

The Student Writing Anthology

2010-2011

**University of Massachusetts Amherst
Writing Program**

Learning Solutions

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INTRODUCTION

Last year, the 33rd edition of the UMass Amherst Writing Program's *Student Writing Anthology* broadened both its goals and content *en route* to realizing our ultimate vision: to make this book a campus-wide resource, used at every level, as an integral part of the University's effort to both celebrate and improve student writing on campus. In past editions, we had imagined our largest audience to be students enrolled in our First Year Writing courses (Englwrit 111, 112, and 112H), and we primarily published texts from the first three units of *College Writing*, blended with essays from our *Basic Writing* course, Englwrit 111. Essays were not identified by course or unit.

Last year we began by rebuilding the book to include separate and clearly identifiable sections for essays from each unit of *Basic Writing* and adding selections from Unit IV of *College Writing*. But the most ambitious and important change came by requesting submissions from the representatives of more than 70 Junior Year Writing courses. We divided the book into three sections and clearly identified the goals of the texts that emerged from each unit of our First Year courses and the texts published from Junior Year Writing courses. It was an experiment, but one I believed in for a very long time: to showcase various genres of academic writing; to open a window to a wide range of perspectives on a wide range of topics; and to illustrate the range of stylistics open to academic writers in the 21st century.

Prompted by the tripling of the number of texts submitted this year, I am prepared to say that this new venture is on its way to realizing its goals. Junior Year Writing instructors submitted three times the number of texts we received last year, making selection highly competitive. Teachers in our 111 and 112 classes discussed how beneficial the Junior Year texts had been in their teaching. Various calls and requests from Junior Year Writing instructors indicated that they too wanted to make use of the texts that were published. And Du Bois Library called, requesting copies.

This year marks our 34th edition of *The Student Writing Anthology*, and the book promises to be our most exciting edition to date. The contributions from *Basic Writing*, a complex course that fulfills a diversity requirement because of its emphasis on issues of U.S. linguistic diversity, always offer crucial insights into this increasingly important issue. Students read and write about the numerous literacies through which they negotiate their worlds, as they examine how these literacies contribute to identity construction. The excellent writing from this course asks us to consider how various efforts to normalize these multiple literacies lead to the oppression of some identities and discourse communities at the expense of others. Such essential considerations of language, education, culture, and the values of our society should engage all of us.

Our section devoted to *College Writing* has also been expanded; as with last year's edition, we have included examples of texts from our fourth unit, called "TBA" because each of our teachers composes a unique project based on his or her personal strengths and interests. Many extraordinary projects emerge from Unit Four, and often include collaborative writing, experimental approaches to academic writing, and publishing texts for specific purposes and audiences. Often, collaboratively written and edited books are created for community outreach as well as college audiences. These TBA assignments are as diverse and intellectually stimulating as the teachers and students who create them—and again, their content and style reach across disciplines and class level.

This year we have added yet another unit from *College Writing*—our fifth paper, called "The Final Reflection." Throughout the course, students reflect on various aspects of their drafting, revision process, and the final product of their work. In the "Final Reflection," which takes the place of a final exam, students look back over the whole body of work they have produced in the course, consider their struggles and successes, then synthesize into one paper what they have learned about writing, their writing process, and what they believe lies ahead of them in their journeys as writers. These papers offer sound advice and insight to any writer. They are so insightful and entertaining, I could barely restrain myself from sharing them with my current students.

Our Junior Year section has also expanded, not so much in terms of the number of essays, but in the variety of genres, the differing lengths of the texts, and the multiplicity of lessons these texts teach us about writing. More detail about these selections will come in the introduction to the Junior Year Writing section.

I remember last year, as I read through the final page proofs for this year's book, feeling amazed at the polish and depth of thought of these young writers. It struck me that many of the texts would not look out of place in an anthology of works by professional authors, and I felt that in some ways, calling the work "student writing" was inappropriate. But taken from another perspective, the fact that it is thinking and writing produced by authors still relatively young, with so many more opportunities to develop their talents, makes the reading that much more enjoyable and, at times, astonishing.

