

CITY TECH WRITER



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**Outstanding Student Writing
From All Disciplines**

Jane Mushabac, Editor in Chief

Cover by Irina Samkova
Art Director: Lloyd Carr

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Preface

A boy plays soccer on a hot summer night in South Africa, a young couple moves into a railroad flat in Brooklyn, two children play by the sea in Iceland, and a teacher protests in Greece.

In *City Tech Writer 8* we hear stories and proposals, address anguish and hope, analyze rituals and meaning, ask questions. Above all, we study—the vast potential hidden in the human genome, the limits of artificial intelligence, the pleasures of Bandcamp, and our assumptions regarding our protected right to privacy in a world of social networking.

As we go to press, I have many people to thank: the faculty throughout the College who have inspired their students to be fine writers, and who have submitted almost two hundred pieces of remarkable writing from their courses; Prof. Mary Ann Biehl, Advertising Design and Graphic Arts Department Chair, and Prof. John McVicker and Prof. Peter Fikaris whose ADV 4700 students produced seventy appealing cover designs; Prof. Lloyd Carr, the journal's Art Director since its inception, who as always has been stellar in coordinating the graphics and preparing the cover for production; the Reprographics Center's Lubosh Stepanek who did a handsome job of printing the cover, and Director of Campus Services Jeff Novak who coordinated this support; and Chief Laboratory Technician Steve Caputo, and printers George Pompilio and Peter Pompilio, who produced the volume with care and competence. I'm grateful to President Russell Hotzler, Provost Bonne August, and Dr. Stephen Soiffer for their invaluable support and encouragement from the top; and the President's Executive Assistant Marilyn Morrison and Assistant to the Provost Imelda Perez for their great help and thoughtfulness. Professors Armando Solis, Rebecca Devers, Caroline Hellman, Kate Falvey, Laura Westengard, Costas Panayotakis, Carole Harris, Maura Smale, and English Department Chair Nina Bannett graciously thought through questions and provided assistance of many kinds; Avril Miller in the Faculty Commons helped also; and English Department Office Assistants Lily Lam and Laura Kodet have been wonderfully generous and resourceful.

But most of all, I thank the student writers who make teaching a great pleasure, and whose writing focuses with clarity and spirit on things that matter.

Jane Mushabac, Editor in Chief

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Each listing provides the title and author of a work, and the professor and course for which it was written

Bending	1
Melissa Hughes 2012 Charles Matusik Fiction Contest First Place	
So Much “Junk”?	8
The Complexities of the Human Genome Luis Loor Professor Solis, Biology 3350	
The Music Matrix: Proposing A New Discovery Tool For Bandcamp	13
Tim Durland Professor Sucre, Library 1201	

The Williamsburg Renaissance Jessica Guerra Professor Miller, English 1101	18
Eminent Domain Lupita Escamilla Professor Espinoza, Law 1202	23
Carrying Oli Kristel Assa Adolfsdottir Professor Mushabac, English 1141	26
Women Breaking Free Anne Antoine Professor Ferrell, English 2000	28
A Will Unbroken Denis Petras Professor Alexis, English 1121	32
The Next Wave of Austerity Incites Anger and Desperation Thalia Cabrera Professor Leston, English 1151	34
Face the Truth Fabio Gonzalez Professor Panayotakis, Sociology 3402	41

Everyday Struggle Chovair Graham Professor Rodriguez, Psychology 2402	45
Where Art Thou, Black Dads? Tamatha Hines Professor Maynard, African American Studies 1466	50
Islamic Rituals, A Pillar in Bengali Culture Abir Khan Professor Pope-Fischer, Anthropology 1102	55
The Religion of America Is Capitalism Leah Braithwaite Professor Pope-Fischer, Anthropology 1102	59
An Interview: The Immigration Experience Jose Rivera Professor Bardallo-Vivero, Sociology 1101	65
Who Will Say 520? Xiao Yan Wu Professor Standing, Speech 1320	66
The Story Behind My Name Jacqueline Henry Professor Harris, English 090W	68

An Interview: The Immigration Experience Carmen Hume Professor Bardallo-Vivero, Sociology 1101	70
Texting and Driving? Viviana Medina Professor Berger, Speech 1330	71
Schnitzel to Syringes Maria Serena Bartha Prof. Kolchenko, Biology 2311	73
Invisible Army Hadassa Francois Professor Berger, Speech 1330	75
New Approaches to Old Disasters Husaan Iqbal Professor Brahim, Mechanical Engineering Technology 2335	76
Law, Privacy, and Technology Fanny Gerloven Chico Professor Moran, Emerging Scholars Program	78
A Hostel Take on City Regulations Rebecca Karrin Professor Hobart, Hospitality Management 3502	83

Prize-Winning Video	91
Chin Sheng “William” Hsieh 2011 New York Fed Video Competition, Second Place Co-winner Professor Terao, Entertainment Technology	
A Rough Ride: No One Seems To Care How You Get There	93
C. Daniel Thomas Professor Westengard, English 1101	
On Happiness: Aristotle and Epicurus	97
Orion McCaine Professor Park, Philosophy 2103	
Hope	100
Juhair Mahtab Professor Mushabac, English 1101	
On Being Human, and Artificial Intelligence	103
Liza Luboa Professor Lansiquot, English 1773	

Bending

Melissa Hughes

It was a balmy night, even for summer in the northeastern province of South Africa. Sbu stood between the rocks-cum-goalposts, hoping the other boys would keep the soccer game to the other side of the lot. It was too hot to hustle. Dume, the big kid with knock-knees broke through the cluster with the ball. He dribbled fast, snorting like a bull as he barreled towards Sbu.

Sbu's hands started to shake. He'd only taken goalie so he wouldn't have to run. Now it didn't seem like the best idea. His teammates scrambled behind Dume.

"Focus!" Sbu's father called out as he walked by. "You've done this a thousand times before!" Sbu felt the rest of the world dissolve. The other boys fell away. His feet took root. *No different than any other game. He's just a bit bigger* Sbu told himself.

Dume faked left. Sbu cut right. His foot caught the ball square on, bending it back to the far side of the lot. The boys spun around and ran the other way.

And then they collided. It was like hitting a wall at full speed. "Punk," Dume said kicking some dirt on him before he ran after the others.

Sbu rolled onto his back. From the corner of his eye he could see his father wave. Sbu waved back as he ducked down a narrow path to where neighbors were playing dice a row of shacks down the hill.

The township smelled like roasting meat and earth and sweat. Sbu took a deep breath in and felt the earth spin under him. "Good on ya," Simpiwe said trotting past, back to the game. "He's a BIG boy."

Pop-pop-pop. The boys hit the ground and scattered as gunshots tore through the lazy night. The shots were close. One row of houses away, where Sbu's father had gone. Simpiwe was face down with the ball pulled over his head like a helmet. Sbu belly-crawled over to him, grabbed his elbow and led him into his house. They slipped under his parents' bed and giggled at Simpiwe, still clinging to the ball. He bit Sbu's shoulder who squealed like a piglet. They laughed until it cramped their sides.

The front door clapped open and slammed shut with the weight of a body falling against it. There was no more laughing. From under the bed Sbu could see his father's boots brace in the dirt floor. Outside gunshots stuttered around the spinning of tiers. Simpiwe had his face under the ball again. The black leather of Sbu's father's boots darted past them to the back of the room where he kept a gun hidden.

"Da..." he whispered.

“Shh! Stay under the bed!” he hissed back. There was the creak of the door’s rusty hinges and then shots from his father’s gun, loud and immediate. Sbu nudged Simpiwe with his shoulder to make sure he was ok. He rolled his eyes and shook, pretended it was to tease him for being scared. The door slammed shut, his father dropping to all fours. “Stay here,” he said. He winked before he jumped up. Fast heavy footsteps. The window rattled open. “I’ll be right back for you,” his father said climbing out. The shack felt frail and mutable though they’d lived there for as long as he could remember. Sbu’s heart punched in his chest. The air seemed thicker. He couldn’t get a full breath. He had to get out. Simpiwe held him back as the gunshots started again, punctuated by the screeches of trucks forcing their way down too narrow streets.

The front door flew open. “Sbu!” his mother’s voice was sharp. He’d heard it like this once before; when his grandmother’s farm got caught in a mudslide. He climbed out from under the bed as fast as he could. She reached down and pulled Simpiwe out by the scruff. The gunshots stopped and the three stood motionless for a moment, holding onto the silence and each other. “Da said,” Sbu started. His mother covered his mouth with her hand.

There was a tinkling of breaking glass, the whoosh of flames and screams. Close and stomach churning. His mother grabbed the boys by the wrists and yanked them behind her out the window. All around them fire crackled up the sides of groaning metal walls that curled in their heat. They ran hunched over, ducking behind bins and into corners. They followed his mother to the south side of the neighborhood and up through the hole in the fence to the sugar cane fields above.

They dove into the shadows between rows and watched as others escaped into the field and the woods beyond. Simpiwe pointed to a collapsed house, “I think that’s my aunty’s,” he said. Sbu’s mom broke off pieces of sugarcane and handed it to him.

“Don’t say such things,” she said. “Eat.”

“Ma,” Sbu said tugging at her sleeve. “Da said he would be right back.”

“He came *home*?” She looked surprised.

“He told me to stay put. He was coming right back. We have to go get”

“Oh no you don’t.” She pulled Sbu back down into the dirt. “He’s a grown man.” She narrowed her eyes at a group of people stealing through the hole in the fence. “He left you there?”

“He was coming right back,” Sbu mumbled. She had that far away look she got sometimes. She wasn’t listening anymore.

Dawn brought quiet and a light ash filled rain that stuck to their skin and ran grey beads down their arms.

They walked home through the ravaged township. Fresh white placards were fixed to broken doors and posts. “If you want to live,” it said, “join the IFP. Freedom in 1992.” The Ikatha Freedom Party had been pasting them up for weeks though until now Sbu’d never given them much weight. His father used to tear them down and say “We’re African National Congress. If it’s good enough

for Mandela, it's good enough for us." Without his father the signs had spread like lice over a sleeping dog.

"Ma...did you see those posters?"

"Hush. I don't care for politics," she said.

A heavy smell of strange burnt meat scathed their nostrils. Small crowds were forming around collapsed shacks. People lifted bent iron sheets to see if anyone was left inside. The body of a woman was pulled from one as they passed.

"No Malusi," a man in a torn shirt said, rubbing his forehead.

"He might have been taken," the man helping him said. Sbu scanned the crowds for his father. *Maybe someone took him too*, he thought. *Maybe they brought him somewhere safe like the cane field*. He pictured his father, still asleep, snorting when a fat fly danced around his nostrils.

On Sbu's street two houses were flattened. Their own house hung at a forty-five degree angle, but it still stood. Sbu took it as a sign. His father had built the house. If it stood, he had to be standing too.

"Ma," Sbu started. She shushed him with a wave of her hand.

"There will be a meeting this afternoon in the Hall. We'll go and see from there. We'll see." Sbu inched closer to her and took her hand.

"I'm scared Ma." He'd only said it so she didn't have to.

"Don't be." She squeezed his hand. "We're together. So long as we have each other, we'll be ok." A rock and rusted gas canister blocked their door. She pushed them aside with her foot. The house was empty and hot. The thickening miasma followed them in, creeping under their loosely fitting door and through the still open window.

The Community Hall was teeming. People packed tight into corners and too many to a row.

Something in Sbu felt different. It was the opposite of full. The way darkness feels when someone turns off a very bright light in the middle of the night.

A soccer ball struck the side of Sbu's knee. A few feet away Simpiwe stood grinning. Behind him a group of boys scrambled, small feet with spindly legs jostled each other to get closer to the trashcan goal posts. For the first time in his life the game seemed silly. Sbu tossed the ball back. Simpiwe kicked it at him, nailing him in the chest. He smiled even wider and waved. Sbu sighed and looked inside the hall. His mother and grandmother were sitting at the edge of the third row. Beside them he vaguely recognized his neighbor Ayize's cousin. The podium was filling with stern-faced men. At either end, bored looking cops played cards and read papers. Unease crept under his skin and wiggled through him, like a big man in a too small overcoat. There was nothing he could do. He was still a boy; his coming of age ceremony wasn't even scheduled yet.

"Kick the ball, Sbu!" the kids shouted in an off-beat chorus. He kicked the ball back and ran out. "You're with me!" Simpiwe shouted after him.

The meeting in the hall outlasted the game and the heat of the afternoon that ushered the boys into the shade of a nearby tree. Those that could went home. Sbu sat outside the entrance and waited. The sinking afternoon sky snared on

rooftops and drying lines. Soft breezes rippled over his bare arms. Somewhere a dog barked. Everything looked as it always had. Intertwining dirt roads, heavily pot-holed and littered with bits of tire and empty packets stretched out before him. Quilted together pieces of metal made up houses that hid full living rooms with quieted radios and well swept rugs.

Sbu leaned his head against the threshold and listened to the meeting inside. “They leave us no choice,” “My wife is gone,” “This is not politics,” people shouted out of turn at the now tired looking men on the stage. Sbu tried to see between the bodies and arms, craning for a glimpse of his grandmother’s scarf. He couldn’t find them. Sbu’s heart started racing. He looked around the empty square. All his friends had gone. For the moment, he was alone.

Three hours later a crowd stiller than a funeral procession trickled out onto the street. Sbu’s mother and granny walked whispering to one another. Sbu followed them, knowing better than to interrupt. His grandmother had unhooked the ANC badge from her shirt collar and was turning it over in her hand. “Truth is subjective, particularly in war. This is war.” Sbu’s mother opened her mouth as if to speak, then bit her breath and nodded. Granny played her fingers around the badge’s pin, “Your husband is not here Mbhali. He has left you to fend for yourself. You must make a choice. And the choice is clear. Not even he would argue.” Sbu’s father always argued. Sbu had heard him debating the color of the sky and the taste of chicken. An uneasy feeling latched to the roof of Sbu’s stomach. He glanced around patting his pockets. He was losing something.

“Life isn’t always what you planned for,” his granny said. “Sometimes you have to recognize the path you were on was the wrong one, be humble enough to admit it and strong enough to change. There are no promises. Your husband has made his choice, he’s not coming back.” Sbu’s mother stopped and shook her head.

“Don’t say that Ma. He’s coming back. He just went into hiding.”

“Not anymore,” Granny clapped her hand over her mouth. She shook her head and looked away.

“Ma?” Mbhali touched her arm. Granny closed her eyes.

“I saw him this morning. He couldn’t find you. He accused me of turning you in...” Sbu’s mother took her hand away and touched it to her mouth. “These men from the party came by. I was angry. He’d called me a traitor.”

Mbahli’s face went slack. “Oh Ma, what have you done?”

Granny tisk-ed and waved her hand. She squinted at something far off.

“They just wanted to ask him some questions.” Mbhali gasped. Granny looked up at her daughter with small eyes. Mbahli couldn’t move. “He’s a stubborn man.” She placed the A.N.C. badge in Mbhali’s hand and closed limp fingers around it. “You have to be soft like a sapling, or when the north-western wind comes it pulls you up by the roots.” She squeezed her daughter’s hand closed into a fist. “Do with it what you like. I have no use for it anymore.” She forced a smile and waddled down her empty street, lifting her skirt daintily around litter to where her house stood, untouched.

Sbu's mother swayed. She looked at the badge her mother had worn every day for the past sixteen years. The pin was loose and came off its clasp. She pushed her finger into it, bending the skin, but not quite breaking it.

"Ma?"

"Hush boy. I'm thinking," she said, her legs wobbling a little as she walked away.

Sbu followed silently behind her, counting twenty-three IFP posters on their way home. One had been attached to a spigot, the trickling water boring its way through the poster, leaving only 'Join' and 'live' legible.

Back in the shack there was no sign of his father. His mother stood in the center of the room, her eyes searching every crevice of their home.

"Ma?" She didn't answer. He shoved his hands in his pockets and looked down at his feet for what seemed like much too long.

"Come," she said, grabbing a blanket and a bag of sliced bread. She led him without hurry back up to the sugarcane fields where they picked another row and settled in for the night. The pop-pop-pop and sour meat smell drifted up from the township below, lulling Sbu into fevered sleep filled with dreams he didn't want to remember.

Sbu woke in the stillest point of the night. He scooted over so he could feel his mother next to him. She seemed small and easy to lose. The field that had once been so familiar was vast and infinite, like a sea that could reach out and drag his mother away at any moment. He wriggled even closer to her. She murmured and pulled away. The inch between them was huge. Sbu pressed his hands into the same ground he and every member of his family had been born on. Once upon a time he felt bound to and cradled by it. A breeze passed through the sugar cane leaves, rushing like water. The wave had come. It was he that was drifting out into infinity.

Mbahli woke him when it was barely light out. She looked grey like the morning. Sbu followed her back down through the hole in the fence. Three men waited outside their house. Sbu ran, thinking one might be his father. None of them was. It was his neighbor Ayize, an uncle and a man who said he worked in the navy yard with his father. Mbahli invited them in and told Sbu to fetch some water.

When Sbu came back, the front door was closed. He hesitated. Inside he could hear Ayize asking about a list. "I don't know what you mean," Mbahli said. "Did you go to the meeting yesterday? People are saying they saw your mother there," he asked.

"No I was afraid," she said. "I looked for my husband all day." Her voice was tight and high-pitched. The way it was when his father had caught her hiding half her pay in her sock drawer. Sbu slipped into the shadowed house and towards the back to build a fire. He didn't understand why she was lying. Ayize's own cousin had been there. The men stood up before the coals had settled. They nodded quietly and left.

Mbahli sat back down and rubbed her face with her palms as if she were washing it. "Ma?" Sbu said. "Must I still make tea?"

After a heavy sigh she said, "No, leave it."

She sat silently staring at the door. *Maybe she's still waiting for him too*, Sbu thought. He felt bad for her. He knew his father wasn't coming home. It was a feeling he had in the pit of his gut as clear as the shack around them.

A woman screamed next door. Sbu looked to his mother. She snapped her fingers and pointed under the bed. Sbu crawled under, his head still far enough out that he could see her creep to the door and peer out. She jumped back and shut the door quickly. Sbu crawled out from under the bed to peer through a gap in the wall as Ayize's cousin ran by, his hands dripping red. Mbhali opened the door again, just a crack and peered through. Other neighbors were running by. She followed hesitantly. So did Sbu. Neighbors collected around Ayize's door. Sbu wiggled his way through tightly packed bodies. Face down in the dirt of his living room floor was Ayize, a large kitchen knife sticking out of his back. Maroon stains formed strange polka dots on his shirt. Mbhali kneeled by his face, slapping his cheek and saying his name a bit too loud. Ayize's second wife was passed out in an old man's arms, mouth open, arms splayed out and heart turned up to the sky. Before his mother could notice, Sbu slipped back through the crowd and under the bed.

The front door creaked open. Sbu could make out his mother's bare feet walking by. "Ma?" he called out from under the bed. She stopped where she was. Sbu peeked out. She looked older. Her eyes drooped, her chin quivered and she shook her head. "What happened?" Sbu asked.

She rubbed at a dark stain on her skirt. "You can make that tea now."

Sbu's mother sat staring out the window, the tea now cold in her lap. There was a knock at the door. Sbu opened it and jumped back: three men wearing IFP t-shirts stood in the threshold. The tallest one, with a cleanly shaven face and a scar on his right cheek, smiled and bent down. "Afternoon, little Comrade. Is your mother home?"

Mbhali pushed Sbu out of the way and ushered them in. "Go out and play," she said. Sbu didn't want to play. He wanted to run. But he couldn't leave her in there alone. Instead he crouched by the back window and listened.

"We want to say how happy we were to see you at the meeting on Thursday. The movement could use a few strong women like you and your mother. Mrs. Florence has become an integral part of the movement. Your husband must be very proud." There was a pause and no answer. "We couldn't help but notice, your brother wasn't at any of the meetings." Again, a pause with no response.

"Sister Comrade, he's only a man. All men have faults to be forgiven. We must unite to be strong and weed out those that make us weak. This is for the greater good, for the future of your country. Think of your son."

"He lives by the north entrance." Mbhali's voice was hollow.

That night they stayed home. No trucks came, no shots rang out. Yet in the morning twenty-seven bodies were found in their own homes, stabbed with sharpened bicycle spokes, screw drivers, and kitchen knives.

Days turned into weeks filled with funerals and digging. The faces all around him were heavy with grief and guilt. Neighbors and family members kept close eyes on each other, waiting to be denounced. No one and nothing looked the same. His grandmother whispered names and people were found limp in their beds. He wondered about the God she had taught him to fear and if she remembered to fear him too. He answered every question she had with as fast a “Yes, Madam,” as he could spit out. She didn’t seem like a granny anymore.

His mother seemed different too. No matter how hard he tried, Sbu was always in her way. He did his chores and homework as quietly as possible. Still she screamed and cried more than he had ever seen her do. He wondered if he’d followed the wrong lady home from the sugarcane fields.

At night Sbu slept on his side, his back to the wall hugging a metal tray under his shirt. In his dreams he was inside a tight wooden box. Dirt and pebbles were thrown on top. They made the sound of rain on a tin roof as they trickled down the sides. He couldn’t breathe or move.

One morning Sbu woke with a start, a single thought running through his mind: *I’m all alone*. It was him against the future barreling down on him. His father was gone. His mother was paralyzed between a past she didn’t want to give up and a future she didn’t know how to maneuver. His heart started to race. His throat closed up the way it did in his dreams. Sbu closed his eyes and pulled in a shallow breath.

“Focus,” Sbu heard his father say. “You’ve done this a thousand times before.” He opened his eyes. It was still the same shack. He was on the same bed he’d always slept on. His arms and legs and hands were all the same. *Focus* he told himself. *It’s no different than any other game, just a bit bigger.*

He sat up and looked around the darkness. In the far corner his mother was sleeping. Outside a breeze passed and shook the leaves in the trees. He felt his mind sway and bend into it. Sbu swung his legs over the side of the bed and pressed his feet into the ground. It didn’t matter what wind blew, he was taking root.

So Much “Junk”?

The Complexities of the Human Genome

Luis Loor

Why do you look the way you do? What determines the color of your skin and eyes? What about your resemblance to your parents? In order to answer these questions, biologists have spent decades studying human genetics and the very intricate instructions that are located inside each of our cells. Safely stored inside the nucleus of cells lies the set of instructions that makes each and every one of us different, and also fundamentally the same: deoxyribonucleic acid, otherwise known as DNA. DNA are long, double-stranded molecules that look like twisted ladders. These molecular ladders are made from four types of nucleotide base units, called adenine (A), cytosine (C), guanine (G), and thymine (T). When these nucleotides are combined in sequence, they form our genome which contains instructions to direct all the processes in the cells and make it possible to build the components of our bodies and maintain them throughout life.

Naturally all of our cells maintain function and regenerate. In order to do this, all the cells follow the instructions encrypted in the DNA to undertake two very important processes, replication and transcription. During replication, DNA is copied in a very complex process. First enzymes called DNA polymerase attach to specific parts of the DNA. As the enzymes advance through the long DNA double helix, they split the DNA into two strands. The enzymes take both of those strands of DNA and use them as templates to create complementary strands, thereby replicating exactly the original DNA containing the same genetic information. The second process, transcription, describes how DNA is “read” to create proteins, which are the worker molecules that build cellular structures and maintain function. First the DNA is unwound, and then one of the strands passes genetic information to another molecule called ribonucleic acid (RNA). The RNA carries the information encoded in the desired gene, exits the cell nucleus, and, with the help of another enzyme system called ribosomes, processes the instructions on how to build complex protein.

Now you may ask, how is information organized in our DNA? To better visualize this we can say that each gene in our genome is a long series of codons, or a set of three-letter DNA words. Scientists have found that each gene contains on average 27,000 letters. If we compile a large set of long sequences of genes and the non-gene sequences between them, we get one chromosome. Humans have a total of twenty-three pairs of chromosomes where we find the complete genetic data about a human, also called the human genome.

A genome can be compared to a “book” that holds the entire genetic information about an organism. This genetic information varies from one

organism to the next. All told, the human genome is made up of about three billion nucleotide base pairs¹. This sounds like a lot of genetic data and indeed it is! Imagine a large book like a dictionary with over a thousand pages. The human genome will fill 428 of those books! Now another question arises, one that scientists have asked themselves for a while: is all this information useful to our body?

The reason this question arises is because biologists are still trying to figure out where all the genes are and what they do. Science has made it evident that only about two percent of the human genome consists of DNA that codes for proteins², and as mentioned above, these proteins are essential to the creation of organs, tissues, and cells. Yes, protein-coding genes only make up a small part of the DNA. What about the other ninety-eight percent of genetic data that does not contain genes and does not code for protein? For some time scientists have called those parts “junk DNA,” but recently they are changing their stance. They are finding that those parts considered useless actually control how and to what extent the genes are used.

How did the term “junk DNA” come about? In 1972, the geneticist Susumu Ohno came up with the term “junk DNA.” In his paper “So Much ‘Junk’ DNA in our Genome,” he used this term to describe “all noncoding DNA sections, most of which consist of repeated segments scattered randomly throughout the genome”². He was referring to the content of the human genome that does not contain functional genes. He compared the human genome to our planet: just as the earth contains many fossils of extinct species, our genome too is filled with the remains of extinct genes. His point of view greatly affected the study of genetics. Many biologists turned their backs on junk DNA and focused their research on the coding part of the human genome, which seemed more important. It wasn’t until the 1990s that many scientists became interested in junk DNA and its repetitive elements. One can view these sections of DNA like advertisements in a magazine, which break up an interesting article. For instance, an article may start on page 5 and be followed by an ad on page 6, continue on pages 7 and 8 and then be followed by another ad on page 9. Even though the ads and the article are different types of information, both are important to the make-up of the entire magazine. In short, even though some genes don’t transcribe for protein, it does not mean that they are rendered useless. This idea began to grow among scientists and led to many of them calling these sections of DNA “noncoding” instead of “junk.”

As interest started to grow among biologists to try to understand the functions of the noncoding DNA, they noticed that these sequences “increase the ability of a species to evolve by serving as hot spots for genetic recombination and by providing important signals for regulating gene expression”³. Indeed these elements are components integral to our genome and can hardly be called junk anymore. Many scientists like John Rinn, professor at Beth Israel Medical Center, have put a lot of time and effort into studying noncoding DNA. In an article in *Nature*, he explains that he “was not interested in looking at the map of known protein-coding genes on the chromosome, but rather everything else”⁴.

