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CITY TECH WRITER

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**Outstanding Student Writing
From All Disciplines**

Jane Mushabac, Editor in Chief

Cover: “Keyboard” by Jessica Hernandez
Art Director: Lloyd Carr

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Preface

What's it like being an x-ray technologist at the Hospital for Joint Diseases? What's it like seeing your uncle on an old *I Love Lucy* show with Desi Arnaz? What's it like being from Cameroon and the Bronx? What's it like in a Chinese bakery? What was it like watching CNN on Election Night 2008?

The student writers of *City Tech Writer* Volume 4 share their pleasure in new technologies and their memory of old dances. They celebrate thermodynamics—and family resilience. They bring thoughtful questions to bear on predatory lending, faulty \$50 nylon slings, and a bedbug epidemic in New York. They're grateful for the words of Descartes and Florence Nightingale, Charlotte Perkins Gilman and Oscar Hijuelos, Toni Morrison and Ha Jin. As always, the juxtaposition of writing from different disciplines and a variety of cultures and moments in time reminds us of City Tech's great span of interest in our world. Reader, don't just hold this book in hand. Read it and be enlightened, provoked, and amused.

I want to thank the faculty throughout the college who inspired fine writing, and selected and submitted nearly two hundred fifty pieces of best writing from their students; Professors Mary Ann Biehl and Nasser McMayo whose ADV 4700 students produced sixty appealing cover designs; Graphic Arts Program Director Lloyd Carr who, as before, coordinated the graphics, instructing and leading GRA 4732 students and GRA 3513 students respectively in formatting and printing the cover; and Prof. Steve Caputo and printers George Pompilio and Peter Pompilio, who approach this task with a commitment to excellence. 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 for her help and thoughtfulness. Professors Candido Cabo, Walter Brand, Nina Barnett, Richard Patterson, Johannah Rodgers, and Reginald Blake graciously helped me think through questions of many kinds; Karen Lundstrem and Rezaul Hoque introduced me to new computer tools; and English Department Office Assistants Lily Lam and Laura Kodet have been not only gracious and generous, but resourceful and wonderfully efficient.

Most of all, however, I thank the student writers whose work has been selected for publication in this volume. They make teaching a great pleasure. Their writing is direct, bold, and memorable.

Jane Mushabac, Editor in Chief

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If I Exist, Then What Am I: Descartes' "Meditation II"

Angeline Boodoo

"Meditation II" by Descartes questions all the writer's former beliefs and reflects his insatiable drive to find the one conviction that will serve as a foundation for the rebuilding of his knowledge. He separates all attributes of self (senses, imagination, and soul) and focuses on the importance of the intellect in determining the reality of existence. Descartes searches his inner consciousness to discover what he is. His writing shifts from the certainty of his existence to solving the question of what he is.

The opening paragraphs resemble ramblings of an individual lost in a forest of misconceptions, desperately searching for clues which would aid in a swift exit out of his state of fear and confusion. His intense questioning mimics a person on the verge of a mental collapse. His mission involves finding certainty or knowing with certainty that "nothing is certain." He believes that everything is fictitious and questions the existence of our bodies. He even asserts the possibility that our existence is merely a "state of sleep." Descartes also attempts to "credit" his uncertainties to a "God who causes these thoughts to arise in my mind."

Even though he begins his second meditation with tremendous doubt regarding the credibility of his existence, Descartes is genuinely convinced that his ability to perceive these thoughts is enough to certify his existence. As paragraph 3 closes, Descartes has come to terms with the belief that he does exist. The very fact that one questions his existence is proof enough that one does exist. The acceptance of his existence is compounded by the realization that his existence is "necessarily true" every time he chooses to express it. Descartes moves from doubt to certainty regarding his existence.

After establishing that he *does* exist, Descartes now ventures to explore *what* he is. He agrees that he is a man, but then seeks to consider: what is a man? He recognizes his physical attributes of hands, arms, etc., and even considers his "soul." The former were perceived through the senses and the latter was just like a wind or flame. Descartes also comments on the frailty of the imagination which only originates through perception which is inadequate to even determine if one is asleep or awake. He affirms that he is still a "thinking thing," but admits that the preceding were still ineffective tools to establish effectively who he was since all these perceptions are subject to change.

Descartes then embarks on his wax experiment to determine if we can

know about something through our senses or by some other means. The wax in its original state is defined by its color, shape and smell, but it becomes evident that these characteristics change as the wax is melted. Even the imagination can construct only limited images of what characteristics the wax can have after being melted and molded. To the observer, the wax continues to be “itself” even though it was changed by the heat. Through this experiment Descartes is able to verify that the reality of the wax is acknowledged not by the senses or imagination, but through understanding what it is. When we understand its components and characteristics, we can in turn recognize what it is and the knowledge we gain of it will be clear and precise. Descartes then confirms that to grasp the concept of our own selves one must move beyond what we sense to what we *think*. Our knowledge, according to the writer, is derived from our intellect and not our senses or imagination. Descartes affirms this *intellect* in the way he judges what the figures outside his window covered with cloaks and umbrellas will be. Through intellect, and not through his senses, he is able to determine that they are people and not machines controlled by springs.

In his conclusion, Descartes is at peace with the knowledge that he does exist because he is a “thinking thing”; if he can perceive thoughts then he must exist. He establishes that his mind and intellect by far outweigh his imagination and senses in terms of clear and distinct perceptions. The senses give us the information of what is being observed, but the mind helps us understand what it is. Descartes does not discredit the other attributes of the body, but admits that without the operations of the human mind a thorough apprehension of what something is will prove to be unreliable. If we are dependent only on our imagination and senses, we only have a partial and finite determination of what something may be. The end of this meditation finds Descartes basking in his newfound knowledge that our bodies are perceived through intellect. He is determined to alter his previous opinions in order to make accommodations for this new revelation.

X-ray Vision

George Rodriguez

I take a deep breath as the automated doors quickly slide open a bit, stop, and then continue to open almost as though playing a game of hard-to-get, and finally giving in. It seems very déjà-vu-ish how my day always begins. But once I have defeated the doors at their little game, I sigh a bit of relief, or maybe it is a sigh of uncertainty because I do not know what my eight-hour day will bring once I have won.

The tranquility of the Gramercy Park neighborhood is right on my heels until I approach the reception desk at the East 17th Street location. A “Good morning. May I help you?” echoes through the hollow lobby. The bold, black hands on the over-sized wall clock are barely reaching 7:42. It is too early for visitors of any shape or size to be slumped in the comfy chairs which are aligned so meticulously. I have a habit of scanning the room to take in the warmth of the morning light as it penetrates the glass walls and brightens the neutral tones of the space. I do not recognize the youthful, confident voice that just greeted me. However, once I glance at the shiny, gold plate on the left shirt pocket of the finely pressed and rich-colored uniform, I realize that this “Joseph Newman” was new to the shift. The deep purple and white circular patches on his cuffed sleeves are a new addition to the security attire. The words “NYU Medical Center, Hospital for Joint Diseases” complete the circumference of his patches, and I can tell by his rigid posture that Mr. Newman is wearing them quite proudly. A sudden flash of my employee I.D. with the title of “Chief X-ray Technologist” in bold font satisfies the guard as he reacts with a stern nod of acceptance. The squeak of my recently purchased running shoes on the freshly waxed floor, which had previously been hushed by the grand, purple carpet runner, was now snapping heads to catch a glimpse of what was creating it. The awkwardness caused me to smirk at each of the faces and greet them before turning away to continue my duties. Now at the time clock to begin my day, I swipe my card and wait for the beep. The “Beep!” I hear, and the words, “Thank you, George,” illuminate the screen as though I had already provided a service to be thankful for.

As I round the corner and head down the icy, white corridor to my department, the sound of my Nikes has now faded since this hallway hasn't been waxed as recently as the last one. “X-ray in Use” in bright red lights always draws my attention as does the apparent buzzing sound. Once I read “Radiology Waiting Room” against the pen-marked wall, I realize that the buzzing is coming from a combination of patients, doctors, clerical staff and more patients as they begin their wait to be cared for. My weary eyes examine the waiting room for “Rogers, M., #526732” whose name is beginning to fade off the tab on the file. Despite being tired and watery from my early wake-up, my eyes meet those of Rogers, M. amongst the cluster of patients. Rogers, as his chart states, is a young child—six years of age—who is clearly nervous, and whose eyes scream that he

wishes to get this x-ray exam done quickly. Before I could say his name, Michael followed the connection between our eyes and proceeded to wheel himself towards me using solely his feeble left hand and the remote on his chair. I could tell by the revving of the motor that his wheelchair was fully charged and ready to go, quite like Michael. It never gets any easier to see anyone in such a condition, but the smile that came over his face enabled me to keep mine. Although it was obvious that Michael could not move much of his body, he proved his independence by asking his parents to remain in their seats. I realize that there is no need for introduction since Michael frequents Radiology and, in fact, he has been a patient of mine since his birth. From that day forward, I have witnessed the extreme roller coaster that his parents have endured in the hopes of seeing Michael take his first step.

I can now hear the tread of wheels in addition to the motor. The cramped corridor to exam room #3 is dim and then bright again as the lighted view boxes positioned on the walls produce a blue-gray light through the x-rays that are displayed. Michael's eyes are drawn as usual to the florescent lights, and I can tell by the stop-and-go of the motor behind me that he is pausing at each as if he were in an art gallery. I turn to wait for him and catch a glimpse of tears rolling down his cheeks but his smile assures me they are tears of joy. Today is his big day because in less than an hour, Dr. Cohen will lead the operation that will correct the disfigured bones in Michael's legs and enable him to walk for the first time. He appears to be reminded of this as his pace quickens and he enters door #3. Next he anxiously positions his chair alongside the exam table and throws his arms up at me so he can be lifted onto the table. He shows a bit of discomfort on the hard surface so I quickly position the x-ray machine forty inches over his legs to perform his exam. Michael looks on as I flick the positioning light and manipulate his legs into the necessary angles. Keeping in mind that he does not have control of them, I rush into the oddly-shaped control booth and set my exposure factors. The smirk that appears on his face makes it clear that he is entertained by watching me rush back to him to reposition, and then back to the booth for another x-ray. Once I observe all thirteen of his images on the computer monitor, I am ready to make a final run back to Michael's side.

The nickname "Bionic Man" always makes him giggle, so that is exactly what I call him to let him know that his exam is completed. Michael seems quite proud to take on the name since he too will soon have the hardware in his legs that will allow him to run. Before I can reach the table again, he lifts himself to the seated position with his arms up once more. He is ready as ever to walk, and even run. As I lean in to him he wraps his fragile arms around me, not to be lifted but for a hug. I hug him in return and reassure him that everything will work out the way that we all wish for him. He snuffles and whispers, "Thank you, George" into my right ear. Despite the fact that these very words appear to me on a regular basis, never had they had such meaning as they did now. I "Thank you, Michael," for allowing me to see how much I enjoy my career as a radiologic technologist and how grateful others are for the care that I provide to them.

Being Part of History

Annupa Sookdeo

"America, this is our moment. This is our time. Our time to turn the page of the policies of the past." —Barack Obama

Throughout my life I've been told that anything is possible if you put your mind to it. Many times I've been discouraged by critics telling me that I'll never accomplish what I've set my mind to do. I have not let that stop me or change the course of my plans. I knew that in some way, with some hope, that if I really wanted what I was working for, with hard work and dedication, success would be mine. This motto does not only reside in the realms of my mind, but in the minds of many aspiring students around the world.

However, I questioned that positive belief as it pertained to American history, until the world was introduced to Senator Barack Obama, a man who has changed our everyday lives and proved that anything is possible if you put your mind to it. Because of our country's somewhat remarkable history on slavery, segregation, and racism, the world doubted that an African-American man would ever be elected President of the United States of America. I'm proud to say Mr. Obama proved the world wrong.

He instilled within the younger generation a sense of hope and pride, and the ability to dream big. His humble ways graced us all as we made our way to the election polls and voted for the next president of the United States. He promised the elderly that there would be social security for them in their retirement, and he gave hope to African-Americans, along with all of the minorities, that unification is possible.

I will always remember the night of November 4th, 2008. As I sat quietly at my desk reviewing an assignment for class the following morning, I kept track of the time as it quickly flew by. I was anxiously waiting for the clock to strike eleven to turn on CNN. Americans all around the US were already tuned in, eagerly awaiting a live broadcast, as I was. This was no ordinary day.

What made this election so special that everyone waited quietly and attentively on the edges of their seats? For the first time in American history, an African-American man was running for presidential office. Barack Obama had promised Americans change, and at 11:05 pm, as Wolf Blitzer related the news to America, I felt tears roll down my cheeks, as I thought to myself, "this man has stuck to his promise thus far."

As I listened to the broadcast, my mind kept racing. I thought back to the time when we were young children who were taught the stories of dedicated men and women who basically gave their lives for the cause they were fighting for, an equal America. These struggles have dated back to as far as time in America

permits us to go. The Native Americans were shunted from their land, brutally beaten and mistreated. African-American students were pelted by rocks, and sometimes killed for their attempts to attend school in order to get a better education. Their sorrows and pain always filled my heart when I imagined what they went through. Their anger and rage allowed me to understand what they were fighting for. Imagine a man losing everything he has, because another man wants it and there is nothing the poor soul can do. The law didn't protect him. The color of his skin basically set the standards for how he would be perceived for the rest of his life. Some men and women didn't stand up against this system, but some took the risk and made a change, year by year and decade by decade. I never quite understood that system, probably because there were laws that protected me from having to experience it, but those laws would not have been possible if someone did not stand up for a cause.

In just a few moments, the President Elect would be making his way onto the stage in Chicago to deliver his acceptance speech. My cell phone and mailbox were overflowing with text messages and e-mails. Friends from far away were contacting me to relate the results of the election, and to ask, "Do you know what this means? We are part of HISTORY!"

This is true. I am proud to say that I live in the time when it is possible for a minority to run the country. I live in the time when the first African-American broke those barriers and made it possible.

This high point would not have been possible if it weren't for many earlier steps, the Emancipation Proclamation passed by President Abraham Lincoln, with the help of the honorable Reverend Henry Ward Beecher and his sister Harriet Beecher Stowe—a document that declared the freedom of all slaves in the Confederate States. This election would not have been possible if it weren't for civil rights acts and constitutional amendments that restricted discrimination amongst citizens. This election would not have been possible if suffrage fighters had not won the vote for both African-American men and women.

These days were made possible by Martin Luther King, Jr. and Reverend Jesse Jackson amongst many others who stood up and marched day and night for equal rights. This lifestyle in which we live today was made possible because Rosa Parks, after her many years of activism, sat quietly in her seat and refused to allow the white man to sit where she was sitting. Most importantly, this election was made possible by Americans who stood up, as if to say, "We're tired of a bleak and sorrowful history filled with racism. Let's make it a cheerful one. Let there no longer be tears from grief and violent abuse. Let this be the time where people of all races and creeds can stand in the streets and embrace each other because an African-American is our President Elect." As inspiringly as he crossed over the stage to make his way to the podium, Mr. Obama knew that our voices were heard.

His first words after greeting the crowds in Chicago will be imprinted upon the generations to come just like the words of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s, "I Have a Dream" speech. Clinging to every word of the 2008 President Elect's speech, I hear them replay in my mind often.

If there is anyone out there who still doubts that America is a place where all things are possible, who still wonders if the dream of our founders is alive in our time, who still questions the power of our democracy, tonight is your answer. It's the answer told by lines that stretched around schools and churches in numbers this nation has never seen, by people who waited three hours and four hours, many for the first time in their lives, because they believed that this time must be different, that their voices could be that difference. It's the answer spoken by young and old, rich and poor, Democrat and Republican, black, white, Hispanic, Asian, Native American, gay, straight, disabled and not disabled. Americans who sent a message to the world that we have never been just a collection of individuals or a collection of red states and blue states. We are, and always will be, the United States of America.

As the camera passed through the crowds, it suddenly settled and focused on the Reverend Jesse Jackson. I was moved at the vision of yet another prominent figure who has helped made this night possible. The Reverend was crying tears of joy as he understood the immensity of his actions when he marched alongside Martin Luther King Jr. in 1965. A man stood before him as living proof of his predecessors' striving for success. This man would be his next President. I was humbled; never had I seen a grown man cry for something he worked so passionately for, a united America.

This night will be written in history books. Barack Obama has invigorated us all to believe that America is the land where anything is possible; he has stayed true to the word that has been the soul purpose of his campaign, "Change." He is an inspiration to young children and adolescents, men and women worldwide. As the whole world participated in America's celebration, leaders from around the world called to congratulate our President Elect. With this excitement and celebration, Americans had to be reminded that Obama would not be the leader of the new administration until January 20th, 2009.

The day following the election, as I got on the subway to head to school, I realized how overnight the world had become *united*. People were smiling and embracing each other saying, "We did it!" and taking a special care in the interests of others. We all felt a surge of success run through our veins because secretly we all thought that it was we the people who had won the election.

I hope that my children's grandchildren will look back and appreciate this moment. Though the words "segregation" and "racial discrimination" might take on a whole new meaning in their times, when they look back to the days in which I lived, there would be a better understanding of everything they do and encounter in their daily lives. It is then that I truly hope that they will be honored, just as I am in these amazing days, to live in the United States of America.

Barack Obama's *Dreams from My Father:* A Long Way to Myself

Svetlana Alisa Paskhina

In Chapter Two of his memoir *Dreams from My Father: A Story of Race and Inheritance* (1995), Barack Obama tells the reader about his years growing up in Indonesia between the ages of six and ten. His American mother, a white woman from Kansas, divorced his biological father, a black man from Kenya, and remarried Lolo, an Indonesian man. Obama and his mother move from Hawaii to Indonesia to join Lolo in 1967.

At age nine, in the library in Djakarta, Obama has his first experience with racism, which he's not able to understand at the time because he's too young and he's afraid to ask his mother. He fears her answer might be too frightening and prefers to bury his head in the sand like an ostrich. Over time his understanding of racism changes because of the significant role of his mother. She does not want her young son to follow the example of Lolo who decides not to fight against injustice in Indonesia. She wants Obama instead to look to the example of his biological father because of his high principles. She encourages Obama to embrace his father's legacy and black people generally. In his adult life Obama understands that racism is not some scary thing one should carry as a "hidden enemy" throughout one's whole life. Only fighting against it can solve this terrible problem to make the world safe for our children.

Obama, as an adult, writes about his experience at age nine of discovering a photograph in *Life* magazine:

Eventually I came across a photograph of an older man in dark glasses and a raincoat walking down an empty road. I couldn't guess what this picture was about; there seemed nothing unusual about the subject. On the next page was another photograph, this one a close-up of the same man's hands. They had a strange, unnatural pallor, as if blood had been drawn from the flesh. Turning back to the first picture, I now saw that the man's crinkly hair, his heavy lips and broad, fleshly nose, all had this same uneven, ghostly hue. (29-30)

Obama is confused, so he decides to read the photograph's caption. He writes that he is shocked by the explanation. For the first time he confronts a very disturbing image of discrimination based on the color of one's skin. Obama can't comprehend why this man seeks medical treatment in response to advertisements that promised happiness as a white person. Obama uses the words "ghostly hue" on purpose to describe the man's tragedy and to catch the reader's attention. As

a child growing up in a good, loving family in Hawaii, in the world of paradise, as well as in Indonesia, Obama wants some explanation or assurance, and only his mother can ease his fear and trouble. Obama doesn't ask his mother about the disturbing photograph, however, because he is afraid that her answer can't help him understand his newborn fear.

Despite his refusal to ask his mother any questions, she was ready to help him. Obama points out the significant role of his mother in shaping his personality and character. He writes how she warned him about a tough and hostile world and how she saved his self-esteem from childhood's doubts. Obama reveals his mother's confidence in a faith which shapes thoughtful people's destiny. Obama compares two different worldviews: that of his biological father and that of his stepfather. He tries to understand the position of his stepfather who doesn't seem to have any options to fight against power and injustice upon returning to Indonesia in the mid 1960s. Obama recalls his mother's conversation with Lolo's cousin regarding his stepfather's return to Indonesia and his ordeal with the totalitarian government he discovered there. Obama writes:

Power had taken Lolo and yanked him back into line just when he thought he'd escaped, making him feel its weight, letting him know that his life wasn't his own. That's how things were; you couldn't change it, you could just live by the rules, so simple once you learned them. And so Lolo had made his peace with power, learned the wisdom of forgetting; just as his brother-in-law had done, making millions as a high official in the national oil company. (45-46)

Obama gives details of the cruel, harsh power which crushed and humiliated Lolo's dignity and soul, made him feel petty, and pushed him to accept the government's demands. Obama tries to understand Lolo's arrangement and his choice to make peace with, and even serve, power.

But thanks to his mother, Obama knows the opposite views, those of his biological father. Obama remembers his mother's words about the principles of his father and her decision regarding Obama's future: he should follow his father's footsteps. Obama writes about his mother's approach regarding his biological father's beliefs that promise, in her view, a "higher form of power":

She had only one ally in all this, and that was the distant authority of my father. Increasingly, she would remind me of his story, how he had grown up poor, in a poor country, in a poor continent, how his life had been hard, as hard as anything that Lolo might have known. He hadn't cut corners, though, or played all the angles. He was diligent and honest, no matter what it cost him. (50)

Obama praises his mother's vision of the right path in life. She wants him to be proud of African-Americans: Dr. King and Mahalia Jackson, Thurgood Marshall and Sidney Poitier, Fannie Lou Hamer and Lena Horne (50-51). Obama learns this lesson well and becomes a person who knows his heritage and destiny and

who carries “glorious burdens” (51) with style.

At the end of the chapter, Obama returns to the memory of the disturbing photograph. Obama discovers a different world back in America where there are some boundaries which can't be crossed because one doesn't look like a particular neighbor, or because one has a different color of skin. Obama learns the tales of his ancestors' humiliation at the hands of an employer or a cop (51). Obama, as an adult, writes on his experience:

I know that seeing that article was violent for me, an ambush attack. My mother had warned me about bigots—they were ignorant, uneducated people one should avoid But that one photograph had told me something else: that there was a hidden enemy out there, one that could reach me without anyone's knowledge, not even my own. When I got home that night from the embassy library, I went into the bathroom and stood in front of the mirror with all my senses and limbs seemingly intact, looking as I had always looked, and wondered if something was wrong with me. The alternative seemed no less frightening—that the adults around me lived in the midst of madness. (51-52)

Obama tries to find answers by looking in the mirror, but the mirror can't help him because there is nothing wrong with the way he looks. What he is trying to find is invisible. The “hidden enemy” he refers to is racism. It is hidden because no one can reach it, or stop it, or touch it. Racism is inside our minds, and hurts our souls; it corrupts lives, communities, cultures and history. Obama talks about the power of racism: “In America, it had generally remained hidden from view until you dug beneath the surface of things. . . . But here [in Indonesia] power was undisguised, indiscriminate, naked, always fresh in the memory” (45). Young Obama can't comprehend racism at first, and his vision, in his own words, has been “permanently altered” (52) by discovering the photograph.

While reading this chapter I realized that I have had a shocking and frightening experience similar to the one Obama had. I recall one day back in my childhood when I was six years old. I was playing with several children in the backyard of our residential building. One boy approached us, looked intently at me and said: “Go away, you are a kike and we don't want to play with you.” I was devastated and brokenhearted. I went home and asked my mother about this ordeal. My dear mother started to cry and said nothing to me. At that exact point I understood that there was something terrible, unspeakable in the adult world. Anti-Semitism was a “hidden enemy” for me. Like black people in America, Jewish people in the USSR confronted anti-Semitism on all levels of their lives. My parents continued to keep their silence and never talked to me about anti-Semitism until a terrible incident happened. When I was nine years old I was invited to my girlfriend's birthday and there I heard an awful conversation between her parents about Jews. They said terrible things about Jews and I couldn't comprehend how badly people thought about us: me, my lovely parents, my beautiful grandparents. I left the party in tears and my parents, for the first

time, talked to me about anti-Semitism in their lives, in the lives of living grandparents, and the grandparents and other relatives who were murdered during World War II. My family needed to hide our celebrations of Jewish holidays from our neighbors. My parents and grandparents spoke Yiddish in whispers and never taught me this language. From a young age I knew exactly what my options were when enrolling in particular colleges or applying for particular jobs. Jewish people were barred from becoming high level managers, commanders in the Army, and leaders in local and national government. It was dangerous to say anything good about Israel because the USSR had cut diplomatic relations with Israel. Jews who raised their voices in support of Israel could lose their job or even go to prison. But I understood a very important idea: as a person with different roots, culture and religion, I needed to deal with existing circumstances and try to sustain and keep my identity and heritage.

The same idea I find in Obama's book. Obama's book is interesting reading because it blends memoir and history. This memoir certainly gives us a precise look into the unique combination of circumstances, backgrounds, places and cultures that shaped Obama. Obama's writing style gives us an opportunity to feel his intelligence and grace. I have enjoyed reading this memoir and realize that Obama defines the face of modern America and proves the basic principle of this country: out of many, one. This is a book for people of all races, political views and beliefs.

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Lending on Borrowed Time

Melissa Krzywicki

The federal government promotes homeownership as the cornerstone of the “American Dream” because, for many Americans, the home is the only means of building equity, what the owner can use as collateral in a home-secured loan for consumer spending. That home-secured loan carries the risk of foreclosure if the borrower fails to make loan payments. By 2007, the percentage of home-secured loans that became delinquent or in foreclosure hit an all-time high. That mortgage crisis has now spread to the rest of the economy.

Before the current crisis, federal lawmakers put in place mandatory disclosure regulations to educate the consumer about the costs of a home-secured loan and the risk of foreclosure if loan payments are not met. Policymakers assume if borrowers are educated about the price of the loan and the risk of foreclosure, then the borrower will act rationally by choosing a loan carrying the best price and least risk of foreclosure.

The high foreclosure rate shows that, instead of acting in their own self-interest, many borrowers have signed loans carrying unjustifiably excessive price and risk, loans known as “predatory loans.” Most often these loans were found in the subprime lending market, the market traditionally serving those deemed as high credit risks. Predatory lenders target and understand what policymakers do not: the subprime home mortgage market.

Traditionally, most mortgage lending was done in the “prime market,” where traditional lenders financed their mortgage lending through their customer’s deposits. This limited the amount of mortgage lending banks could do. Banks only lent or gave mortgage loans to borrowers with documented credit histories that showed them at low risk of default.

The subprime lending market serves those borrowers who might not meet the standard for receiving loans in the prime market. The borrower’s limited loan options may be due to a limited income, poor credit history, or high debt. Subprime lenders compensate for the increased risk by charging the borrower higher interest rates and upfront fees. Subprime lenders target mortgage holders because mortgage holders have the ready equity to pay the upfront fees. In the past decade only a small fraction of these loans have been used to purchase homes.

In about half of all subprime loans, borrowers are not dealing with the funding source itself, but with intermediaries between the borrower and the lender, such as mortgage brokers. The job of a broker includes “counseling borrowers on suitable loan products, assisting with the borrower’s application, obtaining credit and employment reports, and performing other necessary

origination services.”¹

Borrowers usually pay brokers through a percentage of the total loan amount or other direct fees. Mortgage brokers are under less state and federal regulation than financial institutions, which leads to abusive tactics, such as targeting minority neighborhoods with deceptive sales practices.

