

Life Can Be a Bumpy Ride

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"Life is like a rickshaw ride," said Dr. Latha Rajan. "You will be shaken and rattled and even perhaps thrown; you may have to squeeze through tight situations but it will eventually get you there," she told the group of students and others gathered in Rogers Memorial Chapel on the Tulane uptown campus.



Dr. Latha Rajan, an associate clinical professor of tropical medicine, gives her "last lecture" on letting life take you where it leads you. She says interactions with transgendered people have changed her perceptions. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

[Rajan](#), an associate clinical professor of tropical medicine in the Tulane School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine, spoke on "Life As We Don't Know It" as her talk in the "Last Lecture" series hosted by the Tulane Mortar Board Society on Wednesday (March 30). The series challenges faculty members to consider what they'd speak about, if they had only one last lecture to give.

Rajan's talk focused on the similarities of the people she has worked with, despite their differences in climate. Rajan discussed her personal life extensively, describing her upbringing in Kerala, India.

“God made Kerala with a green thumb,” said Rajan, referring to the diverse wildlife and lush tropical forest for which the state is famous.

It was in Kerala where Rajan first began to notice the racial and religious differences that would shape her worldview and impact her career in medicine. This also was where Rajan started to cultivate her interest in poetry and literature.

She said that one of her heroes is the English poet John Keats, and she intended to follow in his footsteps in becoming a writer.

“My classmates in school were completely shocked to hear what I'm doing now,” Rajan said.

Rajan also discussed her experiences working with people who are infected with HIV/AIDS and transgendered people in [Malaysia](#), where transgendered people are marginalized because they do not conform to the standards of society. Rajan described how she treated many transgendered people in her practice, and how this interaction changed her perceptions.

“Now I'm very good friends with some of the transgendered population in Malaysia,” she said.

Michael Celone is a sophomore student at Tulane majoring in public health.