He says, “We wanted to see if we could find biologically active molecules in the human genome that no one previously knew about”⁵. Because of his efforts and those of many other biologists, we are beginning to address the mystery of the function of noncoding genetic material. The way they see it is that, since noncoding sequences exist within the DNA, and since it makes up a large portion of the genome, it *has* to have a purpose. To illuminate this further, biologists have compared the human genome to a factory. Just as a factory has some devices that assemble parts and others that serve as controls and regulators, the genome has parts that encode for RNA and proteins, and other parts to control the process and serve structural roles. This is where noncoding DNA comes in: even though it does not directly code for protein products, it serves a purpose because a “substantial amount of noncoding DNA contributes to genome function”⁶.

Scientists have now been able to classify certain noncoding sequences. First, we have the segments of DNA that exist within a gene itself because this is the area that has been most studied. In molecular biology the parts of the gene that code directly for protein are called exons, and the parts that don’t are called introns. When the RNA is ready to be transcribed for protein, introns are removed and exons are linked up together in the process called splicing. This doesn’t mean that introns are useless. The presence of introns in some genes allows for the gene expression enzymes to decide which introns to exclude from the final gene product. This process effectively increases variability of gene products without having to depend on mutations. Increasing variability means that the gene allows moderate changes done to itself by re-arranging the position of introns and therefore exons which results in the gene producing slight alternate versions of itself that can have positive benefits. Thanks to research like this it has become clear that the “changes in gene expression—primarily changes in noncoding DNA—have a tremendous impact on an organism”⁷.

Another noncoding factor that is important in regulating gene expression is known as RNA interference. One known factor of RNA interference is the microRNA. This small RNA molecule made up of twenty-two nucleotides is known to be a post-transcription regulator. This means that its regulatory capabilities are used during translation of RNA into protein. MicroRNA originates from already transcribed RNA in the nucleus, and enters the cytoplasm along with the rest of the messenger RNA which will be translated. The microRNA’s bind to a specific targeted part of the messenger RNA in order to regulate the amount of protein to be produced. This process is called alternative gene silencing because a specific part of the gene will be turned “off” or not used.

It has taken almost thirty-five years to clearly identify this type of RNA. Recent studies reveal that these microRNA’s “suppress initiation of protein translation, promote messenger RNA degradation and turnover, and initiate transcriptional silencing”⁸. This is an important discovery because, as some scientists imagine, microRNA’s can act as tumor suppressors by regulating cellular replication of cancer cells.

Other types of regulatory sequences are located either close to a protein-coding gene or far away from it. These sequences that sit next to the gene are called *cis* regulatory sequences and they serve as markers by guiding the transcription enzymes by signaling where it can start the process of making RNA. The regulatory sequence itself does not get transcribed. The specific sections of DNA onto which the enzyme attaches are called transcription binding sites, and it is here that transcription of DNA begins.

As we can see, noncoding sequences do have important function, and they are required for many important cellular processes. Since some of these sequences regulate protein production, biologists use them to study variation in genetic sequences, like those that the introns are responsible for. In the past it was thought that “protein-coding variation was most likely the main source of disease susceptibility, mainly because most known genomics disorders are due to such mutations”⁹, but now scientists are turning around and expanding their research to examine the vast amount of genetic data in noncoding sequences. Discoveries made in this area could help examine regulation of genes in a more precise and well-coordinated way. Heading in this direction could help uncover patterns of genetic sequences that may actually cause some genetic diseases. One way to illustrate the role of noncoding sequences is the following. Imagine holding in your hand a microchip that you want to insert in a computer. The chip itself can’t do this task. It will require the use of one’s arm muscles, bones and fingers to precisely place the chip in the right place. The same can be said about noncoding DNA sequences. Their mere size and complexity helps to support, manipulate and regulate the protein coding genes, which is represented by the microchip, in order for it to work properly. Damage to the supporting structure can therefore lead to malfunction, and in the case of the human genome, to disease.

Research on noncoding genes continues to this day, and it probably will for years to come. In the past it was challenging to analyze these long sequences due to the lack of computing power. With the advance in technology and in bioinformatics, it is now possible to study this part of the human genome in greater depth. It is becoming clearer that there exist complex interactions and functions between various elements of the human genome. Understanding the important connections between coding and noncoding sequences can help scientists discover new ways to prevent diseases, apply treatments, and perhaps even create cures. It is only when *all* genomic data is used that we can get a clearer picture of our complex genetic nature.

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The Music Matrix: Proposing A New Discovery Tool For Bandcamp

Tim Durland

Introduction

Bandcamp.com was launched in 2008 as a free web-publishing platform for independent musicians, providing a venue where they could present and sell their music directly to listeners (Baio 2008). As the number of diverse groups using Bandcamp grew into the tens of thousands, a problem became clear to the company's founders: "...every Bandcamp-powered site is still an island, and not surprisingly, one of the most frequent questions we now get is 'How do I find out about other (industrial mariachi | new-age horrorcore | death ragtime | etc.) artists on Bandcamp?'" (Diamond 2010). To address this, they implemented a tagging system which lets artists describe their music with keywords and short phrases. People interested in a certain style of music can browse by tag to discover new artists that they will enjoy. While the company's owners have no desire for Bandcamp to become a social network (Diamond 2010), providing all users the ability to add tags could create a richer, more dynamic picture of the music on the site. In this paper, I propose a model for a new discovery tool based on social tagging which I have dubbed "The Music Matrix." I will describe possible features and how it could encourage accurate, meaningful tagging of songs, discourage inaccurate and malicious tagging, and in turn help direct users to new music that they will enjoy and bring much-needed exposure to artists.

Some Background

Tagging is a form of information management that has become increasingly popular in the last ten years. Tagging systems take a wide variety of forms, but they all share three essential components: users, who create tags, usually in order to make something easier to find again later; resources, which are what users apply their tags to, be it a photo, website, book, or any other item that can be found on the web; and tags, keywords that describe some aspect of a resource that users consider distinctive (Smith 5). This tagging can be done in a social fashion, with users sharing and aggregating their tags for certain kinds of resources on a publicly accessible site. The user-generated system of classification that emerges was dubbed "folksonomy" by Thomas Vander Wal in 2004, a portmanteau of folk and taxonomy (Vander Wal 2007).

Social tagging is far more flexible than traditional taxonomies and thus better suited to the classification of contemporary music. New genres are constantly emerging and evolving, and social tags can rapidly respond to these changes. Also, musicians are mercurial creatures who dislike being pigeon-holed, and jump from one style to another between songs or fuse elements of different genres to create their sound. With social tagging, there is no need to assign a single, “correct,” label to a song—any number of labels can be assigned to create an accurate, detailed description (Lamere, “Social Tagging” 102).

Encouraging the Use of Tags

Tags on Bandcamp are currently displayed as small lists of words which can easily be overlooked, and tagging itself is an activity which can be hard for less technically-savvy users to grasp (Rainie 2007). However, Web-based applications like Foldit (which asks users to fold protein structures into stable configurations) have shown that even high-level science problems can appeal to non-experts if they are presented in the form of a game (Markoff D3). Luis von Ahn and Laura Dabbish used this approach with their ESP Game for labeling images. It pairs two players and presents them with the same image; both players suggest tags for the image without knowing what the other player’s suggestions are. Points are earned if both players suggest the same tag before time runs out (2). This system has shown the ability to rapidly gather accurate tags (4-6), and games with similar structures have been developed for tagging music, such as Tag a Tune and Major Miner (Lamere 110).

However, Liz Lawley points out the flaws in these competitive, time-based tagging systems. In her own experiences playing the ESP Game, she noticed that tags that resulted in a “win” usually described broad, formal characteristics such as shape and color, while distinctive, contextual labels were unlikely to be agreed upon by two players. She gives the example of an image of a Greek coin, which was given labels like “coin” and “round” but received no tags for “Greek” or “Greece,” let alone any tags describing the era or city that the coin was from, which would be much more meaningful (Lawley 2007). Requiring agreement between players, although ensuring “correct” tags, does not allow the nuance that tagging systems are capable of. Perhaps it would be possible to make tagging feel like “play” without the element of competition, by creating an interface that is simply fun to use. I propose a stand-alone applet that provides an intuitive, fun-to-use interface for exploration and discovery.

The Interface

The central feature of the applet interface is “The Music Matrix,” a dynamic visualization of the genre tags in the system. The initial inspiration for the Matrix is Paul Lamere’s “Map of Music Styles” which uses statistical analysis to visualize over a thousand genre labels culled from Last.fm, another music-focused website that extensively uses social tagging. Genres are presented as “Nodes,” sized according to how frequently they are used, and clustered into “Neighborhoods” of similarity according to how frequently they appear together

(Lamere, “Map” 2012). This is an ingenious and intriguing visualization, but it is only a one-time “snapshot” of the tag structure which does not update as the tag database is modified. Furthermore, it presents all of the hundreds of tags at once, which demands a lot of computer processing power and makes navigating through the map feel awkward and sluggish.

The Thinkmap Visual Thesaurus provides some hints for designing a better interface. A user types in a word, which is then displayed at the center of a cluster of “meaning” nodes, which each link to other words with similar definitions. When any meaning or word node is clicked, it is dynamically moved to the center of the display, and a new configuration develops (Thinkmap Visual Thesaurus 2004). While the process sounds confusing on paper, using the application is highly intuitive and the dance of the nodes as one travels from word to word is fascinating, making the mundane act of using a thesaurus an entertaining, addictive activity.

Lamere’s method of clustering genre Nodes that occur together frequently (and can therefore be regarded as similar) is analogous to the clustering of synonymous words in a thesaurus. The Matrix could combine elements from both of these systems. Instead of presenting all the Nodes at once, only the broadest, most frequently used genres would initially be displayed. Selecting one would center it and it would sprout new Nodes for less frequently used but related genres. Selecting a sub-genre Node would reveal sub-sub-genres, and so on. A zoom slider would let the user pull back out and hide the smaller Nodes, and a search bar would let users quickly find and focus a specific Node.

The Matrix would be accessed from individual band pages. As a user listens to a song, a prompt would be shown: “Want to find more music like ‘[song name]’? Try the Music Matrix!” When the Matrix opens, the user would be asked to enter a genre they think the song belongs to, thus tagging the song. Since users would be seeking more music they actually want to listen to, they would be less likely to enter derogatory or misleading tags. An auto fill function could suggest existing tags as the user types and help avoid the spelling errors which frequently plague social tags (Lamere, “Social Tagging” 111). If a user entered in a recently coined genre term which is not yet present in the Matrix, he or she could create a new Node for it, associate it with existing Nodes, and suggest other bands it would apply to.

Once a genre is selected, the Matrix would zoom into the corresponding Node and its related genres. Hovering the mouse over a Node would present a pop-up window with a description of the genre, a list of bands frequently included in that genre, the option to add a band to the Node and the option to start a Playlist. This last option would open a player window that cycles through songs in the selected genre, showing cover images, links to band pages, and a list of songs that have played. Options could be provided for playing the most popular songs in the genre, the newest songs, or randomly selected songs. Other genre tags that have been applied to the playing song could be displayed, as well as a box for entering another tag to describe it. There could also be options for banning songs or artists that the user does not want to listen to.

In order to weed out inappropriate and malicious tags, the Matrix should operate on two levels: The “Master Matrix” that everyone begins with, and a “Local Matrix,” unique to each user, which is instantly updated as they add new tags or assign tags to songs. Data on individual tagging behavior could be gathered from the Local Matrices and automatically analyzed and evaluated by computer algorithms before changes are made to the Master Matrix. For instance, if an artist is frequently skipped or banned by many users listening to a certain tag, that would be evidence of a misleading tag. Tags applied by users to bands they never listen to would be given less weight. New Nodes would only be added to the Master Matrix after being used several times by unique users. Individual users would have the convenience of organizing and classifying music in the Matrix as they see fit, and the Master Matrix would respond to the changing music scene without becoming muddled by inappropriate tags.

Further Questions

In my model I have chosen to focus on tags for genre. However, Last.fm users frequently use tags related to mood to describe songs (Milne 21). Is there a way to combine tags for mood and genre, as well as for other factors like tempo and location, within the same Matrix? Should there be separate Matrices for each facet? This model also does not incorporate the combining of multiple tags, which would be a powerful tool for music discovery. Is there a way to implement this? Finally, could Node color be used to convey information, perhaps the relative intensity or aggressiveness of a genre?

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The Williamsburg Renaissance

Jessica Guerra

The year is 1990. A newlywed couple has just moved into the railroad style one-bedroom apartment across the hall. They'll like it here—the street is quiet, the building is clean. Your morning stroll down the block brings you to the corner of Roebling and North 7th Streets. But don't turn on North 7th just yet. Look down Roebling. See the factories? They're perfectly lined up on the left side, on the right side... all the way down to McCarren Park, to those large, looming trees in the distance. Pretty soon they'll be turning yellow, orange, red, then the colors will fall, spread themselves over the grassy patches and bumpy asphalt leaving the naked branches to prepare for the heavy snowfall ahead. Smell the bread baking? It's that factory right there. Now turn on North 7th. Walk past the three-story walk-ups. Greet the old man sitting on his stoop and his granddaughter riding her tricycle. Tell her how fast she's growing up, as if that matters to a two-year old. Walk briskly past the L train. Turn left on Bedford Avenue and head over to Pedro's Grocery Store. Go in, ask him how his wife is, buy a gallon of milk, some eggs... wish him a good day. Walk home perfunctorily—almost without looking, you cross the streets. Think about introducing yourself to the new neighbors. They seem nice.

Williamsburg in the 1990s was simply that, an industrial and residential area whose inhabitants were mostly of European and Hispanic descent. Affordable housing was in abundance and, although the apartments were small, the rent never surpassed \$500 a month. The couple you read about are my parents. That railroad style apartment was their first place together after their honeymoon, and the place they would call home for the next eighteen years. Their '83 Buick Regal was parked in front of the narrow building; plenty of space available down the block and across the street as well. Little did they know that in just a few years, parking would become almost impossible to find.

Condos Cutting Corners

Fifteen years later, the couple has two daughters, one ten, the other twelve months. You hear the baby crying in the distance. Must be hungry. See the sunlight coming in through the fire escape window and decide to go jogging in McCarren Park. Go down two flights, through the two metal doors, down the steps. Walk past the bread factory and stop for a while. Hear a bulldozer in the distance, look toward the construction workers across the street, the bright blue scaffolding on the next block, the new traffic light at the corner. You know, that's one of the last factories left. They've been replaced with tall buildings. Condos, they call them. Spanning Kent Avenue from North 5th to North 10th, the brand new luxury condominiums hover around \$1 million. The apartments start at \$2,400 a month. You only paid \$485 a month when you first moved in! The

biggest of the waterfront complexes is called EDGE. You've heard some of the apartments are designated for lower income residents. The family across from you has already applied—maybe you will too.

What sparked all the change? Developers noticed the proximity of Williamsburg to Manhattan. The L and J trains, which span the North and Southside neighborhoods, Bedford-Stuyvesant, and Bushwick areas, provide easy access to Manhattan, making the area attractive. By constructing luxury housing, Manhattan residents looking to spend less for equal luxury and still be close to work are instantly driven to Williamsburg. But it is not a coincidence that a bunch of developers suddenly noticed Williamsburg's potential. This is something the city had been planning for years. Expecting the population of Manhattan residents to increase, they *had* to prepare for the overflow of New Yorkers into the surrounding neighborhoods. Williamsburg, of course, was the chosen one. So developers not only bought factories, but three- and four-story buildings as well, paying sky-high prices to landlords and tenants so as to have the buildings vacant. Why? To demolish them, of course, replacing them with luxury apartments, co-ops, and condominiums. And the factories *not* worth tearing down are turned into lofts. These new developments are strictly designed for the incoming Manhattanites. They are mostly from the East Village, single women and single men—artists, they call themselves. Some *are* couples looking to start a family, yes, and that's what the two-bedroom condos are for, but there are very few of those. However, EDGE is not the only new development. In recent months, high-rise buildings such as the Northside Piers, 80 Met, 568 Union, 88 South 1st, and 29 Montrose Avenue have seemingly popped up. And most recently, the Domino Sugar factory project was resurrected, an eleven-acre property bought by the Walentas real estate family for \$185 million. The plan is to create 2,200 apartments, 70% being what we call "luxury" (Bagli).

Booming Businesses, Not Bodegas

The year is 2008. You cross Metropolitan Avenue looking both ways and subconsciously realize this is the boundary between the North and Southside neighborhoods. It seems as though Southside residents have somehow managed to keep their Hispanic culture alive. Maybe this condo thing hasn't hit them yet. But keep your eyes peeled. Remember that beverage distributor across the street from Kellogg's Diner? It says Sunac Natural Food. Nice building, big glass windows. Go in. Grab a cookie. Gluten-free, sugar-free, dairy-free, and fat-free. Price? Two dollars. Without so many ingredients, shouldn't it cost less? Leave the cookie on the shelf, walk out slowly. Take Havemeyer Street. Certainly C-Town hasn't changed. Wrong. Notice the new floors, bright lighting, and wide aisles? Pick up a jar of peanut butter. Organic, it says. Pick up another. Organic again. Desperately look on the top shelves, bottom shelves. Isn't there any Jif? Oh, look. Skippy. Turn the jar over. \$5.99. Almost drop it. Look behind you to see if anyone noticed. Put it back on the shelf carefully. Leave the store looking confused. Decide to pay a quick visit to Pedro's Grocery Store. Stand on the corner of North 8th and Bedford Avenue and look up. Where's the bodega?

Quick, pretend you've lost your way from the train station, blend in with the crowd. Make your way back to Roebling Street without tripping over all the bikes parked on the curb. Wonder why Hub's Pub is where Pedro's Grocery Store used to be? Almost walk into a woman walking her three Labrador Retrievers on a leash. Jump when they all bark at you, blush at the woman's laughter. Find the family across from you bringing boxes down the steps. Ask them if they need help and put the boxes in the trunk of their Toyota Sienna. After wishing them the best, go up the stoop, but turn around to watch them leave. Catch the landlord crying. Jog up the stairs fighting back tears, put the key in your lock with a heaviness on your shoulders. Look across the hallway and notice the empty apartment. Let the tears roll down.

After developers provide new housing and entrepreneurs establish their organic stores and “cute” little pubs in Williamsburg, residents are no longer oblivious to the change. In fact, many residents feel fear and helplessness. Who is going to be shopping in these places anyway? Cue the hipsters! An article from the *Village Voice*, popular among Northside residents, references a British newspaper that calls Williamsburg “the national capital for young hipsters” and depicts these new residents as having “beards, piercings, lots of tattoos, and belong[ing] to at least one band” (Coscarelli). A simple stroll down Berry Street and North 6th would provide sufficient evidence. But these *hipsters*, as they are called, have slowly made their way into the Southside as well, specifically Grand Street, converting a small food distributor into an expensive T-shirt shop, a DVD rental store into a candlelit café, and causing Key Food to be completely unaffordable for most residents of the area. An article published last year in the *Daily News*, very popular among Southside residents, spoke out for those who feel their neighborhood has been taken over. It starts off with “Hey hipsters, keep your skinny jeans out of my Southside Williamsburg neighborhood.” The article goes on to interview many residents who share the same fear of being evicted from their own neighborhood. One man sums it up pretty well: “You wake up one morning and you see the corner bodega is now replaced by a fancy café or restaurant and you see your neighbors being pushed out because they can no longer afford the rent... You begin to wonder ‘Am I next?’” Another gentleman who was interviewed grew up in the neighborhood years ago and remembers nostalgically a bodega that used to be on South 4th and Driggs Avenue. Today a small cardboard sign hangs behind the window with “Pies ‘N’ Thighs” written in black marker (Nelson and Morales).

From the Outside Looking In

The family who moved out of the small apartment on Roebling Street four years ago is my family. When we moved out, rent was under \$800, but the new tenants in the building were paying way over \$1,000 a month. Fortunately, that wasn't a problem for them. Of course we would miss the area: the proximity to the L train (not that you could find your way to the train station anymore—bike racks and long lines for dollar pizza blurred it from view), the Mexican bodega where we always bought fresh tortillas (not that it would be there much

longer—the sign on the window said “For Sale”), the convenient laundromat on Driggs Avenue and North 6th, Northside Pharmacy on Bedford Avenue, the Deli Mart a few blocks down, Vinnie’s Pizzeria, and Brothers Cleaners... but who knows how long *they’d* be there? And our landlord did cry. She begged us to stay, but finally settled for a nice dinner sometime in the upcoming months. We hopped in the minivan on our way to Maspeth, Queens. It’s not that we hadn’t tried to apply for those nice apartments on the Northside. We did. Even in Bushwick there were new developments. But it was always a matter of waiting. And frankly, we could not wait any longer. The people from EDGE finally replied, but it was too late. We were already enjoying our new apartment.

Although I live in Maspeth, my grandma still lives in the Southside and my sister goes to school across the street from her house. I have seen more and more of these hipsters going in and out of the brick six-story buildings that neatly line up her block and their new businesses on Grand Street where I wait for the bus. But, most importantly, I have taken note of the new elementary school that is gradually replacing the one my sister attends. It is the same school I went to: P.S. 19 Roberto Clemente. Back when my parents first moved in together, there were over 1,000 students in the school. Now there are only about 300. After continuous poor performance, the Department of Education decided to phase out the school, leaving only grades 3 - 5. This year they introduced P.S. 414 Brooklyn Arbor, where all the kids wear green shirts and khakis, and the entire faculty is white, with the exception of one paraprofessional who is African-American. P.S. 19, on the other hand, had a vastly diverse group of teachers, and good ones at that. Sadly, the Department of Education waited until it was too late to fire the person responsible for the school’s downfall: the principal. Believe it or not, this has all been part of the plan. A church on Union Avenue and Stagg Street, for example, has recently been demolished to make room for a new luxury building and, surely, the people who will move in, along with all the new residents on Keap Street, will have children of their own looking for a “good” school to enroll their kids in. P.S. 19 Roberto Clemente brings an air of Hispanic pride, what the Southside used to be about, while P.S. 414 Brooklyn Arbor has a more modern, eco-friendly feel to it. Appealing to whom? To those hip, young, fresh-from-across-the-East-River newcomers who have already infiltrated all of Williamsburg.

It’s almost funny, actually. These new residents walk around with 100% recycled bags, shirts that promote saving the environment, and loads of groceries from their favorite organic, natural, and health food shops. Yet, if you stop by McCarren Park any weekend in July, you’ll find yourself face to face with 6,500 men and women scurrying about the streets looking for the park’s entrance, anxious to see a not-so-famous band blast their acoustics across the East River, leaving trails of trash behind them like an evil *Hansel and Gretel*. An article in the *New York Times* looked at these summer concerts through the eyes of a long-time resident in the area: “the rivers of trash strewn along the street and on her stoop, the thunderous noise, [and] the drunken revelers using the street as a toilet” (Leland). To make my point simple: How could a group of people so

determined to “save the Earth” (think 1960s hippies with a more snobbish flair), be so inconsiderate as to litter the sidewalks, relieve themselves in the street, and walk around the residential areas of Williamsburg late at night completely intoxicated?

Calling It Gentrification

Instead of working to provide lower-class residents with better structures, lighting, green areas, and security, the city has simply pushed them to poorer areas, conglomerating already overpopulated neighborhoods like East New York, Brooklyn and Ridgewood, Queens. It’s almost as if they are too undignified to live in neighborhoods near the city, as if Manhattan residents coming in might feel uncomfortable with them around. This is not the case. In fact, if anything, it’s the other way around. It’s not that Williamsburg residents are intolerant of these vibrant young artists, but to kick residents out by making them feel unwanted with the intention of making the area entirely upper-class is simply unacceptable. This type of gentrification is not a mere displacement. It’s about rebirthing Williamsburg, a renaissance if you will, transforming the environment into one that ostracizes the very people who gave birth to it in the first place, who worked tirelessly in the factories, who took care of their neighbors, who opened up delis and pizzerias and bakeries, and planted those beautiful trees that line Roebling Street.

Maybe we should’ve seen it coming. Maybe that summer night my next door neighbor’s daughter and I bought ice cream while watching the fireworks on North 6th, we should’ve realized those beautiful views of the Manhattan skyline would one day be blocked by high-rises and organic cleaners. Maybe while walking from the train station to my grandma’s house one afternoon, I should have noticed the new sketchy-looking pub on Broadway and Hooper Street and realized it was the first of many. Maybe. But I didn’t. And now it’s too late. Let’s just hope I can still find my way around Keap Street and Borinquen Place—so long as my favorite Caribbean food isn’t replaced by another Duane Reade.

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Eminent Domain

Lupita Escamilla

Eminent domain is the power the federal and state governments have to take private property for public use. The last clause of the U.S. Constitution, 5th amendment, states that no person shall “...be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor shall private property be taken for public use, without just compensation.” In a recent case, “public use” was broadened to include “public purpose” when an action was brought against the City of New London in the Supreme Court of Connecticut, after condemnation proceedings. The privately owned property in an “economically depressed” area of the City of New London was to be used as a redevelopment site; the defendants claimed “that the taking of their properties would violate the “public use” restriction in the Fifth Amendment” (*Kelo v. New London*, 545 US 469 (2005) pg. 476). The Supreme Court’s decision was in favor of the City of New London; it was later appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court which affirmed the previous, lower court’s, decision.

The U.S. Supreme Court dissent written by Justice O’Connor states that, because of the majority ruling, “all private property is now vulnerable to being taken and transferred to another private owner, so long as it might be upgraded—i. e., given to an owner who will use it in a way that the legislature deems more beneficial to the public—in the process.” (*Id at 494*). Furthermore, she wrote, “To reason, as the Court does, that the incidental public benefits resulting from the subsequent ordinary use of private property, render economic development takings “for public use,” is to wash out any distinction between private and public use of property—and thereby effectively to delete the words “for public use” from the Takings Clause of the Fifth Amendment” (*Id at 494*). The City of New London was going to have a privately owned company build in an “economically depressed” area, but because thousands of jobs and over a million dollars in tax revenues per year would benefit the city, it was seen as being a “public use.” In the dissenting opinion Justice O’Connor argues that the words “public use” in the Fifth Amendment are intended to distinguish between a public and private use of property. If the words “public use” cannot distinguish the two, then they should be removed from the amendment.

Occupy Wall Street protestors representing “the 99%” would agree with the O’Connor’s dissenting opinion. These protestors have focused on the greed of corporations, the impact they have on the government, and the resulting inequality corporations achieve¹. Occupy Wall Street protestors “occupied” Zuccotti Park arguing that with large corporations taking over large amounts of space and not allowing small businesses to thrive, the American dream is slowly fading². The Declaration of the Occupation of New York City lists twenty-three “facts” they believe these corporations are at fault for, including illegal foreclosure processes and giving excessive amount of bonuses to executives³.