The majority of subprime mortgage borrowers live in low-income and/or minority neighborhoods traditionally underserved by federally-supervised lending institutions, such as banks and thrifts. Subprime lenders may “monitor people’s credit reports for debt problems, buy lists of delinquent debtors from debt collectors, and drive through neighborhoods looking for decrepit roofs and porches”² to target potential borrowers. Lenders use readily available census data to target this demographic.

In February 2008, a Director of the State of New York Banking Department testified at a House Hearing on the subprime mortgage crisis, “...in 2006, residents in minority neighborhoods in New York County, received subprime loans to a rate of 4 to 1, when compared to borrowers from white neighborhoods.”³

The subprime market first came about when “it became legal”⁴ in the early 1980s when the federal government decided to stimulate the economy through home ownership.

Congress passed the Depository Institutions Deregulation and Monetary Control Act (DIDMCA)⁵ which deregulated the mortgage market by allowing lenders to preempt state interest rate caps and charge borrowers higher rates and fees. In 1982, the Alternative Mortgage Transaction Parity Act (AMTPA)⁶ allowed lenders to use variable interest rates, balloon payments, and the option-adjustable rate mortgages (ARMs).

The explosion of subprime lending came about in the mid-1990s due to securitization of the loans on “the secondary market.” Securitization is the structured finance process in which assets, receivables or financial instruments

¹ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development: the U.S. Treasury Dep’t. *Curbing Predatory Home Mortgage Lending*. Washington, DC: GPO, 2000; <<http://huduser.org/publications/hsgfin/curbing.html>>: 39.

² McCoy, Patricia A. “A Behavioral Analysis of Predatory Lending,” 38 *Akron Law Review* 725. 2005.

³ Azia, Jane M. “Effects of the Subprime Mortgages Crisis in New York City.” Testimony before the Subcommittee on Financial Institutions and Consumer Credit, U.S. House of Representatives. Washington, D.C. 11 Feb 2008. <<http://www.banking.state.ny.us/sp080211.htm>>.

⁴ Chomsisengphet, Souphala and Pennington-Cross, Anthony. *The Evolution of the Subprime Mortgage Market*. Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis *Review*, January/February 2006, 81(1): 38. <<http://research.stlouisfed.org/publications/review/06/01/ChomPennCross.pdf>>.

⁵ Depository Institutions Deregulation and Monetary Control Act of 1980 (P.L. 96-221, 94 STAT. 132).

⁶ Alternative Mortgage Transaction Parity Act of 1982 12 U.S.C §3801.

are acquired, classified into pools, and offered as collateral for third-party investment.⁷ By the 1990s, securitization had “already become a major source of funding in the prime mortgage market”⁸ with investor comfort leading private firms to begin securitizing mortgage loans.

In the traditional lending market, the lender kept the loan on his books, giving him a reason to make sure the loan is repaid. In the “secondary market,” the brokers and lenders collect the loan fees from the borrower then sell the loan. This eliminates the credit risk to the lender. Once the loan is bundled and sold, the risk of foreclosure is passed to the market. “The secondary market has an extraordinarily difficult time, however, distinguishing predatory loans (bad) from appropriately priced subprime loans (good).”⁹

Due in part to current federal laws and the securitization of subprime loans, predatory lending became a subset of the subprime lending market. The term “predatory lending” itself has no legal definition. “Predatory lending” can be defined by “its two root harms to consumers, excessive price and excessive risk of foreclosure.”¹⁰

While “there is little political consensus at the national level within the housing finance community about how best to address the various areas of concern,”¹¹ there exists *some* agreement on the practices, alone or together, that may constitute predatory lending.

The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the Department of Treasury published a joint study, the result of a joint-sponsored nationwide forum, that found predatory lending claims tend to fall into four major groups:¹²

Lending without regard for the ability to repay:

⁷ *Black's Law Dictionary* (7th ed).

⁸ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development; the U.S. Treasury Department. *Curbing Predatory Home Mortgage Lending*. Washington, DC: GPO, 2000; <<http://huduser.org/publications/hsgfin/curbing.html>>:39

⁹ Bagley, Nicholas. “Crashing the Subprime Party: How the feds stopped the states from averting the lending mess.” *Slate*. 24 Jan 2008. <<http://www.slate.com/id/2182709/pagenum/all>>.

¹⁰ Willis, Lauren E., “Decisionmaking & the Limits of Disclosure: The Problem of Predatory Lending” (June 2005). *Loyola-LA Legal Studies Research Paper*_No. 2005-14 <<http://ssrn.com/abstract=748286>>.

¹¹ James Carr and Lopa Kolluri, “Predatory Lending: An Overview,” Fannie Mae Foundation, 2001. p.6.

¹² U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and the U.S. Treasury Department. *Curbing Predatory Home Mortgage Lending*. Washington, DC: GPO, 2000; <<http://www.huduser.org/publications/hsgfin/>>

A would-be-borrower's ability to repay a loan should be based on items such as existing debt, credit rating, income, and the length of the loan. With a predatory loan, lender approval may be based *solely* on the item used as collateral, the borrower's home. Monthly loan payments, which meet or exceed the borrower's pre-taxed monthly income can quickly leave a borrower with inadequate living income and/or drive a borrower into foreclosure.

In one case, a financial corporation, with "knowledge based on a borrower's past inability to meet the lower prior monthly payments,"¹³ approved mortgage loans that caused the borrower's monthly debt payments to increase. This put the borrower at an increased risk for default or foreclosure.

Loan flipping:

Mortgage originators refinance the loan several times in a short period to generate a fee income from "high origination fees, closing costs, points, prepayment penalties and other charges,"¹⁴ without generating a profit or income to the borrower. The original lender charges high fees for each "flip," leaving the borrower with decreased home equity and increased monthly payments.

Excessive fees and "packing":

These are the easy-to-disguise points and fees not directly reflected in the interest rates. The points, fees, and ancillary services are "packed" into the mortgage loan (the amount financed) without the borrower's knowledge or understanding of the items. In addition to lenders, "many of these fees were charged by mortgage brokers, home improvement contractors and other third parties."¹⁵

The HUD/Treasury joint task force found some borrowers were sold single-premium credit life insurance. Credit insurance pays the lender should the borrower die or become disabled. With single-premium credit life insurance, "the full premium is paid all at once—by being added to the amount financed in the loan"¹⁶ and not used in calculating the annual percentage rate—rather than on a monthly basis.

Fraud and Deception:

¹³ *United States v. Delta Funding Corp.*, Civ. Action No. CV 00 1872 (E.D. N.Y. 2000). <<http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/housing/documents/deltacom.htm>>

¹⁴ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and the U.S. Treasury Department. *Curbing Predatory Home Mortgage Lending*. Washington, DC: GPO, 2000<<http://huduser.org/publications/hsgfin/curbing.html>. > p. 5.

¹⁵ *Ibid* p.21

¹⁶ U.S. General Accounting Office. *Consumer Reports: Federal and State Agencies Face Challenges in Combating Predatory Lending*, Washington, D.C. GPO: January 2004. GAO-04-280 Predatory Lending: 20.

Predatory lenders “prey” on a borrower’s lack of financial and legal knowledge. These lenders may use “bait and switch” tactics to mislead borrowers about the terms and amounts of their loans; some fail to disclose items to borrowers as required by law. Borrowers have also, unknowingly at the time, been the victim of fraud due to lenders’ doctoring loan and settlement applications, along with inflating property appraisals.¹⁷

No matter the practice used, a predatory loan depends on the ability of a lender to make a loan disadvantageous to the borrower, due to borrower’s inability to understand the loan terms and obligations.¹⁸

A predatory loan is made at the local level where the borrower signs the loan. The federal government attempts to fight predatory lending at this level through federally-mandated written disclosure laws. The enforcing federal agencies for disclosure laws are federal banking regulators, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), and the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

The laws aim to protect the consumer by educating the borrower about the price of the loan and the risk of foreclosure if the loan payments are not met. The disclosure laws have timing requirements that must be met by the lender. The goal is for consumers to use the laws in comparison shopping.

Real Estate Settlement Procedures Act (RESPA)¹⁹

RESPA was passed by Congress in 1974. The Act aims to help consumers understand settlement costs. Under this law, *estimated* settlement costs must be disclosed to the borrower within three days of receipt of the application loan and again at the settlement. The estimate only needs to be a “good faith estimate” (GFE) for the consumer to use in comparison shopping. This disclosure requirement only covers federally-related mortgages.

It does prohibit “kickback payments” in exchange for referring a settlement service. RESPA “does not impose liability on a creditor for an inaccurate or incomplete estimate, or for failing to provide one.”²⁰

¹⁷ Cowen, Andy. “So We Thought, But Then Again. . .” *The New York Times* 13 Jan. 2008.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/01/13/business/13view.html?_r=2&scp=1&sq=Tyler+Cowen&oref=login&oref=slogin>.

¹⁸ Ho, Giang and Pennington-Cross, Anthony. “The Varying Effects of Predatory Lending Laws on High-Cost Mortgage Applications.” *Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis Review*, January/February 2007, 89(1),

<<http://research.stlouisfed.org/publications/review/07/01/HoPennCross.pdf>> p. 39-59.

¹⁹ 12 U.S.C. §§ 2601 – 2617 (2000 & Supp 2003).

²⁰ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and the U.S. Treasury Department. *Curbing Predatory Home Mortgage Lending*. Washington, DC: GPO, 2000; <<http://huduser.org/publications/hsgfin/curbing.html>>. : 55.

*Truth in Lending Act (TILA)*²¹

TILA, passed in 1968 and amended in 2002, aims to help consumers understand the credit terms of a loan by requiring lenders to disclose loan costs to its borrowers on all transactions involving a mortgage on a borrower's home residence. TILA does not regulate the prices a consumer may be charged; instead, it standardizes the disclosure of costs.

For a non-purchase money home loan, the TILA disclosures must be given at closing, or the day before where the borrower so requests. TILA requires creditors to disclose to consumers for closed-end credit loans, inter alia, (1) the finance charge, (2) the Annual Percentage Rate (APR), (3) the amount financed, and (4) the total of all payments.²²

Under TILA, borrowers can seek rescission of loans against creditors until the later of (1) three days after the consummation of the transaction, or (2) once the creditor has delivered the information, two copies of the Notice Form, and the material disclosures required by TILA.²³

Federal agencies have success in bringing complaints and reaching settlements against subprime lenders who have violated disclosure laws. *In The Matter of Fleet Finance Inc.*, a corporation²⁴, the FTC was able to bring charges against the finance company for TILA violations due to the lender failing to provide in writing the required disclosures about the loans costs and the right of the borrower to cancel the borrowing transaction. The company settled the case for \$1.3 million.

On the flip side, predatory lenders have also been able to successfully use signed disclosure sheets against borrowers who claim to be victims of predatory lending practices. In *Williams v. First Government, Mortgage & Investors Corp.*²⁵, the plaintiff, a 61-year-old retired painter and handyman with a sixth-grade education, signed a subprime loan that included, allegedly unbeknownst to him, credit-life insurance.

When the plaintiff brought suit claiming TILA violation, the defendant brought with him the signed disclosure forms. The Court affirmed the lower court's ruling stating, "Credit related life insurance is not required to obtain credit and will not be provided unless you sign and agree to pay the additional

²¹ Truth in Lending Act, 15 U.S.C. §§ 1601 – 1667f (2000 & Supp 2003).

²² U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and the U.S. Treasury Department. *Curbing Predatory Home Mortgage Lending*, Washington, DC: GPO, 2000 <<http://huduser.org/publications/hsgfin/curbing.html>. > p. 54.

²³ 15 U.S.C. §§ 1635, 1639(j).

²⁴ *In Fleet Finance, Inc.; Home Equity U.S.A., Inc. (Rhode Island); and Home Equity U.S.A., Inc. (Delaware)*, File No. 932 3074, Docket No. C-3899. <www.ftc.gov/os/caselist/c3899.shtm>.

²⁵ *Williams v. First Government Mortgage. & Investors Corp.*, 225 F.3d 738, 750-51 (D.C. Cir. 2000). <<http://www.ll.georgetown.edu/federal/judicial/dc/opinions/97opinions/97-7195b.html>>.

cost.”

The Home Ownership and Equity Act (HOEPA)

HOEPA, passed in 1994 as an amendment to TILA, addressed the concern lawmakers had about predatory brokers and lenders targeting residents of low-income areas for credit on unfair terms through “reverse redlining.” HOEPA includes restrictions on such acts as balloon payments and prepayment penalties on loans that exceed certain rate or fee triggers; it requires lenders to verify the borrower’s ability to repay the loan.

HOEPA only places these restrictions and requirements on high-cost closed-end refinancing loans and home equity loans, so it’s unclear how many subprime mortgages fall under this act. Predatory lenders only need to keep the loan and fee amounts below the HOEPA threshold to avoid this law.

The law requires lenders to tell high cost loan borrowers in writing at least three days before closing that they could lose their homes if their loans are not paid.

The increase in predatory lending leads one to believe that disclosure laws alone do not work because they do not take into account those most targeted by predatory lenders, the subprime mortgage borrower. Predatory lenders target those borrowers who do not have the ability to understand the disclosures due to limited contact with banks and thrifts, and despite having been through the mortgage process. The disclosure laws relate to the implementation phase, not the borrowing phase, leaving borrowers with little time to get advice on the loan.

The House and Senate have introduced a myriad of bills to stem the current mortgage crisis. In November 2007, the House passed the Mortgage Reform and Anti-Predatory Lending Act of 2007 (H.R. 3915) as an amendment to TILA, which uses remedy and enforcement provisions by addressing specific abusive lending practices “including reckless underwriting practices, subprime prepayment penalties, and yield-spread premiums.”²⁶ The law calls for establishing licensing and registration requirements for residential mortgage originators.

In July 2008, the American Housing Rescue & Foreclosure Prevention Act (H.R. 3221) became law. The main intention of the Act is to stem the current foreclosure crisis. To prevent future foreclosures, the bill provides \$150 million to expand counseling for borrowers and establishes “stricter disclosure rules to require lenders to make plain the maximum monthly payment for a borrower with an adjustable rate loan.”²⁷

In both of the above acts, the consumer is not supplied with information

²⁶ Center for Responsible Lending. “Analysis of H.R. 3915 Mortgage Reform and Anti-Predatory Lending Act of 2007” *CRL Policy Brief*. 24 October 2007. <<http://www.responsiblelending.org/pdfs/analysis-of-hr-3915.pdf>>.

²⁷ Herszenhorn, David M. "Approval is Near for Bill to Help U.S.Homeowners" The New York Times 25 June 2008. <<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/25/washington/25housing.html>>.

on what the disclosures mean. H.R. 3221 provides pre-foreclosure prevention counseling when the borrower is about to lose their home. However, there is no concerted outreach effort by the federal government to identify and educate those communities targeted by predatory lenders. The consumer needs to understand the laws for disclosure laws to be effective. Predatory lenders use federal and local data to target borrowers; there is no reason why the federal government cannot use its own data for community outreach. If consumers are educated, they will realize that they too have a responsibility, to sign only those loans that they can afford. As Benjamin Franklin has said, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure."

Summary of the Nobel Peace Prize Winning Report on Climate Change

Ryan Jaipaul

Imagine what life would be like if our summers were ten degrees Fahrenheit warmer or if our sea levels were two feet higher. Or imagine bizarre storm phenomena such as torrential rainfalls in one city with severe droughts in cities nearby. Such harsh climate conditions are becoming more likely because of atmospheric pollution amplified by human activity.

In December 2008, my Advanced Technical Writing professor, Dr. Reneta Lansiquot, informed me of a climate change research project. I was intrigued with the opportunity so I met with Dr. Reginald Blake, professor of physics and a lead researcher for the climate change project. He informed me that he needed a research assistant for the project and it would last about a year. The project is being worked on by researchers from NASA and Columbia University. Eager to work on a project of this caliber, I accepted the opportunity and attended my first meeting at the Columbia University campus in mid-December. Some of the astonishing facts that were discussed at the meeting include: the eight hottest years ever documented have all occurred since 1998, the average Arctic winter temperature has already increased by eleven degrees Fahrenheit, the northern polar ice cap has decreased in thickness by 6% over the past 40 years, and the world rice crop falls 10% for each degree of warming.

Before I became involved in this research project, I viewed the issue of global climate change very nonchalantly. I am a full-time college student with the benefit of living in America. Like most Americans, I was fooled by the common misconception that we can always attain what we desire. By working on the research project and becoming more informed about climate change, I realized that this problem has serious implications that affect every individual on this planet.

Climate Change: 2007 is a profound body of research that has immensely contributed to my knowledge of the subject. Published in 2007, it is the Fourth Assessment Report published by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). The IPCC is a global committee that has published three previous assessment reports released in 1990, 1995 and 2005, analyzing climate change caused by human activity. Because of this publication, *Climate Change: 2007*, this distinguished panel, the IPCC, shared the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize with former U.S. Vice President Al Gore. The Fourth Assessment Report

was a collaborative effort by more than 2,500 scientific expert reviewers and 1,500 authors from over 130 countries world wide. It consists of four volumes: 1) The Physical Science Basis 2) Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability 3) Mitigation of Climate Change and 4) The Synthesis Report. My paper presents a summary of *Climate Change: 2007*, the IPCC's Fourth Assessment Report, in order for us to examine our planet's previous and current climate changes and attribute their causes to either natural processes or human activity. My summary includes the Report's evaluation of the effect our current climate change has had on physical and biological structures, and its presentation of future climate change projections.

The Problem

Climate change has huge implications and consequences for my generation. As Americans, we have the benefit of going to the supermarket and purchasing virtually anything we want; the term *shortage* has little or no meaning to many of us. However, recent increases in temperature and precipitation as a result of human activity could eventually limit our food supply. Higher temperatures increase soil evaporation rates and the chances of severe droughts. Increased precipitation leads to soil erosion and an increase in soil moisture, both of which are critical for crop yields. Our government would have to allocate funds from the budget to help cope with such agricultural turmoil. Money will have to be spent on technology that will aid crop management from season to season in order to cope with climate change. This aspect of climate change in America would greatly alter our daily lives.

The term *climate change* is often used interchangeably with the term *global warming*. Scientists prefer to use the term *climate change* because it suggests that other factors besides increasing temperatures are associated with our planet's current state. *Climate change* refers to any significant change in measurement of temperature, precipitation, wind, or sea level lasting for an extended period of time. The Earth's climate has changed many times during our planet's history, with events ranging from ice ages to long periods of warmth. Historically, such natural events as volcanic eruptions, changes in the Earth's orbit, and the amount of energy released from the sun have affected the Earth's climate. However, beginning late in the 18th century, human activities associated with the Industrial Revolution have drastically changed the composition of the atmosphere and are largely responsible for the global climate change we are currently experiencing. Advancement in technology during this era yielded machinery and factories that dramatically increased the emissions of harmful pollutants into our atmosphere. Since we have not taken any measures to better the situation, we are, therefore, experiencing a considerable change in our climate.

Causes of Previous Climate Changes

There are many approaches that can be used when analyzing the vast topic of climate change. Perhaps the most logical approach would be to examine the immense amount of information regarding this topic using a chronological structure. This technique will also reveal correlations between climate change and past global events in an effort to identify human contributions to this problem and the steps that need to be taken in order to improve the situation. During the past 2,000 years, scientists have identified three time periods that exhibited climate changes that were contrary to the norm: the Medieval Climate Anomaly, the Little Ice Age, and the Industrial Era.

The Medieval Climate Anomaly, also referred to as the Medieval Warm Period or the Medieval Climate Optimum, existed between 900 and 1300 A.D. Evidence suggests that Europe, Greenland, and Asia experienced significant increases in temperature. Some 200 years later, the Little Ice Age, occurring between 1500 and 1850 A.D., cooled temperatures a bit. Pack ice, ice that floats on the surface of Arctic waters, began advancing southwards in the North Atlantic. Together, the Medieval Climate Anomaly and the Little Ice Age represent the two most drastic changes in natural climate variability, suggesting that the climate changes that existed within these two periods were caused by the Earth's natural forces, unlike those changes that occurred during the Industrial Era, which was caused by human development.

Scientists have been able to piece together pictures of the Earth's climate during the Medieval Climate Anomaly and the Little Ice Age by analyzing ice cores, boreholes, tree rings, glacier lengths, pollen remains, and ocean sediments, and by studying changes in the Earth's orbital path. They have developed knowledgeable explanations of what may have caused these extreme climate changes during these two time periods. First of all, changes in the shape of the Earth's orbit, or eccentricity, as well as its tilt and precession, the slow torque of the Earth, affect the amount of sunlight that can be received by the Earth's surface. These three important orbital processes of the Earth operate in cycles and are predicted to be the most important factors in causing ice ages. Another explanation for the climate changes during the Medieval Climate Anomaly and the Little Ice Age is the change in the sun's heat intensity. These changes occur inside the sun and can affect the intensity of sunlight that reaches the Earth's surface. The varying sunlight intensity can cause either warming or cooling on the Earth's surface.

Furthermore, volcanic eruptions may have affected climate during these two periods because volcanoes emit aerosols and carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. Aerosols that are emitted from volcanoes block sunlight, thereby allowing the Earth's surface to cool down temporarily. Carbon dioxide (CO₂) is a greenhouse gas that warms the Earth's surface. It is theorized that volcanic eruptions may have elevated CO₂ concentrations in the atmosphere, thus trapping terrestrial radiation and increasing surface temperatures. However, in comparison to the previous volcanic eruptions that released CO₂ into the atmosphere and may

have increased temperature, human activities now emit 130 times as much CO₂. Finally, changes in ocean currents may have contributed to the climate changes that occurred during the Medieval Climate Anomaly and the Little Ice Age. The heating or cooling of the Earth's surface can cause changes in ocean currents. Because ocean currents play a significant role in distributing heat around the Earth, changes in these currents can bring about significant changes in climate from region to region. When analyzing the causes of the climate changes during the Medieval Climate Anomaly and the Little Ice Age, the most significant aspect is that they were all attributed to the Earth's natural functions and not human activity.

The Industrial Revolution began around 1750 and was characterized by major changes in agriculture, manufacturing, production and transportation. Everyday life transitioned from a manual-labor-based economy to machine-based manufacturing. It began with the mechanization of the textile industries, the development of iron-making techniques, and the increased use of refined coal. Steam-powered machines were fueled primarily by coal. In the late 1800s and early 1900s, technology spurred the economy with the development of steam-powered ships, railways, and internal combustion engines. Unfortunately, effortless labor and economic boom came with a price.

Current Climate Change Causes and Consequences

Human activities have substantially added to the amount of heat-trapping greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. The greenhouse gases that most commonly enter the Earth's atmosphere as a result of human activities are carbon dioxide (CO₂), methane (CH₄), nitrous oxide (N₂O), and fluorinate gases. Carbon dioxide enters the atmosphere through burning of such fossil fuels as oil, natural gas, and coal, as well as from solid waste and trees. Carbon dioxide can be removed from the atmosphere when it is absorbed by plants. However, this biological process is limited due to deforestation by human population. Methane is emitted during the production and transport of coal, natural gas, and oil. Methane emissions also result from livestock and other agricultural practices and from the decay of organic waste in municipal solid waste landfills. In addition, nitrous oxide is emitted during agricultural and industrial activities, as well as during combustion of fossil fuels and solid waste. Finally, fluorinated gases, which are powerful greenhouse gases, are emitted from a variety of industrial processes. Burning fossil fuels has also resulted in emissions of aerosols. The addition of greenhouse gases and aerosols has changed the composition of the atmosphere, and these changes in the atmosphere have significantly influenced temperature, precipitation, and sea level.

Temperature changes have been recorded from the Earth's surface all the way through the stratosphere, which extends from 9 to 14 miles above the Earth's surface. From my current involvement in the climate-change research project, I have learned the best scientific approach for analyzing data is to look for common trends and then proceed to determine their causes. Since about 1850,

scientists have been keeping somewhat consistent temperature records reported by land stations and ships. Average temperatures in the Arctic have increased at almost twice the normal rate within the past 100 years. Widespread reductions in the number of days below freezing occurred during the latter half of the 20th century in the U.S. as well as in most land areas of the world. The eight warmest years on record have all occurred since 1998, with the warmest year being 2005. Another alarming fact is that land areas have tended to warm faster than ocean areas and the winter months have warmed faster than summer months.

Increasing temperatures tend to increase evaporation, leading to more precipitation. The common trend observed by scientists is as follows: as average global temperatures have risen, average global precipitation has also increased. The number of heavy precipitation events over various regions has also increased during the past century. Precipitation has become significantly greater in the eastern parts of North and South America, northern Europe, and northern and central Asia. Also, changes in precipitation and evaporation over the oceans are inferred from the freshening of mid- and high-latitude waters.

Moreover, tide gauge measurements and satellite altimetry suggest that the sea level has risen worldwide by approximately 4.8 to 8.8 inches during the last century, and a significant amount of that sea level increase is probably attributable to the observed warming of the atmosphere and the oceans. The primary factors contributing to the worldwide sea level rise include the expansion of ocean water caused by warmer ocean temperatures and the melting of mountain glaciers and small ice caps. Human activities that may contribute to a rise in sea level include pumping ground water for commercial use, impoundment in reservoirs, wetland drainage, and deforestation.

Projections for the Future

This information regarding the Earth's recent temperature increase and precipitation and sea level changes may seem disturbing. However, conditions may become even more disastrous when we consider the future scientific projections of the Earth. Greenhouse gases that are released into the atmosphere will increase dramatically if we continue at our current pace. These increases will cause further severe changes in our planet's temperature, precipitation, and sea level. In order to develop accurate models of the Earth's future in terms of these factors, scientists take into account such issues as global population, living standards, energy use, and technological advancements.

According to future projections, emissions of global greenhouse gases, excluding CO₂, are expected to increase by 44% by the year 2020. Global emissions of CO₂ are projected to increase about 74% by 2030 and 158% by 2100 as a direct cause of human activity. When developing future temperature projections, scientists consider the reactivity between the Earth's atmosphere and greenhouse gas emissions. Every action produces a reaction. For example, increasing greenhouse gas emissions will lead to an increase in temperature. Increasing temperature will cause melting of ice caps, which, in turn, will cause a

rise in sea level. Unfortunately, this cycle continues and expands exponentially. One possible repercussion of melting ice caps is a further increase in temperature. This phenomenon occurs because ice caps reflect sunlight, thereby helping to decrease the surface temperature of the Earth. If ice caps are melted away, then the temperature on the Earth's surface will increase dramatically.

