://www.goddard.edu/people/mike-alvarez)