By allowing the use of eminent domain in *Kelo v. New England* and further redefining “public use,” the Supreme Court is giving these large corporations an easier way to plead their case when wanting to redevelop an area and allowing them a higher chance of success. Meanwhile families are forced to leave their homes, homes that some of them have lived in for decades. In the end, Pfizer never went through with their redevelopment plan of the area in the city of New London. It abandoned the project and now the area is used as a dump by the city.

The areas targeted, where eminent domain was approved, were said to be “blighted,” or deteriorating, forcing low-income families to move so the wealthy could become wealthier. Atlantic Yards is a more recent case where eminent domain was approved and the ruling in *Kelo v. The City of New London* was applied. The defendants in the Atlantic Yards argued four things “(1) the Project will generate no or minimal economic benefits, (2) the Project will not create jobs, (3) the area to be condemned is not blighted, and (4) the Project will not materially increase available affordable housing.” *Goldstein v. Pataki, 488 F. Supp.2d. 254-Dist. Court ED New York (2007) pg. 286*. The U.S. Court of appeals opinion said the “Plaintiffs have not set forth facts supporting a plausible claim of an unconstitutional taking. Nowhere in the Amended Complaint or their briefs do Plaintiffs sufficiently allege any purpose to confer a private benefit. In other words, Plaintiffs attempt to satisfy the “mere pretext” test solely by alleging that the purported purposes of the Project are dubious, but *Kelo* requires them to allege that the “actual purpose” of the Project is “to bestow a private benefit” (*Id at 288*).

This opinion states that the plaintiffs have never alleged that the purpose of the Atlantic Yards is for private benefit, and it would have to be shown that it was intended for private use by the defendants; the defendant had not met the threshold. In applying *Kelo v. the City of New London* any argument that showed the “benefit of the public” was acceptable. From the four previously mentioned arguments, “Counts One,

Two, and Three of the Amended Complaint are dismissed with prejudice. Count Four of the Amended Complaint is dismissed without prejudice....” (*Goldstein v. Pataki at 491*). For the fourth argument, The Ratner Group argued that affordable housing would be built in the Atlantic Yards but it was later seen that over half of the housing units they were going to provide were not for low-income families as they had originally said but were for wealthier individuals; these “affordable houses” were luxurious apartments. The development of the Atlantic Yards is now in progress and protestors from Occupy Brooklyn have marched through the project⁴. They feel the project represents corporate greed, and that those who sponsored this project should instead have put the money to better use by helping small business owners or struggling neighborhoods rather than forcing families out of their homes.

By redefining “public use,” it is now easier for the government to seize privately owned land for public use. Justice O’Connor wrote in the dissent “.....the government now has license to transfer property from those with fewer resources to those with more. The Founders cannot have intended this perverse result” (*Kelo v. New London*, 545 US 469 (2005) pg. 505).

Notes

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2. Smith, Paul W. “The American Dream works best for the super-rich.” *The Voyager*. The Voyager. 01 November 2011. Web. 19 May 2012.
3. New York City General Assembly. “Declaration of the Occupation of New York City.” *NYCGA*. NYCGA Tech Ops Working Group. 29 September 2011. Web. 19 May 2012.
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Carrying Oli

Kristel Assa Adolfsdottir

She lost her first son when he was only five years old. She and her husband were living in a small fishing town. Only about a hundred people were living in the town, so everybody knew everybody. The children were good friends and the adults were as good friends as they could be. Her husband and she had decided to move to the small town because it was safe. Safe for their little son and their future children to play there. They could just run around during the day and play with sticks and roll around in the grass. It was safe. Olafur, or Oli, their son had a best friend who was a little bit older. Both of them knew that they were not allowed to play near the sea—all the children in the town knew this rule.

It was on a Friday that Gudrun got the call that her son had been found. The whole town had been looking for him the entire afternoon without any luck. The friend who had been playing with him told everybody that he had no idea where Oli was. Oli was found in the harbor—he had drowned there two hours earlier. The whole town was devastated. How could this have happened? In such a small town, how could a five-year-old get past everyone's eyes and drown in their harbor?

Gudrun, especially, never got over Oli's death. Thirty years and seven children later, she still carried the sorrow of losing her first son when he was so little. She didn't carry her sorrow on the outside, when she went to the grocery store during the day or met with her girlfriends. Nobody knew the heavy load she carried with her every single day, except for her children. Every single morning the children woke up to go about their day, either to school or work, and the first thing they saw in the kitchen was empty beer bottles and pieces of paper with the name Olafur written on them over and over and over again. Sometimes the pieces of paper were replaced by pencil marks on the kitchen table itself.

Gudrun had been drinking a lot through the years, and her husband had left her for it. Even though he left her, he didn't go far. They were living in a big house now, so he decided to move into the basement, because he did still love his wife, but her load that she kept dragging around with her was destroying her. He could no longer sit and watch his wife of many years destroy herself like that.

One afternoon the phone rang. It was Magnus, Oli's best friend who had been playing with him that day when he died. He sounded afraid and tired. He wanted to meet up with Gudrun and her husband to talk. Gudrun didn't know if she wanted to go meet him and talk about this terrible thing that happened thirty years before, but her husband told her that she, more than anyone, needed to meet up with him and talk about what happened.

When they met Magnus, he looked exhausted. He didn't look good at all. Actually Gudrun and he looked equally tired and sad. Magnus started to cry and told them that he had to talk to them about what happened the day their son died. Magnus said he had been carrying this around since he was a child, and that he could not do it anymore. He asked them to forgive him, he asked them over and over to forgive him, and then he told them that when they were playing by the sea he had accidentally pushed Oli into the sea and was so afraid that he ran away and didn't tell anyone. He told them that when he had been asked if he knew where Oli was, he had lied because he was afraid. He told them that he could not stop thinking that if he had not lied, Oli might still be alive.

All of them started to cry, but then Gudrun told him that they forgave him. She told him that he was only a child when this happened and even though things could have gone better and that maybe if he had done the right thing that Oli would be alive, he should not waste his life thinking about this over and over. Oli was in heaven. He wasn't coming back. She thanked him for telling her the truth and hoped to see him more often and that perhaps they could together let go of what they had been carrying for all those years.

Magnus and Gudrun met each other every month and talked. Gudrun stopped drinking and with the beer bottles gone, so were the pieces of paper with Oli's name on them. She and her husband started having a much better relationship and the entire family starting talking about Oli. Now the memory of Oli was not just a load Gudrun was carrying but an angel that was a part of the family again.

Women Breaking Free

Anne Antoine

At what point will women be able to break free from their roles and be able to pursue their great work without worrying about society's norms? Historically, women have been expected to grow up and be obedient housewives; despite the sexual revolution, women are still considered the weakest link in society. Women are supposed to focus on being the best mother they can be and take care of their husband and family. If they break away from this work, they are judged and rejected. This is why Marilyn from the Twilight Zone Episode Number 12 "Looks Just Like You" and Babli from "A Father" struggle so hard in defending what they want to be and perceive themselves in opposition to what their families want for them; in the end they fall short of their objective like many people who defy and challenge society's norms.

Babli and Marilyn are victimized and pushed aside because of their strong will. They want to change the way people view women but fail miserably; they cannot convince others to accept their beliefs. As Ralph Waldo Emerson said in his essay "Self-Reliance," it takes great strength and character to be able to stand strong while everybody is against you. Marilyn sees herself as her father's daughter, a thinker, a non-conformist who believes that beauty is more than a matter of appearance. Marilyn asks, "Is that good being like everybody? Is it the same as being nobody? How does anyone know me? I don't want to look like everybody else. I want to look like me." This young woman does not care much about being attractive and refuses to tolerate her family's definition of beauty. Marilyn wants to develop herself with knowledge, not what doctor Rex proposes, and she desperately wants to explore the world. For Marilyn, being beautiful means being capable of carrying on an intelligent conversation and sharing with others her thoughts and life experiences. She needs her father's support, but he is no longer present in her life.

Babli is as shrewd and resilient as Marilyn and does not want to be like the typical Indian housewife. She wants to free herself from all the traditions that hold women back from freedom and change. Like Marilyn, Babli stands alone against the world. She is one small voice in this wide and noisy world. She is ultimately consumed and pushed aside like Marilyn.

As Naomi Wolf asserts in "The Making of a Slut," "It was very important to stay in the game, if always nervously moving; but finding yourself suddenly singled out was nothing short of fatal..... One thing was certain: if you were targeted, no matter how randomly, whether you had moved not fast enough or too fast for the music, in some sure way your exclusion was your own fault"

(72-73). Wolf explains that women are already in a box: bad or good girls. It is their role to navigate this complex world without being labeled. Wolf notes that it is very dangerous to stand alone without some sort of support because eventually you will be ostracized and fall. Anything can happen to a person in this situation. It seems to be especially important for women not to become targets. They must get along with people around them because there will be grave consequences if they choose to do otherwise. While Emerson preaches and encourages men to fight for their rights and think independently, women do not have that luxury because of numerous rules and standards they're expected to uphold. Being hemmed in by a dominant crowd, Babli and Marilyn are left to fend for themselves.

Change takes time and does not occur overnight; when a society is used to functioning one way, people may feel threatened when new ideas appear. Marilyn is surrounded by people who firmly believe that beauty is strictly physical. Her mother, uncle, and best friend applaud her transformation and doctor Rex reinforces it as an expected step to becoming normal. Everybody around her thinks the same. Imagine being the only one who thinks differently! "I am ashamed to think how easily we capitulate to badges and names, to large societies and dead institutions," Ralph Waldo Emerson reminds us (13). Society tends to dictate. Marilyn's family and friends want her to be beautiful and happy. But she wants to be like her father and to be an independent person. How can you communicate with millions of people against you? Marilyn does not stand a fighting chance if she wants to live freely among her family. The only way for her to live the way she wants to is to go far away and become an outcast. I believe that she is not ready for such a big change.

Babli is facing a similar situation. Her father and mother want a dutiful, soft-spoken, traditional daughter. But Babli wants something different and is appalled by her parent's marriage. She does not want to be like them: "Who needs a man? Babli hissed. The father of my baby is a bottle and a syringe. Men louse up your lives. I just want a baby." Babli is afraid of being trapped in a loveless relationship like her mother. She wants to be independent and not worry about people's opinions.

Here are two strong-willed young women who believe in something different and are totally on their own against their family, friends, and society. How will they survive? As Emerson posits, "It is easy in the world to live after the world's opinion; it is easy to live in solitude to live after our own; but the great man is he who in the midst of the crowd keeps the perfect sweetness in the independence of solitude" (12). In Emerson's world, a true man speaks his mind and disregards others' viewpoints; but, in Wolf's mind, a woman must at all costs avoid being caught in a compromised situation. Babli and Marilyn were behaving like men in Naomi Wolf's real world. They wanted to be different but they were too small to fight back and stay in the game.

A small fish among predators is eaten alive. Marilyn really wants to cultivate her intellect and does not believe in smiling all the time; she wants to cry, laugh, or frown depending on her emotions. Emerson argues that complying

with society's norms is dangerous because then we lose sight of our own genius. Both Babli and Marilyn feel they have been born to accomplish a greater work, but they are up against those who want them to play a pre-scripted role. They are baffled and disappointed. In the words of Emerson, "To believe your own thought, to believe that what is true for you in your private heart is true for all men—that is genius. Speak your latent conviction, and it shall be the universal sense..." (13). Babli and Marilyn perhaps have not found that inner strength which would allow them to stand against the people around them.

In fact, both our characters have some weakness that prevents them from achieving their objective. Marilyn is just a child, eighteen years old. She is still young and has had no real life experience. She has big ideas yet she still looks for her mother's approval. She wants that maternal touch, her mother's love. Perhaps if her father were still alive, she might have been more tenacious about her convictions. Whenever she sees her mother, she wants to stay by her side. Marilyn is afraid of being alone.

Unlike Marilyn, Babli is a full-grown woman with experience, education and financial means. Yet, Babli has no confidence about moving out of her parents' house and having her own apartment. As autonomous as she is, she is not ready to live on her own. Babli decides to have a child without being married despite knowing what Mr. Bhowmick and his wife might think. Emerson argues "Trust thyself: every heart vibrates to that iron string. Accept the place the divine providence has found for you, the society of your contemporaries, the connection of events. Great men have always done so, and confided themselves childlike to the genius of their age, betraying their perception that the absolutely trustworthy was seated at their heart, working through their hands, predominating all in their being" (12). God has purposely placed every individual on earth to accomplish his or her great work. It is up to us to give all our energy and defend our opinion no matter what. Most famous artists, musicians, and scholars have been ridiculed by others because they have the courage to be unique. Small-minded people simply cannot think for themselves and desperately hold to what they are familiar with.

Recently we've learned that a courageous young girl was gravely hurt for her courage to advocate for equal rights for women. Malala Yousafzai, a fourteen-year-old Pakistani girl, was assaulted on her way to school by armed rebels because she believed that every girl has the right to be educated and play an active role in society. Ms. Yousafzai became an activist for equal rights and for women when some rebels forced her father to close down his school. Outraged, Malala voiced her desire to be a doctor and to see equal opportunity for men and women. Unfortunately, Malala lives in a place where women or independent thinkers are targeted and where society dictates expectations. In such an oppressive environment, it is extremely difficult to be self-reliant, to be assertive without being targeted. In essence, those who lay out rules and norms expect everybody to abide by them and severely punish others who dare disrespect them. Nicholas D. Kristof, in the *New York Times* article, "Her Crime Was Loving Schools," explains, "They shot Malala because girls' education

threatens everything they stand for. The greatest risk for violent extremists in Pakistan isn't American drones. It's educated girls. This is not just Malala's war. It is a war between two ideologies, between the light of education and darkness" (A31). How unfortunate, when education is the path for progress and growth! Although this incident happened in the Middle East, women in the U.S. are still up against many barriers. It is not easy to pursue what Emerson called "your Magnum Opus" when almost everybody thinks very differently from you and has severe punishment in mind for you. As Wolf states, being alone against the world is dangerous because you are vulnerable and defenseless. Anything can happen to you.

One is generally expected to follow the crowd. Conformity and consistency seem to be the winning formula. As we all know, invention and development do require people to think outside the box. Copernicus and Galileo would not have been renowned and symbols of genius if they did not dare to be different. It takes courage and extreme strength of character to be oneself among the crowd. Despite failing to achieve their objective, Babli and Marilyn are admirable for their courage in challenging the status quo. They inspire me to stand for what I believe in and to do so amidst disapproval. Living life to the fullest entails risks. As Emerson teaches, it does not matter if you change your mind different days of the week; nonetheless, be yourself, do your work, and the world will recognize you. I intend to practice self-reliance and inculcate this principle in my daily life. We all have one life to live; why not live it the way we want?

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A Will Unbroken

Denis Petras

Written by Sophocles in approximately 441 B.C., *Antigone* is arguably one of the oldest and most well known tragedies in literature. While chronologically the third of the three Theban plays, the other two being *Oedipus* and *Oedipus at Colonus*, it was the first to be written. Taking place after the tragic downfall of King Oedipus, former ruler of the plagued city of Thebes, *Antigone* follows the trials and tribulations of his daughter Antigone. King Creon, as the new ruler of Thebes, places an edict over the city, prohibiting the burial of Antigone's brother, Polyneices, a law which his sister is not willing to follow due to her religious beliefs. Throughout the play the actions of both Antigone and other characters reveal many underlying themes, including ones of religious faith, arrogance, and individualism, but all come together to portray one concept: the concept of the individual versus the state.

The conflict between individual and state in *Antigone* is first seen in Antigone's first defiance of Creon, the king who embodies the state in the play. Because Polyneices led a rebellion during the civil war in Thebes, Creon places an edict over the city preventing Polyneices' body from being buried and given the holy rites which all dead deserve. In this way Polyneices and his legacy are publicly shamed; he is branded a traitor undeserving of even proper burial, and his corpse is left to rot on the battlefield. Given her faith in the gods and their laws, not the laws of man, Antigone defies Creon by burying her brother and sanctifying his body with the holy rites. "Antigone considers the god's decrees and her own family duties towards her two brothers more important than any of man's laws or decrees, even if such rules come from not only the most powerful ruler of Thebes in her time, but from the man who is her own uncle" (Brandt). It is through her religious faith that Antigone finds the will and reason to defy Creon and his decree. When asked by Creon how she "had the gall to break this law" even after publically hearing his edict, Antigone replies, "It wasn't Zeus, not in the least, who made this proclamation—not to me." Be they the words of a beggar or the man in the highest position in the state, Antigone follows her beliefs as an individual and refuses to acknowledge anyone who challenges her.

Even after Antigone is revealed to have defied Creon's edict, she refuses to bend to his will. Faced with death, she does not deny her actions but rather accepts her fate with pride and dignity, believing that what she had done was truly the right thing. Brought before the king to face his justice, she speaks words that consistently only insult and defy Creon, and this interaction in my opinion is the prime, quite literal example of an individual versus the state. She challenges Creon's will directly to his face, while her own will remains unbroken. "Antigone, who in her own way also refuses to 'yield,' images more fully the greatness of man" (Segal 74). Even the guard overhearing the dialogue between the two

acknowledges her unbroken conviction, stating, "Like father like daughter, passionate, wild...she hasn't learned to bend before adversity." Between her defiance and her unwillingness to deny her will even in the face of death, Antigone embodies the heart and soul of an individual defying the state.

While Antigone's actions may be the main example of an individual standing up to Creon, one finds another case when a guard must face the exceedingly stubborn and arrogant king. Here we find one of the first literary examples of heavy consequences being brought upon the bringer of bad news, as the guard is faced with possible death for informing Creon of the defiance of his most recent edict. "Indeed, the play is the source of the modern cliché, 'shooting the messenger'" (O'Toole). Despite pleading for his life in a feeble attempt to prove his innocence, the guard is desperate as Creon sends him off in search of the true criminal. One may find it ironic that a guard of the state had found himself at the edge of his ruler's sword, but such is the will of the mad, arrogant King Creon, turning even his own men into enemies of the state without reason. As the guard himself says, "It's terrible when the one who does the judging judges things all wrong." Only after the guard had brought Antigone to face the king's justice had he been redeemed of the crimes he had not committed, and relinquished his status as an individual against the state in exchange for once again joining it. While the guard had never willingly chosen to turn against the state, his own king forcefully placed him in a situation which made it so.

The events in *Antigone* and the actions of the characters revolve around the concept of the individual versus the state. Whether we're considering the huge plot points like Antigone's burial of her brother and her direct defiance of the king, or seemingly minor events such as a guardsman being wrongly accused by an arrogant king, the characters in *Antigone* are all faced against the state, manifesting itself in the form of Creon. Through its plot, *Antigone* became one of the first examples of literature expressing the concepts of civil disobedience and individualism. *Antigone* is known as one of the finest examples of individual expression and defiance of power in literature.

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The Next Wave of Austerity Incites Anger and Desperation

Thalia Cabrera

What if the United States were a country with a government that allowed widespread corruption in the form of tax evasion? Wouldn't you worry about your future? More importantly, what if our economy inevitably collapsed? Wouldn't you feel angry? This is the reality for millions of citizens in the country of Greece. Why is there social and economic unrest all over Greece? People in the streets of Athens are protesting for their rights and for the end of austerity ("Austerity Protests").

The main problem is the European Sovereign Debt Crisis which started in 2009 when Greece declared that its national debt was 300 billion euros which is equivalent to 113% of the Gross Domestic Product and 60% over the euro zone limit ("Timeline: The Unfolding Eurozone Crisis"). Unable to sustain itself, Greece sought financial assistance from abroad to lower its debt. It found refuge in the "Troika," which consists of the European Commission, European Central Bank, and the International Monetary Fund and is comprised of the foreign lenders who have decided to bail out Greece and other affected European countries such as Portugal, Italy, Spain, Cyprus, and Belgium through the strict regulation of their economies (Fekete). In order to receive bail-out packages from the Troika, the Greek government was required to impose austerity measures along with selling its own public and state assets. This process has proven to be counter-productive and highly controversial.

The foreign lenders will only provide the bail-out if Greece shows that it is trying to stabilize its economy, for instance through austerity measures. Austerity, which comes from the Greek word: "austeros" means strict or severe. In Greece it translates to salary and pension cuts (Alderman and Kitsantonis), as well as cuts in the health and military sectors. In order for Greece to secure a 31.5 billion euro bail-out loan, Prime Minister Antonis Samaras is pushing to initiate an 11.5 billion euro austerity package (Alderman, "Push for Cuts"). This transaction, if it is approved, could help lower Greece's debt, but at the same time it incites anger.

Greek citizens oppose the austerity measures because they say the plan is crippling their society, further depressing the economy instead of helping it. Austerity has taken a huge toll through people's loss of their jobs and their homes. On September 19, 2012, Liz Alderman interviewed Gregoris Skouros in "As Economics of Everyday Life Erode, Some Greeks See Little Hope." Skouros gives us the perspective of a person facing the economic crisis in Greece; he had to leave his home in Athens to save money, and is currently living in a cargo container, working as a snail farmer—it took him eighteen months to obtain his permit to farm snails. Another surprising fact is that the government has allowed

food to be sold beyond its expiration date, at discounted prices (Donadio). Greek citizens are unable to find stable jobs, are forced to pay more taxes when they don't have the money to do so, and what's more, could be susceptible to food poisoning. This issue has sparked so much anger that people are expressing their views in extensive protests.

In the *New York Times* article, "Markets Falter In Europe Amid Protests On Austerity," Liz Alderman and Niki Kitsantonis quoted Anna Afanti, a fifty-year-old teacher who attended the protests and said: "They (Greece's foreign creditors) just want to impoverish us, to bring our salaries down to the level in India and swoop in and buy everything on the cheap," referring to the planned transfer of Greece's state assets to private sectors (privatization). In "Greeks Take to the Streets, Some Violently, in a Strike Over Austerity," Alderman discusses the protests in Athens after the European Union leaders met in Brussels. Forty thousand people protested in Athens and the police detained 103 demonstrators. Greeks are fighting against their government's austerity plan because they know that the bail-out money won't help them at all since it will instead be largely given to the failing banking sector (Alderman, "In Greece"). The money accumulated is primarily used to cut debt from banks because banks sustain a great majority of national debt, but at the same time to pay back the loans received from foreign creditors. Barely any of the money that is gained from austerity will be given to the people who are suffering from the overwhelming wage cuts and tax increases.

Nevertheless, the austerity plan is not the only challenge Greeks are facing now. There is the growing interference of privatization. Why do people oppose this strategy? Privatization shifts an industry from government or public ownership or control to private enterprise. The Greek government is planning on selling its state assets and businesses to foreign investors to pay off its debt. This seems like a good idea initially because it does cut national debt. But Greeks argue that they are selling off their country to strangers, and at artificially low prices. Those in favor of privatization, the political elite, point out that by selling assets to private firms, these firms will invest in Greece by creating more businesses which creates more jobs (Alderman, "Privatizing Greece"). But Greek citizens vigorously disagree. A decision on further privatization is pending.

With all these problems, why is the Greek government choosing to implement austerity? Greece's Prime Minister, Antonis Samaras, is pushing for more austerity cuts. Liz Alderman interviewed him in her article, "Greek Premier Sees Hope, But Only if Europe Helps." Alderman says Samaras is responsible for the Greek future since the country now has a 25 percent general unemployment rate, and a 50 percent rate for young people. Samaras says, "Keep the faith; better days lie ahead....That is all I can offer." This message, instead of helping is further inflaming people, because Greece is facing its sixth austerity package within the past five years, which shows that things are not getting better (Cockburn). Samaras said the Troika's help is necessary or else it could be the "end of Greece," hinting at the possibility of an exit from the European Union.

Prime Minister Samaras's austerity package of 11.5 billion euros, had to be approved by the Greek parliament in two separate votes, one on the national budget and another for the approval of the austerity measures (Staff, *et al*). On November 8, 2012, Parliament agreed to implement the austerity package at an increased value of 13 billion euros, saying it would come in the form of wage, pension and welfare cuts during the next two years. The decision was close, 153 parliamentary leaders for it, and 146 against (Yannopoulos). Mass demonstrations in Athens' Syntagma Square occurred with the police using water cannons and tear gas against the protestors (Clancy and Trotman). The Aegean Parliament is not voting on just an austerity package, but also attempting to keep its economy functioning with the new bail-out loan at the expense of its people. To analyze this issue more closely, the perspective of the Troika and Chancellor Angela Merkel's role must be considered.

The Troika's decision to bail-out troubled European countries requires difficult discussions about the European Union's future. After speculation that the European Union is facing a serious decline and that Greece may leave it, the foreign creditors have assured their critics that there is no need to worry. Mario Draghi, President of the European Central Bank, has secured the stability of the euro, for instance, by lowering Spanish and Italian yields to normalcy while at the same time overseeing Greece's economic situation (Erlanger). The International Monetary Fund stated that, to protect itself from loss, it would only continue to lend money to Greece, if it keeps its debt under control. If Greece doesn't improve, why keep helping them? ("Greek Government, Troika Optimistic"). The European Commission's goal is to establish a financial transactions tax in ten European countries; Jose Manuel Barroso, EC president, stated, "This is about fairness—we need to ensure the costs of the crisis are shared by the financial sector instead of shouldered by ordinary citizens." It seems like a valid plan, but will it work? Other European countries are skeptical ("Majority EU Backing"). The Troika aims to help the European Union; however, the methods they impose are often criticized.

Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany works constantly with the Troika because Germany provides the majority of the "bail-out" money to the troubled EU states. Merkel is criticized in both Germany and Greece. On October 9, 2012, she spoke with Prime Minister Samaras over the state of the Greek economy. Her visit to Greece was not welcomed, and protests erupted. Protestors' banners read: "Merkel, you are not welcome here." She supports austerity. Merkel has said "Much has been achieved, much has been demanded of the Greek people.....I am deeply convinced that it's going to be worthwhile." (Donadio and Kulish). One notable critic of Ms. Merkel is the Finance Minister of Bavaria, Markus Soder, who opposes Germany's continuing role in Greece and affirms that Germany should let Greece leave the EU, instead of wasting tax-payer's money. Soder compared it to "pouring water into the desert" (Paterson). Chancellor Merkel wants to save the European Union by helping Greece, but she does not understand the price that Greeks are paying for it and that their opinions are barely considered.

How did Greece end up with this economic disaster? Greece entered the EU in 2001 relinquishing the Greek drachma for the newly established euro. Prior to joining the EU, Greece was facing high levels of debt, inflation, and budget deficits. The EU accepted Greece believing that as a member, its economy would improve.. The euro was meant to help Greece not to make it worse (Bohlen). Once the euro was introduced, the Greek standard of living improved with higher salaries and government spending, for example Greece spent huge sums on construction for the 2004 Summer Olympics in Athens, but then abandoned the new structures (Saunders).