As a result of future projected temperature increases, precipitation around the globe will also continue to increase due to changes in atmospheric circulation and increases in evaporation and water vapor. Projected future models of the Earth suggest an increase in the intensity of precipitation events, especially in tropical and high-latitude regions. Events such as the Atlantic hurricane season of 2005, which set a record with twenty-seven named storms, may occur more frequently in the future. The annual average precipitation is projected to increase over most of northern Europe, the Arctic, Canada, the northeastern United States, tropical and eastern Africa, the northern Pacific, and Antarctica, as well as in northern Asia and the Tibetan Plateau. Due to the projected steady increase in precipitation over these regions, the earth's atmosphere would be forced to evaporate more moisture from the surface than usual. This increased evaporation will cause annual average precipitation to decrease in such regions as the Mediterranean, northern Africa, Central America, the American Southwest, and the southern Andes, as well as southwestern Australia.

Future projections regarding a rise in sea level can be directly attributed to increasing global temperatures. Mountain glaciers and ice caps will continue to melt, increasing sea level. The coastal regions of Greenland and Antarctic will gradually be melted or slide into the ocean. As the snow melts, it will increase the sea level. If temperatures continue to increase at the current rate, it is estimated that the global average sea level will rise by 7.2 to 23.6 inches by 2100. Other factors that contribute to a rise in sea level are changes in wind patterns, atmospheric pressure, and ocean currents.

Significant changes in temperature, precipitation, and sea level have been observed since the beginning of the Industrial Era. As a result of evaluating possible causes of two other climate changes within the past 2,000 years (Medieval Climate Anomaly and the Little Ice Age), the conclusion is evident that human activity is largely responsible for climate changes that have occurred since the Industrial Era. After analyzing these recent climate changes, scientists have developed various models to project the Earth's future state if we continue to damage our planet at the rate at which we are going. These future projections are quite alarming, considering the intensity of the changes and the short time span in which they will occur. Because we have contributed a great deal to the Earth's recent climate change, it is in our best interest to start altering our daily living routines now in order to protect ourselves and future generations.

Simple steps performed routinely can make a huge difference for the future. Frankly, we cannot afford to continue our pattern of emitting greenhouse gas while expecting no consequences. Stemming climate change is a global issue, and it will only succeed if everyone is on board. Although the rates of climate change since the beginning of the Industrial Era may be alarming, it is even more

horrific to consider the future projections if the concentration of greenhouse gas emissions continues to increase at its current rate. Future generations deserve a planet on which they can exist comfortably without having to worry about unexpected climate disasters caused by the reckless lifestyle of their ancestors.

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The Cookie Lady

Kristina Esposito

How is a sweet, sprinkle-topped, jelly-filled cookie, or a cannoli or a custard-filled pastry similar to a prescribed tablet, pill or capsule? Or, how are a pastry chef and his salesgirls in a bakery similar to a nursing professor and her student nurses in a health care facility? The idea that a delicious cookie and medication or a bakery and hospital can have similarities may seem far fetched. You may wonder how a bakery filled with the sweet smells of fresh cookies and cakes being baked continuously, and a hospital filled with multiple patients with various diagnoses on each floor can be similar. Well, the connection between the two is me.

Since sophomore year of high school, I've worked at Court Pastry Shop in Brooklyn. This Italian family-owned bakery has been in my neighborhood for sixty-eight years. It is well-known for its pastries and cookies and the close-knit staff. During the holiday seasons, especially on Christmas, we have a line that goes out the door and around the block. Two years ago, the radio station 1010 WINS even came to interview us. A few customers said that they waited for an hour and a half because they couldn't go home and have Christmas dinner without Court Pastry's desserts. In the six years that I have worked at Court Pastry Shop, I have met so many people and even become friendly with the "regulars." They would tell me, "I've been coming here my whole life, I even remember the trolley that came in front." I've always been aware how well-known and popular Court Pastry was in the neighborhood through the stories from these customers, but I never would have thought that these delicious cookies and pastries would make me well-known too.

During my second semester, I was doing my clinical rotation at New York Methodist Hospital with Professor Greene. Throughout the semester, almost each week that I was assigned a patient or one of my classmates was assigned to a patient, it turned out to be a customer from the bakery. I was amazed that people recognized me from the bakery. In some way I felt it to be comforting to both myself and the patient. For example, one day I was assigned to a client who was diagnosed with dementia. When I went to my client's room to introduce myself, she was with her son who was trying to get her to eat. As she turned to look at me, she said excitedly, "You are the one who gives me my

biscotti!”

“Mom, that is the nurse!” her son interrupted and then looked at me to apologize for his mom’s outburst.

“No, she is correct, I do work at a bakery,” I explained to her son.

My client’s son looked puzzled. I told him that I was a student nurse and I was at Methodist doing my clinical rotation. I explained that I work at Court Pastry Shop as well. He told me that he always goes to that bakery too and lives a few blocks from there. He said that he couldn’t believe how his mother recognized me from the bakery. Throughout the day, on top of taking vital signs and doing patient teaching, I was also answering questions on how much per pound pignoli cookies were or if I knew how the pastries were made.

For myself, while it was funny how I was constantly being associated with the bakery, I also found it comforting because I felt as if I knew my clients. From my clients’ point-of-view, I think that they found it comforting because they associated me with a bakery or being in a familiar place. At the end of that day, my client stated, “It is great to have you here, I loved talking to all you girls at the bakery.” When her son left the room, she also stated, “Since we live so close, do you think you could take me back to the bakery with you today?”

Another memorable patient was the roommate of the patient that I was originally assigned to. As I was doing morning care on my patient, the other patient’s family member walked in. We looked at each other surprised. She was actually one of the “regulars.” “Wow, I didn’t know you were a nurse. You are from Court Street, right?”

“Yes, I am also a student nurse,” I explained. She then began to tell me that her father was the patient and he had a stroke. I could tell that she looked tired and she told me that she had been there almost all night. I told her if she wanted to she could go grab something to eat and I would stay with her dad, as well as my patient. She agreed and when she went to tell her father that she was going to step out she said, “Dad, you are not going to believe who is here to care for you. It is the lady that always makes you your box of cookies.”

The patient squeezed my hand once as she told him. From that day, the patient’s daughter always came to the bakery on the days I worked and gave me updates on her father. Unfortunately, a few months ago, she called the bakery to let me know that her father had passed. I ended up going to the wake and as soon as I walked in, she hugged me and introduced me to everyone as the “bakery nurse” that she spoke about.

During second semester, I couldn’t believe how many people associated me with the bakery. I figured the only reason could have been that I was at Methodist Hospital and it’s located close to my neighborhood, but I was wrong. During third semester, as a community service project, four students and I were sent out to teach fire and burn safety to school-aged children in an after-school program. When I walked into the classroom, a student shouted, “Hey, that’s not a nurse! She’s my cookie lady.” My classmates were amazed and we found it amusing. Since that day, some of my classmates call me “the cookie lady.”

As I stated above, it may be difficult to compare a bakery and a hospital

or a pastry chef and a nurse, but there are similarities that I was able to recognize in my role as a student nurse.

Florence Nightingale has said “Nursing is an art,” and noted “if it is to be made an art, it requires an exclusive devotion as hard a preparation as for any painter's or sculptor's work; for what is having to do with a dead canvas or dead marble, compared with having to do with the living body, the temple of God's spirit? It is one of the Fine Arts: I had almost said, the finest of the Fine Arts.”

Florence Nightingale compares the art of nursing to a painter's or sculptor's work; I compare the art of nursing with baking. In a bakery, the pastry chef uses his patience, careful measurements and love in each of the cookies and pastries he makes. As a student nurse, I've come to learn that nursing also requires patience, understanding, dedication, and devotion to each of my patients.

The Old vs. the New

Helen Yeung

How accurate is the impression of a tooth after it goes through the process from positive to negative and back to positive again? In the article “A Better First Impression: Manufacturing Dental Restorations Using Digital Impressions” written by Scott Henkel, CDT, the author talks about the process of taking digital impressions and how to make a tooth. Henkel describes the new dental technology system called the iTero and the advantages of using it. Comparing the older dental technology to the new dental technology, we see which system is better.

Dental laboratories that don't have the iTero system use the old dental technology system that involves many steps in order to put together a tooth that is serviceable for the patient. Henkel mentions that one of the first steps that needs to take place is to have the tooth that needs replacing prepared. After the preparations, an impression of the tooth is taken in a negative form. Next, gypsum stone would be used to make a positive impression of the patient's teeth. Once the impression is set, a die would be cut and wax patterns would be created on the die. After the wax pattern is completed, it is invested and then centrifuged with a chosen metal alloy. Once that part is done, we have the finished product that went through a long process of going from a positive impression to a negative impression and back until it was finished. The integrity of the tooth can be lost during this procedure.

Henkel notes that instead of going through the process of taking a positive impression of the patient's tooth and making it negative, positive, negative, and positive, it is easier to skip those steps and use the iTero system. The iTero machine is a new system that can capture the impression of a patient's teeth by using an intra-oral scanner. The iTero system isn't fixed station machinery; therefore, it can be easily moved from room to room if needed. The iTero system also has a computer system with a wireless internet connection that can transmit the processed information to the Cadent's production facility. Once the processed information reaches the Cadent's production facility, the system will then generate models and dies.

The iTero system is easy to use and doesn't require any special coating prior to use. The system has a scanner that goes inside the patient's mouth and captures the image of the patient's tooth. Once the scanner is inside the patient's mouth, the system does almost everything because it focuses itself, sends the image to the display screen, and shows the area of the tooth that needs attention and fixing. Not only does it adjust itself and scan the teeth, it will also ask the technician what type of material the technician wants to use to make the

restoration, the shade, shape, or any kind of unique instructions. The iTero does all this within three to four minutes and has a scanning accuracy of 15µm. After the scanning is done, the processed information is sent via the internet to Cadent's production center where the models will be made. The models that come back from Cadent's production center are lighter in weight and stronger because of the materials used when compared to the models made from gypsum material. Also the models have fewer mistakes and the margin is clear.

The iTero system costs a total of \$20,500. The laboratory CAD workstation costs \$2,000 and the iTero system costs \$18,000; that includes a three-year year warranty. Even though the whole system is expensive, it saves money in the long run because as the quality of the finished product improves, productivity will increase and turndown rates will decrease.

In conclusion, Henkel's article provides a comparison of the two dental technology systems, and shows that the iTero system's models surpass the traditional models that are made of gypsum material. The models and dies produced by the iTero system are stronger, more reliable and durable; also with the new technology, productivity and accuracy increase, creating more efficiency in the long run.

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Bedbugs in New York City Hotels

Marcia J. Campbell

Once on the verge of elimination in the United States decades ago, bedbugs are now a rising menace in places like New York City, where a local hotline has been created to handle increasing complaints from residents (Anderson & Leffler, 2008, p.1).

Del Williams of *Executive Housekeeping Today* magazine, speaking of the need for this new NYC hotline dedicated to bedbug complaints, notes that since June 2007, nearly 7,000 infestation complaints were reported in NYC, with over 2,000 summonses issued against building owners (Williams, 2008, p.11). In 2008, the city's Department of Housing and Development, which records bedbug complaints and issues violations against property owners, gave out 2,257 bedbug violations, a rise of 366 from 2005 (Solomont, 2008, p.1). At the end of the fiscal year in June 2008, the complaints were 8,830, a jump from 1,839 in 2005 (Solomont, 2008, p.1).

With rising infestations, interest in learning about bedbugs has likewise increased. An entry of the phrase "bedbugs" generates 11.9 million matches through a popular Internet search engine. Rephrasing it to "bedbugs in hotels" produce 3.2 million results in that same search tool (Higley, 2006, p.6). "We have seen more requests come in from industries to come out and do educational sessions," said Frank Meek, a technical director for the pest control company Orkin. Meek also said demand for bedbug training visits have increased (Mieyal Higgins, May 2006, p.34).

What Are Bedbugs?

Bedbugs are wingless, flat, oval, nocturnal insects that grow to approximately 4-7 millimeters in adult form. They are usually brown or gray, but turn dark red after feeding on blood (Anderson & Leffler, 2008, p.1), usually from warm-blooded victims (Pollack & Gary, 2005, p.1). (According to www.dictionary.com, "warm-blooded" creatures are those with a constant body temperature.) They have three pairs of legs, and a short, broad head with a pair of prominent antennae. The abdomen has 11 segments, the tarsi—the leg areas—have three segments with claws, and the antennae are divided into four segments (Anderson & Leffler, 2008, p. 1).

The two most common forms of bedbugs are the *Cimex hemipterus* and *Cimex lectularis*. The first, *c. hemipterus*, is found in mostly tropical countries, while the second, *c. lectularis*, is found worldwide, including the United States. It lives inside lighting fixtures, walls, furniture, in mattress seams, behind loose wallpaper, and in baseboards (Anderson & Leffler, 2008, p.1).

On average, female bedbugs produce 200-500 cream-colored eggs in a

lifetime, with the ability to lay two or three eggs per day after mating. Two bedbugs can produce over 160 offspring within a month (Meek, 2008, p.1). Miniature bedbugs hatch in less than 14 days at room temperature (20°C), with a maturation cycle between nine and eighteen weeks (Anderson & Leffler, 2008, p.1). Even without reproducing, they can survive extreme temperatures and live up to a year without feeding. They generally live up to 20 feet of their food sources. Remnants of their presence are tiny bloodstains found on bed sheets and between mattress seams (Meek, 2008, p.1).

Although bedbugs are not known as *direct* carriers of diseases (Wolff, 2005, p.85-86), the DNA for the hepatitis B virus (HBV) has been detected in bedbug droppings (Anderson & Leffler, 2008, p.1). Bedbugs have been responsible for secondary infections, causing welts, nervous and allergic reactions. They feed by piercing the skin of sleeping victims and injecting their saliva, which is an anticoagulant and anesthetic, not disturbing its target. The victim notices the bites only after waking (Anderson & Leffler, 2008, p.1).

The National Pest Management Association (NPMA) has noted that calls about bedbugs jumped 71% between 2000 and 2005 (Wenk, 2007, p.39). The NPMA also reported that phone calls about bedbugs went up fifty times between 2007 and 2008 (Williams, 2008, p.11). At the first International Bedbug Symposium in September 2006, urban entomologist Michael Potter said bedbugs "will be the most serious urban pest—bar none" (Mieyal Higgins, November 2006, p.4). The *Wall Street Journal*, citing a hotel industry magazine, reported that hotels comprised 37% of bedbug infestation—a 6 point rise from 2004 (Wolff, 2005, p.84). Their presence has triggered lawsuits from unhappy guests (Morris, 2008, p.8).

Liabilities

While bedbug infestations are common in the developing world because of regular overcrowding and a high number of unclean conditions (Hwang et al, 2005, p.1), upscale hotels in the United States are not immune from them. Their presence has triggered lawsuits from unhappy guests (Morris, 2008, p.8).

New York-based Helmsley Park Lane Hotel settled a lawsuit for \$150,000, after a guest, Reuejo Ventura, said he was attacked by bedbugs in 2003 (Wenk, 2007, p.39). In upstate New York during 2006, a woman who claimed to have been bitten by 500 bedbugs at a Catskills resort, later sued for \$20 million (Checking Out, 2006, p.54). A year later, in fall 2007, Michelle Hopkins, a Fordham University student, sued the New Yorker Hotel after her September visit led to two hospital stays. The suit came amidst the hotel's reported \$65 million makeover (*New York Observer*, 2007, p.1). While Hopkins' stay was on a private floor leased by the New Yorker to another operator, its representative has acknowledged previous bedbug presence in the actual hotel (*New York Observer*, 2007, p.2). Alan Schnurman, Hopkins's attorney in the lawsuit, said "Hotels have to have some type of inspection" (*New York Observer*, 2007, p.1). Mr. Schnurman predicts the growing bedbug outbreak might create its

own litigation category (*New York Observer*, 2007, p.2).

Another attorney, Steven Wagner, is involved with a different and more recent pending bedbug case. Wagner's client left his three-bedroom Manhattan apartment after two months, after he said his son was bitten by bedbugs. Wagner says, "My client feels as if they had been defrauded into even signing this lease. Had they known there were bedbugs in the building, they never would have signed the lease" (Solomont, 2008, p.2).

"It gets back to the issue of responsibility," says New York tenant attorney Ronald Languedoc, describing how bedbug-related lawsuits are resolved in court. Languedoc has heard of cases where landlords sued tenants as the source of bedbugs (Solomont, September 26, 2008, p.2). In those cases, according to Languedoc, the burden of proof was on the landlords. Mr. Languedoc thinks the plaintiffs lost their cases because "it is probably hard to track down where, precisely, they [bedbugs] came from and how they got in there [the residence]" (Solomont, September 26, 2008, p.2).

While New York City authorities do not consider bedbugs a "public health nuisance," as their counterparts do in a city like San Francisco, for example (Solomont, September 29, 2008, p.1-2), local laws do place the costs and responsibilities of getting rid of bedbugs on landlords. These obligations were established during the precedence-setting *Ludlow Properties, LLC v. Young* case (Solomont, September 26, 2008, p.1). The defendant—a tenant—had not paid six months of rent because of a bedbug infestation. Judge Cyril Bedford ruled in favor of the defendant: "Although bedbug are classified as vermin, they are unlike the more common situation of vermin such as mice and roaches, which, although offensive, do not have the effect on one's life as bedbugs do, feeding upon one's blood in hoards nightly turning what is supposed to be bed rest or sleep into a hellish experience," Judge Bedford wrote.

The judge concluded that the presence of bedbugs breaches the Warranty of Habitability (Wenk, 2007, p.38).

Causes

Industry professionals provide different accounts for the greater presence of bedbugs. A change in pest control methods, increasing resistance to chemicals, and the frequency of international travel, are a few of the explanations for the resurging bedbug population in Canada, Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States (Anderson & Leffler, 2008, p.1; Meek, 2008, p.1).

One expert spoke on the ineffectiveness of the present chemicals: "Many years back, when DDT [(Dichloro-Diphenyl-Trichloro-ethane)] was in use, bedbugs were very rare, but DDT has been taken off the market. It was such a strong insecticide that the bedbugs didn't have a chance," according to Steve Goldrich, vice president of Noble Pine Products, the producer of Sterifab, a disinfectant/insecticide (Wolff, 2005, p.85). About the prevalence of bedbugs, Goldrich said, "Bedbugs are a problem so ubiquitous and so difficult that everybody, from the Centers for Disease Control on down through every major

player in the hotel industry, agrees there is no one answer” (Wolff, 2005, p.85). In the United States during the 1950s, the bedbug population had been reduced to miniscule numbers with the use of the potent chemical DDT (Mieyal Higgins, November 2006, p.4). Usage of pesticides such as DDT controlled bedbugs, but with its and others’ elimination—because of their toxicity to humans—bedbugs have survived more baits and less powerful chemicals in recent times (Anderson & Leffler, 2008, p.1). Current chemicals sometimes require repeat trips from exterminators with no guarantees (Williams, 2008, p.11).

“Bedbugs are about as flat as your business card, so they don't need much of an opening,” said Dale Kaukeinen, a senior technical specialist for the agribusiness/pest management firm, Syngenta. “They’re about the size of an apple seed and very easy to overlook.” Kaukeinen believes more traveling is another reason for the resurgence of bedbugs (Wolff, 2005, p.85). Add the common use of *natural* fabrics, he stated, and the hospitality industry is a breeding ground for bedbugs (Wolff, 2005, p.85).

Hurricanes too are responsible for the surge in bedbug cases. Hurricanes Katrina and Wilma in 2005 enlarged business for America’s pest control industry (Wolff, 2005, p.85). Bedbugs, like termites and other insects, thrive in unsanitary conditions, such as mold caused by flooding.

Current Solutions

Modern techniques to control insects and pests are part of a system called Integrated Pest Management (IPM), which excludes the use of toxic chemicals that could harm people. “Spraying pesticides immediately after identifying a pest problem is often only a temporary fix and potentially harmful in the long run. Instead, systems that help prevent the problem are often more practical and much safer for humans and the environment,” said Stephen Ashkin, president of The Ashkin Group. IPM involves precautionary monitoring and inspecting an entire property (Wolff, 2005, p.86).

Pest control literature highlights the importance of combining insecticide treatments with environmental measures such as daily laundering of bed linens in very hot water, vacuuming of rooms, and steam cleaning and vacuuming of mattresses. Frequent vacuuming of common hiding areas for bedbugs will remove loose particles that may prevent insecticide penetration after treatment.

There are currently three basic steps to handling bedbugs: cordon off the area affected by bedbugs, relocate residents/victims to another room, and contact professionals (Meek, 2008, p.1). Individuals should avoid the purchase of second-hand furniture and bedding that is covered in cloth (e.g., couches, armchairs). Newer bedding is being designed to eliminate creases and hidden depressions which are a gathering point for bedbugs.

These common methods of combating bedbugs, however, can be expensive, intrusive and time-consuming. For instance, the standard operating procedure for treating bedbugs at a major Las Vegas hotel is to vacate rooms surrounding the infested one, including those above and below, for five to seven

days. The carpeting, drapes, mattress, box springs, headboards and bed-frames from the infested room are all replaced (Williams, 2008, p.11). Additional expenses are incurred while replacing the affected clothes and luggage belonging to guests (Williams, 2008, p.11). This method of containing the problem is now commonly used.

Newer Solutions

In exploring newer ways to combat bedbugs, researchers at the University of Kentucky study bedbug colonies exposed to commonly used insecticides. They found that one colony never exposed to the insecticide died at typical doses. However, several colonies exposed to the insecticide over decades developed immunity to the spray—requiring 300 times the dose recommended by manufacturers (Williams, 2008, p.11).

The researchers experimented with a new process—infrared heaters—to eliminate bedbug infestations, disinfect, and decontaminate buildings. It applies the same principle that is used for processing milk and wine (Williams, 2008, p.11-24). A study conducted by entomologist Vernard Lewis, Ph.D., of U.C. Berkeley, tested the efficacy of the heat process at a California house. The study noted that the use of infrared heaters to treat bedbugs shows “greatest promise when used for structures where they can be set up overnight and dismantled and removed the morning after treatment. Hotels, schools, day care centers, office buildings, vacation homes, and homeowners that are not opposed to moving out for the night would all be potential beneficiaries of this technology” (Williams, 2008, p.24).

Unlike fumigation, there are no chemicals involved in heating, while the narrowly applied heat eliminates eggs and insects. The compact infrared heaters automatically shut off if tipped over. Heat treatments were previously unavailable in high-rise structures because propane or hydrocarbon fuels were disallowed (Williams, 2008, p.24).

In addition to experimental heat treatments, bug-sniffing dogs are being used in offensives against bedbugs, according to *The New York Times* (Moreno, 2007, p.2). The smelling capabilities of dogs, which possess twenty to forty times the nasal receptor cells of humans (Lee, 2006, p.2), enable them to detect the tiny odors from bedbugs (Lee, 2006, p.2). Trainers prefer playful dogs over “too smart” ones that are not eager for a task (Lee, 2006, p.3).

“A dog's nose is cutting-edge technology,” says Carl Massicott, founder of the Milford, Connecticut-based Advanced K9 Detectives (Ridley, 2008, p1). “Our animals are 100% honest, and trained to work for food and love instead of profits” (Ridley, 2008, p.1). The dogs are first given several different items to smell until they get a reward for arriving at the target odor. Eventually they start associating a reward with the intended odor (Lee, 2006, p.3). In the case of a black mutt owned by Massicott, Jada, it takes two minutes to inspect a room—far quicker than the half-hour excursions of human professionals (Lee, 2006, p.2). Massicott, whose clientele ranges from high-priced Manhattan co-ops to low-cost

rentals in Queens, continues training his dogs to preserve their competence (Lee, 2006, p.2).

“We realize their fallibility,” said David Latimer, acknowledging the limitations of using dogs to find bedbugs. Latimer works as a dog-trainer in Birmingham, Alabama (Lee, 2006, p.3). Massicott’s Jada can only work six hours per day before her accuracy starts to decline (Lee, 2006, p.3). Dogs have a tendency to make mistakes because of trying to make their handlers happy (Lee, 2006, p.3). The *New York Times* reports that “overly high expectations helped fuel a boom and bust” during the 1980s when dogs were used against termites (Lee, 2006, p.3). But in terms of the economic sense of using dogs, there is enough demand in New York City to justify their use (Lee, 2006, p.3). “It’s difficult to keep up with the demand,” Massicott said (Ridley, 2008, p1).

Conclusion

As scientists and the tourism industry work toward a permanent solution for eradicating bedbugs, parties in the legal system clash over liability. While people examine ways to permanently—or at minimum more effectively—get rid of them, bedbugs remain a formidable presence.

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Culinary Tourism: A Strategy for Rural Development?

Akane Naka

Are the economic strategies of culinary tourism effective for rural development?

Food has always been a component of travel. However, in recent years as tourism's contribution to worldwide economies has grown and as the value of market segmentation has become more apparent, special travel niches such as culinary tourism—travel to experience food and beverage—have become growing and recognizable sectors of the industry. According to a 2006 Travel Activities and Motivation Survey (TAMS) report, in 2004 and 2005 125.7 million Americans participated in at least one type of activity associated with wine and cuisine while on out-of-town trips. This result has been found in other nations as well. In Canada culinary tourism is expected to result in \$US 7.2 billion by 2010 (Allen, 2005). These facts indicate that culinary tourism can bring millions of dollars worth of direct and indirect spending to a destination. While culinary tourism contributes to rural economies, the question is open as to whether its impact as an economic strategy is effective for rural development.

Culinary tourism has been defined as “the development and promotion of prepared food/drink as an attraction for visitors. It includes all unique and memorable eating and drinking experiences, not just those that have earned at least four stars or a favorable review from a journalist. The term ‘Culinary Tourism’ was first coined by academician Lucy Long in 1998” (Wolf, 2006, p.1 -2). As explained by Roberti (2008), one of the reasons for the growth of culinary tourism is that people are more attuned to food and culture than ever before. In addition, culinary tourism is part of cultural tourism because knowledge of a local culture is obtained through food and drink.

Culinary tourism originated in agriculture since raw ingredients for the culinary arts come from nature—the air, sea and land (Wolf, 2006). However, culinary tourism is obviously not restricted to rural areas; urban settings are also important. In urban areas, people enjoy seeing celebrity chefs, eating at famous restaurants or in ethnic neighborhoods, attending cooking classes, participating in food, wine or beer special events/festivals and in walking tours to sample local cuisine, or going to green markets. In rural areas, people enjoy farm stays, visits to farms and farmers' markets, picking fruits and vegetables at “u-pick” farms, and stopping along wine routes. Miller (2008) states that visits to wineries are among the most popular and profitable activities of culinary tourism. For example, the wineries of California's Sonoma and Napa Valley counties receive approximately 5.1 million visitors annually (Kelli and Richard, 2008).

Miller (2008) estimates that the share of U.S. leisure travelers interested in culinary travel in the near future will increase dramatically. It is widely recognized that restaurants and cafes obtain huge profits from tourists, with profits also, as a result, for other sectors such as travel agencies, tour operators, accommodations, service providers, manufacturers and exporters, residents, communities, and government. By attracting both large numbers for food events and smaller groups for expensive cuisine experiences, culinary tourism can provide a substantial attraction for a destination and subsequent economic activity.