Corruption is an important factor in Greek society. Tax fraud and property mismanagement increased Greece's out of control debt. Although Greek citizens are facing the difficulties of austerity, they are also responsible for its country's problems. Corruption starts with a bribe for a service such as obtaining a driver's license or hospital admittance, or creating a business; it escalated to tax evasion. Prime Minister Skouros has stated that civil service workers planted tomato crops worth 25,000 euros a year in certain areas in order to gain a profit without paying taxes (Alderman, "As Economics"). The government has failed to implement critically needed tax reform.

Property mismanagement, meanwhile, is a grave issue that can bring privatization to a standstill. In order for the government to sell its public and state assets to private investors, legal documentation must show title. However, land in Greece owned by Greek citizens often is not registered with the government. Alderman notes "Property registries are almost nonexistent in Greece, a curiosity that dates back to the Ottoman Empire. Ownership was almost never recorded, so investors could face potential lawsuits from people claiming land as theirs" ("Privatizing Greece"). But acknowledging both tax fraud and government failure to register land use, one asks if the methods used to lower debt have helped the economy recover?

After the introduction of austerity and privatization, the economy of Greece has improved, but not as quickly as expected. In 2008, Greece's budget deficit as a share of G.D.P was equal to 10%. This has changed steadily and now in 2012, its budget deficit is less than 9%. The budget deficit has decreased. The opposite is true, however, for its government debt. According to a report from the International Monetary Fund, Greece's government debt as a share of G.D.P has increased over 50% from 2008's 100% plus to 2012's 150% plus (Thomas, Jr. and Jolly). Austerity and privatization are counter-productive because the results are not sustainable. When there is a decrease in one area of its overall economy, there is also an increase in its debt.

Greek society is in constant turmoil, with regular protests in all Greece's major cities. Greeks mistrust their political leaders, and with reason. A recent scandal is described in Donadio and Alderman's *New York Times* article, "List of Swiss Bank Accounts Turns Up the Heat in Greece." It says that many political figures are rumored to have transferred their money out of Greek banks to avoid taxes. The Greek Magazine, *Hot Doc*, has named around 2,059 people who have Swiss bank accounts including the speaker of the Greek Parliament, finance and

business elites and civil workers. The Finance Minister of Greece, Yannis Stournaras, is investigating the allegations (Donadio and Alderman, "List of Swiss Accounts"). This scandal shows that the socio-political ties in Greece are tense.

What lies ahead? The problems described will not change overnight. While Greece unlocks the 31.5 billion euro Troika bail-out package, it is implementing a tighter austerity package on Greek society (Kanter). EU leaders discuss the health of the overall economy. Nowadays, banks are hesitant to lend money, fearing they will not be paid back. EU member states with economic problems may slowly introduce austerity into their own countries. The role of the EU remains clear, "A whole generation of political leaders want this project to survive, and they have the economic resources to make it do so if they choose to use them" (Norris). Being part of the EU comes with economic implications, but what is important is the sense of unity of the member states despite cultural and language differences.

How does this affect us in the U.S.? The choices that the Greek government has made at the expense of its people are very harsh, but do the means justify the end? This is an issue that concerns us just as much as it concerns Europe. Our economic prospects can shift if the EU continues to decline since it has been proven that U.S. shares fall in the stock market when European markets are suffering (Reuters). Our economic alliance with the EU is connected to our own economy. However, far from this being only an economic issue, this is also a socio-political problem. Are austerity and privatization truly necessary for Greece to recover? If the introduction of the euro led to these problems, should the European Union continue or falter and let everyone fend for themselves? These are questions we should ask ourselves. The Euro crisis is not ending; and we should not close our eyes to it. Americans might not feel entitled to voice their opinions on European issues but Americans can understand the emotions of anger or desperation that many Greeks feel.

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Face the Truth

Fabio Gonzalez

It's not easy living in a society filled with ghosts from the past. These ghosts terrorize us today and play a critical role in situations in which we find ourselves. American society is filled with ghosts in the form of social problems that have been caused by policies that have become prevalent in the last few decades. Getting rid of ghosts is not easy, but an equally difficult task is living in a society in which rich people become richer and poor people become poorer. The dream many people have of one day being rich is continually becoming more of a fairy tale than a dream. Dreams can come true, but fairy tales only exist in books or movies. As the dream becomes more of a myth, society has to deal with problems created by our policies, nothing less than pain and suffering. People tend not to believe in society anymore, and what we have instead is an abyss of inequality. The wealthy use their power to crush the less fortunate and reduce government's role to that of an outsider who cannot intervene.

We live in a society that accepts neoliberalism as the policy to rule our economy. Neoliberals believe in shrinking government and prohibiting it from involvement in the economy. They believe in a set of policies known as D-L-P, Deregulation, Liberalization, and Privatization. They support deregulation of the economy, and urge the government to remove restrictions that companies have to follow, such as the national minimum wage. Neoliberals would prefer to eliminate anything that can affect their ability to produce a profit or decrease their chances of becoming richer. They would like to be able to invest funds in other countries and to have people in other countries invest funds in America. Neoliberals want the government to make massive tax cuts for businesses and high-income earners. Also, they want to abolish any kind of government aid such as welfare (Steger and Roy 7). They do not believe in the government playing a pivotal role in the economy like during the "golden age of regulated capitalism."

The period between 1945 and 1975 is known as the "golden age of regulated capitalism." Just the words "golden" and "age" are exciting! During this period, the government imposed restrictions on the economy, raised taxes for rich people, helped lower the unemployment rate, helped emerging strong unions in order to create better benefits for workers, and came forward with welfare to assist low income families. Also, during this period Keynesian policies emerged and were embraced by the government. Keynesian policies extensively helped the economy. We found the government stepping in and spending money in times of crisis. The injection of money into the economy helped the nation because it created cash flow. People had money and were able to spend it. Also, the government hired people to build new infrastructure, which created jobs, reduced unemployment and strengthened the country as a whole. The role of the

government in the economy during this period was vital, and it shows how there is hope in closing the gap between the rich and poor if the right approach toward the economy is taken. The United States should reject neoliberalism and its policies.

We are often reminded about the big gap between economic classes in the United States. Class inequality is not a new issue. Capitalists have been trying to use the economy to their advantage for decades, and their actions have created a society where only one percent of people do not have to worry about the financial crisis because they keep making money while the people not in that bracket are constantly struggling. Neoliberalism and Adam Smith's ideas are consistent.

Capitalists are always trying to turn a profit, and if they believe their companies will not accomplish this, without remorse, they close them or stop hiring. When companies close, people become unemployed, and their ability to purchase goods becomes almost non-existent. The economic balance capitalists emphasize is meaningless. Adam Smith's ideas and neoliberalism have the same goals for increasing the wealth of the wealthy. They try to achieve this goal by reducing taxes for companies and high-income earners, while other people barely make enough money for food. In a dream society, it should be the opposite, where companies and high-income earners pay higher taxes and help the government provide health care or better social services for those struggling to stay afloat. Unfortunately, we do not have a dream society. Inequality has grown, and class mobility has stalled.

It saddens me to know that unless there is a big change in our economy, or I win the lottery, my financial future does not look promising. Over the years things do not seem to change; the chances of people moving into "elite" groups are slimmer by the day. In recent decades, the inequality has clearly grown. Looking at the distribution of net worth and financial wealth in the United States, 1983-2007, we see the increase of net worth for the top 1% from 33.8% in 1983 to 34.6% in 2007; while the net worth for the bottom 80% was reduced from 18.7% in 1983 to 15% in 2007 (Domhoff table 1). One would think that over the years more people would have the ability to increase their wealth, but it has been shown that the 1% are the only ones achieving this.

There is a funny game called catch up, and this game is being played in American society daily. Nobody needs to sign up; everyone is automatically a player. The bottom 80% is trying to catch up with the top 1%. Lower class people believe their hard work is their golden ticket to the top, but these people live in denial. It does not matter how much people try to move to a better place in society known as the "middle class," the chances of reaching that point are almost none. The chances of poor children making their way to the top are exceptionally low. We believe in an equal society, but there is no worse blindness than when a person chooses not to see, and it is time to open our eyes and realize we do not live in that type of society. We are separated into two groups, the card punchers who work for a salary or hourly wage and the ones who own the companies where those card punchers work. Class mobility here is low compared to that of other advanced countries, especially in Europe (Wessel).

Education is believed to be a fundamental tool for success in society, but a college degree has become the new high school diploma, and a bachelor's degree can only get a person so far. Class mobility moves more slowly than was previously thought, and around 45% to 60% of the parents' advantage in income is passed to their children (Wessel). As a Colombian immigrant whose parents came from nothing, it is crushing to know my future will have to be built with blood and tears if I want to get out of the bottom 80%. Financial wealth is like a paradise where the top 1% are the saints and have access to a wonderful place, and the bottom 80% are the sinners who spend their whole lives trying to get beyond that struggle.

The gap between rich and poor has only become bigger with the recent economic crisis and its high levels of unemployment. Companies are being closed continually, and people who have dedicated years of service have had to start from zero again. The two major reasons for companies' closures are the practices of using technology and outsourcing jobs to other countries (Witte). Companies are always trying to turn a profit at any cost and do not care about their employees or their financial future; they are only looking for ways to reduce labor and material costs. An easy way to reduce labor costs is by outsourcing. Workers here are protected by minimum wage laws while in less advanced countries workers can be paid close to nothing. Also, machines and other types of technology are replacing workers, and do not demand sick days or vacation pay. In some cases, people are replaced by technology that has been created by those same people who later become expendable because of the very technology they helped create. Obviously, companies shutting down increases inequality, a poison that fills people with deep emotions of hopelessness.

Inequality is significant in health care. The type of health care a person receives depends on the person's social status and how wealthy they are. The bottom 80% have to rely on health care provided by the government which can be non-existent at times; in order to obtain government subsidized health care, the person's income needs to be so low it will be a problem to meet other needs such as for decent housing. The connection between class inequality and health is direct. The type of health insurance a person has, or not having any insurance at all, can be the deciding factor between life and death (Scott). The bottom 80% lives in fear of getting sick because visiting a doctor is often not an option. The top 1% can afford the best possible health insurance while the bottom 80% sometimes opt for emergency hospital care instead of regular steady medical attention. Inequality can determine people's health; also, unemployment itself can lead to medical conditions that present major health issues down the road. This is the same unemployment that occurs when hiring stalls because the top 1% needs to supplement their already fulfilled needs.

The greatest tangible inequality starts with children and the type of education they receive. Children have big dreams, to become a cop, a doctor, a lawyer, and president. Many children, however, do not have the slightest chance of achieving what they aspire to. Our school system has vast inequalities. It's well known that schools differ based on social class, and social class is connected

to location. It's been said that our schools educate two kinds of children, those who will become leaders and those destined to be followers (Kozol 434). Schools for upper-class children provide an outstanding education while schools for lower class children are neglected, run down and poor on resources. In a vicious cycle, inequality in education reinforces inequality. Children are the future and when they are not well educated, social mobility is out of the question. Poorly educated children are prompted to follow their parents in the bottom 80%. Children are our future, but in our society, only the children of the rich will enjoy all life has to offer.

People should not use the word "hate." It is a strong complicated word. However, inequality should be hated and addressed. It is almost impossible to believe the different conditions people live in depending on their place in society. People are not equal and do not possess the same kind of wealth, but all people should at least have the same quality of health care and education. American society is a joke, and the people laughing are the top 1%. America is called the land of dreams, but the shining sun in the dream has not risen for decades. The future seems cloudy. It is time to join together for a cause that can only make us better and can give people hope for a tomorrow without fear. It is time for people to feel alive again.

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Everyday Struggle

Chovair Graham

To protect the subject's confidentiality, her name and identifying information have been changed.

Biography

Embrace Change is a thirty-six-year-old woman currently living in New York City. When asked about her race, she answered with a smile, "First place, of course." With this response, she set a positive tone. With the question rephrased to refer to ethnicity, she responded proudly, "I am of West Indian descent." Ms. Change was born in Kingston, Jamaica, which is where she spent the first twelve years of her life. She summed up her memories of her hometown as "blissful and tranquil." Her mother an English teacher, and her father a music connoisseur, it is no wonder her desire for writing poetry and songs surfaced.

In the late 80s, EC's family migrated to the United States. Her mother moved to California, her father to the opposite coast, namely New York City. Many summers, EC traveled between the two homes, and developed a "soft spot" for both locations. As a child, she participated in many extra curricular activities ranging from spelling bees and plays to cheerleading and writing contests. From the outside looking in, one sees an energetic all-American child. In fact, many have seen her that way.

Both of EC's parents earned degrees, so their primary concern, and hers as well, was education. She rejected anything that impeded her educational ambitions just as retired NBA legend Michael Jordan rejected the possibility of defeat during a pivotal game against Utah when he was deemed unlikely to carry the Bulls since he had the flu. Jordan scored thirty-eight points that game, and despite the many difficulties EC faced, she scored big as well. She graduated summa cum laude from Lehman College with her Bachelor of Business Administration degree in Finance, then continued on and got a Masters of Science degree in the same field.

Now, as President Barack Obama always states, "let's be clear," such honors were *not* achieved effortlessly. As life would have it, EC encountered hardship after hardship and continues to do so even now. When asked to elaborate, she chuckled, inhaled deeply, and said, "I am a single parent of two in America, a black female with a dark skin complexion, which means I have to deal with an additional layer of bias. Then I'm always expected to carry the weight of my race on my back because I work in corporate America. Everything I do, I have to make sure that I set a good example for any other black girl coming up behind me, because it's not going to be *I* messed up, it's going to be black girls always mess up, so that's a lot of pressure. My son is sixteen, so he will be going to college in two years, so worrying about college tuition and things of that nature is an added pressure. And just trying to survive and provide

for two children with no assistance is difficult. Of all the life challenges, that's one of the biggest. And then you have your regular wishes, you know? I mean, you get to a point in your life when you wanna get married, settle down and then there is a shortage of men that are my equal, or someone that I feel that I would be willing to submit to 'cuz I'm not just gonna submit to any old... I can't, sorry." Giggling, she continues, "And I refuse to settle, so you might come to terms with the fact that I might end up alone even though I have faith in God and I believe that at some point the right person will come along. Reality is, they might not ever come. Am I ready to deal with that? So I have that to deal with as well, so it's a lot."

With her resilience clear, it was only logical to inquire about what motivates her. "My kids. I mean, to me, I think life boils down to these things: I want to laugh really hard, and often. I want to love everybody that's been around me that I care for. I want to love them to the fullest of my capacity and I want to enjoy the simple things in life. I want to make the most of the world that's around me. How can I get better? How can I be a better mom, person, friend? As long as God has given me another day to wake up, I should do something with it, and I should improve. To me, if you're not growing, you're stagnating and you're kinda just taking up space and wasting time on earth; there are so many people that do that. So that's practically what motivates me. I want to become something that's bigger than what I am and I know that my time on earth is relatively short. I want to be remembered. Drake has a line that says, 'I wanna be remembered and reprinted, so every word I utter will be mine.' I wanna leave a legacy; I wanna change someone else's life for the better. That's what motivates me every day."

Like any other human being, EC has strengths and weaknesses. Her strength is being able to see life in 3D— "I can see life from my point of view, their point of view and many points in between." Additionally, she is empathetic, an effective communicator and respectful. Admittedly, her weaknesses, areas that she could use improvement in, include that she never gives herself enough credit and often seeks out those who are insidious, oftentimes, picking the "wrong people to love."

The Story

"A little over nine years ago, I moved up here [N.Y.C.] away from my daughter's father. Me and my daughter's father had like the worst relationship ever, I mean he was real abusive. My self-esteem was probably at the bottom of the barrel. I've always been the type of person that once I put my mind to something, that's it. I was like, you know what? I'm just gonna go. And something told me that life in New York was just going to be better. A lot of people were worried and nervous 'cause I literally decided to do this within like, two weeks. I had just got my tax money, I called my aunt, paid my bills, broke my lease and packed up everything. Me, my eight-month old baby, my seven-year old son got on Amtrak and left on the next thing smokin.' March 1st, I think it was. We came up here, it was a snow storm and all!

“Now throughout my time here, I have transformed into what I would like to say is a strong, formidable, beautiful person. I still have my flaws and my weak points and I think we all do as humans, but the progression that I’ve seen is tremendous. I had to spend fourteen months in a shelter. I was in my aunt’s house for about two months before my cousin made some stupid comment. Maybe she didn’t mean it in that way, but I heard it and I didn’t like it. In the meantime, I was arguing with my daughter’s father every day, back and forth. He kept threatening me, warning me that, ‘when I find you, imma kill you.’ I actually went to the shelter and they overheard me arguing with him over the phone and they put me in as domestic violence.

“ That fourteen months was tough because you’re in a place with nothing but women and kids. And not everybody raises their kids the same, not everyone comes from the same background. The things I went through in Cali and Atlanta I feel prepared me on how to navigate in New York. I learned what to do and what not to do. There were certain mistakes that I made in other places that prepared me to be where I am today. If I made those same mistakes here, I don’t think I would be as successful as I am now. What I love the most about the people here in New York is the authenticity of the people that I run into. I really do think that the energy that you throw out into the universe is the energy you get back. I am a much happier, healthier, mentally sound person than I ever was in my life and it’s reflected in the relationships I have with my friends, in the relationships I have with guys. Now, I know when it’s time to throw in the towel instead of dragging it out.

“I knew my daughter’s father for eight years—seven years too long! I should have broke out after the first year. I kept trying because I felt that I owed her a father in the house, and I felt I owed it to my kids to try. Now I know that I would never make the mistakes I made previously. I have to say though, that I love my village. Like, they always say it takes a village to raise a kid. And I’m the type of person that hates feeling like I’m a charity case, I hate feeling like a stereotype. Those are my pet peeves. What’s funny is that I look so young, and when walking with my kids here in New York, people are quick to be like, ‘well when did you have him? When you were two?’ They say what’s on their minds here. Atlanta is a place where people don’t say anything, and they just look at you funny, and then they just pass their judgment. And here I am with this 5’11” kid...But my village... my girlfriends are so beautiful and so caring and loving. And it’s so different from the friends I have in California. I only talk to one girl out there now, and I love her to death! But I don’t trust her as far as I can throw her!

“Many times you will hear me say, ‘I trust you to be who you are. Nothing more, nothing less.’ I have girlfriends now where I can leave them in a room with my man and I don’t feel like they gonna sleep with my man. I have a peace of mind that I’ve never had in any other place. I’m used to friends sleeping with a guy that I’m dating. I’m used to people saying, ‘Oh we cool’ and then the minute that I get into an argument with them, they tell you everything that they been wanting to tell you, but never had the courage to tell you when we were

quote unquote *cool*. I only had one or two falling outs with people here and normally, if I don't like you, I stay to myself. I find that other people here operate in the same manner.

"I have a girlfriend from the south, and she can't stand it here. She just hates it and feels that people here are dirty, and rude and dah-dah-dah. 'I don't understand why you love it so much,' she tells me. 'Because the people are real and authentic in my experience. The people say what they feel and I like that. I don't wanna guess' is normally my reply. I come from a place where I saw someone get killed over \$20 by their *best friend*. The same person that they shared the same bed with, that they grew up with. I come from a place where people use the word *friend* real loosely. Most of the people that I see here are surrounded by people that they grew up with; they have this close knit family whether it's blood, or extended family. I mean, yes they bicker and they fight, but there's this loyalty here that I have never experienced in any of the other places that I have lived. And that's something that I cherish. That's one of the reasons I moved here. My girls were like, 'we will help you,' and not only did they mean it when they said it, but they showed it as well.

"I think that here, I found my home. In the last ten years, I can really say that I don't feel like I have to watch my back all the time any more and I don't feel like everyone's out to get me. It is such a relief! I really felt like it was me against the world before. I mean, Biggie's *Ready To Die*—"Everyday Struggle,"—that was my soonnnggg! I mean I really used to feel like that. As happy as I am, I'm very good at internalizing my feelings, and laughing something off. I mean, I have had to condition myself for the last sixteen years. But it's nice to be consoled; to be falling apart and be able to call someone and be assured that they are here for you. That it's going to be all right. It's nice to have that feeling and I cherish that. That's the reason I enjoy being in this space, being amongst my extended family. I love them. It's a blessing and I think God puts certain people in your life for a reason, for a season or a lifetime, and I think I found my lifetime people. And for that, I'm happy.

"It takes time for you to kinda figure out home. And home is not necessarily where you were born, or where your parents live. It's where you as a person feel the most natural, you feel the most acclimated. You can be who you are and not have to worry about what anyone else is thinking of you and so on and so forth. To me, that's home! And I feel that here."

The Personality Analysis

Is there anything that stands out in this interview? If you answered no, you may want to re-read it! In practically every aspect of this interview, EC made mention of human interaction. Without difficulty, one would connect EC's biography and experiences to Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers's "Humanistic Theory of Personality." This theory places an immense amount of emphasis on the creative, optimistic, and self-actualizing tendencies of human beings. EC encourages any experiences that are deemed "satisfying," by maintaining them, and those that are anything short of that she discards. For example, when EC

realized how toxic her relationship with her daughter's father had become, she made a spontaneous, heroic power-move north. This would best be defined as the "organismic valuing process" according to humanistic psychologist, Carl Rogers (McAdams 272).

Moreover, after having experienced so many years of storms and disappointments in her interpersonal encounters, she is now at a place in her life where she can count on her loved ones to perform endless, "unconditional positive regard." Putting it briefly, EC has landed into the unselfish, comforting arms of those that accept, value, love her and treat her as if she is irreplaceable. Feeling such warmth, it is no secret that her self-worth has become heightened. Her sense of belonging followed suit.

As the preceding statements prove, EC's basic needs are met and the only portion of her life that has not been fulfilled, but is currently under construction, is the attainment of self-actualization. As EC said, she is striving to reach her innermost potential as she wants to "become something that's bigger" than what she is. She wishes to "be a better mom, person, friend." If that does not describe the goal of self-actualization, I do not know what would.

In the final analysis, EC has encountered peak experiences, and not just the positive ones mentioned in the textbook that include moments of happiness, ecstasy, and transcendence. I believe that it is safe to declare EC's struggling times and unhappy moments as peak experiences as well. Why? Look at the outcome and how such experiences have honed the person she has become. The life lessons her experience overflowed with created what I would call a BEAST (positive connotation, please). EC has proven herself to be a multitude of things. Since my list of her qualities is as long as the Nile, here's the short version. EC is courageous, optimistic, reflective, inspirational, resilient, wise, unique, driven, honest, trustworthy, affable, and altruistic. With such motivation and self-determination, it would be impossible for me to even entertain the idea that EC will *not* attain self-actualization—her fullest inner potential. I don't see anything anywhere in this interview suggesting she'll fall short of her goal.

Having said that, I have to add that adversities that you and I face should be embraced, no matter how difficult. As the saying goes, "What doesn't kill me, shall make me stronger!"

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Where Art Thou, Black Dads?

Tamatha Hines

The absence of committed black fathers in black homes is the root of many of our problems within black communities. More specifically, the absence of my father has been problematic for my family. I am angry and frustrated. I have no father, no husband or man. As a microcosm of the state of black America, my family is dominated by women who are leading dual parenting roles and maintaining households. My family has the challenge of raising boys without the benefit of positive, strong male role models. It is a common issue within black America. The state of black America rests on the state of the black family. We cannot progress nor will we survive if our black men continue to “disappear.” Although there appears to be a trend to redefine family, I only know of one that speaks to continuity and black tradition.

The black family is desperate for black men to be present physically and emotionally. It is imperative that our men return home. The drive to emasculate our black men and families must be acknowledged and confronted. When the head is cut off, the body flails. We have managed to flail successfully purely on spirit and tenacity, but eventually the body will drop. Can black men rise to embrace their families despite the conditions of racism and socio-economic injustice aimed to weaken their masculinity and ultimately the state of black America?

The dilemma of today’s absent black father must be understood from a historical perspective. The problem is not a new phenomenon but a cleverly crafted construct based on numerous unethical “experiments” that supported America’s racist agenda. The precepts of black inferiority as outlined in Higginbotham’s *Shades of Freedom* and Willie Lynch’s *The Making of a Slave* speak loudly to why many black men and ultimately the black family are struggling. From the onset of the “New World,” white superiority was synonymous with the dehumanization of people of color in order to colonize and clear the land (manifest destiny) for the benefit of white privilege. This dehumanization process effectively pitted one person against another by removing the seed from its natural state, and instilling destructive patterns.

Today’s crisis of absent black fathers is directly linked to America’s historical crafting of black inferiority and white superiority. Colonial White America believed:

The African Americans themselves must come to realize their wretched status; black youngsters must be “educated” as to their place and limitations. Only then would African Americans lose all just ideas of their natural position. When African Americans

believed in their inferiority, the precept would become both a part of law and a part of life. (Higginbotham 29)

With the notion of black inferiority firmly implanted in white and black mindsets, (and often touted as scientific fact by “experts” such as Samuel A. Cartwright), transmission into law soon followed. Slaves were not allowed to legally marry as that would have constituted a legal contract between people—slaves were deemed chattel, more likely cattle—who were protected by civil and constitutional rights. Only free blacks, not slaves, were allowed to enter into legal contracts. It would take the Civil Rights Act of 1866 to extend marital rights to all black people. However, before that, as a matter of keeping the peace and “expanding their property,” slave owners did allow the custom of jumping the broom. “The wedding vows they recited promised not ‘until death do us part’ but ‘until distance’—or, as one black minister bluntly put it, ‘the white man’—‘do us part’” (Hunter). This quote reflects the fragile state of black families and their powerlessness to remain together. Black slave codes effectively shut down black people’s pursuit of happiness, systematically stripping them of all human rights that allow a person to declare “I am.” Their pursuit of happiness was not considered an unalienable right set forth in the United States Declaration of Independence. Black people’s happiness or love of family was not a factor in an equation based on profit by breeding black people. Additionally, male slaves were made to impregnate multiple female slaves, and female slaves were kept pregnant thereby producing new slaves. During this breeding process, emotional and familial ties were devalued and degraded.

The advent of the Civil War presented a new twist to the absence of black fathers. Approximately 180,000 black men—free and slave—joined the Union Army to fight or labor in the Civil War. Conversely, there were also black Confederates (count widely ranges from 15,000 to 120,000) who mainly served as laborers but also engaged in combat (Williams). These enlisted Union and Confederate soldiers voluntarily or involuntarily left behind their families with hopes that the end of the war would result in black freedom, equal opportunities, and whole families. To reunite with family and/or begin a new family, these black men fought and served diligently in hopes of securing a brighter future. A poignant scene in *Glory* showcased the pride Rawlins exuded when greeting black children back home. He represented the true character of a black father who stands up to be able to provide for and protect his family. The Rawlins of yesterday and today represent the truth that black men can rise beyond age-old precepts of inferiority to embrace their families.

During the Civil War, black women were not strangers to the absent black man syndrome; it was a way of life. Many black women such as Harriett Tubman did not blink an eye in raising “their” children, using hoes and shotguns to provide and protect, being both mother and father. This forced independence set the stage for strong, black single mothers and village parenting in raising children in black America. Unfortunately, some independent black women have adopted this absence as typical rather than abnormal. We have to challenge black

men to be responsible, to return, stay, and co-head their families. Black women must allow them to do so. Super families trump superwomen.

After the Civil War and during the Reconstruction era, returning black soldiers went back home to reconnect with family and start anew. According to Bennett, “Witnesses said the roads of the South were clogged in 1865, with Black men and women searching for long-lost wives, husbands, children, brothers, and sisters. Some of the searchers were successful, but many families were never reunited” (201).

Old and new families alike picked up the pieces to move forth from familiar grounds to new beginnings in areas near and far. These times represented promise for the black family as black communities emerged offering stability and independence. Black towns such as Rosewood were self-sufficient with skilled labor and professions (doctors, teachers, blacksmiths, bankers, store owners, etc.) and, more importantly, were the epitome of black progress. They characterized the true spirit of the black family when allowed to thrive without interference. “The first fruit of the new legal order was a deepening of the relationships between black men and black women, who legalized marriage ties at mass registrations and ceremonies” (Bennett 290). The Reconstruction era and these towns represented a chance for black fathers to be men in their homes. These symbols of black pride offered additional proof that black men could rise beyond their restrictive environment and head their households with love and pride.

Jim Crow laws and modern-day plights, however, were a terrible setback. Jim Crow laws effectively reversed public black freedom. Segregation of public facilities in the South, the disenfranchisement of southern black America, and the “strange fruit” that hung from southern trees ushered in a new era of terror. However, innovative black families banded together to again showcase their great strengths:

Southern blacks survived the demeaning character of Jim Crow by organizing self-help associations that functioned as parallel institutions to those in the white community, ranging from lodges and social clubs to life insurance programs and volunteer fire departments. By 1910, a wide range of segregated black institutions in southern communities served as refuges and safe harbors from white terror and violence; these social clubs and lodges enabled a small, middle-class of prosperous black participants to live in dignity and with self-respect. (Davis)

The black progress that burgeoned within the hearts and minds of black people could not be “worn” because fearful white America deemed it a threat. Lynchings became a southern pastime. During 1882-1968, approximately 3,500 black people were lynched, with Mississippi, Georgia, and Texas respectively accounting for the states with the most recorded incidents. This terrorization definitely plagued the psyche of the black family. Black men and women alike did not know if the slightest transgression or none at all could cost them their life and lead to their family being torn apart. This terror still reverberates as

countless black families (e.g. Evers, Till, King, Bumpers, Hawkins, Bell, Martin, etc.) move forward in the wake of tragedy. Moving forward and away (e.g. Underground Railroad, The Great Migration, Kansas Exodus) is what black people apparently have mastered in order to survive the systematic violations of their human rights.

Unfortunately, the modern black family is still under attack in contemporary ways that were set in motion centuries ago. The machine is so finely tuned that it needs minimal interference from the engineer. The challenge for black families today is moving forward by remembering the past as depicted in *Sankofa*. Black people lead the statistics for most social ills today. Incarceration, unemployment, black-to-black crime, single-parenting, foster-care children, high-school/college dropouts, etc. are plagues as much as the chains of slavery and the nooses of Jim Crow. Our true heritage demands that we as a people, and black fathers particularly, make a united stand to rise beyond the age-old precepts of inferiority to embrace our families despite the conditions of racism.

Surely an inferior people would not be able to survive, progress, and lay claim to being achievers and trendsetters in every field, industry, and sport today. Black men must embrace their innate greatness for actually flourishing through centuries of mind-boggling physical and psychological abuse. By looking back, black men and women can see what is wrong today. What is wrong is that we are allowing yesterday's false precepts of inferiority to ruin our relationships, families, and communities today. We are not the product of Willie Lynch's *The Making of a Slave*, we are the antithesis, the anomaly, that would not go the way of "The Trail of Tears" walked by Native Americans. Bennett notes a "...desperate need for new interpretations of the formative events in Black history from a Black perspective...in order to mobilize the latent energy in the masses, in order to save them from self-hate and self-destruction..." (201) Powerful, positive black images need to be injected into our psyche. Our ancestors sacrificed and paved the way for us. The black family cannot disintegrate and let their struggle be for naught. The ancestors' stories and images are to be acknowledged and honored. Acknowledgement and acceptance will lead to healing. As poignantly stated by Dr. Youngblood, "the way out is back through." Self-love is the answer to our dilemma. To love ourselves, we must love our history. To love ourselves, we must love our image. To love ourselves, we must love one another. Loving one another will ultimately save the black family. Understanding our history and the forces against us mitigates my anger and frustration. I forgive my father because his journey was heroic. He did his best given the cruel realities that engulfed him and our family during Jim Crow and the Civil Rights movement. I am living because my father was not inferior. I am a living testament of our history. I have faith our black fathers will return home and usher in the dawn of a new day.

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Islamic Rituals, A Pillar in Bengali Culture

Abir Khan

I was born in the United States to Muslim immigrants from a little Southeast Asian country known as Bangladesh. Very dense in human population, Bangladesh is a predominantly Muslim country with very few resources. Many of its inhabitants leave to search for better opportunities elsewhere such as in America. Upon arriving here, many of these families are faced with real predicaments. One problem is accepting that their community's culture—their religion and language—is vanishing among their children and even themselves. People are falling away from the community. They have become so preoccupied with maintaining their socio-economic needs that they feel as if they are losing the very essence of what their forefathers fought so hard for. This paper suggests that the Bengali community relies heavily on the daily ritual requirements of their religion, Islam, to keep their beloved cultural identity and sense of community intact.

Let's consider the history of Bangladesh, a fairly new nation. Having been born a "Bengali," I have been told the story of Bangladesh's independence and I must say we are very proud of what our people have fought for. In the mid-1900s Pakistan was divided into two, the East and West, that had little in common with the exception of their religion, Islam. Their cultures were completely different and so was their language. East Pakistan believed they were being economically and politically discriminated against because demographically the West was occupied by the wealthy, who spoke Urdu. In the East, the poverty-stricken inhabitants who spoke Bangla thought they were being economically neglected because of their language and culture. Their differences led to a war of secession. History books say Bangladesh fought for its independence for political and economic issues, but ask any native and they will tell you that they fought to keep their culture alive (since the Pakistani government was trying to get rid of it).

In Bengali culture, religion pretty much defines a person and plays a key role in everyday life. The life of a Muslim requires discipline and regulation. As a practicing Muslim, I can explain that "Muslim," originally Arabic, means "one who submits to God." Now however it describes an adherent of Islam. Growing up I was taught that Islam is a monotheistic Abrahamic religion (faiths deriving from or associated with the origins of Abraham) which was based on the Quran (holy text of Islam) which is believed by Muslims to be the direct word of God revealed to them by the prophet Muhammad. According to Islamic teachings,

Muslims are to pray—either alone or in a congregation for religious worship, usually at a mosque—five times a day, at dawn (*fajr*), at noon (*zuhr*), right before the sunset (*asr*), once just after sunset (*maghrib*) and finally at nightfall (*'isha'*). So here I am born and raised as a Bengali Muslim and yet for this anthropology paper I choose to observe the Muslim prayer routine of rituals and observances from the outside looking in. It was only recently that I gave up being a “blind follower” of faith and started some introspection as to why I believe what I believe. Observing this ritual allows me to suggest that those who attend mosque prayers use religion as a cultural system.

In Islam the mosque, similar to a church, is the place of worship but it also serves as a community center. I'd like to observe a mosque, Masjid Al-Aman, which I have regularly attended throughout my life. Of course this time I will be going there with different intentions and purposes. Masjid Al-Aman is located in the heart of the large Bangladeshi-American Muslim community located on the Brooklyn-Queens border. The mosque itself is in Brooklyn but its surrounding neighborhood and most of the people who attend are from Queens, specifically Ozone Park. It holds five daily prayers. It is about five minutes walking distance from where I live and has been there for more than twenty years. Although generally mosques allow women to pray in them, this mosque does not; in accordance with Islamic teachings, women and men are to pray separately and this mosque because it was long being renovated, could not accommodate the needed separation of women. In order to conduct my observations, I began by requesting consent from the Imam, or the leader of the mosque similar to a pastor or priest. Because I am a regular attendee, I did not have to have permission of all the other attendees since it would be no surprise for them to see me there. I decided to go to the evening prayer called *maghrib* which is now held at 7:40 pm daily. The time varies according to the time of the year following the Islamic calendar as well as the time the sun sets. I chose to attend this prayer specifically because I thought it would have the most people in attendance. Many would attend this prayer service since they are home by this time from work or school. I also decided that I should walk to the mosque and not drive. I promised myself to observe this prayer service as if I were observing it for the first time. The way I chose to do this was to note down whatever I deemed as necessary information on my phone as well as participate in the prayer services being conducted. Also, I conducted an informal interview with one of the regular mosque attendants.

To analyze what I saw, I'll consider Clifford Geertz's book, *Islam Observed: Religious Development in Morocco and Indonesia* in which he describes two peoples that practice Islam differently. This work was not an assigned reading, but Geertz and his work in anthropology have a great influence on the content of this course. Geertz seeks to explain how religions react to deep changes within society. His study of Islam in two very different countries allows a comparison to be made. Geertz explains how although rituals play a big role in a religion, it is that society's culture that defines how to go about those rituals. This work supports my argument that the community uses religion to develop their identity.

Members of the immigrant Bengali community pursue the preservation of their culture, and it seems that they use motions of ritual Islamic prayer to attain that goal. Victor Turner has stated “Communitas is rather a matter of giving recognition to an essential and generic human bond, without which there could be no society” (328). “Communitas” is the Latin word for the unity of a community. Turner notes that humans in general rely on an attachment to each other to achieve a bond, for without it there is no sense of community. I suggest that the attachment may form from the actions of ritual Muslim prayer. Imagine that five times a day you attend a prayer service with your fellow Bengali men to attain salvation together. You do this with specific motions: you stand alongside each other, shoulder to shoulder, feet to feet and, following the imam’s command, prostrate before your lord in a repetitive synchronizing motion. This surely induces unity. The imam, naturally, has a key role; every community requires a leader, and he plays this part by leading the ritual.

When attending the ritual prayer, Bengali men refer to one another with the term “brother.” Muslims base this practice on the belief that they are all children of Adam and Eve. This notion creates strong bonds, giving one the feeling that when they are practicing their faith they are doing so with their family. Emile Durkheim suggests that a religion is “a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden, beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them” (45). In our case it would be a mosque and not a church, yet the emphasis on uniting the community is relevant since the term “brother” denotes unification. Bengali men only refer to each other as brothers when they are in the space of “ritual holiness” so “brother” can almost be understood as a sacred term; only then is the term appropriate.

Geertz defines religion as “(1) a system of symbols which acts to (2) establish powerful, persuasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by (3) formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and (4) clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that (5) the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic” (“Religion as a Cultural System” 59). He says that a system of symbols connotes importance to an object, a feeling or an idea. He explains that culture patterns are unique in the world in that they are a model for and a model of the society that they come from. This is true for the people of Bangladesh since their ritual procedures are distinctive. For example the older men seem to be found seated towards the front of the prayer services and the young found in the back. This reflects Bengali culture where respect for elders is emphasized. All cultures teach respect for your elders but Bengali culture believes with age comes wisdom, whereas youth connotes inexperience and opinions that may be disregarded. Other ethnic mosques I have attended had a random seating arrangement. Geertz says observing the rituals allows us to create moods and motivations, for instance, joy in the mosque when prayer services come to an end and some men stay back to exchange hugs and to perhaps express their gratitude towards each other that they have attended the prayer. The gratitude then motivates one to continue coming to the mosque to

pray. Individuals develop a strong tie with their people and feel encouraged to return and feel good about it.

In short, in attending ritual prayer you are essentially engaging in an act to be a part of your culture again. Speaking from experience, when one hasn't attended mosque services for a long period of time, you can be seen as a negative figure in the community, and one to be avoided. This occurs even though one of the beliefs pushed by Islam is not to judge others. There can be only one explanation; the mosque in this community is strongly culture driven.

After observing my fellow Muslims pray, I feel that a big part of the Islamic belief system is unity. This concept is further prompted by the Bengali culture since people feel as if after leaving their motherland, they have lost their sense of cultural identity. Fortunately, their faith in Islam and the rituals it requires them to observe, allows them to reconstruct that identity by unifying with one another through a prayer which is required five times a day. Followers go to the mosque which acts as a center to reunite this community and reinforce men's strong ties with one another. Even I as an observer felt a strong sense of unity multiple times during the course of this observation. Of course being Bengali, my whole life has contributed to my feeling this way, but this was the first time I analyzed and understood why. It began when everyone was holding the same pose during the prayer, then when one Muslim greeted another as "brother." I am a perfect example of what the leaders of my community worry about; I risk losing all ties to the culture which they fought to gain independence for! Now I feel that it was necessary and a good insight for me to observe my faith from a distance only because, for the duration of my observation, I felt that my sense of individuality was dropped; during the prayer I felt a deep cultural sense of harmony with my community.

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The Religion of America Is Capitalism

Leah Braithwaite

I believe that the religion of America is capitalism, and the lottery plays a key role in this religion. Americans are told to work hard in order to have a lot of money, so they can buy big houses and fancy cars. We marvel at other people's success with pride as well as envy. We are told to make money in any way we can, as long as no one is hurt in the process. From the time a child is young they are told to work hard in school, so they can go to college and make a lot of money as adults. The possibility of getting money is the driving force in America. In this paper I argue that the lottery shows that capitalism is a religion in America. I refer to articles by Robert Bellah, Max Weber, and Clifford Geertz.

The lottery is a national game played in almost every state in the U.S. twice a day. Considered as gambling to some, which is viewed as a sin in other religions, the proceeds made from the lottery here are said to support public schools around the country. As long as people have the opportunity to make money, and are helping others in the process, the lottery is not seen as a form of gambling. In fact, the prospect of making money through the lottery is glorified.

On a September morning I went to a local liquor store in Crown Heights, Brooklyn, Tin Choi Liquor store on Prospect Place and Nostrand Avenue, to observe the playing of this fulfilling and addictive game enjoyed by more than a million Americans. I wanted to see if the lottery really aids people in making money, or if it is the thrill of the possibility of winning that drives people to spend sometimes as much as one hundred dollars a day on this game. Even without the likelihood of winning any money, people still come out in droves to take part in the American belief system embodied in the lottery.

On that September morning I accompanied two of my neighbors, "Mama J" and "Ms. J," to the liquor store to observe the playing of the New York Lottery. We arrived at 10:30 am. The first drawing for the numbers takes place at 12:15 pm every day, and most lottery players buy their tickets before then. I chose to accompany "Mama J" and "Ms. J," because they are both avid lottery players, who always play at this store. They both admitted to having a favorite place to play. They did not say why but I assumed that some superstition is involved. If you have won at one particular store, you are more likely to go back to it all the time. They agreed to help me with my observation as long as I changed their names. They play their numbers for the day and evening drawings. When asked if that is the custom with lottery players, they said yes, and explained to me how

upsetting it would be if they only played the 12:15 lottery and the same number they played came out in the evening. I noticed in fact that most people play morning and evening the same way “Mama J” and “Ms. J” do. I decided not to use a pencil and paper during my observation, and opted to use the notepad on my cellular phone instead because I did not want to draw attention to myself. Of course once at the store I realized that drawing attention to myself would have been impossible, because the people were focused on the task at hand.

The store is located on the corner of a busy avenue with a bus stop directly across the street. On the windows outside the store are two large poster boards dedicated to the rules and regulations of the game, as well as the numbers drawn on the previous day. I took time to read the rules of the nine different forms of the lottery that one can play. The rules are different for each game, but the motive, which is to win money, is the same. I found it interesting that these posters, rather than liquor advertisements, were posted on the front of the liquor store. At the rear of the store, a clerk sits behind thick plexi-glass, and takes the numbers and money of the people purchasing tickets. Every number taken from a customer is put into a machine and a small pink and white ticket is generated with the numbers chosen printed on the front. I participated in the game myself. I purchased two numbers for midday and evening. When the tickets were given to me, I noticed a telephone number on the back. The number was for a hotline for people with gambling problems. I thought how convenient it was to have the hotline number printed on the back of a ticket millions of people see in this gambling act everyday; but we’ve noted that the lottery is not looked down on like other forms of gambling.

During the hour and a half that I observed the game being played, I estimated that close to eighty people come into the store to buy a lottery ticket. I did not see any patrons purchase any liquor during this time. How interesting that no liquor was purchased in a liquor store. Most of the people who bought tickets bought more than three at a time. One gentleman who stopped to talk with “Mama J”, “Ms. J,” and me explained that he purchases only his afternoon tickets at that time, and after work he purchases his evening numbers. When I asked why, he said, “It’s the best way to win! And my mother purchased her tickets this way.” I saw this act as both a superstition, and a family tradition. “Mama J” and “Ms. J” purchase both their morning and evening tickets at the same time. They say that it is more convenient to buy their tickets all at once, but they did admit to having a ritual like the gentleman who buys his tickets separately. The women always buy their tickets together, and at 11:30. On this particular day the two women reluctantly brought me to the store earlier than their usual time. They understood that I needed more time to observe in order to view more of a crowd buying tickets. They explained to me that the two became friends because of the lottery. They met at the liquor store, not knowing that they both lived in the same apartment building. In fact I noticed that people who bought tickets at that time seemed to be very close friends. “Mama J” and “Ms. J” were even able to give me a profile on almost every person who came into the store, but when I asked the person’s name, they could not remember, or never got the person’s name to

begin with. What they did know was the person's regular numbers, and their reason for playing the lottery in the first place. The reasons were simple and straightforward for most; it was to get extra money.

On that day I saw people of many different cultures and races purchasing lottery tickets. Crown Heights has a strong Hasidic Jewish and Caribbean population living there, as well as East Asian and Middle Eastern. I saw people of all of these cultures come in and purchase tickets. All these different cultures, representing different religions, and speaking different languages share in the American culture's focus on money. We are always striving for bigger and better here in America. Each person has different plans for what to buy if they ever win, but the motive is always the same.

In "The Protestant Ethic and The Spirit of Capitalism" Max Weber discusses the importance of working hard and making money in America (49). Weber reminds us that, "*time is money*" and "*credit is money*" (50). "*Time is money,*" because the more time you take out of your day to work, the more money you are likely to make. "*Credit is money*" because here in America, we use "credit" or the act of borrowing as a form of money. If one borrows money, the money has to be given back to the person it is borrowed from in a timely fashion, and most times with interest. He mentions that if creditors see the person who owes them money not working hard, the creditor will go to that person first to collect their debt. Americans being lazy is unacceptable, because lazy people cannot possibly be making money. Weber quotes a story about Jacob Fugger and his "business associate who had retired and who wanted to persuade him to do the same, since he had made enough money and should let others have a chance." Fugger rejected that thought "as pusillanimity and answered that 'he thought otherwise, he wanted to make money as long as he could'" (Weber 51). The idea of not striving for something more in life is cowardly to Fugger, and to many Americans. No matter how long one has been retired, the desire to make money is still present in a strong way.

"Mama J," "Ms. J," and a lot of the people at the liquor store who play the lottery embody this principle. Like Jacob Fugger, the women are retired, but they still have a desire to make money any way they can. On the day of the observation, "Mama J" mentioned that she was eighty-two years old, and had been retired for fifteen years. She has a cozy apartment in Crown Heights, and a home in Florida that she goes to during the summer. For some, having a summer home is opulent and a privilege, but she still feels the desire to play the lottery daily. She hopes to use her winnings to buy nice things for special occasions and take her family on vacations during the year. Money is always to be made or earned in some way.

Weber argues, as I do, that capitalism or the importance of making money is the religion of America. I'd add that the desire in every person who participates in the lottery is to make money. Weber states that in the United States, "the pursuit of wealth, stripped of its religious and ethical meaning, tends to become associated with purely mundane passions, which often actually gives it the character of sport" (54). Is such a sport frivolous? Americans continue to

send their children to good schools, and encourage them to pursue high-paying careers so they can make a lot of money in the future. The desire to make money is found even in games and competitions. The lottery is only one of the many games where people can make a profit by winning. The lottery is a sport, someone always wins, and someone always loses.

The religion I've described is not reserved for less fortunate Americans. Americans with good salaries also participate in the lottery. During my observation I saw several nurses purchase lottery tickets, as well as construction workers and teachers. They explained that their salaries were simply not enough. If they wanted to buy nice things, and do nice things with and for their families, they had to find ways of getting additional money. The superstar of the store was a young man who once won a lot of money from the lottery. He drove up to the store in a very expensive car, wearing very nice clothing. What surprised me was that even after winning so much with the lottery he was still playing the lottery every day.

In "Civil Religion in America," Robert Bellah paints a very different picture of religion in America than my own (509). Bellah argues that Americans have a strong belief in God as described in the Christian bible. Bellah points out the use of the word God in President John F. Kennedy's inaugural speech: "Just below the surface throughout Kennedy's inaugural address, it becomes explicit in the closing statement that God's work must be our own" (512). Bellah emphasizes that the work of God is to help others be humble; that's what we should do as American citizens. I disagree with his view of our country. Being humble does not involve being a millionaire or working so hard to achieve that title or status. Americans work to make money. Bellah also argues that Americans are a very moral and just people, and their behavior comes from their belief in a Christian God. I disagree. I agree that America can be a very moral place, and this could come in part from the things learned in the Bible, but America is a melting pot of so many different types of cultures, races, and religions that I do not think this behavior or belief comes from the Christian Bible.

Bellah describes various American holidays like Memorial Day, Thanksgiving, and Washington's and Lincoln's birthdays as religious holidays and rituals, but I see that these holidays and their rituals have become ploys for making and spending money. Bellah states, "Memorial day observance, especially in the towns and smaller cities of America, is a major event for the whole community involving a rededication to the martyred dead, to the spirit of sacrifice, and to the American vision" (515). Bellah paints a picture of Memorial Day being a day of honoring the men who sacrificed their lives in the Civil War. But today what would Memorial Day be like without a sale at a major department store? Thanksgiving he calls "a day which incidentally was securely institutionalized as an annual national holiday, to serve to integrate the family into the civil religion" (515). But what would Thanksgiving be like without the excitement of "Black Friday"? What would Thanksgiving be like without the opportunity to get an exceptional deal on a flat screen television, or an iPod?

Many stores count on “Black Friday” to boost their annual sales. “Black Friday” has been marked the beginning of the holiday shopping season. On all of these holidays, American rituals have been replaced by the desire to spend and make money. Americans feel so obligated to make money to spend during these holiday sales that they will gamble away money with the strong hope of making a profit. One woman I observed who purchased lottery tickets said she saved all of her winnings during the year so she could buy Christmas gifts at the end of the year. Money has become the root of every ritual and traditional holiday here in America. Money is a part of the American belief system, and the lottery aids in the religion of America by helping people to make additional money.

Playing the lottery truly felt like a religious experience that September day. People came into the store always at certain times, approaching the store clerk as if he was a priest at a Catholic mass giving Communion, with each number played having a story and meaning behind it, and with the person leaving with the same reverence as when they came in.

In the article, “Deep Play: Notes of The Balinese Cockfight,” Clifford Geertz discusses cockfights in small villages in Bali (430). Geertz also describes a culture of winning, but reasons for winning are slightly different than those in the lottery. In Bali only men can participate in cockfighting, and winning is a male status symbol. Cockfighting is outlawed in Bali, therefore, the men must compete in secret, and competing allows these very poor men to create a hierarchy amongst themselves. Money is not the only reason to compete, but it is still important to them, as much as status within the village. Geertz states, “It is because money *does*, in this hardly unmaterialistic society, matter and matter very much that the more one risks, the more of a lot of other things, such as one’s pride, one’s poise, one’s dispassion, one’s masculinity, one also risks, again only momentarily but again very publically” (434). What Geertz says here is that money for the Balinese is very important, but what is more important is the image of being a winner that comes with it.

Like cockfighting to the Balinese, the lottery aids in the creation of status here in the U.S. But since the lottery is not outlawed here, the way cockfighting is in Bali, people are more comfortable participating in this competition. Everyone over eighteen years old in the U.S. can participate in the lottery. Both cockfighting and the lottery are gambling, but the lottery is glorified here because it allows us to make money. Also, as with cockfighting, winning the lottery creates status. We have a class system in America. Americans work hard to maintain their middle class status with hopes of one day being considered upper class. The lottery is a quick way to achieve that class difference. Having money means more opportunities. When a child grows up in a financially privileged household, they have many academic and extracurricular activities, and are exposed to more things because they can afford to travel. Like “Mama J” and “Ms. J,” winning in the lottery allows them to travel with their families, and to provide the things they need in a capitalistic consumer-based society. Their families can appear as if they are in a higher class than they truly are.

People participate in the lottery to take part in the American ritual. On November 9th I went with my mother to purchase a ticket for the Mega Millions. The amount she hoped to win was over 500 million dollars. I took her to the liquor store on Prospect Place and Nostrand Avenue that “Mama J” and “Ms. J” took me to. My mother and I chose our numbers carefully and split the price of the ticket in three, because a friend wanted to try his luck as well, and gave me a third of the lottery ticket’s price. After the ticket was purchased, and was put into a compartment in my wallet for safekeeping, my mother and I walked the five blocks back to our apartment. As we walked, I calculated the amount of money each of us would get if we won. My mother asked me what would I buy if we won, and I asked her. We spent the entire walk back to our apartment talking about what we would buy if we won. The conversation was great fun. It was fun to imagine a life better than what we have, a life where you could buy what you want and travel when you want. This moment was the perfect embodiment of the religion of America, the desire to have more than we already have, to gain the same options as the people we see on television and in magazines. The possibility of being “better off” than you are now, and knowing the only way to achieve that is through money, is the American way.

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An Interview: The Immigration Experience

Jose Rivera

The person I interviewed shared the story of how she became a citizen of the United States. She was born and raised in Orissa, India. She immigrated to the United States in 1991 at the age of twenty-three, with nothing but a duffle bag full of old clothing. Her family did not come with her; they could not afford to. Despite the distance, however, she manages to maintain contact with them by a cell phone she bought them. To speak with them, she pays for long-distance calls, which she makes every few months. Aside from a cousin in Queens, she has no family in the U.S. or any means of bringing anyone here for a visit. A visa, required for a family member to visit, is far too expensive for the family and even purchasing a visa for one person is out of the question, so she never gets to see them.