Greenmarkets can also have a significant economic impact. Sonntag (2007) explains that for every \$100 spent at a farmers market, \$62 goes back into the local economy, and \$99 out of the \$100 stays in the state, compared to the \$25 which goes back into the local economy when the same amount is spent at a grocery store. In other words, spending in farmers markets has a high multiplier effect in the local economy. A study conducted by Otto & Varner (2005) reports that farmers markets in Iowa State contributed up to \$20 million in sales to the economy and created another \$12 million in direct and indirect economic activity. The success of farmers markets has made a huge difference to small farmers. A strong local economy is particularly important in rural areas because of the lack of outside investment in these areas, and a small tax base.

Food festivals and events also contribute significant benefits. The 12-day *Taste of Chicago* event in 2006 attracted 3.6 million visitors who generated over \$100 million in spending, and also contributed to overnight business (Miller, 2008). Food festivals and events also contribute increased revenue in many service areas as well.

According to Roberti (2008), cookbooks are a \$400 million-per-year industry which has had a five percent annual growth since 1996, due, in part, to the rapidly increasing movement of cuisine-related activities. Cookbooks offer the chance for a local region to reach a much wider audience and promote various culinary tourism activities.

Wolf notes that travel operators can provide additional business partnership opportunities with accommodations discounts, and also establish relationships with chefs and artisans to arrange unique and attractive cuisine events. Manufacturers and exporters can also have additional opportunities, for example, getting more customized wine and food labels and sample products, and more shipping products. More sales and business opportunities mean more profits and more jobs. In addition, more jobs help the area in economic and community development, and tourists' spending can add to the local government's tax base.

Even though culinary tourism contributes to both rural and urban economies, some negative issues need to be considered. Rural economies are especially weak since tourism creates highly imbalanced income and employment distributions in general (Getz & Page, 1997). Seasonality and the lack of proper training can also be major problems. The seasonal nature of rural tourism—farmers markets and “U-pick” farm visits—means more tourists come

in harvest season, so while seasonal employment and part-time workers are preferable for employers, this means high unemployment in the off season.

The quality and quantity of labor in rural areas is a major problem also since training opportunities are usually limited, and tourism marketing and management are not enough to promote the products (Roberts & Hall, 2004). The professional service required in the hospitality industry would add extra costs for training and educating employees

According to Gatz & Page (1997), the scale of rural tourism business is normally small, and there is much less flexibility in time and working conditions for the small operator, along with hiring and maintaining knowledgeable staff. Because of the limited number of entrepreneurs in rural areas to promote other businesses, there is usually little else to draw visitors to the area.

However, strategies for maximizing benefits and rural development through culinary tourism present some clear opportunities. Roberts (2004) indicates that marketing techniques, technological advances and new products and services will contribute to clearer perceptions about what activities are available to the consumer, and help to revitalize local economies.

Gartner (2004) suggests that developing a business network is the most significant strategy in a rural area. For instance, farmers' markets are based on a relatively simple supply chain that consists of food producers, other food retailers, prepared food retailers and business services. Market managers tend to deal with vendor relations and business services largely independent of one another (Stephen & Xiao, 2008). The farmers who do not take advantage of the farmers' market opportunity have to rely on national or international markets for their products. Moreover, the opportunity to network with other farmers and interact with customers directly leads to more business prospects. Not only farmers, but also wineries and other food/beverage markets, need to plan and manage service strategies for their businesses.

In terms of marketing and customer service education, the Canadian province of British Columbia has set the world standard for customer-service training. Tourism British Columbia in Canada, a marketing professional organization, has six educational programs—customer marketing, visitor experience, partnership marketing, SuperHost® customer service, tourism product management, regional destination marketing organizations and associate contacts—to provide tourism operators information and knowledge of marketing techniques to grow the operators' businesses. Tourism British Columbia (1997) defined SuperHost® as a customer service training workshop that provides information and tools to improve the quality of customer service to front-line employees. It was first introduced in 1985 to prepare British Columbia's tourism workforce to host the World at EXPO 86. SuperHost® has been successful not only in Canada, but also in Australia, New Zealand, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong, Indonesia, the Philippines and the UK. Many such workshop opportunities can improve service standards in ways beneficial to operators of rural tourism.

Improving marketing, media relations and technology is needed to draw

more people to rural destinations with culinary activities. As the report by Romeo (2005) shows, the New Orleans-based Ralph Brennan Restaurant Group receives about 230 online bookings per month on average. Travelers rely on the Internet not only for information on what specific places to visit, but also as the means for booking new experiences. In addition, although many people learn about food events through word-of-mouth, media coverage and paid advertising, especially in newspapers and on television, are very important. Allen (2005) found that these media have helped raise the overall consciousness of the general public to food/beverage tourism, and have reflected growing interest in dining out.

The Ministry of Tourism and Recreation in Canada (2001) advises the development of complete destination packages along with an assortment of mixed add-ons and suggested itineraries to help foster growth in culinary tourism. Kelli and Richard (2008) suggest an example of a diversified culinary tourism product with the Gundlach Bundschu winery in Sonoma, which hosts other outdoor attractions besides its wine activities, such as a Shakespeare festival, movies under the stars and classical music concerts. These packages need to reflect trends in the market, exhibit new ways to attract visitors and promote the local cultures, which may or may not relate to cuisine. Public-private partnerships also may enhance rural development.

In conclusion, culinary tourism is a profitable niche that holds strong potential for economic and community development in rural areas, but it is a new industry and still uncharted in terms of its overall impact. Even though many economic strategies are shown to enrich rural development, further research is needed. Garter (2004) indicates that as new marketing ideas and theories develop, they will have relevance for rural communities and for the economies that they depend on. How to make this happen is the challenge facing rural communities wanting to draw visitors who are seeking authentic rural and culinary experiences.

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Damn

Samson Gong

For as long as I can remember, my grandmother was smiling, carrying me and my twin brother around her little shop in Chinatown. She was always showing off her two grandsons. I can't remember my first word, but I do remember reading a whole sentence in Chinese. My brother and I sat at a little table with books in front of us, my grandmother holding a stick in her hand.

She was strong, loving and caring, but always strict about education. My parents worked more than twelve hours a day, so we spent most of our time with my grandmother. My grandmother worked twice a week even though she owned her own medicine shop, but she needed to take care of us. She was my hero.

From first to sixth grade, my math skills were always above average, but my English always needed improvement. This was because my grandmother could only teach us math and Chinese. She always wanted her grandchildren to have a career that would support ourselves and our family. Even though she was strict, she wanted us to be not only successful, but happy.

I loved ice cream. When I heard the jingle of the ice cream truck, I ran up the stairs to my grandparents and asked for money to buy ice cream cones. I remember staying outside eating our cones and I never recall our grandparents saying no to the ice cream.

I am known as an American Born Chinese (ABC) born in 1990 in New York City, and in all the sad experiences of my life the one with the most impact was when I was in sixth grade.

It had been my best year at school. I had good friends and the teacher was nice. But there was one morning that year I will not forget. My mom called my brother and me to go to the second floor to see my grandmother. That day her skin turned a bright yellow, but otherwise she looked normal. I only saw her for a minute before I had to go to school.

When we returned from school, my grandmother was in the hospital. I didn't care much, I thought she would come home soon. As days passed, her condition worsened. My uncle, who is a doctor, said my grandmother wouldn't make it. I believed him. We visited her, and she looked tired. I made her a Get Well Soon card for each visit. My aunt stuck them on the wall by her bed for her to see.

One afternoon I took the citywide test in school and had done really well. I wanted to tell her the great news. I was so happy. When we arrived, I tried to tell her what happened, but she couldn't hear me. I couldn't help but cry. She was in much pain and couldn't open her eyes to look at us. I guess I always thought

she would beat this because a patient next to her also had liver failure, and he was okay and went back home. So I thought she would be all right too.

But my hope disappeared. My mom asked my aunt to take us to her house for a sleepover. My cousin and I walked together, and I talked about how I thought my grandmother would be okay. But the next morning my cousin told us that my grandmother passed away.

Recently, my brother told me my grandmother could have lived if she accepted the liver transplant. But she rejected the offer because someone else younger than her needed the transplant also. My grandmother gained the respect of many people through acts like this. She was a hero not only to me, but to others too. She helped many people as a Chinese doctor and would never reject someone even if they didn't have money to pay. This is the way she lived and who she was.

Even now, years later, I wonder how life would be if my grandmother were still alive. Damn.

Cynthia

Nicola Samuels

Small fingers shook my body. “Mommy, wake up.” “Tell me this kid is not serious,” I thought to myself. “Danahyah, what is it?” I asked, still with sleep in my voice. “Grandma wants you.” “Oh my goodness! It’s Saturday and it’s 8:15 in the morning!” With my head under the pillows I roared like a lion. I crawled out of the bed and went upstairs. There she sat, a frail small-framed woman in a pink fleece robe, with a low white afro, wide awake. With a huge smile, “Morning, my Nicky.” I forced a smile. “Morning. You wanted me?” “Yes, your motha left and she didn’t even leave me a cup of tea to drink.” “Are you serious?” “Yes.” “Why are you waking me up at 8 o’clock on a Saturday morning? I am tired.” She continued, “Nothing, not even a slice of bread.” I laughed. I picked up the phone and called my mother. “Hi, where are you?” “I’m at the supermarket. Why?” she asked. “Because your mother wants tea and a slice of bread.” Devoney laughed, “I’ll be home soon.” “Why did you have to tell her that?” Cynthia asked. “Because I’m tired and it’s Saturday. I should be sleeping.” She smiled at me. “Talk to me, nuh.” “Now?” “Yes, why you can’t talk to your granny?” “Not at 8 in the morning on Saturday. Come on, now,” I said. “All right, go back to bed.” Her eyes stopped smiling and her head turned as if she were looking for someone.

I came back. “I’m already up. I’ll make you a cup of tea until Devoney comes from the store, and you can talk to me.” So I started to prepare her tea and she started talking about her past as if it were yesterday. How when she was my age she got up at six in the morning and started to clean the house and wash clothes. How she used to have a stream in the back of their home in Paisley, Montego Bay. I commented that I remembered visiting there as a child. She continued on about my mother, how she doesn’t cook well enough for her. It made me laugh, thinking she is always criticizing something. She started to talk about how she never had the opportunities that we had, for example, going to school. She was an uneducated woman. She worked as a maid almost all her life to take care of her four children. She was ignorant in every fashion. Her parents never talked to her about life or love and she in turn did not talk to my mother, and my mother in turn also did not talk to me.

Her rants would take place in moments when I wanted to sleep or when I was too tired to listen. However this rant that came from her lips has stayed with me even until today.

After a ten-minute rant that at the time felt like thirty minutes, I thought to myself, "Maybe because in one week I'll be moving, she needs to see more of me." I shrugged and went back downstairs and all sleep was gone from my body.

It has been six months since I moved out. I have visited at least once weekly. I would listen to rants as usual and then be on my way, feeling like I'd done my part to appease her loneliness. One particular visit on a cold winter day was shocking. I did not hear her squeaky voice calling my name. So I asked my brother, "Where is Cynthia?" He answered flatly, "Oh, she is in the hospital." "Why?" I asked. "She had a stroke," he answered. "Are you serious?" I asked again. Seems like I use that question for everything. "How bad is it, do you know?" "Nope," he replied. Seems like I'm talking to the walking dead. I dialed the phone to call my Mom and got only voicemail. "Whatever," I said. "Doesn't sound too serious from how he sounds."

I came back to visit the next day and still no squeak. I walked to the end of the hall to her room. There she lay like a baby, curled, eyes staring into space without their usual smile, mouth opened slightly. My heart dropped. I held her face in the palm of my hands whispering, "Grandma, can you hear me?" No reply. I felt the wet on my face as my eyes filled. I left the room in haste and darted up the stairs screaming, "Devoney!!" She came running out of her room with surprise on her face. My eyes searched her for an answer. She calmly said, "I didn't want to tell you." I understood. I left the house and went home.

I came back that same night and sat by her side looking for some hope. The silence from her lips was deafening. I kept hoping that the past that flowed from her lips would come alive again. Where is that squeak? Where are the rants I grew tired of? I wanted them back. My real life connection to my own past and where my future should go had been severed. My insight and understanding of my family were no longer there. There was nothing and there will never be anything again.

Bridging Generations through Popular Culture in Oscar Hijuelos's *The Mambo Kings Play Songs of Love*

Daren Dowlat

Different forms of entertainment can be used to link both the past to the present and characters to the reader. This is often evident in shows such as *The Honeymooners*, *Bonanza*, and *I Love Lucy* which, thanks to the magic of cable and syndication, are still viewed today, thereby connecting different generations. The same bridging of generations occurs when authors use music styles such as the mambo and blues songs of the early 1930s and 40s, which never seem to die, in their writings. These songs may be less popular at times but you can always find them being played on the radio, or you'll hear an old song covered by a modern artist, linking different generations of music fans. Authors can employ aspects of popular culture as non-human characters in their books to enrich characters and connect them to the reader. An example of this is Oscar Hijuelos's use of both the mambo and the *I Love Lucy* show in his novel *The Mambo Kings Play Songs of Love* (1989).

Hijuelos takes advantage of mambo music by using it to structure narration in his book. Hijuelos's unique style also gives readers a feeling of what it is like to be able to read sheet music or be Cesar listening to the same song over and over on the record player. The novel *The Mambo Kings Play Songs of Love* would be nothing without the mambo, a style of music brought to America from Cuba in the 1930s and 40s. As Isabelle Leymarie notes in *Mambo Mania: A Brief History of the Mambo*, the mambo, unlike other music styles, went to France, Haiti, Africa, and then Cuba before coming to the U.S. (40). The mambo itself was a genre that peaked in the 1950s before losing its appeal to the public. With the mambo clubs came the musicians from Cuba, as Hijuelos demonstrates in his book by mentioning such names as Tito Rodriguez, the Mambo Aces and, of course, the most famous Cuban at the time, Desi Arnaz, star of the *I Love Lucy* show. Arnaz himself became an idol after becoming famous and Cesar hoped he

could become the next Arnaz. Hijuelos often showed this in his book by not only Cesar's physical description but his antics as well, for example, when he came out on stage dressed as Ricky Ricardo, or as Hijuelos describes it "a la Arnaz" (85).

Hijuelos also touches on the many influences in the creation of the mambo by mentioning places that influenced the form or making them characters in his book. An example is the Mambo King's neighbors at the Hotel Splendour, a black couple. The man comes to Cesar asking for liquor so that he may have a drink with his lady friend. The Mambo King is constantly turning his attention to the woman until he states that she resembles a goddess from Arauca (Hijuelos 241). By doing so Hijuelos manages to touch on one of the places from which the mambo draws its influence, Africa (Morgan 1).

Although the Prologue mentions little about our main characters except for a brief overview and the rush of emotions Eugenio experiences about his father, it gives the reader a glimpse of who Cesar was, both when he was at the top of his game and what was left of him after a life of chasing women and drinking. According to Richard Patteson, "The prologue to *The Mambo Kings* might just as accurately be called an overture" (par. 5), or the introduction to a track on a CD or record where the artist is building up to what is viewed as the chorus or heart of a piece of music. Hijuelos's seemingly unimportant prologue, significantly connects the generations when Eugenio recognizes that the episode of the *I Love Lucy* show in which his father and uncle Cesar appeared is being shown on television again. We see how inventive Hijuelos can be in using music from a television show to create an emotional connection from father to son. Hijuelos is able to use music as a non-human character that will move the plot in his novel. Including the mambo in his story, the author is also giving us a timeline for when the events of his novel took place.

Cesar's life runs a course equivalent to the story of the mambo itself, in that the mambo's lifespan and the timeframe at which it was most famous and then phased out mirrors Cesar's own peak and then loss of vigor and appeal. Interestingly, both the mambo and Cesar hit the peak of their careers at the same time: the 1950s, which is when *I Love Lucy* is on television. As Hijuelos says, "In 1955 Arnaz himself would appear at the club where the brothers were performing at and ask them after hearing them play to appear on his show" (124). Cesar and Nestor would appear on the show. Through the eyes of Eugenio, Hijuelos manages to use the show to create a connection because the episodes often viewed by Eugenio were repeats since the show went off the air years before: "When I heard the first few strains of the *I Love Lucy* show I got excited because I knew she was referring to an item of eternity, that episode in which my dead father and Uncle Cesar had appeared, playing Ricky Ricardo's singing cousins fresh off the farm in Oriente Province" (3). Hijuelos connects two generations with this episode. This is much the way Cream's version of "Crossroads" connects today's blues fans with an era of blues decades ago.

Both the mambo and Cesar's life are played with reckless abandon and neither is solitary except towards the end of their popularity. We see this in the

participatory style of music the mambo became. A mambo patron never goes to a club just to listen to music and, when Cesar was the lead singer, women never went to hear the Mambo Kings just on account of their music. Mambo patrons always participate in the dance and women always left with Cesar, contributing to his fast and reckless lifestyle much in the way the music is played, with many instruments playing together to create the story of a life experience.

Through their music the Castillo brothers find a surrogate family in fellow band members. When they finally put together a band, the musicians become more than people they work with; they become brothers. We see the dedication these men give to the Castillos, practicing through the worst of conditions after working hours at their jobs. The men show the brothers a commitment only your family would, creating bonds that they consider blood. These men also put up with the many antics of Cesar whose sole goal is to be the next Desi Arnaz. For example, when Cesar comes out dressed like Ricky Ricardo, the other members of the band look past it and decide to stick with the Castillo brothers. The band's popularity leads the brothers to gain a moderate amount of fame, which in turn leads to their invitation to appear on the *I Love Lucy* show, a feat which under normal circumstances would not be attainable by an immigrant musician with no title or fame. This feat gives Eugenio the opportunity to see his father even after death. When Cesar finally gets a chance to meet Arnaz we see not only Cesar recreating a past, but Arnaz also. As Hijuelos puts it: "Arnaz and Cesar reinvented their pasts so that, in fact, they had probably been good friends," which shows a common mindset between the two (127). By discussing their native country and love of music, Cesar develops a relationship with Arnaz.

Mambo Kings takes the form of a song, record or sheet music written by Cesar. It starts off with an intro, Eugenio's narrative about watching the *I Love Lucy* show. Then the book takes the form of wild riffs being played, repeatedly, consisting of Cesar's wild nights and adventures until Nestor dies. The book then revisits the first part of the narrative, going back to the beginning as if the band has reached the "DC al Coda or repeat sign" (Hellman). The whole story is gone over again and again until the last section of the book which would be considered an outro. As the book begins to end, Hijuelos fittingly chooses to show our protagonist Cesar as deteriorating. He no longer is the Mambo King or stud, but fades, the way most songs do at the end.

At the novel's conclusion, Hijuelos returns to the episode of *I Love Lucy* with the Castillo brothers. There are two versions: one with Eugenio, Nestor's son, in it, and the original without him. This allows for a closer link between father, uncle, and son because now both generations share the meeting of Desi Arnaz, the man both Eugenio's father and uncle sought out to become: the epitome of success in America for any Cuban. We see in tying up his entire novel, Hijuelos returns to where it began, like a record, and like the mambo itself.

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Fleur de Sel with a Grain of Salt?

Jennifer Contreras

Welcome to Dining Room Operations. All semester long you will be asked to exemplify professionalism. You will be expected to raise the bar, your standards, and push aside any “me-first” attitude that, so often, wrongly appears in many service-oriented businesses. Your classroom will consist of napkins and wine glasses, entrée forks and knives. Of course you will think “good” service can be explained through the tired cliché: the guest is always right, but you will soon learn this is more than just a convenient line to mutter whenever a McDonald’s cashier sasses you, or the Domino’s pizza delivery man takes more than thirty minutes to deliver. After all, what does “good” even mean? You are guaranteed to be tested and tried, forced out of any comfort zone you have. In order to become a successful hospitality *professional*, you will be introduced to new tastes and experiences, and for those who want it, the chance at honing your service skills.

Personally, a fine dining experience was something I had never had prior to the Dining Room Operations class, let alone something I cared to provide for others. Undoubtedly, I understood the connection between service and the hospitality industry, but I thought fine dining was only for those that could afford it. The characteristics of fine dining seemed to go beyond excellent service and focus on excluding underprivileged members of society. This notion seemed to go against my definition of service. I struggled to accept that fine dining was something more than pampering the self-important and self-indulged. But, in order to make any fair judgments on fine dining, I knew I had to have a fine dining experience of my own. Of course, since having this experience was part of a required class project, and worth a large portion of my overall grade, I warmed up to the notion rather quickly.

Fleur de Sel, located in the Flatiron District of Manhattan, posed a terrific option where I could conduct a thorough evaluation and discover for myself what fine dining was all about. The restaurant specializes in French cuisine from the Northwest of France, a region known as Brittany. This area is not only the birthplace of executive Chef Cyril Renaud, but of the beloved sea salt for which the restaurant is named. Fleur de Sel operates under Chef Cyril Renaud, whose previous successes have been with two other French restaurants in Manhattan, Bouley and La Caravelle. Desserts are created by pastry chef Devin McDavid. Fleur de Sel has received numerous accolades for the sensation

it has become, yet I wondered whether I would enjoy the experience provided me as much as the reviews seemed to promise.

The moment of truth began before I arrived at the establishment, when I was greeted warmly over the telephone by a courteous male who gave me the impression that I had called with perfect timing. Then again, I had made every effort to call long before the time of day when staff members are drained from the stressful pace associated with successful restaurants. Still, I remained wary of the experience I would have. Nonetheless, my reservation had been confirmed, and I would find out if Fleur de Sel would be on a par with everything I secretly hoped it to be.

My belief that all fine dining comes with a heavy bill proved to be a fallacy as I researched the lunch options, surprised at the various tasting menus available for reasonable prices. The lunch tasting menu of my choice was just under \$60. The restaurant offered excellent price value, considering the foods that were served and the care that went into making them superb.

The restaurant emitted warmth and was inviting, with hints of femininity. Billowy white curtains, soft lighting and cushioned booths adorned with decorative pillows presented a romantic setting without being too forward. When I entered, the host swiftly removed my coat and sat my guest and me at a corner table in the far end of the restaurant. The seating was prompt, and I appreciated being in a position from where I could easily observe the service and atmosphere. Aware that the restaurant had opened just short of an hour ago, I knew it was still too early for there to be many diners. However, I was impressed with the fact that there was only one front server and one back server, both of whom provided the same smooth flow of service for each of the five tables.

After we were seated for a few minutes, the front server arrived with two menus and discussed with us the different lunch tasting menus of the day. Giving us some time to think, the waiter then started on another table nearby. After careful consideration, my partner and I decided we wanted to order the three-course tasting menu. I chose one in which each plate seemed to balance something different and something I knew I would enjoy. For example, I could imagine what the butternut squash soup would taste and look like, but imagined the truffle oil would change the flavor significantly. And having used bitter greens in class, I wondered how the chef would use those flavors to compliment the chicken liver pâté appetizer. To compliment the three-course tasting menu, I added the wine pairing for an additional price, hoping the wine would enhance the taste experience of each course.

After we ordered, the front server vanished and the back server appeared with two kinds of bread and fresh European butter. The back server offered a choice between rye and sourdough bread. He delicately placed two rustic, crispy rye slices onto my bread and butter plate using tongs instead of the complicated spoon and fork method, and gave the sourdough bread to my guest. The rye bread had a pronounced, almost nutty flavor, and a flaky outside. The sourdough was much lighter and softer with a slightly sour taste. Both were delicious, but I knew I did not want to fill up on bread.

The wines to be paired with the first courses were presented to our table and poured. The server explained the wines, always keeping the label facing both me and my guest. The wines were already opened because we would only be having a glass, not a whole bottle. The butternut squash soup was paired with a fresh and fruity white wine, Catarratto, Tenuta Rapitalia, Piano Maltese, Sicily, Italy 2007. The chicken liver pâté was paired with a different white wine, Viognier, Echelon, Clarksburg, California 2006. Afterwards the wines were returned to the wine holder located in the center of the dining room. After the wine service, our back server pointed the table for our appetizers, and shortly after, arrived with both appetizers in hand. As I had imagined, the truffle oil brought an appealing earthiness instead of the typical sweetness often associated with this soup. The butternut squash soup was smooth and silky, with bubbles from the white foam garnish that popped on the tongue, adding interest. I was happy to discover that foam would appear in another course I had ordered. My guest's appetizer was a balance of color between the pale pink, molded smooth chicken liver pâté that was served chilled, and the side of bright green frisée and chervil salad, which had its bitter tastes balanced with a truffle vinaigrette. Crispy buttery bread complimented the woody flavors of the salad, and the mellow and rich pâté was beautifully paired with the refreshing wine, which contained hints of lemon.

Again, the back server arrived to remove our plates and pointed our table for the entrées, making sure to crumb the table as well as refilling our water and bread. The front server had poured our wines, and again explained them to us. The floral scented Pinot Noir, Côte de Nuits Village, Domaine Rion, Burgundy, France 2003, would be paired with my order of the pan-seared blue cod with braised cabbage, tomato confit and shallot foam. The crispness of the skin gave texture to the otherwise buttery melt-in-your-mouth, almost sensuous-tasting flesh of the cod. The cod fish lay on a bed of shredded tender cabbage with sweet tomato flavors that balanced with an airy foam, this time having a light onion taste. My guest had his own sensual experience with the braised beef short ribs that had a rich flavor stemming from the earthy wild mushroom garnish, and the beurre noisette sauce which pooled under a fluffy cloud of celeriac purée. The celeriac purée tasted like mashed potatoes, both in texture and flavor, and nicely absorbed much of the rich brown butter sauce.

Satisfied with the first two courses, my partner and I could not fathom what other pleasing surprises the kitchen would deliver. The back server arrived to point the table for dessert, and later, to drop both plates. Slowly, more diners began to enter the restaurant, but the total covers never exceeded a dozen. When the desserts arrived, the back server switched the orders, and my partner and I had to exchange plates with one another. This small mix up, of course, was easily forgivable. The apple gratin was composed of tart apple slices with a crunchy top layer and a mound of refreshing green apple sorbet, which tasted more like ice cream. It was accompanied by a dessert wine, Suaternes, Castelnau de Suduiraut, Bordeaux, France 2001. My guest ordered the assorted sorbets on top of a light, crisp meringue. The meringue added texture to the various creamy

fruit sorbets that included raspberry, grapefruit, and lemon flavors; and the dessert was paired with Noble Blend, Lilly Pilly, NSW, Australia 2006. Both desserts had balance of color, and were slightly larger portions than the previous courses. In addition, I felt that the desserts were understated, having a simple yet elegant plate design.

As “Wild Horses” by The Sundays played softly, I could not help but observe the connection between the dessert and the feel of the restaurant. The serene, comfortable elegance and unobtrusive service were easy to overlook. But, when paying close enough attention, I could see the magic of it all.

In retrospect, I was so pleased with the meal that for a brief moment, all seemed to be right with the world, and I gained a deep appreciation for the privilege given to me to dine and have this experience. I refuse to look at fine dining restaurants the same way I did before I dined at Fleur de Sel. I realize I could possibly have had a different experience at this same restaurant, at a different time, with different servers, food, or prices. Furthermore, I understand the importance of researching a restaurant before dining in order to have the right expectations. I also learned that fine dining does require something of us, as guests, but in return can offer something great. We are asked to make reservations, to dress according to the dress code, to savor, not devour, to sip, not slurp. But this does not mean that guests cannot feel comfortable or relaxed. Dining at Fleur de Sel proved to me that while all fine dining restaurants may not be the same, new experiences should be given a chance before we form an opinion of them, and lessons aren't just learned in a classroom.

Chinese Bakery

Sue Cheng

Fa Da Bakery, in Flushing where I live, has lots of breads and pastries. My favorites are the hot-dog-inside-sweet bread, the egg-cruste d sweet bread with red bean filling, the egg custard, and the yellow cake with fruit filling. Fa Da Bakeries are located all over New York City—in Flushing, Chinatown, and Sunset Park, Brooklyn. When I walk in, there is the smell of sweet bread and it's very relaxing. There is open seating and I usually get cold milk tea and sit while I decide on what I should get. A glass counter up front shows all the pastries. The bread sits out in the open for people to pick and choose which one they would like to get.

I usually get a hot-dog-inside-sweet bun. I stand on line and wait to buy it. When I get to the counter, they ask me if that is all I want, and I usually say “I don't speak Mandarin, can you please speak English?” Then I pay for the bread and go back to my table and eat my bread and drink my milk tea. I bite into my sweet bread and can taste the hot dog with it. I take my time eating it because it tastes so good. I take little sips of my milk tea. It takes about thirteen bites to finish. While eating, I think of my mother because when I was younger, my mother used to get me hot-dog-bread for lunch.

One time I was still very hungry after my hot dog bread. I still had a little bit of my milk tea left so I decided to get a pastry. The pastries are not inside the glass counter, but outside it, and I can just pick it up and pay for it. I got a Chinese egg custard, which smells of sweet eggs and milk. I picked it up and got on line. The egg custard gives me a deep warm feeling of my mother taking care of me. I think of how my mother used to get me egg custards after dinner. I went back to my seat and ate it while sipping on my cold milk tea. It is flaky-cruste d on the outer edges and on the bottom, and has an open top with egg custard filling. It looks like a miniature pie. I began to feel full. One egg custard was just right.

Had I been with my mother, she would've gotten a whole bag of bread and pastries, a variety, especially my favorites, including the sweet bread with red bean filling and a slice of the yellow cake. She would have taken it home and we would've had them with lunch and dinner. Fa Da Bakery carries the best Chinese bread and pastries. They take very good care of their customers.

A Poor Man's Truth

Melissa Lebruin

Poverty alleviation is largely seen as the most pressing issue faced by the world today. Like a stain on the moral and social fabric of humanity, poverty persists despite numerous humanitarian and administrative attempts at eliminating its causes. In fact, many believe that it is those same administrative laws, along with human rights abuses, discrimination and inequality that add fuel to the fire. Andrew Carnegie addressed the question of poverty and more in his essay, "The Gospel of Wealth" (1889) by highlighting the benefits of wealth and suggesting a variety of ways in which the privileged can help alleviate poverty. Jacob Riis, on the other hand, takes us on a journey through the extremely squalid conditions of one of New York City's worst tenements to expose the desperate circumstances of its tenants. His *How the Other Half Lives* (1890) paints a vivid picture of the often overlooked city slums of that era.

Andrew Carnegie's view of the obligations of the wealthy is aptly summed up in the opening line of his essay. He states, "The problem of our age is the proper administration of wealth, so that the ties of brotherhood may still bind together the rich and poor in harmonious relationship" (98). Carnegie believed that if wealth management were left to those most capable, society as a whole would benefit through the lessened gap between rich and poor that would occur as a result. He found that proper government of wealth would be more beneficial to the poor than if monies were disbursed to them individually in small amounts over a period of time. The latter he thought would only lead to indulgence and waste. He also believed that the self-made rich owed a service to the community that could be realized through philanthropic works which would uplift his fellow man. Carnegie suggested the creation of recreational parks, public interest institutions and museums as a few of the ways in which the wealthy should give back. He then named a few wealthy men who had been successful in this approach to philanthropy. Carnegie's ideals portrayed the rich man as a "trustee" for his poorer brethren (101).

However, Riis's firsthand account of New York's poverty-stricken tenements at the turn of the century gave a very different view. It not only described the conditions of the dwelling spaces of the working poor, but also unveiled the lax health and safety laws that guided the city during that era. Riis's narrations of life in the tenements gave a gripping depiction of the absolute horrors that can occur when the management of public interests falls into so-called capable hands. He described a stark building with inadequate heating, crumbling walls, foul stench and rooms overcrowded with people already resigned to a dreadful fate. Death in the tenements is not only accepted with a flippant wave of the hand but sometimes even welcomed. Riis identified children as having suffered the most from this poverty because of their overall vulnerability. Riis believed that these poor living conditions were overlooked

because its tenants were mostly immigrants who worked for subsistence wages, which is why he stated, "...they hold within their clutch the wealth and business of New York" (106). Riis's account shows us that though the wealthy might be capable of managing public interests, they are not always willing or just enough to do so. Wealthy people are often too concerned with accumulating more wealth to devote time to assisting the poor.

Carnegie in his era could have provided decent low-cost housing for those living in these deplorable tenements. He could have also attempted an investigation into the inner workings of the New York City Health Department and the reasons for their poor enforcement of health and safety laws. His proposals on the handling of wealth, if administered justly, could have then eventually closed the gap between rich and poor by providing the education, financial backing and motivation needed to help the poor become successful. This would, by extension, benefit future generations. Things would have been easier for Edwidge Danticat and her family in their era had these proposals been made law. Her essay, "New York Was Our City on the Hill" (2004) details their struggle with poverty while trying to build a home in New York. If Danticat's parents had been allowed access to the financial resources to start a business, success would have come at a less harsh price for that family. In their case, the wealthy would have been able to help hardworking people create a means of providing for themselves thereby overcoming poverty. Free healthcare would have also helped Danticat's parents take better care of her sick brother. Today, Carnegie's proposals are only practiced by a select few. Thankfully these people contribute to the wellbeing of society by setting up foundations that offer pertinent resources required for the survival and advancement of the human race. Charities like the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Buffet Foundation provide for free to the underprivileged around the world: medicine, education, and other expensive resources. Yet sadly, nearly forty percent of the world still live in abject poverty. More than a century after Carnegie's and Riis's works were first published, poor people continue to fall victim to misguided governments whose main concern is to protect their own interests and do so by mismanaging public funds and passing deficient laws. As a result, the gap between the rich and poor widens while the needy continue living with the only truth that they know—the truth of an uncertain future.

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The Idea that Wealth Brings Happiness

Ashley Alioto

Americans are influenced by their culture to be captivated with the goal of having an elite status and obtaining incredible wealth. Many who immigrate to the United States aspire to fulfill their American Dream which they conceive as achieving prosperity and self-reliance. Although on the surface attaining the typical American Dream seems desirable, immigrants who are fortunate enough to achieve such status soon discover there is little satisfaction and personal growth once they have gained riches. Two novels which portray the struggle of determining one's American identity while living in a money-driven society are *A Free Life* by Ha Jin and *Song of Solomon* by Toni Morrison. In these books, Jin and Morrison focus on the quest for American roots and a sense of national belonging. While Nan Wu, the protagonist in Jin's novel, is seeking to establish American roots, Milkman, the protagonist in Morrison's novel, is on a journey to trace his family roots. Despite their different styles, both authors weave historical events into a plot that shows the money-driven nature of American culture.

In *A Free Life*, Ha Jin depicts the journey of Nan Wu, a Chinese immigrant seeking independence from China and fulfillment of the American Dream. The first problem shown is his lack of national belonging. According to

the *Pacific Review*, “After the June 4, 1989, Tiananmen Square Massacre, and for the first time since the formation of the People’s Republic of China, a substantial number of political activists succeeded in leaving their motherland” (Beja). Ha Jin includes this historical event as the reason for Nan’s migration to the United States. As a political science major, Nan decides to break off all relations with China because of his disgust for the government after the Tiananmen Massacre. Nan mentions to Pingping that he wishes they could “squeeze the old country out of their blood” (Jin 235). He describes China as accepting only “those who could make substantial contributions to its economic and technological development”; everyone else “wouldn’t matter at all” and was “already counted as a loss.” Immigrating to the United States provided Nan with the “opportunity for a new beginning” to become “self-sufficient” (Jin 356). Nan settles in America with the intention of sacrificing himself in order to create a better life for his son Taotao (Jin 55).

A second problem within the novel is once Nan achieves financial stability, he realizes he is still miserable. Society dictates that it is crucial to gain a great abundance of money in America. In the article “Fortune Hunters,” Lisa Cullens describes immigrants’ traditional American Dream as “[a]rrive in this country for a menial job with scant pay. Save and save until you can open a small business—in recent years, a takeout restaurant or a dry cleaner. Buy a modest house in the suburbs. Send the kids to college and hope they’ll grow up to be doctors, so they can subsidize your golden years” (Cullens). This path is almost identical to Nan’s journey as an immigrant; however, he soon discovers the false sense of happiness resulting from this dream. Nan describes Americans as worshipping money as if it were God (Jin 66). Ha Jin displays the harsh consequences of being mesmerized by wealth. Although Nan’s good friend and fellow Chinese immigrant Bao attained great success as an artist, in the end he failed at life in America and became homeless as a result of falling subject to “money grubbing instead of aspiring to a higher order of artistic achievement” (Jin 576). Another example of American money-grubbing is seen when the Wus sell their restaurant, The Gold Wok, to their friends Shubo and Niyao. Due to health issues and a back injury, Nan and Pingping were not well enough to handle their business. Nan agrees to sell The Gold Wok under the assumption that Shubo and Niyao would remain his friends. However, once Nan regains his health and asks to work at The Gold Wok, Shubo refuses him and Pingping jobs and merely replies that “business is business” (Jin 613).

Nan recognizes that he was using the idea of the American Dream to shield himself from the fact that he was afraid of being rejected for pursuing his passion for poetry. He concludes that he “wasted so many years and avoided what he really desired to do, inventing all kinds of excuses—sacrifices for his son, his effort to pay off the mortgage, his pursuit of the American Dream. . . .” (Jin 605). After returning to China, Nan finds that his family members are only interested in the American money he is making and his new financial stability. This discovery pushes him to focus on his family and passion for poetry and to stop “existing in the flesh” (Jin 419).

Morrison's novel, *Song of Solomon*, places emphasis also on the desire for national belonging as well as the harsh effects of craving money. In this novel, Morrison shows Milkman's mythical passage into adulthood during his search for identity. Milkman, a self-centered middle class African American living in Michigan after the Great Migration, becomes frustrated by his seemingly unstable and abnormal family members and his ambiguous lineage. Throughout his life, Milkman observes his father's hoarding of money. In the article "Anaconda Love," Gary Storhoff describes Macon Dead II saying, "He consumes himself with the outward symbols of wealth and elegance, buying the finest cars while the rest of the African-American community in his city suffers dire poverty" (Storhoff). Macon Dead II embodies the typical American money-driven attitude whereas Milkman does not share his father's concern for wealth. When Macon Dead II hires Milkman as an employee in hopes to teach him how to become a ruthless businessman, he is disappointed to discover that Milkman does not have any desire for money. "He was friendly—just the opposite of his father—and the tenants felt at ease enough with him to tease him, feed him, confide in him" (Morrison 57). Macon Dead II once again reveals his greed when he persuades Milkman to steal the bag of gold from his sister, Pilate, and then to travel to Shalimar, Virginia to continue to search for the gold, telling Milkman to "Get it. For both of us. Please get it, son. Get the gold" (Morrison 171). Although Milkman initially embarks on his journey in search of gold, his passage to Shalimar becomes a personal growing experience filled with deep emotional meaning and allows Milkman to find a connection to his ancestors.

We also see the control that an obsession with money has over a person's actions when Milkman asks his friend Guitar Bains for assistance in his search for the lost gold. Milkman's seemingly loyal friend Guitar, who endured extreme poverty and family abandonment his entire life, is intrigued with becoming rich and even fantasizes about how he would spend his riches if they were to successfully steal the gold (Morrison 179). Guitar, blinded by his greed, becomes paranoid with the thought that Milkman is planning to cut him out of his share of the gold. As a new inductee of the Seven Days, a group of African-American men who avenge the deaths of African Americans by killing whites, Guitar's violent nature intensifies. Although Milkman pleads with Guitar explaining that the only treasure he discovered in Shalimar was his family's lineage, Guitar continues to pursue Milkman, eventually leading to death.

Society has fabricated the idea that money and wealth lead to happiness. Many people immigrate to the United States solely in search of becoming rich and successful. However, having an obsession with money can transform people, causing them to be selfish and insatiable. Both Milkman and Nan come to terms with the harsh effects of fixating on wealth and discover the true sources of happiness in their lives. In their novels *Ha Jin* and *Toni Morrison* accurately display the brutal actions and betrayal caused by Americans' money-driven attitudes.

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The Undeniable Race to Happiness

Seung Lee

Jung-Hoon was born in Pyongyang, North Korea in 1990. He was born into a middle class family with their own house and a small car fitting four. But that year, Jung-Hoon's family had very little food to eat each day. He faced hunger frequently, but his parents couldn't do anything about it. That year when the national celebration rolled along, *Sui Nal*, Korean New Year's Day, others filled their tables with *dduk gook*, a traditional rice soup, but the boy and his family only had one bowl of *dduk gook* to share. The boy asked for more when he could see the bottom of the bowl. But there was no more.

When Jung-Hoon was twelve years old, he attended his first year of school. The first thing he saw entering the classroom was a picture of Kim Il-sung, the dictator of the country. They adored and praised him. The teachers forced Jung-Hoon to praise Kim Il-sung or else they would beat him and isolate him from the others. Jung-Hoon hated this so much until one day he told his parents about the beating and isolation, but they could do nothing about it except embrace Jung-Hoon in their arms and say they were sorry. Jung-Hoon didn't understand his parent's tears. Somehow he felt guilty for telling his parents about the abuse.

The beatings at school continued. Sometimes Jung-Hoon was afraid to go to school so he hid in the sewers. If one of Kim Il-sung's guards found him, he and his family would be tortured and their possessions confiscated. While in the sewers, he saw other children filthier and much hungrier than himself. He asked one boy his name, but he didn't reply and just ran away from Jung-Hoon.

One afternoon leaving the sewers, he saw a family being dragged into the river while being tortured by one of Kim Il-sung's guards. The scream of the mother and the cry of the baby terrified Jung-Hoon. All he could do was stand there and watch this terrifying moment. Jung-Hoon looked around but there was no one to help, and if there were, the guards would take them away as well.

"Hey, kid! What are you looking at! Huh? Keep walking! Go home!" yelled the guards.

Jung-Hoon ran scared all the way to his house. The next day after school, Jung-Hoon went to the river again. This time there were no guards. Being curious, Jung-Hoon went looking for the family. What he saw he would never forget. He saw the family from yesterday, dead and left behind in the streets. People said they left them in the streets so others knew if they did something bad, they would face the same consequences. The authorities want to warn them, to show their power and abilities; but more importantly, to threaten them.

Not until 2002 would things change. One early morning that year, Jung-

Hoon's mother woke him up. It was 2 a.m.

"Keep quiet. Don't let go of my hand, and don't be afraid," said his mother.

Jung-Hoon didn't know what was going on. Grabbing his hand, his mother led him to the car very quietly. The headlights on the car were off. The car drove quietly to the river. That is when Jung-Hoon realized that his family was trying to cross the border from North to South Korea.

"My dear boy...Mom will always, ALWAYS love you, okay?" whispered Jung-Hoon's mother. Then he lost consciousness.

A long period of time seemed to pass. When Jung-Hoon woke up it was cold, icy and wet. Looking around, everything looked like a sewer. Next to him was his mother, still holding his hand tightly. Jung-Hoon tried to wake her up, but she seemed to be sleeping. He noticed blood coming from a cut on her head. Jung-Hoon shook her desperately until her eyes opened.

"It's done. We made it!" she whimpered.

A day passed in the sewers with no food or drink. Fortunately a man, whom Jung-Hoon didn't know, came and took them to his dark van covered with plastic. They drove for a distance and the van stopped, arriving at an apartment. Looking through a window of the apartment, Jung-Hoon saw South Korea for the first time. He and his family had finally arrived in Seoul, South Korea.

This is a true story of my best friend (his name has been changed) who is a normal person just like all of us living in the U.S. I had no idea about the hard life he had in North Korea. Through telling this story, I wish all Koreans and Korea would unite as one so no one has to face what my friend did.

The Pursuit of Happiness

Blaise Tega

My life as an immigrant has not been easy. I had traveled to many countries before to visit or to work, but I never imagined that one day I would move to a foreign country indefinitely. Georgia was the first state in the U.S. I went to in January, 2006. I was depressed and sad because of what I lost. About thirty dollars a day was spent on phone cards to talk to my family at home in Cameroon.

I next moved to the Bronx, New York. This crowded city with all these immigrants was like a Spanish country because it seemed everyone was speaking Spanish around me. I was surprised that rent in an old building was \$850 for a living room, bathroom, one bedroom and a kitchen. That was double what I paid in Atlanta. In Atlanta the same apartment would have a garden and be beautiful and clean.

Even though there were many immigrants in New York City, it was not easy to make friends. However, I stayed in the Bronx. I was thinking perhaps I would die from loneliness.

It was then I received bad news, and it was not loneliness that would give me more pain. News from my mother said that my sweet wife was pregnant. I was so quiet on the phone that my mother asked if I was still there. I said “yes” with a breaking voice.

Then my mother asked, “Do you understand what this means?”

The only thing I could think of was that my wife sometimes went to Stephan’s house, my best friend. I was going crazy. I needed to talk to somebody. It crossed my mind to kill myself.

The next day I went to a park and spent almost the entire day lying on the public bench. Through the help of another immigrant from the Ivory Coast, I made an appointment with a psychologist and then after several months of therapy I started to feel much better and wanted to build a new future for my life perhaps better than my past.

Now I was broke. Almost a year had passed since my last job. My friend from the Ivory Coast, Brahim, found me a job in a Puerto Rican restaurant. This was a minimum wage job, and I had to work six days a week, 3 – 11 p.m. It was awful, but then I found a job at “Just Bagels” for \$7.15. On these jobs I learned more Spanish than English so I had to enroll in evening classes, English as a Second Language, to learn English. Finally, I worked at “International Delight” for \$8.50.

Then I went back to see my therapist. She encouraged me to keep working hard and said that I would find my way. She advised me to have a plan and then work through it. My first plan was to go back to school. One of my

colleagues advised me if I would like to study that I should find a soft job that would give me more time to study. I then chose to be a security guard and started taking training at City College in a program for adults. In the end, I received certificates and a license. I found a security job and was assigned to work in the French Embassy for \$9.50. Then I got another job as a member of a team of culture services organizing private parties for \$15 an hour.

This is not enough still, but I think I am on track. My first plan has been achieved since I am enrolled at City Tech. The wheels are now in motion, and I can believe in success and happiness again.

Being an immigrant is not easy, not only in the United States, but everywhere in the world. You deal with problems of language, rent, food, jobs, friendship and homelessness. These problems force you to accept any kind of job with minimum pay. But I prefer to accept minimum wage than stand with those without disabilities on the street or subway asking for a quarter or a dollar saying the same story, "they just stole my wallet. I need a dollar or whatever you can give me to buy a metro card." I prefer those guys who sell candies to take care of themselves because it's safer than selling drugs on the street.

When I was in Cameroon, my family always made donations to help the homeless. We never thought to be in their place, to feel what they feel, to feel the pain they had in their hearts. We thought we knew what they felt, but in reality, we didn't. Now I do.

What else can I say? My wife and I are now going through a divorce. My next step is to graduate and have a new life. I wish to have two or three children so I don't have to be alone. After going through hardship as an immigrant, I am a stronger person.

Coming to a foreign country means starting everything over. It's like we are born again and need to learn how to walk, to speak, to eat and to make friends – all in this pursuit of happiness!

Philosophy Journal

Joel Arbaje

In Plato's *Republic*, Plato and Glaucon are having a conflict defining human morals. Glaucon tells the story of Gyges, an ordinary shepherd who stumbles upon a magical, golden ring which allows him to disappear amongst his peers if and when he chooses, letting him freely choose to commit *just* or *unjust* acts. Choosing the unjust path, Gyges decides it is in his best interest to seduce the queen, murder the king and take the throne. The legend of Gyges proves the statement made by Glaucon that "we are all unjust" by nature. When given the power and or opportunity, we will always choose to be unjust if we are allowed to get away with it, and avoid facing the negative consequences. Glaucon states that if we were able to live like Gyges, then it would be like being a God among men, taking all that we desire of wealth and power, proving the natural state of self-interest for power that consumes us all. In my honest opinion, if we would be able to live without the guilt of being a self-indulgent deity among our peers who suffer at the hand of the cruel unjust world, then I believe anyone would do exactly the same as Gyges did. In society, we praise those that promote justice because we have been trained to believe that this is the right conduct, and with that type of mentality we are psychologically developed to have these kinds of *morals*. They allow us to perceive what appears to be just and unjust. Plato's rationalist views coincide with Hobbes's theory in *Leviathan*. Hobbes claims are that all men seek self-interest and need security from others who try to commit unjust acts. The desire for security ends up in a "war of all against all." The "selfish" theory is the driving force behind our striving for happiness.

In John Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* we learn that in order to attain knowledge we have to adopt the empirical standpoint which involves direct observation both of the material and mental worlds. He believes all our knowledge is derived from the senses and not so much from reason or a purely rationalist point of view. Locke takes what he receives from his senses in high regard and trusts them unconditionally. All objects that we can sense and that have a physical state have what he calls "qualities," which then bring certain "ideas" to our minds and allow us to relate to them. Two types of ideas come from an object with certain qualities. "Primary Qualities" are physical attributes that make up the object and without these qualities the object wouldn't exist at all. Hence, they are the real qualities of objects. These "Primary Qualities" are solidity, extension, figure, number, and motion which are just the

atomic structure of the object and cannot be changed. The “Secondary Qualities” are characteristics of an object which, if they were eliminated from the object, the “Primary Qualities” would still remain. The “Secondary Qualities” consist of color, sound, texture, and smell. To prove that “Secondary Qualities” exist only in ideas in the mind and do not affect the objects’ existence, he asks the reader a simple question: “If you turn off all the lights, a state where no colors are seen, doesn’t the object still exist?” He wants you to understand that it’s there because it always has its “Primary Qualities” and there isn’t anything that you could do to change that.

In René Descartes’ *Meditations*, he theorizes that we should not rely on our senses as a primary source for acquiring knowledge because we don’t always receive the correct information and are left deceived by our very own senses. Descartes wants to be certain that all facts that he has acquired until now are indeed what they are said to be and not just a matter of misinterpretation from his senses, leaving them mere opinions. We are taught to believe that seeing is believing and even knowing. “So, for the purpose of rejecting all of my opinions, it will be enough if I find in each of them at least some reason for doubt” is how Descartes goes about his thinking. To truly prove your knowledge you must take certain elements into consideration that may cause you to change the way you think about things. You can easily see that if you were a madman and your brain did not work as it should, then the simplest task like looking at a color and trying to associate that color with its name could be flawed. We can often be tricked by the senses by making assumptions based on similar situations and similar items. For example, if we were to see a nice man who gives to charity and acts like a good Samaritan accused of a violent crime, we would be baffled. The only fact that is known is that there is more to knowledge than just what we can sense.

A Mark for Life

Kwon Ellis

A personal experience I will never forget is when I cut myself. It scarred me and left a mark on me for life. I remember that day as if it were yesterday. I was doing some plumbing work at the home of a member of my family. Theo (one of the guys who worked for my family) and I were putting in a new water main. The old one was leaking badly, and it was beyond repair. I was digging the ground in the basement to clear the way for the new PVC, a thick white plastic pipe.

It was Tuesday, June 10, 2006. I checked my watch and saw that it was about 11 a.m. I usually start working at six in the morning, but for some reason I started later that day. Instead of breakfast, my co-worker and I decided to go for lunch. Subway (the restaurant) was very crowded. I asked the girl to make me a chicken sandwich with American cheese, lettuce and green pepper. After having lunch I went back to work, but I was not feeling well. I was getting that little knot in my stomach, that feeling a person gets when you think or even know that something is about to go wrong. I remembered that I had to get back to fixing the pipe in the basement.

The straight piece of PVC was too long. I could not believe it because when I checked the PVC earlier, it was the right measurement. I said to myself, "Why is this so long? I just checked it." So I took the pipe in my hand and started looking around for my power saw to cut it. Then I remembered that I had not brought the saw. I started to look around for something to cut the pipe. The only thing I could find was a sheetrock knife. Sheetrock knives are very sharp. I took the knife in my right hand because I am right-handed, and then I gripped the PVC in my left hand. The next thing that I did will remain with me for the rest of my life.

The knife slipped while I was cutting the pipe. All I saw was blood. I had cut the main artery that supplied blood to my left thumb, and all I could see was my blood gushing out of my left hand. It was like I was in a scary movie, and I had got my hand chopped off. My friend Theo was in the back, and I did not say anything right then. Then I saw Theo walking toward me, and he asked me what was wrong with me. Then he saw the blood gushing out of my hand. Theo almost passed out because he doesn't like the sight of blood at all.

Then he said, "Kwon, what the hell did you do?" I said to him that I had been trying to cut the PVC pipe with the sheetrock knife, and it slipped and I cut myself by mistake. So Theo took off his T-shirt, and he tied it tightly around my

cut hand. He and I went outside to call 911. Both of us had left our cell phones at home by mistake. Theo ran to the payphone, but when he reached it, a cop car drove by me. The cops looked at me and then stopped the car. The officers, named John and Oral, asked me what was wrong. I did not really answer them. Then I started to talk to Officer John. He asked me, "Where is all this blood coming from?" I kind of looked at him like he was stupid, and I showed him. I took the t-shirt off my hand, and then the blood started to gush out at him.

He moved back very fast so that the blood did not get on him. Officer Oral asked if I was okay because I was not freaking out, and I calmly said yes, I was okay. Even though I had an open cut on my hand with a lot of blood gushing out, I did not freak out. I knew that if I had an open cut, and if I started to panic, the blood could run out faster. At that moment I remember that the two officers were making jokes about how calm and peaceful I was. Finally the FDNY came. I was put in the ambulance, and the EMS people in the ambulance took the shirt off my cut so they could try to stop the blood. They rushed me to Kings County Hospital. Theo called my family and let them know what had happened to me.

I was still acting bizarrely calm when I was in the ER. A doctor came and looked at my hand. He took off the bandage and the blood was still coming out. I can remember my doctors then asking things like what my name was, how was I doing and how old I was. They all asked me what had happened to me, so I told them everything. Now it was time to start the surgery. All I could see were doctors in blue scrubs, with goggles and masks. One doctor asked me if I wanted them to numb the area or put me to sleep. I said "Hell, yes. Put me to sleep." The doctor said to me, "Count down from ten to one." I can remember that I reached about five before I passed out. The surgery was about four to five hours long.