The respondent had many memories of her hometown, some better than others. Initially, she described her life in Orissa as poor and depressing. The respondent described her parents as economically disadvantaged, yet very loving and generous. As she talked, she warmed to her subject. Her father is a fisherman who not only caught fish for dinner, but also sold it to locals as a means of income. Her mother works at the house, maintaining the chicken coop and vegetable garden in the back yard as well as taking care of her daughters. The respondent mentioned fond memories of mornings in which she would awaken to find freshly picked mangos and jackfruit in a bowl on the kitchen table. Any food that was to be prepared for dinner was cooked on an open flame in the backyard. The interviewee described the way her father would lay the large fish across his lap, running his fishing knife across the body to remove the scales before he put it on the fire. Recalling fond memories of her life in India, the respondent admitted that she misses her family above all else, but also that she misses the old times when she and her sister would sneak to the river bank and try to catch the toads after a rainfall.

The respondent, who had never watched television before she came here, thought the United States would look similar to her hometown but with better houses. When she arrived in New York City after her father saved up enough to buy her a visa, she found New York absolutely intriguing. How neatly arranged it is with its tall skyscrapers. It took her two years to adjust to life here. She wasn't used to common luxuries such as clean, running tap water, indoor heat, or even toilets. She is very grateful for her life here in America.

The respondent's father raised the money for her visa because he simply wanted her to have a better life than he did. However, she still hopes to find a job that pays well so that she can bring her family over so that they can lead more fulfilling lives as well.

Who Will Say 520?

Xiao Yan Wu

Today is May 9th. My sister's birthday is coming up. I miss my little sister. I envy that little sister has a very special birthday because it is May 20th, which means 520; and 520 means I love you. Little sister is great. Little sister always celebrates her birthday with me every year, but she's not with me this year. I wonder who will be the person to say 520 to little sister. I keep thinking about her.

Last night, I had a dream. I saw my little sister was crying. She was talking to me while she was crying. She asked me why I didn't care about her. She blamed me for not caring and taking her with me. She began to cry louder. She said, did I do something wrong? She said, was it that I broke the lucky necklace that father gave you, so you're mad at me? She began to cry louder and bowed down to the floor. She said, "You are not my sister anymore, and I hate you." The dream became dark immediately. I still heard her crying. I was so afraid. I didn't know what happened. I wanted to help her. When I called little sister's name louder and tried to rescue her, I woke up.

The dream is scary. I'm still thinking about her, but I know that people need to face problems and look forward to the future. I know that dream was just a dream, and it will never be true. However, I'm still thinking about little sister. I think about the dream again, especially the part when she says, you are not my sister anymore, and I hate you. When I hear this, my heart is full of pain. I feel like a knife is in my heart. I want to cry, but I know crying can't help. The only way to heal my heart is to be friends with her again. Then, my heart will be fine. Also, when little sister talks about the necklace, it's not totally true. It is true that she broke my lucky necklace that father gave me, but this is not the reason that I didn't take little sister with me. I didn't get mad at her at all. The reason that I didn't take her with me is that I needed to go to school in California. She was still young and needed mother and father to be with her, not me. Little sister probably got angry at me, but I have no way to deal with this. I needed to go to school.

Father calls me in the afternoon and asks me, can I go back home to celebrate little sister's birthday this year. I tell father that I don't know. Then, father tells me that he will begin to celebrate little sister's birthday on May 16th. I tell father to tell her "Happy Birthday" for me. I go to school right after the phone call.

At night, father sends me an e-mail and tells me all the daily events that he will celebrate with little sister. May 16th I will bring your little sister to an Italian restaurant for lunch. At night, I will have homemade dinner with her. May 17th I will make French foods for her for the whole day. May 18th I will bring your little sister to see the lavender in the lavender farm in Provence. I will

travel around Paris with your little sister to see Paris at night. I will give her a clover necklace. The necklace is similar to yours, but the color is different. I will tell her that the four-leaf clover means good fortune in the West and happiness in Japan. Each leaf has different meanings. The first leaf means true love. The second leaf means health. The third leaf means glory and reputation. The fourth leaf means happiness and wealth. The shape of the leaf is a heart. Also, I will tell her that her necklace is similar to yours. I hope that she will love this necklace and cherish her sister.

May 19th I will show her fireworks in the sky to make her have a memorable birthday. May 20th I will give her a birthday cake with "Happy Birthday! I love you, my dearest little sister!" on top. I wish she will forgive her sister and be friends with her again. I will tell her that her sister loves her. I hope she can have a memorable birthday and never forget what I say.

When I know what father will do with little sister, I feel happy and touched. I also wish that little sister will be touched and forgive me. I wonder if she forgives me, will she call me immediately? All the things that I wonder will not happen; it's just what I'm hoping.

At night, on May 19th, father calls me again one more time. Can I come back or not? Father tells me that I can arrive on May 20th right after what he says to little sister. Father says he wants to give her a surprise. I know what father is thinking. Father hopes that when little sister says that she forgives me, I will arrive immediately, so she will be so touched she'll hug me. I feel happy because father cares for both of us. I say maybe.

I'm wondering about what father says, but I think I won't go back. I'm afraid that when I see her, she will say, you are not my sister, again. I'm so afraid. However, she's still my little sister. No matter, I'm still her sister, and I still need to go back and talk to her. Sigh! People need to face problems, so I decide to listen to father and fly back home immediately.

At night, on May 20th, right after what father tells little sister, I emerge in front of her. She has no reaction at the moment. I wonder did she forgive me yet? She is so quiet, and father is looking at her. I'm thinking what happened to her while I was looking at her. I'm afraid that she will not forgive me. While I'm looking and thinking, I say "Happy Birthday." Little sister is smiling and looking at me. I feel happy, and I think she forgives me, but I'm not exactly sure. Then, I say "520" to little sister. Suddenly she smiles and looks at me. I'm so happy, and I think she really forgives me. But maybe little sister's laughing, and is going to yell at me. Little sister becomes so adorable suddenly. Little sister says "Sister, thank you for your happy birthday! I forgive you, and I thank you for your 520, too. I love you. You are my sister forever." I'm so happy, and kiss and hug little sister. I give my own lucky necklace to little sister as a present too. I hope that my lucky necklace and her clover necklace can give little sister a full happiness in her life and in her future. I wish that little sister cherishes all the things that she has.

This is the diary that I wrote in May.

The Story Behind My Name

Jacqueline Henry

Jacqueline Elaine Henry, nickname, Nanny/Brownin. She is I, and I am her, born on the first of November, 1966, in the busy city of Kingston on the island of Jamaica to Verna and Kenneth Henry.

As a child growing up, I was never really fond of my name. To begin with, I thought Jacqueline was just another boring name that people looked past. I often wondered why my parents didn't give me one of those cute, girlie names like Tina, Latoya, Aahisha or even Karen. To me, only pretty girls carried these names. As a young teenager, I gave myself an alias. I would tell anyone who didn't know me that my name was Michelle. I liked it because it was popular. I used Michelle occasionally, until my late twenties and even received some mail in that name.

I really started to like the name Jacqueline in my late teenage years. It was in songs that people liked. In these songs Jacqueline is the pretty girl, with the sexy body, who gets the man or is a man's desire. I started to feel pretty and sexy. I started to own my name. I began telling some people my name. People call me Jacque sometimes, which I really like. I asked my parents why was I given the name Jacqueline. My father said, "I just liked it."

I didn't like my middle name, Elaine, as a child growing up either. Where I come from, only much older women had that name. Now as an adult, I still don't like it. To make things worse, I worked for a woman with that name. I inferred that she felt I was inferior to her because of the way she talked down to me, but that's another story. One day, I asked my mother how she came up with Elaine. She told me as a young girl she had a classmate who was very pretty. She had a lot of hair and she loved to smile. My mother admired her. My speculation is that my mom wished she looked like Elaine. She made a promise to herself that whenever she had a daughter, she would name her Elaine and so she did. She heard the original Elaine lives in England now. I'm just happy it's not my first name.

I am affectionately called Nanny, which is my nickname. My mother told me I was a baby, lying on the bed. My oldest brother Courtney, who's six years older, came into the room, slapped the bed with his hand, and asked, "wahpen Nanny?" I guess he learned the name at school, where he was taught about the National Heroes of Jamaica. Nanny is the only female hero. She was a warrior who fought and died for the liberation of the Jamaican people. She was the leader of the Maroons. The Maroons lived up in the mountains. They were very dark-skinned people with thick hair. Nanny was feared by many. Today, in Jamaica, Nanny is on the five hundred dollar bill. I love my nickname because it represents greatness.

People who have known me from way back call me Nanny. That name has influenced me somehow. When I was younger, and even now, people would

say I'm feisty, or, in Jamaican dialect, "yuh too facety," and I would shrug. I would tell them, "mi ave a plaasta fi every sore," meaning anything that was said or done that I didn't favor, I had a counterargument for. As a young teen, my teacher, Mr. Parchment, once told me I was "witty." I never forgot the meaning of the word. And yes, I fought a lot, but I was a shy tomboy. My friends and I hopped trucks whenever they drove by, played football and cricket in the rain, rode self-made skates put together from piles of wood and small iron wheels that came from old trains. We climbed trees to pick fruit and went to cane fields to cut sugar cane, but we were chased away sometimes by the ranger on his horse who protected the fields. We thought it was fun!

My children, except my daughter, call me Nanny. Sometimes my friends call me Nanny of the Maroons, or Nanny Granny, which doesn't bother me because we all know the story behind the name. Isn't it funny how, when I was younger, I wanted a name that was popular? Even though I had the name Nanny since I was a baby, I've never heard anyone else with it, until one night when it got me into serious trouble with the father of my three sons.

I was in my early twenties. It was Saturday night. The street dance in my neighborhood was off the chain. Reggae music was blasting. Both sides of the street were blocked with dance-goers. Everyone seemed to be enjoying themselves. My friends and I were laughing, dancing, drinking. It was pure fun. Then the music stopped abruptly, and the disc jockey blurted into the mike proclaiming, "Nanny come check mi now." My friends—and I—were curious as to why the D. J. called me since I did not know him. I didn't move from the spot where we were standing. I kind of pushed the command to the back of my mind, but I was still curious. A few minutes later, Maxi appeared. He stood around seven inches taller than me, and is a year older, with a thin build. He is light-skinned and good-looking. He was well known around the neighborhood because his family owned a couple of racehorses which made them money.

Maxi whispered in my ear and commanded that I leave the dance with him. I was upset because I wasn't quite ready to leave, but I obeyed because I didn't want any drama. I had to say goodbye to my friends. When we were a little distance from the dance, the argument started. I tried so hard to explain that I didn't know the D. J., but out of nowhere I ended up with a busted lip. Jealousy got the best of him. A couple of days went by as I investigated the D. J. and this Nanny he called. To my surprise, he had a girlfriend who had the same nickname as I have. Maxi apologized, but I still didn't speak to him for about a month. So much for an unusual name!

Brownin is a slang name used by Jamaican men to describe women with a lighter complexion. This once caused a controversy in Jamaica. A D.J. who goes by the name of Buju Banton sang about loving his Brownin most of all. The women with darker skin tone were offended. This caused a stir. Buju had to create a remix singing how much he loved and respected women with dark skin. His remix was accepted.

I have grown to appreciate my names because my parents had good intentions when they gave them to me.

An Interview: The Immigration Experience

Carmen Hume

I interviewed an immigrant from the Dominican Republic. I've composed his responses into a narrative. What follows are his own words.

About thirty-one years ago, when I was sixteen, I came to the United States to live with my mother on Long Island. It was August, but it felt so cold compared to the DR, I wore a jacket everywhere. My brothers, sister and I came together because my mother, whom we hadn't seen for ten years, got visas for all of us to come live with her. It was strange to be here and to be living with my mother because I didn't grow up with her. Many of my mother's relatives were already here, living in Lindenhurst.

Santiago in the DR where I was born was very different from Lindenhurst. There was a lot of farmland and trees, a lot of space. The house where I used to live with my grandparents is still there. I remember working every day on the farm. It was hard work, but my brother and I were very free, not like kids here in America. We could run around, swim for hours in the lake and play a lot of pretend games. We didn't have much, but life was simple.

I keep in touch with my father and step-brothers and sisters and visit them every four years or they come here. It's not that far away. What I miss most is the beautiful countryside. We had fresh air, also fresh food, like farm eggs and yucca.

When I came, I didn't know what to expect. I knew it was a rich country and that you could make good money here. My mother had been sending money back home to my grandparents to care for us. I knew that here I could get a good education and find a good job. I forced myself to go to school every day even though it was hard at first to understand what was being said. I learned English when everyone was learning Spanish. I made friends who were very helpful and within a year, I started to "fit" in. I was young and determined; it was the 80s and life was good. But I worked very hard. I was going to school and working to pay for my clothes and car, and eventually got an apartment. Although my mother helped bring us here, she didn't pay too much attention to whether we went to school or not. It was up to us to do it, to make our own way.

Doing it on my own, with little help from my family, taught me the work ethic I have today. My mother worked to bring us here, but I worked hard to get ahead. Was my experience easy? No. As a foreigner in a new country, you always have to deal with some kind of prejudice, especially when people hear your accent and make assumptions about you.

Texting and Driving?

Viviana Medina

I'm going to give you a number...Eleven. This is the number of teen deaths per day caused by texting and driving. Admit it, you or someone you know has texted while driving. I'm guilty of it myself. I say, "It's no big deal, nothing will happen. I'm a good driver," but the reality is you are twenty-three times more likely to crash if you text while driving.

Here's an alarming fact. According to *Car and Driver* magazine, texting and driving impairs you far more than drinking and driving! You would think America would learn how to make a culture change. Thirty-nine states ban texting while driving, yet the texting continues unabated. Around the world this is a dangerous trend. In the Emirates of Abu Dhabi, which has the world's highest rates of road fatalities, a three-day outage of blackberry messenger produced a forty percent drop in traffic accidents!

You may ask, "What can we do?" Everyone can make a difference by making a pledge. The pledge is not just for those who drive! It means you agree to make your voice heard. If you're in a car and see the driver grabbing their phone to text, you stop them. Maybe if one of Bailey's four friends had spoken up and said something, they wouldn't have all been killed. Bailey swerved into oncoming traffic, hit a tractor-trailer and her SUV burst into flames because she used her phone to text a friend. Is that what you want for your friends? Are we going to wait until the government figures it out? You may think you won't make a difference but change starts with YOU! Take the pledge!

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Schnitzel to Syringes

Maria Serena Bartha

How does a person go from devoting her life to making people happy through food—to deciding to be a nurse? That is my story and I will try to make sense of it. For most of my adult life my career was in New York City's restaurant industry. I attended cooking school. I found work first as a cook; later on I overcame my fear of dough as a pastry assistant. I enjoyed food as a child and found pleasure in feeding my family as an adult. Life should be filled with pleasure, and food has been a way to convey that to others.

My father was a physician, so medicine and needles were things I was comfortable being around. I enjoyed visiting him at the hospital emergency rooms where he worked. As a young girl, I found the brisk action in these places curious. I also had a feeling of pride knowing my father was taking care of patients. Seeing him interact with patients was a treat for me. Also, little children get into scrapes and when I had a pustule in my finger from an infection, he would take care of me. It never scared me to see him take out a scalpel or other medical instrument.

As a young teenager my grandfather had a stroke that left the right side of his body paralyzed. My grandmother took care of all his needs when the visiting nurse wasn't there. I would help with the intravenous feeding. Although he was a family member, I never hesitated to help out.

Despite a scientific leaning, I followed my passion for food, which lasted a decade. Then, the year of my thirty-fifth birthday arrived. I felt a need to change my life and thought about different careers I could pursue. Should I open a food business, or get away from food? A deep talk with my mother followed. She said, "If you aren't doing much with your life, maybe you should go back to school?" That is what I did. I decided to head forward to my medical roots and apply to nursing.

I did Internet research on nursing schools. I thought about Hunter-Bellevue, since I had finished my Liberal Arts B.A. at Hunter College. I found out about City Tech, and it all fell into place. I live in the Downtown Brooklyn area and the nursing program had great pass rates of first-time takers of the NCLEX exam. I ran over to the admissions office and, through direct admissions, was accepted. Since I had been to three different colleges as an adult, I'd already completed most of the pre-requisites for the nursing program. All that was left was Anatomy and Physiology 1.

I was nervous about taking a biology course since the last one was a decade ago! Studying hard and focusing were keys to my success. I think there

are certain gains in going back to school as an adult, as opposed to being in school as an eighteen-year-old. If you make the conscious choice to go back to school and spend your own money on it, there are built in motivators to doing well. I won't say the first semester back was easy. But it went quickly and it was fun to make study buddies in the process. Challenging your brain to learn new concepts is rewarding. Those "a-ha" moments, when a piece of information is learned and makes sense, are amazing!

I found out on December 29th that I was accepted to the nursing program and it was a special feeling. The instructors I had this semester inspired me. I have to thank my mom for pushing me to think outside of the zone of what I normally think possible for myself. My father passed away in 2006. I would like to think he would be proud of the fact that I decided to go into nursing. He would tell me I was choosing a career that isn't easy but would be fulfilling.

Invisible Army

Hadassa Francois

Sometimes, on painful days, if I close my eyes and everything around me is still and silent, I feel like I'm back there. My stomach begins to turn, my heart starts beating fast and I get cold, freezing cold. I have to open my eyes quickly and remind myself that I'm not in the hospital, that it's just a dream, one of those hospital dreams. I did not ask to have this condition, I did not ask to have Sickle Cell, but I refuse to pity myself or to receive pity from others.

I am tough, I am strong. But if you look closely, you will see why I'm so strong. Are you looking? Do you see them? Don't you see the face of my mother looking right at you, or the piercing eyes of my father glaring at you? How about the presence of my aunts, did you notice? Or maybe it's the smile of my sister, which always grabs attention. Oh I know, you must hear the laughter of my many friends. You see, I am strong not because I choose to be, but because I was born with an army. An army that supports me, that watches over me, an army that spends those painful hospital nights with me, an army that pulls my hair out of my face when the morphine makes me vomit, an army that refuses to abandon me, even in the darkest hours.

Sickle Cell does not define me. Pain does not define me. My army, my family, and love define who I am. With darkness, comes light, with weakness, comes strength, with pain, comes relief—my army brings me that relief.

The silence is here again. My eyes are shut once more. I see it once again. I see that white hospital bed, and I feel the cold creeping up against me and my heart pounding. But now, now I am smiling. Not because I'm not scared, not because the pain is non-existent. Do you know why, do you see why? Can you hear them? It's my army, they're here with me and they're cheering me on.

New Approaches to Old Disasters

Husaan Iqbal

In the wake of treacherous super storms arriving on land more frequently than ever before, cities with millions of dwellers have come face to face with the destructive wrath of hurricanes, tornadoes, and earthquakes. While we may blame global warming, many politicians and bureaucrats have fought vigorously against any efforts to stop it. Instead of waiting for long-term outcomes to solve immediate problems, it is in everyone's best interest to search for preventative solutions now.

Only a month after Hurricane Sandy made it into the record books, talks began on how to avert damage in the future in the largest city in the country. Along with New York, other coastal and high weather traffic cities across the country and across the globe are facing the same questions. Much like strategies that could have prevented Hurricane Katrina from wrecking New Orleans, the notion of building sea walls, levees, and flood gates for the New York metropolitan area has been talked about by climatologists for years¹. Although the cost of such behemoth projects may come with many uncertainties and insane budgets, considering them should not be seen as farfetched.

On the other side of the world, Fiat hydraulic engineers have been working hard since 2003 to complete a large-scale public works project to save Venice, Italy. Rising water lines with the help of annual floods have been threatening to sink the ancient flooding city. Set for completion in 2014, mobile flood gates are being installed off shore with embedded permanent sea walls to break up surges headed for dry land².

In Chicago, city developers are using permeable pavement in parking lots and bike lanes so storm water can drain through the tiny cracks of the pavement into the soil to reduce water build up and filter runoff rainwater³. More noticeable now than ever before is the greenery in and around New York City, with gardens and farms on city rooftops along with initiatives to make the city greener and absorb rainwater⁴, but they were no match for Sandy.

The Metropolitan Transportation Authority of New York had been in the process of raising sidewalk vents above the curb line to prevent flooding into the city subways. Once Sandy hit, transit workers using specialized pump trains were able to clear flooded tubes by pumping water into the Hudson River. With the help of the Army Corps of Engineers, the city had most of its car and subway tunnels restored within weeks⁵.

A defense project was in the works to protect America's tunnels from terrorist attacks by the Department of Homeland Security, which could have prevented flooding. Engineers at the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory teamed up with West Virginia University and ILC Dover, a spacesuit manufacturer, to develop a giant inflatable plug that could help stop storm water from entering tunnels. Unfortunately, this project is still in the testing stage⁶.

Besides hurricanes and typhoons, other natural disasters such as earthquakes are also raising awareness of the need for building safer structures to withstand violent movement. While it is common for builders to use dampening systems to reduce or eliminate swaying of high rises, Japan is at the forefront of this seismic technology. During its recent earthquake, in March 2011, which caused a tsunami and a nuclear meltdown, Japan's cities were able to withstand the tremors. Geotechnical engineers had used earthquake-resistant building standards, requiring seismic isolation techniques, which left many high rises virtually untouched. The taller a high rise is, the more intense the swaying can get towards the top, but if the building can be decoupled from the foundation, with rubber and steel bearings between the building's frame and base to allow movement, vibrations become less of a factor. This in turn keeps furniture in place inside and the building's metal and glass take less stress outside⁷.

To prevent loss of lives, Japan has also made it safer for commuter trains to halt before an earthquake wave reaches the tracks and derails the trains. Using earthquake-warning systems, computers can sense primary waves of earthquakes that come before the secondary more destructive ones to provide alerts of upcoming conditions. Similarly Otis, the largest manufacturer of elevators, uses sensors that stop elevators' vertical movement and releases the door locks so passengers can escape the suspended elevator during earthquakes.

Since many locations around the world see natural disasters returning for a second or third bite, developers are now prepared to use disaster mapping technology to identify common flood zones and where the ground would give when an earthquake occurs. Open source and crowd source mapping with mobile applications have allowed civilians to supply local information and geo-tagged photos to pinpoint areas of disaster. Most recently this technique was used in Haiti after the earthquake of January 2010, which helped U.N. relief workers to reach bruised areas of the island⁸.

Research and development have helped save lives from natural disasters across the globe. Although every approach comes with a cost, new prevention systems can ultimately pave the way for safety and a future sense of security.

Notes

1 http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2012-12-08/national/35701529_1_andrew-cuomo-hypothetical-storm-superstorm-sandy

2 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/MOSE_Project

3 <http://www.concretethinker.com/casestudies/Chicago-Green-Alleys.aspx>

4 <http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/05/23/in-urban-jungles-green-roofs-bring-relief-from-above>

5 <http://green.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/10/29/for-new-york-the-issue-of-steps-not-taken/>

6 <http://www.nbcnews.com/technology/futureoftech/giant-inflatable-plug-could-protect-subways-floodwaters-1C6876355>

7 http://web-japan.org/trends/11_sci-tech/sci110728.html

8 <http://newswatch.nationalgeographic.com/2012/07/02/crisis-mapping-haiti/>

Law, Privacy, and Technology

Fanny Gerloven Chico

Is the emerging proposed legislation for online regulation realistic? Examining our country's history of privacy regulation together with the advances in technology suggests the challenge that lies ahead since technology moves faster than legislation.

An amendment to the U.S. Constitution was added to protect rights not foreseen at the time of writing: "The enumeration in the Constitution of certain rights shall not be construed to deny or disparage others retained by the people" ("Constitution of the United States" 46, 23). However, since 1787 (*See id.*) no amendment was added to protect privacy. Although the expression "right to privacy" is often mentioned, it has not yet been established by law.

However, although the constitution has not been expanded with amendments on the privacy issue, some federal statutes have emerged since 1787. For example the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) was created through the Communications Act of 1934, which was truly the beginning of government involvement with technology, specifically the telephone, telegraph, and radio. Then in 1947, the National Security Act was established as "a comprehensive program for the future security of the United States" (50 U.S.C §401) and relates to the Information Sharing Environment (ISE). The ISE "provides analysts, operators, and investigators with integrated and synthesized terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, and homeland security information needed to enhance national security and help keep our people safe" ("What Is ISE?") and is the main reason why other acts have been created and agencies established such as the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).

In 1976 the Directorate of Science and Technology (DS&T) was created by the CIA primarily to "attack national intelligence problems with effective targeting, bold technology and superb tradecraft. The DS&T creates, adapts, develops, and operates technical collection systems and applies enabling technologies to the collection, processing, and analysis of information" ("Science & Technology"). This branch of the CIA is the real technical security agency of our nation and provides security intelligence to senior United States policymakers.

The Privacy Act of 1974, according to the Department of Justice, was enacted because "Congress was concerned with curbing the illegal surveillance and investigation of individuals by federal agencies...also concerned with potential abuses presented by the government's increasing use of computers to store and retrieve personal data...such as an individual's social security number" ("Privacy & Civil Liberties"). It was designed to regulate how government recorded and used individuals' personal data.

The Privacy Act was then followed by two acts that covered technology usage, the Electronic Communications Privacy Act (ECPA) of 1986 and the

Computer Matching and Privacy Act of 1988. The latter amended the original 1974 act by creating procedural requirements for computer-matching activities. The ECPA generally “protects wire, oral and electronic communications while the communications are being made, are in transit, and when they are stored on computers...applies to email, telephone conversations, and data stored electronically” (“Privacy & Civil Liberties”).

In the early 1990s, when the Internet became available to the general public, it wasn't as advanced as it is now. The younger generation, age ten to twenty-two (Schroer) lack understanding of their rights and have a false impression that they are protected. Even more importantly, popular webpage influences on young people, like MySpace, Twitter, and Facebook are known for not practicing prudence when it comes to their patrons' privacy and provide no warning signs to consumers before they sign on. Notorious for selling his members' information to advertisers, Mark Zuckerberg, the CEO of Facebook, was misleading when he stated that privacy is “no longer a social norm” (Schmierer 57, 6) due to the amount of information that is shared. Zuckerberg was wrong both in his statement, and in the message he sends to his followers. Of course, Zuckerberg is going to try to sell the idea that privacy is not important to his patrons because his patrons' privacy is what he turns over to advertisers for profit. Unfortunately, however, when Zuckerberg speaks, we listen and, ineptly, we want to believe his truths.

The right to privacy has not been established by law and because of the delusion that it has, regulation is still needed for the practice of online advertising.