Much later, I woke up to see all my family around me and then my doctor came in and told us what he had done in the surgery. He told them that he could not join back the main artery that linked the main vein to my left thumb. So he had to put a link in my hand to join back the artery so the blood could pass freely through my hand. Then he put twelve stitches in my hand to close the cut. This experience has left me checking and double-checking all decisions that I make. When making decisions that deal with power and non-power tools (power saw, screwdriver), I just look at my hand and think about it twice before making a decision. Now I find myself more careful when it comes to any kind of tool.

Safety in the Construction Industry

Stanley Wu

In “The Men We Carry in Our Mind. . . and How They Differ from the Real Lives of Most Men,” an essay written in 1984, Scott Russell Sanders said, “the men I knew labored with their bodies. . . They got up before light, worked all day long whatever the weather, and when they came home at night they looked as though somebody had been whipping them” (701). To provide for their families, these men sacrificed their bodies. They worked in dangerous conditions. Their bodies were either being destroyed slowly by all the toxins and brutal work or were mangled by dangerous machinery. Scott Russell Sanders was born into the laborer group but was determined to break free from his fate.

In the years since Sanders’s essay, have there been improvements in workers’ safety? Or do blatant problems remain in certain industries, such as construction? The fact is the construction business today is still a very dangerous place to work. Three articles respond to the horrific increase in construction accidents this year. “Danger and Rip-offs Are on the Rise: How Hot Construction Biz Brings a Black Market, Scams and Deaths,” an article by Brian Kates in the *Daily News* of May 27, 2007, focuses on the illegally employed workers in the construction workforce. “High-Rise Safety Rules Offer No Guarantee” by Thomas J. Lueck in the *New York Times* of April 20, 2008, states that even with safety rules in place, accidents still happen. An editorial from the *New York Times* on June 11, 2008, “A Far-Too-Dangerous Business,” says safety measures in the construction industry need to be significantly tougher. Also, I have interviewed Dominic Stiller who has worked in the construction industry for over ten years and now has his own engineering firm. He blames the rise in accidents on the shoddy practices of contractors.

Brian Kates’s *Daily News* article exposes the corruption that is present in the construction economy. One of the biggest problems that exists, he says, is illegally employed workers. Although the construction industry has unions, only a small percent of the workforce is unionized. Those workers who are paid under the table not only cost the city millions in unpaid taxes, but sacrifice their safety as well. Since they are not unionized, they lose equity and voice in the work place. Some of the workers are paid one third of the established wage. Common amenities are not provided for. Kates quotes one worker, “The contractor never provide heat and there is no bathroom on the site.” He quotes another worker, “Only a few of the workers have hardhats or other safety equipment.” Safety precautions are not provided, the workers are forced to work in dangerous conditions, and on top of that, they are being paid substantially less than the legal wage.

Kates further states that “developers ignore fines and penalties and treat

them as the cost of doing business.” These fines and penalties are imposed for violating safety regulations. Instead of following safety procedures, many developers find that it is more cost-effective to just pay the fines. In addition, the enforcement of the law is not sufficient to persuade contractors to pay the legal wage. Kates notes, “In 2006, penalties for contractors caught underpaying workers amounted to only 14% of the underpayment, according to Public Interest Economics.” With only a small percent of the offenders getting caught and the fines so small, contractors would rather take the risk of underpaying workers. If contractors are not afraid to cut wages, obviously it is even easier to disregard the safety precautions that should be enforced.

In his *New York Times* article, Thomas J. Lueck notes that if construction workers use proper safety equipment and take the time to put it on right, accident rates can decrease dramatically. Often, serious injuries and even death can be prevented if the proper safety equipment is used. Many of these safety measures are relatively inexpensive. The explanation for the recent crane collapses was believed to be the failure of nylon slings. These “slings valued at about \$50 apiece, played a crucial role in the most deadly construction accidents in years.” Lueck says the rise in recent accidents can be attributed to insufficient training in safety practice and equipment, and the workers not realizing that simple procedures can dramatically reduce the risk of accidents. Many workers are not trained to employ safety measures. The constant time pressures for job completion also contribute to the lack of safety in construction. “The hurried installation of some required safety devices, including hooks, guardrails and cables” is risky and unsafe. Safety should not be rushed.

Lueck also sheds light upon the human error factor in these tragic accidents. Many people think that an accident will not happen to them. They figure that they are only in danger for a short amount of time so they don’t use their safety harnesses. Although the workers might think otherwise, the human error factor is a big cause in accidents. “In many cases, experts say, safety precautions are no match for human error.” There have been many instances where people have lost lives because they ignored safety precautions because they thought they were insignificant.

“A Far-Too-Dangerous Business,” a *New York Times* editorial, blames the recent string of accidents on a faulty government agency. Dubious safety equipment was not the only liability; the New York City Department of Buildings also needs to be changed. With the continued boom in construction, the Department of Buildings (DOB) has been shorthanded. “The city has depended on just four crane inspectors, who cannot possibly keep up with the 200 or so cranes used citywide.” With an inadequate staff, the DOB is ill-equipped to handle the city’s construction industry. According to the editorial, furthermore, the DOB was not enforcing the laws adequately. Contractors who broke the law were fined insignificantly. Corruption was present at the department as well. The editorial states that the “city’s chief crane inspector was charged with taking bribes.” The Department of Buildings needs to be reformed.

The editorial credits the Bloomberg administration for proposed changes

in the Department of Buildings. The number of building inspectors has been increased to survey construction sites across the city. Bloomberg has proposed heavier fines and punishment for negligent contractors. However, contractors must be held responsible for building sites' safety. More rigorous inspections are required. Better safety training on procedures and equipment is a necessity. Although the Department of Buildings is headed in a good direction, it will be a long time before we reach a satisfactory level of safety.

Dominic Stiller, who has worked in the construction industry for over ten years, believes that safety is ultimately in the hands of contractors. It is the duty of the Building Department to enforce the laws but it is the responsibility of the contractor to uphold these laws. Many shady contractors take advantage of day laborers and provide very few safety precautions. Contractors who are under the gun to meet a deadline allow unsafe working conditions by pushing employees to work hastily. For honest and good contractors, safety is always top priority. Proper safety procedures must be practiced by the construction workers as well. Just as architects and engineers are required to take continued education courses, contractors and construction workers should also be required to take classes in safety procedures.

The construction industry is a very large business with a great potential for danger. Such an important industry in New York City requires a lot of safety measures. With so much construction going on in the midst of a dense population, safety must be a priority. The Building Department needs to do a better job of punishing shady contractors and, at the same time, avoid impeding honest contractors. Construction workers need to be better trained to handle equipment and follow safety procedures. The Department of Buildings, the contractors and the construction workers all have to do a lot more to ensure the highest level of safety for both workers and the general public.

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Buildings

Jesse Gibbs

Three influences greatly affect my life: my fascination with buildings, my interest in construction, and my liking for making money; and with them are the hopes for my future.

From a very young age I was curious about buildings. My fascination began with castles. At Belmar Beach when I was three years old I would sit in the sand for hours making castles. When I was about seven, I became interested in how buildings were built. During my childhood, my whole neighborhood was being built up, and I spent many hours watching framers, builders, backhoes and cement trucks. I have lived in the same house in Staten Island my whole life and today acres of woods have been replaced by blocks and blocks of homes. I couldn't believe how land could be cleared, a house built and a family would soon make it their home.

My interest in construction also started at a very young age. When I was nine years old I got to experience my first day working on a construction site. I went to work with my friend's father pouring concrete for a thirty-story building. I saw first hand what owning a company was like with all the responsibilities you have to face. By the time I was ten, my father would let me go to work with him on his moving truck. He is an interstate truck driver who owns and operates his own tractor-trailer. I enjoyed working with my dad and helping him out, but working construction has always been my passion. My uncle too, would let me watch him with home improvement jobs that he often did around my house. I wouldn't go out with my friends and play sports or hang around, because I loved to learn how to make things and how to make a house look better. I started out working construction at a young age and saw how it would be to own your own business. I've been making money since I was nine years old and would always think how much I would be making if the business were my own. Today, I still work with my dad when he needs me, but I also have been apprenticing with FDM, a carpentry and framing company. I do the dirty work that no one wants to do. It's okay because as I said, I love to watch and learn.

I hope some day to become a construction manager. I hope to be very successful in life and I want to make sure I achieve my goal. That has encouraged me to go to college and major in Construction Management. For the first time in my life, I enjoy going to school and feel very positive and hopeful about my future. I look forward to earning my degree.

Lost in Calculation: The Thermodynamic Miracle

Joseph Roxas

It dawned on me in one of my calculation-heavy classes. The question had nagged at my mind ever since I decided to pursue the title of mechanical engineer. Is it possible that we inspect, dissect, analyze, calculate, scrutinize and basically look at something so super-close that we lose sight of it completely? I entered this field hoping to pursue a passion of mine, a passion that ran so deep within me that the roars and growls of engines were like lullabies; the smell of gasoline, oil, and burnt exhaust like the most fragrant of perfumes; and the inner workings of a planetary gearbox more awe-inspiring than the most beautiful painting. Saying that I loved machines would be an understatement. But as I inched ever closer to my degree it seemed like that love was waning. Class after class of calculations, deviations, formulations and frustrations soon diluted that love. And then a class came along that revived it, renewed the fascination. The class caused me to rethink all the possibilities that lay before me. It even challenged me to prove that the impossible could be possible. Thermodynamics was a game changer.

I remember the first time I ever experienced the ridiculous power of an engine first hand. I had driven cars for years, but the excitement was never there. Cars always seemed safe, controllable. I never had to worry that I would awaken a beast within. That all changed when I bought my first motorcycle. It wasn't safe. It wasn't controllable. It was a fearsome force that I unleashed on an unsuspecting world (and an unsuspecting me). A creature that didn't care who or what piloted it. An ungodly, unholy source of never-ending power and acceleration which meant that a fraction too much throttle or too much brake meant that I was heading face first into the asphalt—at 60 mph. There were two things that I loved most about that bike, the power and the sound. To not only control such a power but create it as well soon became my goal.

As I stayed the course for my engineering degree, I soon realized that it wasn't all power and roaring engines. From Manufacturing 101 to Kinematics and Calculus, I discovered that not only was engineering extremely difficult but also dreadfully boring. I enrolled in Thermodynamics in the last semester of my Associates degree in Mechanical Engineering Technology thinking it would be more of the same—calculations, dreaded calculations. I was so disheartened by my experiences so far, I had lost sight of why I was even there. It wasn't until the class dove deeper into the realm of engineering that my interests were reawakened. As we studied the laws of thermodynamics and learned how internal combustion engines worked, I was reminded of that fateful day when I first

mounted my personal mechanical fire-breathing beast and was taught a lesson in trying to control something so uncontrollable. In Thermodynamics I learned where the power came from and how to get more. I learned that there were losses: heat, energy, efficiency. I wanted to take all that I learned and all that I knew from my past and make my machine even more powerful than it already was. If power was lost, it could be recovered. If heat was generated, why not use that as energy? What would it take to increase efficiency by 2%? Now there were so many questions that I thought I could answer. It's not that there weren't calculations to do, or problems to solve; it's just that now they applied to the things that made me want to be an engineer in the first place. I even discovered how the 4-stroke cycle could take something as inanimate as metal and generate a noise akin to the slow growl and then roar of a lion. I learned how metal, combined with oxygen, fuel and spark, became an organism that breathed and moved, and worked. It was this realization that made sense of all the senselessness. The laws of thermodynamics became like commandments.

But of all the things I learned in Thermodynamics, the one that inspired me the most was the one that has nothing to do with the machines I love so much. It was that I, like all the rest of the human beings in the world, am one of the most incredible thermodynamic systems ever developed. There was no engineer that calculated and experimented in order to create what we are. It was developed by chance. In the course of millions of years, slight changes and gambles were taken and thrown out into the field. Some succeeded, many failed, but they all led to what we are now. As amazing as the human machine is, we are far from perfect. Even now, slight changes and gambles are being taken; and still, some succeed and many fail all for the same goal, 100% efficiency, or in other words—perfection.

I am pained by knowing that I could never create something as incredible as what I am. No matter what I do, I could never match the efficiency and autonomy that human beings represent. We are thermodynamic miracles. If science has taught me anything, it's that miracles don't exist. All things are meant to be explained with calculations, experiments, and proof. Things don't happen just because. There are always reasons. As impossible as miracles seem, we still exist and that's what will keep me going.

Mad Genius or Rotten Apple? Exploring Time Travel Through Wormholes

Gayatri Dhavan

“They had to travel into the past to save the future” — *Timeline* (2003)

That’s the tagline from the 2003 movie *Timeline*. The film itself was forgettable but it was based on a premise that has intrigued humanity for generations: time travel. In the movie, characters were able to identify a wormhole, which allowed time travel between present day and medieval France. I thought this was an interesting idea but I knew it bordered on ridiculous, so I decided to take a closer look at whether time travel through wormholes could indeed be possible.

First things first, what is a wormhole? Here is an easy way to picture wormholes without a Physics PhD: imagine that you fold a piece of paper so that one end hovers a couple of inches above the other end. Now punch a hole with a pen on the top part of the paper so the point of the pen reaches the lower part of the paper. Your pen now represents the wormhole. In principle, the wormhole could be used as a shortcut so that, from the point of view of observers outside of the wormhole, travel between the two points could appear to take place faster than the speed of light.

The essence of the idea was originally put forth in 1935 by Albert Einstein and Nathan Rosen, who suggested the possibility of “bridges” in the space-time continuum. Once I learned that Einstein had something to do with the concept behind wormholes, I actually felt that wormholes might not be so ridiculous after all. This so-called “Einstein-Rosen bridge” would essentially act as a tunnel connecting two distinct regions of space or time.

However, it was later realized that there is actually a black hole preventing passage from one side of this “bridge” to the other. Could the human body survive falling into a black hole? Not according to Neil de Grasse Tyson, director of the Hayden Planetarium at the American Museum of Natural History and author of the book *Death by Black Hole: And Other Cosmic Quandaries*. He says that it would be “the most spectacular way to die in space,” where your body would be shredded into miniscule pieces by the force of gravity and then slowly spit back out (contrary to popular opinion, things eventually do come out of black holes bit by bit).

Even though the Einstein-Rosen bridge turns out to be black hole, this is the original idea that prompted physicists to search for genuine wormhole solutions to Einstein's theory of general relativity. However, they encountered what seems to be a universal problem: all wormhole solutions in general relativity seem to require the presence of "exotic matter" with negative energy, which prevents them from collapsing into a black hole. To date, all known matter has positive energy. However, in 1948, a Dutch scientist named Hendrick Casimir showed that a small attractive force exists in a vacuum between two uncharged plates. Although this is debatable, some scientists have proposed that this force is actually the result of negative energy.

In order for something to have negative energy, then it would essentially have negative mass. Looking at Einstein's equation $E=mc^2$, E denotes energy possessed by a certain amount of matter, m is the mass and c represents the speed of light; since the square of the speed of light cannot be negative, the mass must be negative in order for the energy to be negative. Some scientists have suggested that certain fluctuations near black holes may exhibit characteristics associated with negative mass.

Without the presence of negative mass/energy, a wormhole could only exist for a fraction of a second before collapsing into a black hole. In order for us to use wormholes for time travel, these bridges would probably have to be sustainable for a lot longer than that!

Let me end by mentioning that there are extensions of the theory of general relativity which contain wormhole solutions that don't require the presence of negative energy in order not to collapse. However, such theories tend to involve extra dimensions, and this opens up a whole new can of worms—or wormholes!

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A Mathematics Major's Musings

Alma Cabral Reynoso

The New York City College of Technology opened its doors on October 19, 2008, to welcome everyone to the New York State Mathematics Association of Two Year Colleges Region IV Conference. The conference covered the theme, "Promoting Student Success in Mathematics." Although open to everyone who wished to attend, this conference was mostly meant for educators and others in the field. Different ways to foster student learning and success in mathematics were presented at the conference. Professors from different colleges, as well as students and representatives of various organizations, were among the speakers.

Top-Down Trinomial Factoring: This subject was presented by Professor Ida Klikovac of Nassau Community College. Top-down trinomial factoring is a method that has been developed to help in the solving of different polynomials by using the so-called Bridge Method. This method is very useful in my opinion because it helps students in solving polynomials by using this method only, taking away the hassle of having to remember all the different cases of factoring.

A Brief History of Cryptography: Professor Jack Lubowsky of Nassau Community College presented this topic. He spoke about how various methods of cryptography had already been used for centuries to transmit messages in some sort of code that could, hopefully, only be deciphered by their intended receivers. Different types of cryptography known today were used at some time in history. Steganography, Transposition Cipher and Substitution Cipher are some known examples of the different types of cryptography. In Steganography, the messages are hidden in some way, using invisible ink, for example. In Transposition Cipher, words in messages are written in odd orders; a code for this method provided beforehand will allow the receiver to reorder the message in the correct way. In Substitution Cipher, the alphanumeric message is conveyed with substituted letters, or in some cases numbers, contained in a code book.

Teaching Graphing Techniques through the Composition of Functions: This subject was covered by Professor Marina Dedlovskaya of LaGuardia Community College. Prof. Dedlovskaya demonstrated how, by reading and interpreting changes of composition of functions, we would be able to know how their graphs would behave given different changes. The shift functions would shift or change the position of the graph up, down, left or right.

The reflection functions would reflect the graph on either side of the X or Y-axis. Other functions would have an affect on the graph size, by either compressing or stretching it vertically and horizontally.

Student Success Using MyMathLab: This presentation was given by Mr. Theo Lieber of Pearson Addison-Wesley Benjamin Cummings Prentice Hall. MyMathLab is a web-based software, similar to blackboard in its user interface, that offers online help and assessment for professors using the Pearson's database. It allows professors to assign homework and give exams to students using the material stored in the MyMathLab database. The program has video tutorials for all lessons seen in the course, in addition to examples, to guide the students through the process of solving the assigned problems. This database and tutorials can be easily accessed at any moment by students who wish to review their material, unless time restrictions are set beforehand by the professor. Free accounts were offered for the term of one year to the students who attended this part of the conference, myself included. I can say from personal experience that this is a very useful tool; it does help to promote student success in mathematics. Using MyMathLab, students can see their problems being explained from a different perspective than that of their professor, which can help think through difficulties encountered while going over a lesson.

The Power of Differential Equations in the Financial Market: The speaker for this presentation was Professor Zhao Chen of New York City College of Technology. Prof. Chen explained how differential equations are helpful in the financial market because they help us get an approximation of the price of a stock at a given time in the future. This approximation can be calculated by using the Ito Lemma process. In using this process one takes into consideration the current price of a stock, its volatility and its expected return, to get the probability that the stock has of reaching the desired percent increase in a given time. The Ito Lemma process can suggest the risks that any transaction would represent.

Conjuring Calculus in the Realm of Transformations as it Casts its Spell on Non-Singular Matrices: This part of the conference had two familiar faces for speakers: my current calculus Professor Satyanand Singh, and Mr. Javier Joya, both of the New York City College of Technology. I believe this part of the conference tried to show how we can find derivatives and anti-derivatives by using matrices. This theme got me a little confused as it was hard to follow and understand. I now know that this is because this subject is over my current level of studies in mathematics, and that I would need to take linear algebra in order for me to better understand what was being discussed.

Flying by the Numbers: Professor Chris Roethel of Nassau Community College said it's important for a person to be comfortable with numbers because a lot of careers require this skill. In aviation, for example, all flight information (height, wind speed, etc.) is provided in a numeric fashion. Global Positioning Systems, or GPSs as they are better known, are the devices being used today to navigate the skies, but will be replaced by a more modern system called Wide Area Augmentation System or WAAS. This system makes use of ground stations, as well as satellites, to remove errors; GPSs only use satellites to

provide information. WAAS makes the data being provided more accurate than that of the GPSs, besides costing less.

Initially, I thought that by attending this conference I would be learning to apply different techniques, as well as how to use other software, such as MyMathLab or WileyPLUS. Later I realized that this was not the purpose of the conference, but rather to help educators improve their techniques to better help the students' learning process. Attending this conference was a very pleasant experience overall. For me as a student, learning that things are being done to help educators share different techniques with each other, techniques they believe will help students succeed in mathematics, was the best part of being at this conference. Also I see educators are able to keep up to date by taking a look at various software programs to help students succeed. I am happy to have attended this conference: (1) because I learned about the Bridge Method to help me factor polynomials, as well as some Cryptography techniques and history, and (2) because of the fact that we were given free student accounts for MyMathLab, which I am already taking advantage of and will hopefully use until I no longer need it. I would like to thank my professor for inviting us to the conference and I hope that more students will be given a chance to experience this form of presentation and see mathematics in its beauty as it is applied to various applications.

Nomadic Herders

Aryuna Shoynzhonova

My ancestors were nomadic herders of the Mongolian steppes, a temperate grassland of contemporary Mongolia and northern China. Due to constant migrations, the Mongols developed an easy and fast way of cooking and preserving food. Beef or mutton is simply boiled in water or dried under the sun and cut into thin strips that are easily stored in a traveler's small leather bag tightly attached to the saddle. The traditional Mongolian cuisine is less refined than that of other ancient cultures like Japan or China, which are older and therefore more diverse. The food mainly consists of dairy products and meat, the products of the nomads' animals. The central part of the traditional Mongolian cuisine is boiled mutton.

It was in the beginning of February of 2005, during the celebration of the White Moon, the New Year according to the Lunar Calendar, more commonly known here as the Chinese New Year. I remember being very excited and impatiently standing at the table in the dining room watching one of my friends, Rinchin, take fresh mutton out of a big black plastic bag just brought from the farm. The mutton was of good quality, marbled and big, but its red and almost purple blood vessels were easily seen through the guts' fragile transparent walls. My imagination was already vibrantly drawing pictures of steamed piles of meat on the table and of my energetically biting into the fresh mutton. We would probably have been suspected of paganism by our neighbors, since Lakewood, a predominantly Jewish town in central New Jersey, had not experienced such original festivities before. The Russian Kalmyks, who are from the area between the Volga and the Don Rivers in southern Russia, share a culture and historic background with the Mongols, and there are many Kalmyk residents of Lakewood; but it was the Buryats, another ethnic minority of Russia, also close to the Mongols, who decided for the first time to celebrate the traditional holiday in America according to their Mongolian background. The Buryats occupy the southern part of eastern Siberia bordering northern Mongolia and northeastern China that is known as the Republic of Buryatia. Here in the United States, the Buryats are scarcely represented. They barely form even a tiny ethnic group. The Buryats tend to build close relations with the Kalmyks with whom they represent

the only two historically related ethnic groups in all of Russia, speaking similar dialects of Mongolian origin, celebrating the same holidays and enjoying the same dishes. Boiled mutton is an essential part of any Mongolian festivity and *Sagaalga*n, the celebration of the White Moon in the Buryat language (*Tsagaan Tsaar* in Mongolian and Kalmyk) is one of the major Mongolian holidays.

The most interesting part of the ritual of preparing mutton is the slaughtering technique. When I was approximately five years old I witnessed the process for the first time. It happened in the backyard of my grandfather's house where two of my uncles with their sleeves rolled up were industriously executing the animal. To my great disappointment due to my young age, I was not allowed to watch the scene next to the adults, but had to stay in the house observing from afar others "having fun." Unlike in Middle Asia where a sheep's throat is cut quickly, Mongols cut a sheep's belly first, making a small hole in it. While others help keep the sheep still by holding its legs, the main butcher puts his hand into the hole in the belly and reaches for the aorta and squeezes it hard to stop the blood influx into the heart. The heart stops, the sheep dies. Long live fresh steamed mutton! This method is said to be more humane since the sheep does not suffer much pain but "falls asleep." Whether it is true or not, I do not know, but I know that the sheep's blood is the main filling for a variety of delicious dishes like *gedergen* (*ge-der-gén*), which is a sheep's stomach. If you cut the sheep's throat, it causes a lot of bleeding and much of the blood is wasted. The more "humane" technique does not let the flesh sit in its blood and spoil the fell which is later used as material for many handcrafted goods.

After a sheep has been slaughtered, all of the innards are removed and prepared for eating. The blood of the animal is collected to fill the carefully cleaned intestines. My favorite part of the boiled mutton is *khoshkhonog* (*hosh-ho- nók*), sausages stuffed with liver, lungs, and other goodies. In order to properly prepare this dish it is important to wash the guts in warm water inside and out very carefully, but not too rigorously, otherwise the natural film and fat will be washed off the walls resulting in tasteless *khoshkhonog*. After the cleaning process, which is not for impatient people since the guts are thin, long and slippery, they are stuffed with cut chunks of the mutton's insides and tightly tied with either cotton threads or the mutton's blood vessels. A good knowledgeable nomad never gets too dirty. I remember myself being covered with stains of fat and blood all over my hand-made apron. The raw dish looks like long ropes of different sizes, some of them as thin as USB cables, reminding me of snake newborns or dead remnants of an unusual creature. Steaming aromatically on the plate it looks more attractive and bigger after being boiled in hot water with other parts of the mutton and bones. You boil the flesh and bones first and then add other hand-prepared parts in order to have a flavorful broth. The good *khoshkhonog* should melt in your mouth. It is enjoyed with a little bit of salt and wild scallions or *mandir* [*mán-dir*]. A true nomad would also enjoy the dish with the hot flavorful *shulen* [*shu-lén*] or broth. Boiled potatoes are welcomed to accompany the mutton and ease the consumption of it. The mutton is served in a large bowl, which will be well received by all family members. The

neighbors also get a plate full of selected pieces. The leftovers will not taste quite as good the next day, especially cold, so they are usually reheated in the oven.

Since I was raised in the city of Ulan-Ude, the capital of the Republic of Buryatia, and enjoyed meat shipped to our door monthly from our grandfather who lived in Chesan, a small village about two hours drive from the city, I had less than decent knowledge of preparing this sacred dish, a shame for a good Mongolian woman. Nevertheless, the fact that I had a grandfather living in the countryside, whom I visited whenever my parents had an opportunity to take me, and therefore had seen the butchering process, made me feel more experienced compared to my other two friends, Elena and Irina, who were hopeless third generation city dwellers and knew nothing about the dish. However, all I remembered were some poor images of the grass of my grandfather's backyard and the sheep's eyes wide open and filled with horror while two adult males were slaughtering it. That memorable day, when Rinchin placed the mutton on the table, I tried hard to sound like a pro when consulting my partners. Ironically it happened not in my native town or in my grandfather's village but, as mentioned, in a small Jewish town in New Jersey, across the Atlantic, where I finally and fully learned how to prepare the mutton. Our common friend Rinchin, a well-built and smiling man in his mid-thirties, was a typical traditional Buryat villager. I cannot remember even a minor thing about the house that Rinchin was not able to handle properly: he cooked and sawed, he could build an entire house himself or fix the furniture—and slaughter a sheep, something that every Mongolian man was supposed to know how to do from birth. Horrified and excited at the same time at all that bloody mess on the table, there we were, under strict Rinchin's supervision, maniacally cleaning the fresh flesh of a just-killed sheep and sweating it out as we tried to tie unmanageable sticky guts. Then everything was put in a pan with boiling water and left to be cooked through. Raw parts of meat are not welcomed by the Mongols: even slightly reddish meat goes back into the water until it is cooked properly. Terms like "rare" and "medium" are not known and such meat would be perceived as undercooked. Only after Rinchin started taking the mutton, piece by piece, out of the boiling pot, did I realize that finally after two years of eating processed American chicken and tasteless beef from supermarkets, I was going to eat real, fresh meat.