In 1890, Samuel D. Warren and Louis D. Brandeis felt compelled to publish an article regarding lack of privacy from “new” technology during their time. They wrote, “Political, social, and economic changes entail the recognition of new rights, and the common law in its eternal youth, grows to meet the new demands of society” (Warren and Brandeis 11, 1). The concern they mentioned has remained decade after decade, but no changes have been made. Unsure of what exactly would protect privacy, Warren and Brandeis said, “It is our purpose to consider whether the existing law affords a principle which can properly be invoked to protect the privacy of the individual; and, if it does, what the nature of such protection is” (Warren and Brandeis 11, 2). The government to date has not established regulation of the web because of its ambiguity. However, having no regulation creates a threat to users' privacy and a desire for a change.

Interestingly, there are sixteen states that “require, by statute, government Web sites or state portals to establish privacy policies and procedure” and they are Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Delaware, Iowa, Illinois, Maine, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, South Carolina, Texas, Utah and, Virginia (“State Laws Related to Internet Privacy”), In addition, some of the states have enforcements that go beyond government Web sites. The California Privacy Act protects online activity for writing emails or text messages, online chat or reading e-books. California also provides privacy rights to residents of California on what books they read or purchase and who can manage that information. Other states have provisions on Personal

Information Held by Internet Service Providers (ISP), Employee E-Mail Communication and Internet Access, and Public Employers. Only four out of the fifty states have any kind of privacy policies for Web sites. California, under the California Online Privacy Protection Act, “requires an operator, defined as a person or entity that collects identifiable information from California residents through an Internet website or online service for commercial purposes, to post a conspicuous privacy policy on its website or online service and to comply with that policy” (*See id.*). Fascinatingly, in 2010 Zuckerberg, who resides in California and originated Facebook in New York, strategically filed the incorporation of Facebook, Inc. with the Secretary of State Division of Corporations for the state of Delaware (“*Eleventh Amended and Restated Certificate of Incorporation of Facebook, Inc.*”), which is not one of the four states that provide any privacy policies for Web Sites. The three other states that do provide privacy policies for Web Sites are Connecticut, Nebraska, and Pennsylvania, all with provisions like California’s.

The University of California Berkeley and University of Pennsylvania’s April 2010 empirical study found that actually the younger generations are as concerned about privacy on the web as the generations before them (Schmierer 57, 7). The problem occurs when the majority of users skip over warnings and legal jargon. Then they go on to provide their biological and geographical data in order to create a page that requires an identity. By this time, the already proposed warning of rights has been waived and the behavioral advertising has commenced. The collection of this data is processed and sent to various buyers who then begin retargeting. The consumer, who was warned, is oblivious to the warning and assumes the weary belief that “if everyone else is doing it then this must be safe”; but he or she soon finds out how wrong this is.

Web advertisers use many devices on consumers to maintain their presence on the web. Some of their tactics are known as behavioral advertising and are applied through contextual, cookies, spyware, and adware. The contextual type is “when an advertiser itself uses information about the particular website a consumer is viewing to determine what type of ad to display” (Schmierer 57, 9). This behavioral advertising does not make a practice of retaining any data from the user and is not as invasive as other techniques. An aggressive, more invasive, technique is called a cookie. The cookie program, created through Navigator 1.0, is applied during URL transmission exchange, although some cookies can be removed. The cookie is a text-only string, which is transmitted through Hypertext Transfer Protocol (HTTP), and is eventually stored on the hard drive without the consumer knowing it. After a cookie is placed, it “...collects information about the user, including usernames, search terms, and passwords” (Schmierer 57, 10). The browser-based cookies can be easily removed by the consumer; however, flash cookies are relentless and are controlled by the advertiser and usually regenerate deleted cookies. The other two techniques, spyware and adware, have the common goal of collecting and reporting in-depth information. Spyware must be installed on the user’s

computer while adware is more of a tracking system that generates pop-up advertisements while the internet is running (Schmierer 57, 12).

Consumers must begin to read the terms and not just scan and accept them arbitrarily. When doing banking transactions or government requests online, you don't have the option to click your agreement; instead a questionnaire appears and will not let users continue unless they pass with a certain score. Users who fail this questionnaire are sent back to the first screen to restart and if they fail a second time, they are timed out for twenty-four hours. Advertisers should be regulated with these tests before offering certain services or upgrades and be forced to pay the costs of them.

After *FDA v. Brown & Williamson Tobacco Corp.*, 529 U.S. 120 (2000), the Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act (FSPTC) was passed. Since Congress had not granted the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) the authority to regulate the tobacco industry when the FDA Rule was originally established, the FSPTC Act was signed into law in 2000. It required Philip Morris, for example, to advertise that smoking is harmful. Philip Morris was compelled to place warnings on its product to prevent people from further harm (Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act, Title 1 Section 101).

The FSPTC Act was established to educate the consumers on the consequences of using a product, to show that potential harm existed. The Internet advertisers are not causing bodily harm to the users, but they are causing (or helping to create) depletion of the user's privacy and exploitation of their identity. The online advertisers need to be held accountable like the Philip Morris Company, through regulation.

Today we see various forms of Internet legislation under consideration, for example, "Representative Rick Boucher and Cliff Stearns released ... a discussion draft of the privacy legislation that aimed to regulate the collection and use of consumer information by online behavioral advertisers and other media providers" (Schmierer 57, 37). Before long the Best Practices Act was introduced by Bobby Rush (*See id.*). The concept is a good cause but the problem with this legislation is it keeps the status quo without significant change that can only be developed through real transparency. Transparency and education need to be required. The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) has jurisdiction because the web does business through interstate commerce and on the international level. In fact, the FTC as an administrative agency of the government can create regulation without bills passed by Congress. The process of legislation can be costly, time-consuming, and bureaucratically taxing. The FTC, however, can start the process of transparency by "encouraging all members of the online advertising industry" (Schmierer 57) to start making the elements of behavioral advertising more obvious by participating in programs of awareness and transparency.

In conclusion, proposed privacy legislation sounds promising but is not adequate for the scope of the epidemic, and takes too long to enact. Only by first setting the foundation through regulation by the FTC, will we engage the issue of privacy now and assist in preventing future problems.

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A Hostel Take on City Regulations

Rebecca Karrin

Hostels in New York City, which were once under-regulated, have now come under fire and even risk extinction because of stricter zoning and building development policies (Blaine, 2010). These policies consider the well-being of every resident and tourist, and address what is acceptable for an apartment rental and what constitutes a hotel, but they neglect the middle ground of youth hostel. This analysis reviews established regulations as they apply to hostels. It reflects the extensive negative news coverage as well as personal experiences from within the hostel world. The continued survival of hostels in New York City rests upon the recognition of their importance by the local government and legislation that applies solely to their type of boarding entity. Because there is no one definition of hostel within our jurisdiction, hostels remain in limbo between hotel and residential apartment regulation. These factors suggest the complications which deter the advancement of this niche market.

You step off of a bus onto an empty street, having just arrived at a new destination and eager to start exploring. But upon arrival, you find that the hostel you booked no longer exists (Lemon, 2011). A sign on the door reads: “closed due to building code violations.” Now, imagine you are in a foreign country that speaks a different language, your phone does not work on their local carriers and you have already prepared a budget for this trip down to your last dime, which does not account for an expensive hotel stay, what do you do? Unfortunately, this scenario happens more frequently than most people realize, but is often kept out of the media (Dolor, 2010). The ongoing debate amongst New York City officials and small business owners as to what constitutes a legitimate establishment for accommodating tourists has been an incessant argument.

During the last five years, the city’s position as to what is considered legal versus illegal boarding has changed drastically. The guidelines that determine such accommodations had previously lacked definition. The rules applied varied between hotel and housing regulation, bouncing back and forth between the two. In 2010 an attempt to standardize housing laws the city has allegedly destroyed budget lodging for the independent entrepreneur by procuring a stricter policy signed into law by Governor Paterson, which limits certain types of buildings to no less than thirty days’ occupation by each guest (Segan, 2010). Requiring a minimum stay theoretically restricts the number of transient guests passing through a building’s doorway; in the past visitors had unrestricted freedom. After the new legislation came into effect, City Commissioner LiMandri expressed pleasure in its passing by stating that “Any illegal residence can put tenants, neighbors and first responders in serious danger,

and landlords must be held accountable for creating unsafe conditions, in order to make a profit, which are a risk factor to New York residents, tourists and city employees” (as cited in Loeser & La Vorgna, 2011). The reasoning behind this legislation is that a majority of these businesses are in violation of zoning laws and fire codes that again apply to certain constituents under two separate entities. In this paper I explore hostels, both their positive and negative aspects, the flaws in our system to regulate this category of housing, and the city’s inconsistencies in justifying the shutting down of such businesses.

A youth hostel, as defined by Merriam-Webster, is a “supervised shelter providing inexpensive overnight lodging, particularly for young people...” Hostels which were originally founded in Germany in the early 1900s began to spread around the world creating a new dynamic of budget accommodation. In 1932, Hostelling International (HI) was formed in England, establishing the first international organization. HI set the standard for what hostels represent, creating a corporate image and membership-based program (Youth Hostel, 2012). Independent hostels interpret these guidelines broadly. However, certain properties take this design to the extreme by competing with luxury accommodations in room standards and amenities, while others will offer the most basic of rooms and environment. The more typical of hostels offer dormitory style lodging, shared showers, a common room for socializing, a kitchen for meal preparation, and often a kiosk that provides local tourist information. The hostel demographic stereotypically applies to younger, more social, open-minded, and budget-conscious travelers.

One common trait that remains consistent is the ability to offer market-friendly rates in contrast to those of the ever-growing, expensive hotel competition. As previously mentioned, a fine line separates a hotel and a hostel. The differences between the two are what hotels thrive upon and what New York City officials target as dangerous, the factors involved putting all implicated parties at risk (Voien, 2012). Nonetheless, here in one of the most expensive cities to visit in America, tourists are frequently searching out the best deal. What better option than a youth hostel? When most hotels’ average daily room rate starts at \$277 as listed on New York City’s main tourist site’s statistic page (<http://www.nycgo.com/articles/nyc-statistics-page>), the alternative \$30-\$50 per night for the 2012 winter season, as currently listed on Hostelworld.com, a popular online booking engine, certainly has its appeal. Many are skeptical of what to expect from communal accommodation, whether it’s a shared common space, bathroom, or bedroom, but find themselves testing it out and taking a chance in New York because it is the affordable option. The same temptations that lead tourists in search of cheaper accommodation prompt a similar interest in entrepreneurs.

Owning property in this city can be highly expensive, especially when affordable housing and rent control are strictly regulated, despite the fact that the city proactively raises taxes and the cost of living has no ceiling (Hazlitt, 1979). Small entrepreneurs who own a couple of buildings cannot afford to maintain their properties when the average amount of income they collect is less than the

cost of operations. This can also apply to the individual apartment owner that has difficulty coming up with rent (Epstein, 2012). Let's say these individuals have an unused spare bedroom, an empty apartment, or an unoccupied building. Wouldn't the temptation to operate a hostel, even illegally, be enticing because a nightly rate and extra beds would bring in additional revenue? This situation is what has influenced many of the newly developed budget accommodations to appear. Where a consumer's demand exists, a supply of service will develop to fill that need, especially when that demand will bring in more profit than the average rental.

Consider a NYC two-bedroom apartment that goes for \$1400. Now, instead of two tenants in that apartment, you manage to fit two bunk beds in each room, allowing eight people to occupy the same space per night. Instead of collecting that one rent check per month you are collecting \$40 from each individual person per night. In one week alone the landlord has made more than \$2000. The demand for budget accommodation is very appealing from both the consumer's and the supplier's outlook.

Although there is incentive for both tourists and businesses alike to pursue budget accommodation, these same factors create hostility toward hostels from both the city and residents for three main reasons. New York City residents can easily figure out that for every apartment, building, or house that is illegally converted into a transient guest-lodging facility, it means one less affordable home listed on the market. Even though new developments are constantly on the rise, affordable housing is dwindling and these illegal establishments are viewed as a threat to the livelihood of locals (Kamping-Carder, 2012). As a resident and student, I have personally experienced the difficulties in finding a reasonably priced place to live, while sites like www.airbnb.com contain over three thousand listings that offer nightly rates. These boarding rooms overcharge the unknowing tourist because they appear more reasonable than a room at a hotel but at the same time reduce availability of affordable housing for local residents (Fickenscher, 2007). A second issue is noted in frequent news coverage dealing with the welfare of permanent residents. They feel unsafe with the influx of strangers entering into their buildings to stay in an illegitimate renovation. Every day a new face is in their hallway. Also, the noise permeates the walls because young tourists are usually more careless and tend to party harder than a long-term renter. And finally, a lot of these "hostels," because they are not properly certified, are most likely not paying the appropriate amount of property tax or employment tax to the city.

So how do you differentiate between a legal hotel, an illegal hotel, and a legal apartment rental? One major defining entity is fire safety codes. Depending upon the size, occupancy, and type of building or home, certain fixtures, markings, and training are required for them to be considered up to code. An example would be that hotels are required to have a fire marshal present at all times (<http://nyail.com/fsd/>). This person has to have undergone special training and certification to qualify for this position. Apartment rentals and privately owned homes do not require a marshal. Also a privately owned home generally

does not contain a sprinkler system. Any building in New York City that has converted from its original use must adapt and update to its newly defined guidelines. An illegally converted building generally does not abide by these rules. These businesses allegedly open purely for personal interest and gain, not considering the welfare of their guests or employees. This also means that they are most likely not properly insured. In the event of a fire, the city deems this as a high-risk factor (Moynihan, 2010). The New York State Department of Health lists the very strict guidelines that have been developed based on past experiences and legal delegations that hotels must abide by (http://www.health.ny.gov/regulations/nycrr/title_10/part_7/subpart_7-1.htm). Public safety is at the forefront of most of these rules. In addition, proper exits and signage must be present more so in hotels compared with residential buildings. In hotels, a floor plan is usually displayed in a guest's room; there are illuminated fire exit signs, a secondary means of egress, and pathways that comply with the Americans with Disability Act (ADA).

As previously stated, there are currently no regulations for hostels. The hostels that attempt to "legally" function in New York, generally apply to the Department of Buildings (DOB) as a newly developed hotel (Stallman, 2007). Beyond being in the correct zoning category, to be considered, a state licensing prerequisite states that the owners must present a floor plan to an engineer at the DOB that includes thirty or more rooms within the building. Each lodging room must have its own bathroom. It is unclear how precise these plans must be and how thoroughly the layout is inspected. When consulting with Lisa Amoia, an engineer at the DOB, she clarified that it was a strict policy that left no window for flexibility. Afterwards, I inquired about boutique hotels, known for their small occupancy levels. She reiterated that state guidelines apply, and alleged that any business granted a title of hotel must be in compliance with all regulations (personal communication, 5 Dec. 2012).

Once an engineer has preapproved the building's design, determined it is in the correct zone, and had a fire marshal inspect it for fire code regulation and safety, the building owner may apply for a certificate of occupancy. If an H-9 occupancy certificate is granted, the building is categorized as a hotel. Each type of certificate determines the legal use of a building, whether it is a mixed dwelling, a family home, boarding house, industrial, etc. The various building codes can easily be found on the Department of Buildings website (http://www.nyc.gov/html/dob/html/development/co_factsheet.shtml). Hostels generally exceed occupancy codes that have previously been established for most types of buildings and room sizes. It is common to come across rooms that contain bunk beds and occupancy levels of up to four times those allowed in residential regulations. This goes against the long-standing "three unrelated persons" rule defined in the Housing and Maintenance Code § 27 - 2075:

A family is: (a) A single person occupying a dwelling unit and maintaining a common household with not more than two boarders, roomers or lodgers; or (b) Two or more persons related by blood, adoption, legal guardianship, marriage or domestic

partnership; occupying a dwelling unit and maintaining a common household with not more than two boarders, roomers or lodgers; or (c) **Not more than three unrelated persons occupying a dwelling unit and maintaining a common household; or (d) Not more than three unrelated persons occupying a dwelling unit in a congregate housing or shared living arrangement and maintaining a common household.**

The rule was established in the early 20th century as a means to prevent unmarried couples from living together, then functioned as a means of preventing unsanitary conditions resulting from overcrowded housing, and now has transformed into another purpose, to keep college students in check. It is alleged that having more young individuals together in a living space leads to additional problems with noise, parties, drugs, alcohol, and loitering. Many apartments within the city have four bedrooms. For a family, this is fine, but the city considers four strangers living together a risk factor. It is argued that there is extensive overcrowding in immigrant or welfare families, so to insist on an outdated policy such as the three unrelated persons act, seems nonsensical. Nevertheless, they have applied this rule to hotels and thus to hostels as well (Buckley, 2010). In a hotel, if you wish to add a fourth person to a room, often a fee must be paid. Hostels do not have such a fee because they consistently surpass the legal limit. Non-profits, shelters, orphanages, and college dormitories, are the only forms of occupancy in New York City that are allowed to circumvent these rules and even then the city is tough on these establishments.

So how can we regulate hostels? Unfortunately or fortunately depending on your point of view, the city is under-staffed and under-budgeted. They do not pursue or search out illegal establishments unless valid complaints have been made against the individual property. Only then, when a proper grievance has been filed, will a city official investigate (Rutkoff, 2010). Even then, the fines are not big enough to discourage these establishments from continued operation. Some have been temporarily shut down or eventually permanently shut down, but it has been noted that these businesses tend to relocate elsewhere. This is only a short-term preventative for the ongoing problem that is plaguing the city. The tourists that are expelled onto the streets during a raid are the most affected in these scenarios. The city is showing a lack of social responsibility for the welfare of visitors when implementing these actions. As noted earlier, guests have been left stranded in the street without a place to sleep. There is no one to pick up the pieces. The illegal accommodations that disregard the well-being of their guests and the city's regulations have negatively affected businesses that attempt to conduct themselves legally because they are seen in the same category.

With so many factors involved, it is difficult to determine the best means of regulating hostels. The three-unrelated-persons rule should be reevaluated because it's commonplace for hostels to have multiple beds in a room. This is how hostels are able to offer such reasonable rates. Fire codes should be reevaluated to accommodate these additional guests, implementing new regulations, since they already are applied to non-profit lodging. The city has

increased fines for noncompliance, but does not follow up with most properties after the initial complaint has been resolved (Pincus, 2012). Mayor Bloomberg created a special team that investigates illegal lodging, but they should be more actively pursuing illegitimate transient housing, as well as having more routine inspections. Businesses that follow all the guidelines should not be penalized like illegal establishments (Richardson, 2012). Hostels that try to abide by most of the city's laws are allegedly targeted more frequently because they let themselves be known by the community, but as they come under fire, more illegal hostels pop up in their place. The demand for hostels exists and should be acknowledged by city government because it attracts a large percentage of tourists each year. If the city's enforcement prohibits further illegal developments, then opportunities will arise that give legal businesses the ability to develop (Cochran, 2010). Further reform of current building codes, a reevaluation of current legislation, and more distinct definitions will be the only way to guarantee a cooperative progression for the continued existence of hostels and ensure the best interests of both residents and visitors in New York.

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Prize-Winning Video

Chin Sheng “William” Hsieh

Professor Ryoya Terao informed us in May, 2011, about the Financial Awareness Video Competition sponsored by the Federal Reserve Bank of New York. At that time, we all looked at it and showed interest, but we didn't really do any follow up until Tony Davis from the New York Fed came to talk to us in detail about this great contest.

We were very excited and started to generate ideas as soon as Tony left. The big challenge at that time was, I remember, that the deadline was just two weeks away. We decided to get everybody generating ideas, so two days after Tony spoke to us, Chih Yao Yang, Miguel Valderrama, Ron Hatcher, Professor Terao and I all sat together at the table and started throwing around ideas.

Chih Yao came up with an idea of having a credit card walking a human, just like a human walking a dog. He thought of that because he saw a woman walking her dog in his neighborhood, scolding the dog, so he thought why don't we swap the characters around and let the human be a dog walked by his credit card because he has too much credit card debt. Professor Terao thought that was a great idea, but it would be a challenge to develop and tell a story in just thirty seconds.

During the brainstorming meeting, we came up with the “Godfather” idea, using dialogue between a person overwhelmed by his credit card debt and a crook who charges huge sums of money as a credit card debt consultant. Prof. Terao also wanted to do a music video with a rap song that speaks about credit card awareness for teens and young adults.

Miguel also came up with an idea about a person stacking up his credit cards until they fall over. It's a good image to represent a person racking up too much credit card debt.

I was involved with most of the projects. The “Godfather” idea was named “The Visit” and won third prize in the contest. I also was involved with Miguel's “Card Stacker” idea (later titled “The House of Cards”) and it won fourth prize.

The project I was most involved in was the “It's a Dog's Life” idea, which won second prize. After I heard Chih Yao's initial idea, I started to help develop the story. Time was a big issue because we had to come up with a story, a shot list, find a location, shoot, edit, and edit the sound— in twelve days. At first the story and shot list I thought of didn't come out quite right. I was missing some of the details and on the day of the shoot, we weren't fully prepared. The

other challenge was getting all the cast and crew together. The good thing about having just a little time to prepare, however, was it pushed me to really get things done without procrastinating. Prof. Terao gave us a pep talk, and taught us how to get fully prepared in pre-production. He always said that pre-production is the most important stage.

After the first unsuccessful shoot, Professor Terao got involved and helped make the script flow in a better way. My crew—Chih Yao Yang and Maria Sideris—and I started spending more time on preparation, making costumes and getting the props together. The pre-production took us a huge amount of time and by the time we finished, we only had two days left for shooting and editing. The deadline was on Monday. We shot the video on Saturday and edited the footage on Sunday. The good thing about having a complete and great pre-production was that it made the production and shoot go very smoothly on Saturday.

I worked on this project from pre-production to production to post-production. I helped with the shot lists, making costumes, preparing props, operating the camera, doing the production sound recording, post-production sound editing and composing of the music. I am glad that I was involved in the project, not only because we won second prize in the contest, but I learned a lot and gained a lot of experience.

[In the 2011 New York City Financial Awareness Video Competition, City Tech students won 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th place. "Credit Costs," the 1st prize video was produced by Kenneth Bordes-Hollon; he won \$2000 and his video was aired in local movie theaters as a public service announcement. The 2nd and 3rd prize winners were given a celebratory lunch and vault tour at the New York Fed. To view the top three videos, see <http://www.newyorkfed.org/videocompetition/2011.html> and scroll down after the Puerto Rico contest.]

A Rough Ride: No One Seems To Care How You Get There

C. Daniel Thomas

New York City College of Technology's Representative to
New York Public Interest Research Group's State Board

Consider a full-time student attending college and braving the hectic mass transit system of New York City, to commute to and from school, as a daily routine during a fifteen-week semester. At the current price of \$2.25 a ride, the cost of transportation is expensive for students, as much as about \$700 a year. Many self-sustaining full-time students do not have jobs. Not all students are self-sustaining, but we can narrow down the individuals who cannot afford this by looking at how they pay tuition to begin with. Those needing federal (Pell) and state (TAP) grants to attend school clearly lack financial stability. This group of unemployed, full-time students who receive need-based free tuition face a struggle paying for transportation.

The state gives grants to students who cannot afford tuition but ignores how they are to get to school. It is like giving someone water, sugar and lemons, and saying to them "make lemonade" but with no pitcher. If a student is approved for financial aid, this should signal the incapacity to afford transportation. But according to Melissa Sangster, a representative of the City Tech Financial Aid office, financial aid does not cover transportation. The C.O.P.E. office on campus does offer Metrocard assistance but you must be working a minimum of twenty hours a week to qualify, so this assistance would not help students who want to dedicate their time to education alone. In a 2008 student experience survey, performed by the Office of Assessment and Institutional Research, thirty-two percent of City Tech respondents reported an annual household income of less than \$20,000 a year, and eighteen percent report living in homes with income below \$10,000 a year ("Student Experience Survey" 10). In a school with over 16,000 students ("Facts 2012-2013"), if the respondents reflect the whole school population, that would mean a significant number of individuals live below or at the poverty level for a three-member

family as listed by Kathleen Sebelius, The U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services who published the 76th volume of the *Annual Update of the HHS Poverty Guidelines* (Sebelius fig. 1). Whatever money these individuals may have should go towards basic necessities such as food, but students may be sacrificing food in order to get home. About forty-eight percent of City Tech students do not live in Brooklyn, so their reliance on the MTA is evident (“Facts 2012-2013”). This is a problem that is real; it affects many students attending City Tech as well as the other twenty-three CUNY colleges. Six out of ten CUNY students receive need-based free-tuition, and nearly one billion dollars was spent on financial aid during 2012-13 to fund their education (“CUNY Value”). That means that about sixty percent of CUNY students need transportation assistance.

If you are living in a household below poverty level, should the money received go towards alleviating the need for basic necessities or to transportation? Dr. Myers, the author of *Exploring Psychology*, states “biologically speaking, life’s purpose is not happiness but survival and reproduction” (Myers 471). The expense of transportation conflicts with the needs for an individual’s survival.

I propose a solution, and here’s how it would work. In return for good grades, the state can award students who are full-time, unemployed and receiving need-based free tuition with a Metrocard that awards them a certain number of rides daily. The Metrocard should be available Monday through Saturday (except holidays), because some students have Saturday classes, and should be accepted on all MTA buses and trains (except express buses). This enables students to get to school and focus on their most important job: being in class and learning.

A Metrocard for CUNY students would alleviate the stress of getting to campus for those who cannot afford transportation. It would bring about a more positive outlook on school. Furthering your education should not be viewed as a financial sacrifice; however, problems in attempting to just get here increase the possibility for one to look at school as a series of problems. We cannot say with certainty that insufficient funds cause low grades, but there definitely is a correlation between struggling to survive and poor grades, so the proposal may help students do better in their college work.

In response to my proposal it could be said that Public Assistance offers financial assistance for those in need. But Public Assistance is a program that does not concern itself with the worries of education. In order to be eligible for Public Assistance you must comply with their requirements that are not school-related. If you have to attend an appointment during class hours, then you are expected to miss class and follow through with their requirements. This may cause you to lose time in the classroom. I know this because it has happened to me. The difference between the CUNY Metrocard and Public Assistance is that in return for good grades you are awarded transportation assistance. This approach supports educational values without forcing students to become distracted by non-school related requirements.