After being taken out of the pot, the mutton and its chunks are placed on a big plate or in a bowl to be shared. Traditionally the boiled mutton is eaten by hands with the help of a knife. *Khoshkhonog* is cut into smaller pieces, dipped in salt and eaten with boiled potatoes. *Gedergen* is filled with coagulated blood which is scooped out and is delicious with *mandir*. The mutton is excellent with a flavorful broth which is drunk in short sips from small bowls.

Though Mongolian etiquette itself is a very vague idea because of the cuisine's relatively simple nature, there are some basic principles that one should follow if sharing a meal with a Mongolian family. Historically the Mongols are very hospitable. The mutton is enjoyed by an entire family, and neighbors and friends are also heartily invited. A sudden guest who shows up would have bad manners to refuse from the offered dish; one has to have, at least, a taste of the

dish, and usually no one refuses. The most honored guest is offered the head of the mutton and is always served first. The head of the house is served second; the rest are served according to their age. Since on that day we did not have any guests, Naran, our common Kalmyk friend and the head of the hosting family, was presented with the first bowl. The filled bowl is offered by the right hand with the left hand supporting the elbow of the right one or with both hands. It is rude to leave the plate or bowl untouched or only half eaten.

The boiled mutton is an excellent source of protein and fat which are vital elements for the nomadic lifestyle. My ancestors had a long way to go from the inner Mongolian steppes to contemporary Hungary. Busy pursuing their expansive ambitions and building what eventually became the biggest empire in human history, they invented one of the most delicious and easily cooked dishes that gave them energy and kept their bodies warm enabling them to endure the most severe conditions. Today it is one of the world's unique dishes, rarely seen anywhere.

Traditional food of any nation is an essential and unique part of its culture. Not only does it let an individual connect with one's people and land, but it helps to preserve a cultural heritage. No matter how far a person travels, no matter how much time passes, the food of your family always reminds you who you are and where you came from. That amazing day in a small town in New Jersey I felt as if I were back home, back to open endless steppes like a true nomad.

A Psychiatric Analysis of the Film *What's Eating Gilbert Grape?*

Diana Santos

Today, to fulfill the assignment in my Psychiatric Mental Health Nursing class, I saw *What is Eating Gilbert Grape?* The assignment required a psychoanalytical description of the family dynamics of the Grape family. I had many mixed emotions about the film. Throughout the course of the movie, I felt anger, frustration, pity and sadness for the Grape family. In the film, we were able to observe the complex relationships among the members of this family. The Grapes were an obviously loving family that fought often, yet they were always supportive of each other. Like every family, the Grapes had many problems, but in this case it seemed all of the Grapes' problems came from the same person, Mama. She realized too late that her insecurities were hurting her children.

It was immediately obvious that Mama's many problems expressed themselves in her morbidly obese state. Her children were running around serving her every need. They were sacrificing their entire lives to support her need to be taken care of in every way. It seemed she was suffering from a dependent personality disorder, one which, according to Videbeck, is "characterized by a pervasive and excessive need to be taken care of" (p. 358). Mama lived on the couch in her living room and, from it, she watched her children live her life for her. Her children sacrificed their youth to help maintain their mother's avoidant personality, which was evident from her signs of a "pervasive pattern of social discomfort and reticence, low self-esteem, and hypersensitivity to negative evaluation" (Videbeck, p. 358). Mama kept repeating that she was beautiful and that she did not mean to turn out the way she did, yet she did nothing to change. She waited for her food to be brought to her and controlled her family from the couch. Once Mama began her downward spiral after her husband's suicide, it became apparent that she could not cope with the emotional and physical abandonment of her husband. Reviewing the different stages of grief leads me to believe that Mama was stuck in Bowlby's Phase III of the grieving process, showing "cognitive disorganization; emotional despair [and] difficulty functioning" (Videbeck, p. 218). With no job or home responsibilities, Mama was not functioning at all. She could not even look after her youngest son, Arnie. The abandonment of her husband was too much for her. She locked herself in her home, the place where she lost her husband; she seemed attached to it for this very reason. Her grief did not get any better when her eldest son, Larry, left just like his father. Losing another relationship further extended her grieving process.

Although many things were wrong with the Grape family, they were still united and supportive. Gilbert and Amy assumed the roles of mother and father,

caregivers and providers, and did it all without complaining. Their roles in the family in fact showed a clear picture of enmeshment, defined by Videbeck as a lack of clear role boundaries amongst family members, and a loss of independence for the children (p. 398). Gilbert and Amy were not just the eldest children, they were the parents. They were being deprived of the opportunity to start their own lives. The children took care of their mother very well, but didn't realize that they were not only hurting their own futures, but hurting their mother by enabling her depression and eating disorders. Mama was a good example of secondary gain, which is defined by Videbeck as "the attention received from others [for experiencing anxiety and stress-related illnesses]" (p. 251). Often, family members will try to care for loved ones that are experiencing anxiety and stress, even if that means taking over their responsibilities, such as work and parenting other siblings (p. 251).

Gilbert and Amy could have left like their father and brother, but they stayed. Their best job was taking care of Arnie and loving him unconditionally. There was also Ellen, the typical teenager who cared more about her appearance than anything else. She argued with Gilbert all the time and was obviously frustrated by Arnie. She was selfish, but that can be common in teenagers (Potter/Perry, p. 213). She thought Gilbert was not doing enough, although he worked hard to bring food and money home. In her arguments with Gilbert it seemed like she was displacing some of her anger towards her father onto Gilbert. Her father was not around, so it was easy to snap at the closest thing she had to a father figure. Arnie was mentally underdeveloped for a young man of almost eighteen years, but he was the uniting factor in his family, even while he aroused much of the other characters' ambivalence. His brother and sisters took turns in looking out for him and protected him, although this was hard to do. Ellen was always frustrated with him and even went so far as to hit him when he caused a scene in town. Despite this frustration, Ellen was still able to help plan Arnie's birthday party. Gilbert also hit Arnie, but his ambivalence was more towards his mother than his brother. Gilbert loved his mother very much but was extremely embarrassed by her weight. He did not want to introduce her to Becky and he even turned away from her at the police precinct, where the entire town could see her.

Gilbert and Arnie had a unique relationship. Instead of being ashamed of him, Gilbert loved Arnie for who he was. He cured Arnie's bruises, bathed him, protected him from bullies, and helped teach him manners. Unlike Mama, who treated Arnie like a five-year-old, Gilbert tried to teach him a sense of right and wrong, or how to say thank you instead of good-bye. He always corrected him when he was acting inappropriately. Gilbert never treated Arnie like a disabled child.

Arnie and Ellen were close in age but they were on opposite ends of Erik Erikson's developmental stages. By age, Arnie and Ellen were both supposed to be in Erikson's stage of Identity vs. Role Confusion (Videbeck, p. 49). However, Arnie was developmentally at a pre-school level, which Erikson calls Initiative vs. Guilt, when children are "beginning development of a conscience [and]

learning to manage conflict and anxiety” (Videbeck, p. 49); for example, we see Arnie learning the consequence of his actions and crying inconsolably about the grasshopper he killed. Ellen, on the other hand, was definitely at an appropriate adolescent level, Identity vs. Role Confusion, when adolescents begin to “formulate a sense of self and belonging” (Videbeck, p. 49). She showed good social skills by caring about her appearance and joining her school band. Like many adolescents, she even feared the town’s reaction to her mother’s death. She began to cry after her mother died only after realizing that there would be a crowd watching her mother being pulled out of the home.

Arnie was the character with the most obvious mental health disorder. Mental retardation is defined as below-average intellectual functioning that greatly impairs a person’s ability to communicate effectively and take care of themselves (Videbeck, p. 434). Arnie had slow, delayed speech and motor functioning, could not complete an easy task such as bathing, and also blurted out anything on his mind. Videbeck states that people with mental retardation are passive and dependent, or aggressive and impulsive (p. 434). Arnie was definitely passive and dependent, listening most of the time to instructions, but still needing help with daily living. He was harmless, he never hurt anyone, but then he didn’t realize the harm some of his actions might cause, like when he continued to climb the water tower.

The Grape family resembled a typical family in many ways. They had their share of problems but they remained united. This was apparent when Arnie was arrested. For the first time in years, Mama left her home to get her son back. The rest of the family went as well. Although he seemed embarrassed, Gilbert took his mother to the precinct and I felt that he was also trying to protect her by asking her to stay in the car. Together, as a family, the Grapes got Arnie and walked back to their car. Even through many arguments, they were also able to put a party together to celebrate Arnie’s birthday. They clearly supported Arnie, even joining in on his games whenever he wanted to play hide-and-seek. The children also displayed the ultimate act of sacrifice and love for their mother when they burned down the house instead of allowing people to make a joke out of her death. Throughout the movie, the Grapes stood as a united front and were always able to overcome their hardships. The Grapes were a perfect example of resilience. They used every hardship to fortify their self-esteem and self-efficacy, and became mature young people who could care for themselves (Videbeck, p. 128). They used their mother’s legacy positively, to become productive members of society.

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The Struggle for Power

Jonathan Hilzinger

A question in Fanny Fern's *Ruth Hall* and Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper" is that of power and who controls it. In both Fern's novel and Gilman's short story, one of two situations occur; either men inherently control the women characters, or the women characters, though perhaps unintentionally, willingly give up their own power. Written during the nineteenth century, both works display an imbalance of power characteristic of that time. *Ruth Hall* takes place in a time when men run society by holding most positions of influence, dominating financially rewarding careers and oppressing women into submission. Three important characters in the novel *Ruth Hall* are Ruth, Mary Leon and Mrs. Skiddy; each possesses a different role in the power struggle. In "The Yellow Wallpaper," the narrator finds herself in a position where she *will not* fight for her right to run her life as she sees fit. She lets others tell her what to do, so much so that she no longer is regarded as a responsible adult. Gilman provides the main character as an example of what can happen to people who are incapable of taking control of their lives. In fact, the imbalance of power is so great in "The Yellow Wallpaper" that even an inanimate object becomes imbued with power over the narrator.

To understand the first situation (in which men simply control the power), we will look at Mary Leon's situation in *Ruth Hall*. Ruth first comes across Mary in a hotel at Beach Cliff. We find that although Mrs. Leon is married to a "tall, prim, proper-looking person" (Fern 55) who is well off enough to provide a good life for him and his wife, Mr. Leon has no love for her. Mrs. Leon, on the other hand, loves him and calls this love "the drop of poison in her cup" (Fern 57). Taking advantage of her love, Mr. Leon has gained the upper hand in the situation and thus has control over his wife. As the story progresses, Ruth encounters Mrs. Leon again. Having the law as a tool of power, Mr. Leon has placed his wife in a mental hospital. It becomes evident at this point that Mr. Leon always had more power than his wife, because of a wide range of nineteenth-century laws that empower men and, more specifically, husbands. We also find out that he is a person of influence; he uses his influence over the Superintendent to fabricate the story of Mrs. Leon's insanity. Mr. Leon then takes off for Europe, leaving Mary trapped in the hospital with no hope.

This is perhaps one of the most striking examples of how men used the law and influence to gain power over another person. In this case, Mr. Leon had total power over Mary, especially since she was only introduced to us on the

verge of her death, when she was virtually powerless to do anything. She had no means of leaving the mental hospital under the law. In her final letter to Ruth, Mary states, "I am not crazy, Ruth, no, no—but I shall be; the air of this place stifles me; I grow weaker — weaker. . ." (Fern 141). In her last moments, Mary gave up her own remaining power, the will to live. The stay at the hospital ended up breaking her. The Superintendent describes her as "hopelessly crazy," and says she "refused food entirely" (Fern 139). She dies of starvation; Ruth describes her corpse as "that emaciated form, those sunken eyes and hollow cheek" (Fern 141). Mary never had a chance to change the balance of power because she was a woman and a wife.

Interestingly, Mrs. Skiddy is the opposite of Mary and her situation. Mrs. Skiddy is a powerful female figure in the novel. She is married to Mr. Skiddy and, needless to say, is very much in control of their marriage, so much so that she tries to act as a strong example to Ruth, and states, "When a woman is married, Mrs. Hall, she must make up her mind either to manage, or to be managed; *I prefer to manage*" (Fern 135). This is certainly unusual in the novel. Mrs. Skiddy is the only married woman in the novel to show this much dominance. Mr. Skiddy makes little to no effort to gain power over Mrs. Skiddy, and is so complacent that he has no control over his circumstances. A memorable moment is when Mrs. Skiddy drags Mr. Skiddy back home, and "he perfectly understood, that for a probationary time he should be put 'on the limits,' the street-door being the boundary line. He heaved no sigh when his coat and hat, with the rest of his wearing apparel, were locked up, and the key buried in the depths of his wife's pocket" (Fern 136). Mrs. Skiddy is presumably also the main financial pillar of the Skiddy household, as she owns the building which they rent out, and makes financial decisions such as drawing up the daily food bill to be bought at the market.

Although Mr. Skiddy leaves for California in the end, we must note that he does not have the final say. He becomes free of Mrs. Skiddy, but does not gain any power over his situation as a result. On the contrary, he ends up more powerless as his situation in California takes a grim turn after he "had been 'burnt out,' and 'robbed,' and everything else but murdered; and 'umbly' requested his dear Maria Matilda to send him 'the passage-money to return home'" (Fern 137). To this, Mrs. Skiddy replies with a resounding "N—e—v—e—r!" (Fern 137); she does not need him; rather, he needed her.

Perhaps the most important and longest power struggle in the novel is that of Ruth Hall. In the novel, Ruth experiences both ends of the power struggle; in the beginning she has the same amount of respect and control over Harry as Harry does over her (in a balance of power). However, towards the middle of the novel, after Harry's death it becomes obvious that she is powerless due to circumstances and those around her, yet later she becomes master of herself and her family. Perhaps it would be better to say that in the beginning there was an absence of a power struggle; in the Hall household, "Time flew on; seasons came and went; and still peace brooded, like a dove, under the roof of Harry and Ruth" (Fern 26). After Harry's death, however, Ruth finds herself rejected by her

family, her peers and by various other male characters. Ruth has lost all her financial power and, for quite some time, is unable to get a job. Relative to the other characters throughout this part of the novel, Ruth has very little power. Her brother Hyacinth, an editor of influence, turns her down for a position. Mr. Millet and Mr. Develin use their influence and power to vote against Ruth when she applies to be a teacher. The various men of the different offices keep either turning Ruth down or offering her measly pay. Jennifer Harris writes in her essay on *Ruth Hall*, "In Fern's novel we watch as her protagonist learns this lesson in the process of acquiring significant marketplace savvy. The end result for Ruth Hall is the ability to determine her own value, both by discarding sentiment in favor of sympathy and in terms of marketplace capital" (Harris 344). I agree with Harris. At this turning point, Ruth gains power and control over her life and family again. She gains the knowledge to work a business, which eventually propels her to amazing heights of success. In the end, the tables have turned. Ruth has become a powerful and influential person. Ruth's rise to power is a direct result of her constant striving and the accumulation of small successes.

In "The Yellow Wallpaper," we see another power struggle. The narrator (whose name we are not given) is a wife and mother who suffers from a nervous breakdown. From the first page, we can tell that she is not in a position of power. Her husband is a man of authority, not only over her, but in his profession as well (he's a physician). She argues, "You see, he does not believe I am sick! And what can one do? . . . Personally, I disagree with [his] ideas. Personally, I believe that congenial work, with excitement and change would do me good. But what is one to do?" (Gilman 1392). She repeats the phrase "what is one to do?" various times throughout the story, showing that she simply does not have the authority or control over herself to put these thoughts into action. However, we must note that the characters that oppress her or restrict her have the best intentions for her well-being. She describes her husband as "very careful and loving"; he "hardly lets me stir without special direction" (Gilman 1393). Therefore she must willingly give up her power to those around her, perhaps as a result of her mental state.

The most interesting aspect of this short story is the antagonist. The most powerful "character" in this story is, in fact, the yellow wallpaper itself! The narrator gives up so much of herself to this inanimate object that she fails to realize she is becoming obsessed with it, until it fully consumes her time and energy, and eventually becomes "alive" to her. The wallpaper begins to move in strange ways and has the power to change the people around it. Such powers are fabrications, of course. As the story progresses, towards the end of her stay she believes she is feeling better when, in fact, her situation has grown bleaker. She claims:

Life is very much more exciting now than it used to be. You see, I have something more to expect, to look forward to, to watch. I really do eat better, and am more quiet than I was. . . . I'm feeling so much better! I don't sleep much at night, for it is so interesting to watch developments; but I sleep a good deal during

the daytime.” (Gilman 1399)

She denies herself sleep because she must find out more about the wallpaper. The narrator’s method of coping with her lack of power is ironically to give up more power. The weaker she gets, the more she seeks to figure out the wallpaper. “The Yellow Wallpaper” is essentially a diary kept by the narrator in a vain attempt to find sanity. Regarding this point, I agree with Greg Johnson who states, “Gilman made her heroine a writer for purposes of art, not autobiography, and the story as a whole describes a woman attempting to save herself through her own writing. . . .” (Johnson 523). Gilman wrote in “Why I Wrote ‘The Yellow Wallpaper,’” that the story “was not intended to drive people crazy, but to save people from being driven crazy, and it worked” (Gilman 1404). Gilman created this story as an example of what could happen to someone who gives up all her power, similar to Mrs. Leon in her final days in the mental hospital.

The struggle for power is a strong theme that often arises between men and women. As we have seen, however, in certain situations even inanimate objects can gain power over someone who simply cannot retain any herself. Situations like these were common in the nineteenth century, and Fern and Gilman both do a fantastic job of pointing out the difficult issues and details in such power struggles.

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A Promise I Keep

Aeisha Elchoum

Having two sisters and an older brother, I always wished for a younger brother. I enjoyed imagining how life would be with little feet running around the house. I promised myself that if I were blessed with another brother, I would always be there to protect him and try to be the best big sister ever. My dream finally became a reality, and I met Ahmed for the first time, not expecting what was to come.

Throughout Ahmed's first year, I always enjoyed entertaining him, even though I couldn't help but feel that there was something different about him. About two years later, the reasons for the feelings I had became clear. At three years of age, Ahmed, the younger brother I always dreamed about, the child full of life and happiness, was diagnosed with autism. I was about nine years old at the time, so I didn't really understand what autism was. I had a hard time understanding why my brother would act a certain way, and why he would behave differently from others his age. My mother spent endless days in bookstores reading and taking notes on the disorder, and would come home trying to educate me, my siblings, and my father on what she learned that day.

Over time, as I grew older, I understood more about autism and how individuals are affected in different ways. Ahmed has Pervasive Developmental Disorder (PDD), which affects speech, communication, and social interaction. Being a pre-school teacher, my mother realized the difference between her students and her "non-communicative" son. While my mother's students began to develop their first conversations with one another, Ahmed was not able to develop a complete sentence.

My brother wasn't able to communicate like other children his age, and at times in public I felt embarrassed. One day, when Ahmed and I went to the Brooklyn Public Library, I met a classmate from school, Sarah, and her younger brother, Adam. As Sarah and I started to talk, I realized that Adam was trying to establish a conversation with Ahmed, but wasn't succeeding. Adam asked me, "Why isn't your brother talking to me?" When I answered, "He's autistic; he can't talk as well as you," Adam gave Sarah a curious glance. Sarah reacted to her brother's stare by saying Ahmed is slow and he has a mental problem. Dumbfounded by what she said, I shouted "No, he's not the slow one, you are. Get your facts straight." While Sarah walked out of the library, laughing along with her brother, I sat beside Ahmed and started to cry. I wasn't sure if they were tears of embarrassment or love for my brother, but either way I was very upset by Sarah's underestimating Ahmed and taking him for something he was not.

Over the years autism has become more recognized, and since the time Ahmed was born in 1996, the diagnosis of autism has been increasing. The public is becoming more aware of this developmental disorder and is flashing the autism awareness symbol. Each part of the symbol has its own symbolic interpretation. The puzzle pattern on the ribbon symbolizes the complexity of autism, the different shaped pieces represent the diversity of people with autism, and the brightness of the ribbon signals hope. The causes of autism are still unknown, and since they do not know the cause, they do not know the cure.

Over the next few years, I had other frustrating moments, mostly dealing with Ahmed's tantrums in public. Sometimes he drew pictures on my schoolwork. Ahmed loves to draw. His sketches are usually about what he is thinking or how he feels. Often, when I see my brother's drawings, I realize that he feels happy, sad, or simply that he

dislikes the girl who sits in front of him in class. And, whether it's plain paper or my homework, it will do for him. Several times I have found Ahmed's masterpiece sketched on my work, and so I started to make a habit of hiding my papers. One day unfortunately, Ahmed was able to get his hands on an essay of mine which happened to be due the next day. Without noticing his sketches on the paper, I put it away along with the rest of my work. The next afternoon when I gave in my assignment, my teacher, standing in front of the class began to laugh. When the class looked at him with baffled stares my teacher said, "I know I asked you to be a creative writer, but this was not what I had intended." When the class turned towards me I realized his words were directed at me, and it was *my* "creative" writing that was being held up. My face turned red and I did not know what to say, so I laughed along with my peers even though my teacher asked to see me after class. My teacher and I were the last ones in the room when he said, "Aeisha, I'm sorry if I embarrassed you, but please explain why you handed that in." After I explained Ahmed and his drawing habit, my teacher gave me an extra day to hand in a "words-only" essay, which I did.

To this day, I find myself thinking back to past incidents with my brother, and in particular the day in the library. My interaction with Sarah allowed me to learn how my sense of protectiveness for Ahmed has grown along with the love I have for him. When Ahmed's distinctiveness is brought up, I am now able to explain his autism and introduce Ahmed before others start to underestimate him or his disorder. By not defending him, I was breaking a promise I hold of trying to be "the best big sister ever." I now have a more accepting view of individuals than I did in the past, and I am capable of understanding others beyond what is exposed to the public. Understanding Ahmed's autism was a key turning point in my life and, as I mature, so will my knowledge of my brother's disorder. As I walk down the street in my neighborhood and meet new people, I do not allow myself to judge before getting to know the person, and I believe that underestimating someone is wrong.

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Restrictions on the Free Speech Rights of Inmates

Barbara Reveron-Morales

The First Amendment basically guarantees the right of free speech. That guarantee changes, however, if you are not free, but rather an incarcerated person. It is true that just because an individual is an inmate at a correctional facility, it does not mean that their constitutional rights evaporate into thin air. If an individual has broken the law and is sent to prison, they still are entitled to the same basic rights as if they were free, but upon closer examination, the difference now becomes the degree to which the right of free speech can be exercised.

Inmates' right to verbal expression cannot be taken away, but they cannot abuse this right either. In *Harry v. Smith*, 148 Misc. 2d 629, 561 N.Y.S. 2d 374 (N.Y. County Sup. Ct. 1990), the petitioner was accused of violating institutional rule of conduct 107.11, which prohibited verbal harassment of correctional staff or any other persons, New York City Rules and Regulations 270.2[B][8][ii]. The inmate was waiting on line for something when he asked how long it would be before he would be called and he was told that it would be an hour. When he came back and saw the line was still pretty long, he became loud and abusive and exclaimed "Why you tell me that shit, come back in an hour?" The petitioner, disciplined for the use of the word "shit," brought an Article 78 proceeding because he believed that the word "shit" is constitutionally protected free speech under the First Amendment.

The court in this matter first pointed out that the United States Supreme Court has previously ruled that an inmate "retains only those First Amendment rights that are not inconsistent with his status as a prisoner or with the legitimate penological objectives of the corrections system." See *Pell v. Procunier*, 417 U.S. 817, 822 (1974). That being said, the Supreme Court established a four-point test to make sure that correction regulations do not impinge on inmates' constitutional rights:

- 1-Is there a valid, rational connection between the prison regulation and the legitimate government interest put forward to justify it?
- 2-Is there an alternative means of exercising rights that remains open to inmates?

3-Will the accommodation of asserted rights have a significant “ripple effect” on fellow inmates or staff?

4-Is there an alternative to the regulation that fully accommodates prisoners rights at a *de minimis* cost to valid penological interest? Id at 818.

In short, there are competing interests, and the constitutional right being infringed upon is weighed against the prison’s needs and objectives of order, safety, discipline and rehabilitation. When the inmate used the word “shit,” it was in a way to incite or provoke behavior from either fellow inmates or staff that was inconsistent with the prison goals of safety and order. According to the four-point test in *Pell*, if accommodations were made for the use of such abusive and harassing language, it would go against the legitimate goals of order and safety of the facility. Moreover, the regulation of foul language does not deprive inmates of all free speech rights, especially if there were other means of speech that the petitioner could have used to express his dissatisfaction with his situation. It was concluded that the guidelines set to prohibit volatile and insolent language were legitimate and did not infringe on the inmate’s right to free speech. Inmates may have a right to say what they want, but they had better be careful the way they say it because the legal system views the restrictions on inmate speech as a means to keep order.

What about the means that inmates have for expression? The best way for inmates to communicate with others is through the phone and mail. Free speech is guaranteed, but are the means to this speech guaranteed as well?

According to §623(4) of the New York Corrections Law, the Department of Corrections is given the power to establish rules, regulations and departmental procedures regarding any inmate phone system. Whatever phone system is established, it must provide reasonable security measures to preserve the safety and security of each correctional facility as well as all staff and persons outside a facility who may receive inmate phone calls. By establishing an inmate telephone system, does this mean that inmates have a constitutional, First Amendment right to telephone access and use? The answer is no. In *Cooper v. Morin*, 91 Misc. 2d 302, 398 N.Y.S. 2d 36 (N.Y. Sup. Ct. 1977), a class action lawsuit was brought, alleging unconstitutional jail conditions, one of them being an encroachment on inmates’ First Amendment right to communicate by restricting the inmates’ use of the telephone. This court held that, once again, when weighing the validity of a regulation that limits an inmate’s means of communication against the correction facilities’ objectives of safety and order being furthered, then judicial deference must be given to the correctional facility.

As for a constitutional right to phone calls, the court cited *Hill v. Estelle*, 537 F. 2d 214 (5th Cir. 1976), which states that “prisoners have no constitutional right to make telephone calls.” The only thing that inmates were entitled to was their one “free” phone call upon initial entry to the facility and that was it. Another matter also cited the *Hill* case in which it specifically says that the “use of the telephone by inmate is a *privilege and not a right...*” *Crandell v. State*, 199 A.D. 2d 883, 605 N.Y.S 2d 552 (3rd Dep’t 1993) [*emphasis added*]. In the

end, as long as the most important concerns, such as a right to counsel, are being met, access to telephone services is not considered a deprivation of inmate First Amendment rights.

Restriction of inmate means of communication via telephone services is allowed because it does not infringe on free speech. The only other avenue an inmate may have for free expression is correspondence, or specifically, mail. Over the years, mail has served inmates' interest by allowing them to keep a connection to the outside world. Whether it is reaching out to family for some news or contacting the media to inform them of unfair treatment, mail service has been a reliable constant throughout time as a means of keeping in touch with others. The government recognizes that telephone use and prisoner mail fall under the free speech clause of the First Amendment but since inmate telephone use is restricted, does this mean that inmate mail can be restricted as well? The answer is yes and no.

Generally, inmate mail remains unrestricted content-wise. The rules regarding the inmate correspondence programs can be found under New York Code, Rules and Regulations, Section 720 which states "the sending and receiving of mail by inmates will be restricted only to the extent necessary to prevent a threat to the safety, security and good order of the facility or the safety or well-being of any person, and to prevent unsolicited and unwanted mail." In reviewing the previous court rulings, a pattern starts to emerge regarding the restricting of inmate free speech rights, which is that censorship or suppression of inmate expression is justified only if it poses a threat to the safety and order of the correctional facility. Any rules or regulations that do not further this goal will be considered impinging on an inmate's First Amendment rights.

Milburn v. McNiff, 81 A.D. 2d 587, 437 N.Y.S. 2d 445 (2d Dep't 1981) demonstrates how overly broad regulations regarding written expression can be struck down and considered unconstitutional. The petitioner in this matter wanted to correspond with individuals whose classified ads appeared in a newspaper. He brought a petition to the court which challenged the constitutionality of the prison's policy restricting whom he could correspond with via making inmates fill out a "Permission to Correspond" form. The court noted that other facilities tried to justify this procedure by explaining that some correspondents may not want to receive mail from inmates, and/or if a policy did not exist, officials would be unable to detect escape plans or contraband. Other than the fact that the officials can constitutionally inspect outgoing mail to correspondents (see *Wolff v. McDonnell*, 418 U.S. 539 (1974)), officials have other means to offset smuggling and escapee plans and therefore the corresponding policy was determined to be an overly broad abridgement of inmates' First Amendment rights. The court in *Milburn* cited *Procunier v. Martinez*, 416 U.S. 396, 94 S. Ct. 1800 (1974) stating "Prison officials may not censor inmate correspondence simply to eliminate unflattering or unwelcome opinions or factually inaccurate statements. Rather, they must show that a regulation authorizing mail censorship furthers one or more of the substantial governmental interests in security, order, and rehabilitation." The Appellate

Division found that the correctional facility had no justification for this practice and the policy did not further governmental interests in security, order and rehabilitation. Any kind of First Amendment restriction, unrelated to the suppression of expression, must be no greater than necessary to further these interests and certainly written correspondence to a local newspaper does not fall into this category.

Inmates can express themselves through various means and their content cannot be regulated unless it poses a threat to maintaining the order of the correctional facility. A bizarre set of circumstances comes into play when the inmates want to use their rights for profit by describing their crimes to the public. Quite a few high profiled inmates found that by selling their story rights to the media, the payday could be massive. This came to light in 1977 with New York's Son of Sam law, named after the infamous serial killer David Berkowitz. When Mr. Berkowitz was apprehended, he was inundated with large money offers from Hollywood for his story rights, and so the state of New York tried to rectify the situation by enacting New York Executive Law §632-a. This law had any monies that an inmate received from selling his or her story go to the victims of the crime to compensate them for their suffering. In theory, this was a good idea, but someone forgot to check whether the statute violated any fundamental rights, and thanks to the gangster Henry Hill, we found out it did.

Simon & Schuster, Inc. v. Members of New York State Crime Victims Board, 502 U.S. 105 (1991), was a case that started in New York and went all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court. It is because of this case, that the Supreme Court was forced to strike the Son of Sam law as unconstitutional because it violated the free speech clause of the First Amendment. This first came to light when Mr. Hill was contracted with Simon & Schuster, Inc. to publish details of his previous crimes in a book called *Wiseguy*. Eventually this book was turned into an Oscar-winning movie called *GoodFellas*. Soon after, the New York State Crime Victims Board sent notice to Simon & Schuster saying to turn over to the Board all payments that were payable to Mr. Hill to be held in escrow. Simon & Schuster, Inc. soon brought suit alleging the statute infringed on its First Amendment rights. The United States Supreme Court eventually agreed.

Basically, the United States Supreme Court ruled that New York's Son of Sam law was over-inclusive because the language of the statute could have applied to works on *any* subject provided that they expressed the author's thoughts or recollections regarding his crime, however tangentially or incidentally. The major flaw was the way the law was written. If the law were literally applied the way it was written, it could have been applied to all works and to anyone who briefly mentions a crime that was committed long ago in which there was no accusation or conviction. To illustrate this point, the Supreme Court mentions that the memoirs of Henry David Thoreau and Malcolm X would have fallen under this statute and would have been penalized if this law stood.

The main constitutional issue that drew the attention of the Supreme Court was the criminal/inmate rights to free speech. The public may not like the

fact that the inmate may speak about his crimes and the state may have an legitimate interest in compensating the victims for their suffering, but any statute that places a financial burden on a particular kind of speech and on its speaker based solely on its content, is inconsistent with the fundamentals of the First Amendment. Citing a previous decision that they made in *Leathers v. Medlock*, 499 U.S. 439 (1991), the Court found it necessary to reiterate that “regulations which permit the government to discriminate on the basis of the content of the message cannot be tolerated under the First Amendment.” The Son of Sam law may have been created with the best intentions by trying to prevent those prisoners who take advantage of their transgressions by earning profits through their speech, but speech-derived income cannot have unequal treatment under the First Amendment. If it did, it would serve as a disincentive to drive certain ideas out of the marketplace. The U.S. Supreme Court did not say so directly, but it also recognized the free speech rights of inmates and prisoners. The content of their expression may be disturbing, but if it was to be suppressed a slippery slope of government censorship might ensue. (Being penalized for breaking the law is one thing, but if an incarcerated individual were penalized for simply exercising his rights of speech and expression, it can be said that the government considered incarcerated persons to be second-class citizens.)

When a person is imprisoned, it does not mean that they are automatically stripped of their First Amendment rights. Naturally, the extent to which prisoners may exercise these rights is to a lesser degree and less extensive than that of a non-incarcerated person. Whenever a regulation is implemented, and may have a chance of impinging on these rights, the interest of the correctional facilities and their goals of maintaining safety and order must be contemplated against the prisoners’ constitutional rights. Whether the means of expression is through verbal speech, telephone use or correspondence, the law and the courts have time and time again acknowledged the role of prison officials and the great responsibility that they have in meeting these goals, therefore a great deal of discretion is given to officials in order to further legitimate correctional concerns. The greatest challenge now is balancing prison regulations against inmates’ fundamental rights. This can result in 100,000 solutions, but one thing is for sure: the entitlement to First Amendment constitutional rights drastically changes for the incarcerated, and the best way to take full advantage of free speech is never to become incarcerated in the first place.

Really Cool: We Go to School

George Rodriguez

Despite its brevity and simplicity, Gwendolyn Brooks's poem, "We Real Cool," presents a clear and powerful message to its readers. Written in 1960, this poem paints the picture of a group of teenage males enjoying their time at a pool hall. The teenagers see themselves as being "cool" because they have dropped out of school, drink alcohol and listen to jazz until late at night. Brooks uses the word "We" at the end of just about every line of the poem to imply that they collectively feel a sense of power and invincibility. Although Brooks provides a cheerful tone to the poem, we, as readers translate the teenagers' behavior as that of troubled young men who lack any regard for education or a meaningful future. The teenagers surprisingly acknowledge the likely outcome of their lifestyle by admitting, "We/ Die soon," in what may be the most powerful line of the poem. Brooks does a fine job of getting her point across by describing the teenagers' "cool" fun, and then abruptly ending the poem on a somber note. She clearly wishes to have her readers envision the lives of some of the youths of her era.

Unfortunately, our society today continues to struggle with this type of teenage mentality. Much like Brooks, we think about why young men such as those in "We Real Cool" make the decisions they do, or behave the way they do. Because the majority of us see life through a different lens than these teenagers, an effort must be made to alter this type of thinking and behavior so that young men can lead normal, productive lives. Three sources provide evidence of the need for education in prison as one means of altering self-destructive behavior. The sources show how education programs in prisons decrease rates of recidivism. "Studies of Correctional Education Programs" by Barbara Wade appeared in *Adult Basic Education and Literacy Journal* in 2007. Dennis Zaro's "Teaching Strategies of the Self-Actualized Correctional Educator: The Inside Person vs. the Outside Person" and James S. Vacca's "Educated Prisoners Are Less Likely to Return to Prison," both appeared in the *Journal of Correctional Education* in 2007 and 2004 respectively. I also had the pleasure of interviewing Dr. Michelle Fine, Distinguished Professor of Psychology and Urban Education at the CUNY Graduate Center, to discuss her research on prison inmates and education.

There is great concern in the United States about the increasing rates of imprisonment as well as recidivism. As noted in Barbara Wade's article, this problem is believed to be the result of the disparity between the economic and academic levels among individuals in the correctional populations in contrast to our general population. Wade reported on a series of studies conducted to determine the effectiveness of college education programs implemented in prisons. Wade says, "Since a lack of education may lead to poverty and crime, prison education programs should be rehabilitative, and should enable inmates to secure employment upon release, thereby reducing poverty and giving them an opportunity to become contributing members of society" (27). With this

objective in mind, Wade reported on studies to determine the development of the basic educational skills of inmates. According to Wade, "Results indicated that inmates who participated in ABE [Adult Basic Education] programs made significant learning gains in reading, math and language" (29).

Although Dennis Zaro agrees with the need for basic educational skills, he also emphasizes the need for improvement in other skills: responsibility, anger management, control of impulses, and empathy. Zaro notes, if inmates can change "the thinking patterns that brought them to prison, the recidivism rates can be substantially lowered" (29). Zaro bases his approach on data from sixteen studies conducted by criminologist Dr. Robert Ross. Advocating a focus on these skills, Zaro introduces a teaching strategy, "The Inside Person vs. the Outside Person," based on the construct "that meaningful change must come from within and not be superimposed from outside" (28). The concept involves written exercises on each essential skill; inmates are given a series of descriptors and are expected to assign them to one of two "Circles of Influence," one for the inside person they have control over, and the other for the outside person they have no control over. The inmates' choices are then analyzed to determine the strengths and weaknesses of their skills. This teaching strategy has been proven effective.

The article written by James S. Vacca directly addresses the issue of recidivism. Vacca notes that prison education systems have produced "lower recidivism rates, lower parole revocation rates, better release employment patterns and better institutional disciplinary records" (299). The project that informs his work included sixty studies that focused not only on prison academic programs, but also cognitive and vocational education. As a result of the vocational education, for example, inmates developed the skills necessary to succeed in employment upon their release. In fact, "ex-prisoners who participated in employment and vocational programs in prison had a better chance of maintaining employment" (300).

I interviewed Dr. Michelle Fine to learn about her research, to determine what she has learned about the impact of educational programs on recidivism, and get a sense of her personal experiences with inmates. The first participatory action research (PAR) Dr. Fine conducted was in a New York State women's prison in 1996-2000, when the federal Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act had placed a hold on federal funding for prison programs. Dr. Fine's research collective of scholars and inmates met every few weeks over a four-year period to learn not only inmates' stories of crime and the prison environment, but also about their responsibilities and experiences after their release. Dr. Fine states, "Our primary goal was to write convincingly about the data we had collected; that it made political, economic, and social policy sense for the New York State legislature to restore funds for college programs." The women in the study were deeply and positively affected by prison college programs. The women demonstrated leadership within the prison environment and many even launched educational projects of their own dealing with the alternatives to prison life. A second PAR Dr. Fine mentioned involved twenty-five male and female former inmates of varying race, age, type of crime

committed, and length of sentence. The research group asked questions regarding the former inmates' prison experience, changes they had experienced, turning points while incarcerated and preparation for parole. Closing questions addressed their future goals. The study showed that all inmates attributed their imprisonment to similar factors such as poverty, troubled family life, lack of education, and hanging around with the wrong crowd. However, Dr. Fine said, "College education was the single most cited reason for enabling change, transformation, and responsibility."

In order to get a sense of Dr. Fine's experience on a personal level, I asked her to describe a memorable conversation with one inmate from each of the studies that we had discussed. In one project, she recalls a female inmate enthusiastically describing how college education filled the entire prison, how she could hear typewriter keys until late into the night and fellow inmates knocking on her wall asking how to spell. In the other project, a male inmate described his life and identity after incarceration had disrupted them. The analogy that he used was that of taking a dresser drawer and throwing its contents on the ground. His subsequent goal was to figure out how to place the contents back in the drawer. Dr. Fine was impressed that yet another inmate was thinking through the process of rehabilitation.

The effectiveness of prison education systems paves the way for a more promising future for inmates, as well as for their relatives in the general population. What is surprising about the programs, in my opinion, is the intensity and the actual success rate of education provided. Will these programs be allowed to continue and evolve, or will they simply be extinguished in the coming years out of budget constraints that fail to consider both the long-term budget savings and the saving of lives that programs of these kinds provide? Were Gwendolyn Brooks alive to witness these programs today, I feel she would be much in favor of maintaining and expanding them. They represent an opportunity for individuals to learn, evolve, mend the past and re-imagine the future.

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Always a Bridesmaid, Never a Bride: George Saunders's World of Losers

Denis Yusupov

George Saunders, like few other authors, has the ability to create settings and characters that you can not only imagine but feel you can touch if you close your eyes and grip the paper hard enough. He is, without a doubt or hesitation, a master of his craft. The way he creates his magic, though, is the most compelling part of his story-telling ability, for his method is unique—different from any other author's style. What is amazing about Saunders's style is how after reading any of his stories you can honestly say "Wow! I've been there" or "Holy crap, this person is my cousin," or maybe if you are unfortunate enough you might say: "My God! This is me he is writing about—isn't it?" And no matter how absurd some of his stories sound, or how fictitious they become, you believe him, because as long as you are reading something of Saunders's making, you live and breathe in the literary work itself. Thank God, however, that once you put down one of his stories you can go back to the real world because George Saunders's world is not a place you would want to be trapped in too long; he does not spare his characters anything. He makes sure that they live their life as you do on your worst day, except that these characters live your worst day—times infinity—every day of their lives, and what's scary about it is that you can almost see yourself inside these miserable, have-nothing, and live-for-nothing characters.

It would be difficult to say, no, it would be absolutely impossible to say which of Saunders's characters in any of the three stories "CivilWarLand in Bad Decline," "Sea Oak," or "Winky" was spared less, or tortured more in the literary world that Saunders created for these characters to live, breathe, and die in. The only thing that is certain is none of these characters had it easy; they were all born without backbones into a world that was ready to chew, swallow, and spit

them out in continuous cycles more ferocious than a Kansas City tornado. And although the characters are all different, and their settings all different as well, the main characters do have much in common. The nameless main character of “CivilWarLand in Bad Decline,” Aunt Bernie of “Sea Oak,” and Neil Yaniky of “Winky,” are all characters who are unable to fulfill their dreams because they are incapable of doing anything to get out of their self-inflicted pitiful lives mainly because of the weakness of their own characters.

The main character of “CivilWarLand in Bad Decline” is one downtrodden and unfortunate soul. He works in the most absurd of places, a theme park designed to take visitors back to the times of the Civil War. He is a slave to his boss, he is constantly degraded by his wife who is the mother of his two children, and he gets humiliated, without protest, by potential investors. Surely this is not the life he intended on living, surely he did not ask his high school guidance counselor what course of action he should take to live this kind of life, but this was his life nonetheless. And although this character may seem inhuman in his spinelessness and because of his ridiculous position in life, Saunders shows the reader the humanity in this character by giving the reader a glimpse into his battered mind: “Is this the life I envisioned for myself: My God no. I wanted to be a high jumper” (Saunders 962). His wanting to be a high jumper may seem ludicrous, but it is no more insane than wanting to be an astronaut, a basketball player, or whatever freakish dream you may have had as a child.

Unfortunately for him, he was born in a world conceived within Saunders’s mind and therefore he is powerless, like all characters of Saunders’s creation, to achieve a life that he once envisioned for himself. But to get more to the point, he never achieved his dream because of his own weak character traits. Saunders makes this obvious because the character does nothing to better his position in life, and at no point in the story do you ever feel like he ever tried to do so. In this character’s case, the reason he never does anything to change his situation is this regretful reason: it’s not that he is scared, “just aware of the likelihood of the possibility of failure” (Saunders 969). This is a common fear that is probably faced by everyone at one point or another, but it takes a true coward to live with that fear and never try to face it in the hope of bettering his or her life.

Neil Yaniky, the main character of “Winky” is definitely living a crapstorm of a life that can only be comparable to other characters of Saunders’s imagination. Yaniky, in the story, is living with his half-demented, overly religious, balding sister, and his only income is soldering together “little triangular things in his basement, for forty-seven cents, a little triangular thing, for CompuParts” (Saunders 990). All this at the age of forty—forty! And it’s not that Neil doesn’t have dreams. Oh, does he ever. He wanted the so-called American dream, and Saunders shows the reader this when he writes: “He wanted a Jag, not a Benz! Golden statues of geese, classy vases, big porcelain frogs, whatever. . .” (Saunders 995). Fine—these dreams are ludicrous. But they are dreams and goals nonetheless. But to achieve such dreams, one has to work

hard and have a focus. Which might explain why the sorry Yaniky doesn't drive a Jag or have golden geese, but instead finds himself in one of those bogus self-help seminars.

Saunders, being the unforgiving author that he is, at no point in the story, ever makes you doubt the fact that Yaniky never achieves his dream, and is in the unenviable position he is in because he has never done anything in his life to help himself. He has never worked hard to step out of the dung that was his life. The bottom line is it's Yaniky's fear, it's his mentality, and his inability to take action that causes him to be such a, for lack of a better term, loser! Saunders shows this to the reader when he once again allows the reader to enter the main character's mind: "He wasn't powerful, he wasn't great, he was just the same as everybody else, less than everybody else, other people got married and had real jobs, other people didn't live with their fat, clinging sisters, he was a loser who would keep losing for the rest of his life. . . ." (Saunders 996). With this kind of a gutless, broken spirit it is evident why Neil never does, and probably never will accomplish, any of his dreams. He is too afraid to act, for he simply has no courage even to attempt to achieve his far out goals.

Aunt Bernie is one of the characters in the third and final story, "Sea Oak." Aunt Bernie takes the persona of a saint, one of those sweet kind-hearted women who have never done a thing in their lives unless it was to benefit someone else. But all poor Aunt Bernie ever received in return for her life of generosity was nothing but a box of pencils from her father, a steaming load of poop in her suitcase (when on the only vacation of her life, to Quigley, Kansas), and a head full of regrets which she took to her grave after she was murdered. Aunt Bernie is by far the most extraordinary character in any of the three short stories by Saunders because after being scared to death, she comes back from the dead expressing all of the regrets she took to her grave and all of her dreams that were never accomplished. She expresses her dissatisfaction with the life she lived: "My life was shit! I was never even up in a freaking plane" (Saunders 982). Bernie, a woman who until her death never swore in her life, returned from the grave infinitely bitter from the sorry life she lived above the ground.

Saunders as usual shows why this person never lived a fulfilling life; because, until she died she had the backbone of a worm. This was Bernie's mental plan for living: "'You know what I do if something bad happens?' Bernie says. 'I don't think about it. Don't take it so serious. It ain't the end of the world. That's what I do. . . . That's how I got where I am'" (Saunders 975). Aunt Bernie lived with that kind of a carefree mentality until she was sixty years old, and that's why she was never able to fly on a plane, or have the lovers she fantasized about, and really that kind of mentality is what brought her back, miserable, from the grave. At one point Bernie's corpse says, "The world ain't giving away nice lives" (Saunders 986), and that statement could not possibly be more true, for the world definitely does not give anything away. If Bernie wanted something in life she should have mustered up the guts to go for it, but instead she was "...fucked. As per usual. Always the bridesmaid, never the bride" (Saunders 986).

As pitiful as these three fictional characters are, many real people deal

with the same issues. It's not easy to achieve your dreams, and yes it might be scary to go against the norm and do something different for a change, but it's necessary, otherwise you will take to your grave all of your pent up frustration and all of your regrets. There is much to learn from these characters, for they are perfect role models of how not to act, of how not to live in order to achieve your goals in life. Their failure as individuals, however, is what makes them so real because failure is a fear all of us here in the real world face, and maybe by reading these stories it can push us to work harder, be stronger and, most importantly, live a life that will not have us taking regrets to the grave.

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I Am a Writer: Chapter One

Marlon Irizarry

I was born to do this not because I am a natural but because of the pain I feel. I guess as a kid it was always hard for me to express myself. I was overweight and knew nothing about anything. It was as if I was never prepared for the world and it made me less of a person. Less because girls laughed at me and less because I was every young boy's target. I was a walking bulls-eye and I couldn't change that. I was sweet and more sincere than most priests these days. Years passed and I grew bigger in weight, but more so at heart. I always considered myself a soldier because I battled all obstacles in the battlefield (my neighborhood). I really didn't get out much because I felt safe in my house. Specifically, my room was my safe haven and that worked for me. I had everything I needed there and on the outside was just another way for me to get messed with. My parents basically thought I was a failure even though they refused to admit it. I sucked in school and more important I tanked in life. I found myself feeling sorry for everything that happened to me. Nobody taught me right from wrong so I had to take the time to figure it out. From the beatings my mother gave me to the cruel words my dad told me I learned pretty quick. There was no order in my house because something was always going down. Don't get me wrong, in the early times when my father wasn't always in the house watching television all locked up in his room, we did okay. Money was usually good until my mom took a long break from work and my dad's music just wasn't preferred by a lot of people. He did good for his profession or at least I thought he did. It was lovely when he told me that the refinancing of the house made us live well. Meaning it wasn't him being successful with his career but an investment he didn't want to make with the house in the first place. Life was just crazy with this Irizarry family, but I stuck by it because I knew I couldn't do any better. Waking up in the mornings sucked because I either had school or had to stay in a house full of miserable people. We were like vultures who fed on one another because we had nothing better to do. Complaining came natural to us and I guess you can say we were a bit ungrateful. Then again when you live with a father who controls everything and gives you no leverage to do anything at all, what do you expect? When I smartened up, I would try to stay away from my house and go anywhere that was quiet or relaxing. I always felt out of place with my family but as I said, I stuck by it because it's all I had. I became a writer, and it just helped me get away. Get

away from the drama and the heartache. People say I am sensitive or in my mother's words "like a female," but I just have feelings. I didn't want to be mistreated and I never really got what I wanted when it came to that, so I settled. Poetry easily became my life because the deeper into life I went, the more I realized that's all I really have. I feel like my mom is a great person or whatever, but when I am around her I just can't function. She makes me uncomfortable and I feel like she wants to be the villain in my superhero story. I just mention her because I always used to feel like she was the only person I had and loved. Every other family member, especially my father, made me put up my defenses really high. Nobody ever knew how I thought and they felt time was too precious to actually sit down to listen. So I chose to write down how I felt and it ended up working out beautifully for me. From writing about a girl I was falling for to the hate I felt towards my life. Questions were always on my mind and I never needed to censor or hold them back. It could be as simple as why am I fat to why does that girl do that.... I was always thinking and sometimes I just wish I could live in my mind. It would be uncensored with lots of sex and plenty of bone breaking. I knew in many ways I was insane but I kept it to myself because nobody would understand that, deep within me, there was actually a good person. Someone who is genuine and considerate of others' feelings. I realize now I have broken the laws of science. With everything that I was exposed to and with the experiences I've gone through I managed to maintain an outcome nobody could have expected. The things that I have been through in this house along with in school I should basically be a serial killer who was stupid enough to get caught and be locked away in a insane asylum for the rest of my life. I guess I was a natural-born killer and in some ways you think it would have been the rush of a lifetime. Instead, I am living my life scared every day of not being the best I can be and living my chill days high enough to fly like superman. Things worked out weird that way and though I am still fat as hell, I still live because once again I have nothing else to do. In a way things have gotten so bad that I am happy. Happy because I need to try that emotion out for a while and see how it works for me. At this point I just block everybody out and move as if I am programmed to do so. In many ways it's fun because I try to make my life random and unpredictable. Only someone as weird as me can understand exactly what the hell is going on around me. The smoke is clouding my smell and the television is too loud, but it's a way of living. Everyone these days is struggling so why not just say screw everything and let's just do whatever we want, right? Wrong, everything in life needs to be justified because at the end of the day you have to answer to yourself. . . .

Obviously nobody is going to admit it, but at the end of the day the only person who has to deal with the issues is yourself. Why give others the satisfaction of feeling sorry for you or thinking they are better than you? You don't, so you keep pushing in hopes of things magically becoming better and you put a smile on because you just can't be sad anymore. I guess either you're something or nothing. Either you're rich or you're poor. Even rich people are miserable and killing themselves these days, so what does that say about life in

general? You can have all the money in the world and still feel all odds are against you. Poor people don't feel any better, and at the end of the day we are all doomed. Depression gets the best of us all and in reality nobody is happy. Nobody reaches their goals or expectations and we all just settle. Rich people have more money to do more drugs, and poor people just battle the economy through the little opportunity they do get. If you really think about it, the ones that supposedly "win at life" get what? Money, sex, drugs, or maybe approval from the people just as miserable as them but with less money. . . . The rich snobs, whether they be white as snow or black as night, find it hard to live a normal life. Philosophers say those without stress or hate are not human. They are not human because lacking emotion one cannot be human. So doesn't that mean those who do crimes can possibly be expressing their emotions of not having a father or being molested when they were a child. Okay, but then they are just considered another mental case that couldn't afford the proper guidance. . . . No, instead, the ideal people are the ones who go through that and actually become something.

I say be one hundred percent honest with yourself and don't let nobody tell you the sky is blue when you know sometimes it can turn black on you. My belief is this is hell, and heaven is just one death away. I choose not to tell anybody that because either they might want to die faster or they might take that literally and spread the word. I ain't God and I am no philosopher, but I have a right to state the obvious, that this place we live in is no paradise and this ain't a place of equality. Either you got it or you don't. It just so happens that the majority don't got it and they just so happen to stay that way until they die. I mean there are those who may hit the lottery or get hit by a bus and sue the government, but when do you ever see those people? Better yet when has that ever happened to somebody you know and if it has how much did they get after all the taxes or whatever? So I say unto you all, be smart and find something you do right. Hopefully you can milk that for all it offers and later on make a profession out of it. I became a writer because at the end of the day it's all I really do right and it's all I really want to do. In the long run I am not even a real writer because I have published nothing and I might never even be heard. I will just fight to live up to my own writing hype and I will either get a tough checkmate or an easy stalemate. Best case scenario is I am still stuck here with either a little more money in my pocket or a book that nobody wants to read. I would settle for people reading my stuff and saying "Wow, he inspired me to work harder and not become a depressed loser like him." If that were to happen, my book would be completely justified and I would be able to die a happy man.