It could be said that young adults must learn to fend for themselves in a challenging world. But psychologically this approach would be a benefit to students, causing them to perform better as their work is rewarded. This is “immediate reinforcement” to produce good grades (Myers 239). In other words, we can condition students to produce good grades with the right incentives. As Myers explains, many people respond more readily to immediate gratification (immediate reward/immediate reinforcement) and less readily to working to achieve future reward (Myers 240). Good grades consistently reinforced by this Metrocard will yield better long-term development as well. Myers defines this as “continuous reinforcement: Reinforcing the desired response every time it occurs” and states that “Under such conditions, learning occurs rapidly, which makes continuous reinforcement preferable until a behavior is mastered” (Myers 240). Some might say that students might become dependent on the state to produce good grades. But if some students do become temporarily dependent on tangible rewards to achieve good grades, in the long run we can condition them to accept social acceptance as a form of reward by praising their academic accomplishments, through an academic achievements list. But long term, the solution appears to have no psychological dependency other than what we learn naturally as humans, that hard work brings rewards.

The CUNY Metrocard solution is practical and affordable; as the state already funds CUNY students’ tuition they should also fund this Metrocard. The funding would be automatic for all first semester CUNY freshmen receiving need-based free tuition and for it to continue another semester, they must meet a certain standard (3.0-3.5 GPA). New York State spends tax revenue and awards tax credits. The Barclays Center was built, in downtown Brooklyn, at the expense of taxpayers, money I believe could have been spent better by investing tax dollars in educating the youth of our city who will build its future. Funds used to support lavish stadiums should be channeled into education instead.

Additionally, the 2013 NYS budget gives tax credits for having a green building and using clean heating fuels. Instead of making these things mandatory for established companies, the state provides incentives. They also plan to award up to \$11 million in tax credits to companies as employment incentives and up to \$38 million in other “miscellaneous” deductions (Cuomo 21). I believe that these taxes should be collected and invested in the future of education as these companies already make a large profit. Many argue that NYS expenditures exceed its revenue, but with numerous questionable expenses, the need for financial reform that benefits New York’s college students is evident.

The solution should be implemented by New York State, since they run the MTA. According to Ben Fraimow, the New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG) Project Coordinator at City Tech, all the decisions made by the MTA go through Albany. I urge that petitions, letters and calls to the governor’s office and state legislators should be made. The MTA has a website where we can leave comments, to voice our opinions, but without significant numbers the message may not be heard. Calls to the governor’s office enable the state legislators to be aware of our concerns; as elected officials, their work should

always be in the best interest of those who elected them. The State of New York has apparently allowed the education of New York City to suffer, and maybe this is because they have no faith that those who are unable to afford schooling are capable of achieving academic success. At the moment you can liken New York to a delinquent teenager who makes decisions without thinking of the effects those decisions are going to have on his or her future. The creation of a CUNY Metrocard system would ensure that New York's future is bright.

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On Happiness: Aristotle and Epicurus

Orion McCaine

We all seek happiness. We devote the vast majority of our time to attaining happiness and all that comes with it—a sense of satisfaction and fulfillment, completion of goals or tasks, and pleasure. The many kinds of happiness include the “quick fix” that comes in short bursts, moments of pleasure when our needs or desires are momentarily satisfied; think being hungry, hot or cold, or on a more sinister note, doing drugs. Once we complete whatever it is that was necessary for us to be satisfied for the moment, we experience happiness, but it does not last very long compared to the span of a person’s entire life. Long-term happiness, on the other hand, is achieved by the completion of goals over the course of time—finishing school, staying in good health, being helpful to others. These goals lead to a pleasure that satisfies both the body and the mind. We obtain true happiness from fulfilling goals and being satisfied with our character. This essay will look at happiness through the views of two philosophers, Aristotle, who believed that true happiness comes from accomplishing goals and living a virtuous life, and Epicurus, who thought of true happiness as something that is derived from pursuing pleasures. Both philosophers’ positions will be evaluated.

Aristotle (384 – 322 B.C.E.) was a Greek philosopher who believed that humans are rational beings. We don’t behave in a random or aimless manner; everything we do has some objective in mind. Aristotle also believed in teleology, the notion that in nature, there are final causes. These final causes, or *telos*, are defined as ultimate ends or goals. A smaller goal accomplished is a mean toward accomplishing a larger goal. For instance, we make it a goal to wake up early in the morning to go to work or school, and accomplishing that goal serves the greater goal of getting a promotion or graduating. Staying healthy is an overall goal that requires the completion of several smaller goals, e.g. eating a balanced diet, exercising, making time in your schedule to go to the gym. It is when we accomplish greater goals in our lives that we can begin to experience true happiness. Aristotle defines true happiness as attainable and final, allowing us to be self-sufficient. In his review of Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*, Howard J. Curzer points out that “happiness is complete, self-sufficient, most choiceworthy, and ‘in accord with the best and most complete virtue.’” True happiness lacks

nothing. If a person is leading a virtuous life, that is what allows them to be happy.

A virtuous life, in short, consists of living as a rational being. According to Aristotle, rationality means being goal-oriented; and rationality is also what sets us apart from animals. We set the concepts of good morals and good character as goals to achieve in order to live a happy life. The completion of these goals leads to true happiness.

A person should have good character, be resolute, thorough, and responsible. Happiness comes from being satisfied with our character. A person who chooses to help others feels good about themselves. This leads to a satisfaction of the mind, making that person content with themselves. When a person exhibits kindness towards others, it signifies a selflessness that is not held by everyone else—as long as this kindness is genuine, being kind towards others strictly for the sake of being kind. A lot of time and effort must be spent on the path toward obtaining true happiness. This goal takes a lifetime to achieve.

Epicurus (341 – 270 B.C.E.) would have us believe otherwise. Epicurus was a Greek thinker who followed the hedonistic train of thought, that happiness is derived from the pursuit of pleasure. Epicurus was also an atomist; he believed that everything we know is made up of atoms that cannot be destroyed and come in an infinite number of forms and sizes and that our lives are just the sum total of our sensations. Epicurus said that we should give into our indulgences. If we develop a particular desire, it is our right to pursue the satisfaction of that desire. But because too much of anything can lead to displeasure, Epicurus proposed that we practice prudence while indulging ourselves. For example, if you get hungry, you eat. You do not eat until you are completely overfed to the point where you experience discomfort. If you have been prudent in satisfying your hunger, you are happy. But how long does this happiness last? Obviously, we need to keep eating to continue living, so in this case, the happiness lasts until you get hungry once again. On a hot summer day, if you get overheated, you will attempt to cool yourself. However, if you get too cold, you will try to warm yourself again. If life is just a sum total of sensations, then we try to have that sum skewed towards the side of overall pleasure.

Epicurus referred to the opposite of pleasure as pain. His philosophy emphasized avoiding pain. In fact, avoiding pain leads to overall pleasure. “Happiness in the Garden of Epicurus,” an article from the *Journal of Happiness Studies* says about Epicurus’ assumption of what leads to happiness, “The freedom from pain, which is, as we have seen, in itself a pleasant state, consists in the lack of pain in the body—*aponia*—and the non-disturbance of the soul, a state Epicurus called the tranquility of the mind—*ataraxia*...This state is also called static pleasure, because it is thought to arise from the stable atomic structure of our souls.”

This pleasure is described as arising from something stable. If something is stable, however, it indicates that it could be, or at one point was, unstable. A person who follows this ideal is continually working to end up in a place without pain. This notion of static pleasure differs significantly from long-term happiness.

The problem I see is that there is no such thing as “freedom from pain.” Life includes pain; there will always be some form of discomfort or dissatisfaction that has to be dealt with, not avoided, to try to live a so-called happier existence. This could lead to another quandary—in constantly trying to avoid pain, one risks the chance of becoming dependent on the pleasures that are required to maintain that static pleasure. We see this in the case of drug addicts; they always need to achieve their next high. That high is their static pleasure, but it is not permanent, so they continue to try to obtain the means to return to that state. There is no end; this state does not signify true happiness. True happiness is self-sufficient and therefore lacks nothing; instead of constant avoidance of pain, there is the happiness itself.

So where does true happiness come from? It comes internally, both from fulfilling personal goals and from being satisfied with your character. When smaller goals are accomplished, they become means for accomplishing increasingly larger and more difficult ones. By satisfying these larger goals, we derive a great sense of happiness; the more difficult a goal is, the more gratification we get from its completion. We dedicate much of our lives to achieving true happiness. With true happiness, you get what you give; there are no shortcuts. The effort and time you put into it, you get back.

Hope

Juhair Mahtab

In recent times life has become uncertain. With wars and rebellions going on in many parts of the world, along with the ongoing economic recession, people have nothing other than despair left in their lives. Most people sleep in fear, never sure what the next day will bring. They don't know if they are going to live or die. They are insecure about their employment. In troubled times such as these, hope has become the only reason people are still often happy and healthy. Hope helps people overcome despair and lead their lives the best they can, giving them a way to imagine that things may become better someday. Hope also plays a major role in our daily lives. It helps us overcome the various day-to-day uncertainties. While the definition of hope may be unclear at times and can mean many things to many people, it is generally accepted as a lack of despair. It is to believe in something with such determination that even when it seems impossible to achieve the goal, it feels as if the mere desire of achieving it will make it possible.

The origin of hope in Greek mythology is told in Hesiod's poem "Theogony" as one of the items Zeus placed into Pandora's Box. When Prometheus disobeyed Zeus by stealing fire and giving it as a gift to man, an angered Zeus created the first woman, Pandora, as a curse for man and gave her a box, forbidding her to open it. However, her curiosity got the best of her and when she opened the box all the evils of the world came pouring out of it. Knowing what she had done wrong, Pandora quickly closed the box, trapping the last thing left in the box, hope. Zeus knew that this would happen so he placed hope in the box. While it is unsure whether Zeus wanted hope to stay in the box or be released from it, mankind obtained the gift of hope which helped him overcome all the evils released from Pandora's Box.

While the origin of hope is unclear, its importance to humankind is not. Throughout history many great people have succeeded in changing the world only because they had hope amidst all the despair surrounding them. Let us take the example of Martin Luther King, Jr. He lived in an America troubled by racial segregation, unending discrimination and brutal violence against African Americans. While many African Americans allowed themselves to be exploited, King hoped that one day the treatment of his people could be changed. He hoped that he, along with all his oppressed brethren, could one day end the discrimination against them. In King's "Letter from Birmingham Jail" he says that "freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded

by the oppressed.” In many instances his negotiations and protests failed and his hopes were shattered. He asked his brothers and sisters to follow the path of non-violence, getting hit without retaliation and enduring the ordeal of jail. They endured postponement after postponement of their planned actions. However, they never felt a complete lack of hope and it was through patience and hard work, along with a hope to achieve his dreams, that he finally succeeded.

The need for hope has become especially prevalent in recent years. Due to the ongoing Great Recession, individuals, families, and also corporations are anxious about economic instability. We can no longer have the confidence in our jobs we once had. We’re scared we may lose our jobs at a moment’s notice. But it is hope that nothing bad will happen which helps us to overcome our fears and insecurities and function the way we do in better times. Hope helps us to have an optimistic view in these times, that one day everything will come back to normal. We hope that until things get better, nothing bad happens to us.

There have been times for me personally when things seemed bleak and impossible, but the hope that I might be able to get out of a tight spot and overcome problems helped me to keep a straight mindset and work towards my goals. Once I was in a swimming competition, competing in the 400-meter freestyle event for my school’s swimming team. I had been doing pretty well in the races, and qualified in all the rounds. But in the final race, just after the beginning, I got a cramp in my leg mid-race. My coach knew something was wrong and I could hear him yelling at me to stop swimming. However, I didn’t give up hope and instead fought through the pain and won a bronze in the race.

Personally, I feel if we didn’t have hope life would be bland and meaningless. We wouldn’t have anything to look forward to with anticipation. Human life as a whole is based on dreams and the determination to fulfill them. If we didn’t have hope to keep us energized through psychological challenges, mankind couldn’t have achieved what we have. In “The Joy of Reading and Writing: Superman and Me,” we learned the author, Sherman Alexie, lived in a time when Native Americans were expected to be illiterate and backwards. They were expected to be dumb and submissive to the white man. However Alexie hoped to change that. He was devoted to reading and writing and enjoyed nothing more than reading. He hoped to change the negative perception of Indians in his society and he succeeded in this by becoming an accomplished writer of short stories and novels, proving to the world that Indians could also amount to something in life just like everyone else.

Hope is compared to a bird in Emily Dickinson’s poem, “Hope Is the Thing with Feathers.” She visualizes hope as a little bird, a “thing with feathers that perches in the soul.” It sings to us, never stopping, making us feel contented and happy. No matter what the weather, be it a storm or the chilliest winds on the strangest sea, this bird keeps singing ceaselessly. No matter how bad our situation is, this small thing helps us stay calm during our times of distress. She also says that the bird sings for us and, despite all its hard work, it never asks its listeners for a crumb, a reference that hope is something which doesn’t cost us anything but in moments of our need, it becomes our most beloved possession.

In Hedrick Smith's op-ed article "When Capitalists Cared" from *The New York Times*, he tells us the story of how Henry Ford took the risk of adopting new business practices which helped create the American middle class. He hoped that if the employees were given a higher wage, "the then unheard-of wage of \$5 a day," it would in turn enable them to become consumers resulting in the creation of "the virtuous cycle of growth" which would in turn profit the company and the economy of the whole country. What we learn about hope from Smith is that when we take risks, it is often because of hoping for the favorable outcome of events. Hope gives us the courage to take risks. Every time we invest resources and time into something, hope allows us to rest assured that it is worth it.

Life without hope is meaningless. Hoping is what makes humans different from other animals. We live in a society where the outcomes of our actions are only favorable sometimes and it is hope which helps us take risks. Hope is what keeps our minds running when all else fails. It is what prevents us from giving up in moments of despair to achieve what we felt was impossible. It keeps our dreams alive, that one day we will achieve them. It is what helps us overcome our fears and insecurities. It is what makes us believe in miracles.

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On Being Human, and Artificial Intelligence

Liza Luboa

“To err is human; to forgive divine.” This thought from “Essay on Criticism” by Alexander Pope succinctly notes a common understanding of the term “human.” It is a unique word in that it can describe anything that exhibits the behavior of a person, yet it lacks a universally accepted definition. Different interpretations of what it means to be human, both benevolent and malicious, can be seen throughout history. Aristotle (350 B.C.E.) believed that the ultimate goal of every human being is to achieve infinite happiness while Descartes (1641) argued that in order for a living creature to be considered human, it must show that it cannot be deceived into denying its own existence. The field of Computer Science is challenging such reasoning with the creation of artificial intelligence—the result of attempts to replicate and maybe even transcend the human capacity to think and reason. However, being human suggests the ability to understand and respond rationally to experiences that affect the “soul.” Artificial intelligence cannot recreate this ability even if it can match or even surpass the human level of intelligence.

According to Aristotle, happiness is the final and finite goal of every human being. Regardless of the profession or path in life that a person chooses, all routes lead to the same destination: happiness. Humans make rational decisions every day that are as much as possible pre-disposed to achieve happiness; Aristotle found that “some identify happiness with virtue, some with practical wisdom, others with a kind of philosophic wisdom...accompanied by pleasure or not without pleasure; while others include also external prosperity” (Section 8). For many years, this was a widely accepted view of what it meant to be human, because animals, plants, and inorganic matter could not comprehend the concept of happiness and did not make rational decisions to achieve it; therefore they were not considered human beings.

On the other hand, Descartes, having learned all the knowledge of his time, decided to seek new knowledge based on truth. His discovery greatly

troubled him: much of what he knew was based on opinions and beliefs, and their credence could be questioned. So Descartes decided to forget everything he knew, and accepted only what he could not doubt as part of his belief system. He determined that the five senses could be easily deceived. However, his search led to the conclusion that he could not be convinced by anyone to think that he himself did not exist. This revelation led to the famous phrase *cogito ergo sum*, or “I think, therefore I am” and because no other species known to man can exhibit the same ability, being human primarily relies on the fact that a human being cannot be convinced by others to deny his or her own existence.

Artificial intelligence attempts to create a being that can recreate the ability to think and reason like a person. Complex programs have been created to mirror the process of human thought, and their effectiveness has been demonstrated in the famous chess match between the IBM supercomputer Deep Blue and Garry Kasparov, and more recently, by the victory of another IBM supercomputer, “Watson,” over Ken Jennings and Brad Rutter, the chess player with the longest winning streak. Then there is Cleverbot, a web-based artificial intelligence that interacts with the person who uses it by relying on responses previously entered by other users, and creates a database of information that it can utilize for interaction. But what exactly is the aim of artificial intelligence: to prove that humans are capable of creating a sentient being that can mimic their thoughts in their own image and likeness—or to create a sentient being that can transcend the supposed human level of intelligence and make life easier for people?

Aristotle’s ideology can be criticized because it leaves the definition of sustainable happiness open to interpretation. He failed to realize that some people may define happiness in a way that is morally unacceptable. What about those who find it in deplorable acts such as genocide, murder, torture and theft? Because everyone has a different idea of what happiness is, they cannot be considered inhuman for their destructive methods of attaining it. Yet, they are seen by society as “monsters” and “demons” and dehumanized. Would a computer with artificial intelligence be able to feel and interpret its own description of happiness? For that matter, would a computer be able, without relying on a program or a person to feed it information, to independently describe its happiness?

Meanwhile, Descartes’ dogma, known as Dualism, was tersely criticized by British philosopher Gilbert Ryle with the phrase, “ghost in the machine.” Ryle believed that Dualism viewed the human body as nothing more than a “machine” that houses the soul, or “ghost.” With this argument, it can be said that computers and machines with artificial intelligence are no different from people. Richard Dawkins (1976) argues in *The Selfish Gene* that human beings are nothing more than “survival machines” created by genes to ensure their continued existence in an ever-changing environment. Because genes lack the capability to make quick decisions to adapt to the environment, they compensate by creating a brain (p. 60). And according to John Smythies (2009), “the function of the brain is to discover what is going on in the physical world around the organism and to use

this information to guide behavior optimally with respect to the short-term and long-term needs of the organism” (p. 37).

Be that as it may, William R. Clough (2010) points out that “you can either design a system that is very complex, very costly, and robust and tries to anticipate every possible environment, or you can try to design a system that adapts to its environment” (p. 142). Essentially, this is one of the main differences between humans and computers with artificial intelligence: humans do not require separate parts to be assembled like computers. Yet assembling a computer is very complex and very costly: some parts alone can cost hundreds of dollars alone with the price depending on the specifications required, not to mention the program that fits the needs of the person building the computer. And human parts cannot be assembled together to form another human and have it come to life, otherwise the dead would be resurrected everywhere without their “soul,” the very essence of their identity as human beings.

Clough also believes that “all AI requires a programmer. The ‘software’ is not produced by the hardware... the nature of the creator will always determine the nature of the creation... it will always be a human-created, human-serving construction” (p. 142). Dualism states that the mind is separate from the body. Artificial intelligence in computers and machines cannot be separated from their bodies because without it, they cannot function. No computer can function without a program installed into its system to operate it. Furthermore, Dawkins’ argument that humans are just machines with brains programmed to ensure the survival of genes has been countered by people who choose to defy their genes. Some choose to consume alcohol past inebriation while others smoke cigarettes even though research has made it clear that cigarette smoking is detrimental to one’s health and can lead to emphysema or lung cancer. Humans can demonstrate the ability to override or ignore any directive given to them—computers cannot. They must obey the objectives given to them in their programming, or they will “crash” and suffer internal error.

Humans are consistently fickle creatures, especially when it comes to relationships. They can easily say they dislike someone who has broken their heart yet moments later profess their inability to live without them. Some people who are polar opposites in personality somehow manage to stay in a relationship, puzzling their friends and family. Yet despite the illogical nature of these two scenarios, people do not find them strange as a computer would: they have gone through or will eventually have the same experience again at some point. A computer with artificial intelligence will try to analyze why two people who are polar opposites or someone in an abusive relationship would stay, whereas humans would just shrug off the first example and try to help their fellow human being in the second.

Moreover, computers with artificial intelligence do not see the value of human interaction. Unlike humans (if we discount sociopaths), computers with AI can easily remain detached from conversations without regret or concern. For example, Cleverbot can ask if the person it interacts with is okay, but is it truly concerned with the human user’s well-being, or is Cleverbot simply repeating a

question that it acquired from another person it interacted with? Brian Christian (2011) summarizes it best in the following:

I remember being enchanted as a kid with the early *Hardy Boys* books by Franklin W. Dixon, but after a certain point in the series, the magic seemed to disappear... The first fifteen books were written by a man named Leslie McFarlane. The next twenty were written by eleven different people. What I'd chalked up to the loss of something intangible in those later books was in fact the loss of something very tangible indeed: the author.

Aesthetic experiences like these for me are like an unending series of blind dates where you never follow up, conversations with a stranger on a bus (or the Internet) where you never catch the other person's name. There's nothing *wrong* with them—they're pleasant, sometimes memorable, even illuminating—and all relationships start somewhere. But to live a whole *life* like that? (p. 31)

Next, when humans are drawn to someone they like, because of chemicals released in the brain or an emotional attraction felt in the soul, they pay more attention to that person and show interest by getting to know him or her better. That interest could lead to the development of a relationship or heartbreak and a soul being crushed. Artificially-intelligent computers do not exhibit the same behavior: they simply interact to gather information and then move on. Any interest they show in a person is purely based on acquiring as much knowledge as they can for analysis or data gathering, nothing more. Humans can certainly behave the same way, but it would be dull and distressing to the soul. And what exactly is the soul?

The soul is usually defined as a spiritual essence that lies within each and every human being. It cannot be seen, yet it is believed to exist. Some philosophers argue that the soul doesn't exist and that the concept of thought is just a result of signals in the brain responding to chemicals. But if this is truly the case, then what drives people to ponder certain aspects of their life and go on journeys to fill that emptiness inside them? Surely Aristotle had to have considered the concept of the soul when he reasoned that every human action is done to attain sustainable happiness! And Descartes believed in the concept of a soul when he created his famous phrase—a person must have a soul in order to have consciousness, represented by the fact that he can't be deceived into denying his own existence.

Attempts to capture the essence that is the soul can be seen in art and music. Songs and poems about unrequited love, jealousy, loss, and the joy of being with that special person permeate the lives of almost everyone. No matter the language, people are able to understand the emotions and the way it touches their souls. Wendell Wallach (2011) states:

Emotional engagement is a very important tool for humans. It grounds us in our world, it connects us and gives form to subtle responses to difficult challenges, and some of these responses are

very moral or empathetic... machines are far from displaying the kinds of emotional intelligence we observe in even youngsters. People have a capacity for discernment, for discrimination, for recognizing what is important from what isn't. We have the ability to bond with and care about each other, to show compassion, to imagine ourselves in the position of others. (p. 141-142)

Would a computer with artificial intelligence be able to understand the depth and meaning of a song about unrequited love like "Someone like You" by Adele? The computer can certainly analyze the words of the song and deduct that it is about Adele's regret and sorrow over an ex-lover, but would it be able to feel the emotion behind the lyrics the way humans do?

Of course, the word "art" is almost as indefinable as the word "human." Different forms of art exist, and opinions on what is true art make for a never-ending debate among aficionados. Salvador Dali is hailed as one of the greatest artists, along with Pablo Picasso and Leonardo Da Vinci, yet many are unable to understand the eccentricity and emotion behind his works. If the beauty of art is found in the emotion within the piece itself, could an artificially-intelligent computer or machine create a masterpiece? Granted, it might get some leeway based on the fact that there is no definition of true art, but part of what makes art appealing is that undefinable humans have created it, and at least one person will be able to grasp the inspiration and the small bit of the artist within the work. The knowledge that a human with emotions is behind any masterpiece is a small comfort that most take for granted, simply because we know that artificial intelligence can never truly mimic the creativity of a human being.

But then, why are humans so determined to create beings that can think and feel like them? The thought of another sentient being that can think like a person is undeniably exciting but Wallach advises caution, saying "I am skeptical that we know enough about the brain to emulate human intelligence" (p. 136). Continuous research is conducted on the human body, especially on the brain, to understand diseases such as Alzheimer's and epilepsy and how to prevent them. Are humans essentially recreating themselves to overcome the limitations of biology and access all the advantages of technology? Wallach brings another interesting argument to the debate:

What safeguards are needed to minimize accidents caused by AI systems operating in situations that designers and manufacturers did not anticipate? How should the adoption of robonannies for infant care and service robots tending the homebound and elderly be regulated? (p.136)

These concerns can be attributed to Isaac Asimov's famous Three Laws of Robotics, designed to prevent robots from harming humans or allowing them to come to harm. But as artificial intelligence continues to advance and develop each year, it is only a matter of time before the concept of morality becomes part of the program that runs computers. Morality is a very complex subject because it cannot be seen with the "black and white" perspective that computers depend

upon to function: their binary system stays strictly to a “yes” or “no” structure and computer programming is primarily mathematical in nature. Adding to Wallach’s argument that people do not know enough about the brain to emulate it, Berrar, Sato, and Schuster (2010) point out that “mathematical models are still simplistic compared to the daunting complexity of real biology” (p. 4).

Still, lack of knowledge about the brain and the conscience or the problem of applying morality to computers should not be seen as a deterrent to making them more “human.” For the time being, computers are still incapable of evolving without depending on human intervention and this relationship has proven to be symbiotic. According to Allenby and Sarewitz (2011):

The human and the technological will not clash, with one or the other emerging victorious. Nor will technology, reaching down its empathic paw, raise us from the trials and tribulations of being human. Rather, what will happen is what has already been happening: the two will continue to merge and re-make one another on the individual scale, on the institutional scale, on the social scale, on the planetary scale. (p. 118)

Until computers and machines learn to progress on their own, they will continue to rely on human input to develop a semi-solid idea of what it means to be human. In the motion picture *I, Robot* (2004), Sonny, a unique, artificially intelligent robot that behaves in a humanlike way, asks his human friend, Detective Spooner, what he will do now that his primary purpose has been fulfilled. Detective Spooner tells Sonny that he will have to find his way like any other human. So much about human nature is spoken in this brief interaction because it highlights a big part of what it means to be human: to discover the reason behind our existence. Computers and machines are built for a purpose, but why have humans been created? Are people simply just the result of copulation? Or is there a reason why every human being on earth exists? As long as there is no definite answer, humans will always struggle to learn the reason behind their existence. Computers and machines will never have to worry about that: after all, they were built by humans for a reason.

Research has shown that humans are genetically related to chimpanzees. Marine biologists have proved that humans are also related to fish since both species descended from the same ancestor albeit human beings evolved differently. Yet humans consider themselves special because of the ability to understand their experiences that affect the “soul,” with art, music, and culture. Humans do not behave with a “hive mind”; they can connect with one another yet exercise autonomy at any given moment. From the moment they are born human beings have an unexplained hunger that drives them to seek whatever will satisfy it. When humans develop consciousness, they recognize that hunger and ponder it.

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