We invite our readers to discover the many rhetorical choices available to us in academic writing and to learn from the wealth of ideas and experiences that emerge from each writer's personal context. Finally, we hope our readers will enjoy the excellent work produced by our UMass Amherst students.

Patricia Zukowski
Chair, Anthology Committee

Assistant Director
University Writing Program

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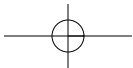
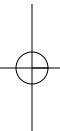
I am grateful to so many people who made this book possible: the First Year Writing instructors who contributed their students' excellent texts to the Anthology (far too many names to recognize here) and all the students who so eagerly agreed to share their work so that others might learn from it; the Junior Year professors and lecturers who shared our vision for this book and worked so hard to make the Junior Year Writing section a reality: Mitch Boucher, Lindsay Demers, Beth Jakob, Betsy Krause, Sarah Malone, Deb McCutcheon, and John Stifler. Their enthusiasm for this project and their willingness to do whatever needed to be done were constant reminders to me of how I am fortunate to work at an institution filled with people who care deeply about students, their learning, their success, and, in particular, their writing. The efforts of our Anthology Committee members were extraordinary. Since September of 2009 until the end of the academic year, they have been fully engaged in every task that it takes to put even this small book together. Every week they diligently picked up a new packet of 25–40 papers, read them intensively and attentively, and scored and commented on each one. They met every Friday afternoon to thoughtfully, thoroughly, and spiritedly discuss each text that had been submitted to us. They also helped with the long and tedious process of editing and putting the book together, then graciously kept offering to do more if needed. These volunteer graduate student committee members—Sarah Boyer, Sarah Magin, Kate Marantz, and Samantha Nataro—showed graciousness and dedication throughout the entire process. Our sixth member of the committee, Deirdre Vinyard, Deputy Director of the Writing Program, also deserves special recognition. She not only served on the Anthology Committee but also chaired a separate Basic Writing committee that selected and edited all the essays from that course.

Not one step of this process would have gone as smoothly as it did without the extremely competent, dedicated, and enthusiastic assistance of our support staff: Cara Cusson and Summer Ellis. From transcribing ALL the information from the release forms into a spreadsheet, to Xeroxing the essays and creating reading packets for each committee member, to recording all scores and decisions, these young undergraduate women were as professional as any permanent staff member. Special thanks also goes to David Fleming, Director of the Writing Program, for sharing and supporting the vision for this text and finding the time in his unfathomable workload to contribute whatever was needed—from sage advice to help with proofreading text. Finally, I wish to thank Pearson Custom Publishing for agreeing to publish this anthology and bundle it with our second UMass Amherst custom edition of Lester Faigley's *Penguin Handbook*, a required text in first-year courses; through this agreement, all of our first-year students have access to this valuable learning resource—also a required text in both *Basic* and *College Writing*. I also thank Pearson Custom Publishing for sending us Wendy Nelson as our liaison: her enthusiasm, her supportive words, and her consummate professionalism have brought much joy to the project and lifted me up when the weight of tasks seemed overwhelming.

Patricia Zukowski
Chair, Anthology Committee

PART I

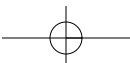
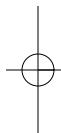
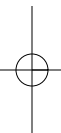
BASIC WRITING



Part I

Preface

This collection of essays represents some of the excellent writing done by students in the Basic Writing course (English Writing 111) during 2009. Basic Writing here at the University of Massachusetts is a prerequisite for College Writing for some students and also grants US Diversity credit. In this course, students read and write about the myriad literacies by which and through which they negotiate their worlds and how these literacies contribute to identity construction. In unit I, students explore the idea of multiple literacies and discourse communities, focusing their writing on a literacy with which they have experience. In unit II, they read texts which examine literacies from an academic perspective and then apply this lens to a home literacy. In unit III, the class examines literacies of power and how certain groups and institutions are supported and normalized by the language society forwards. In unit IV, students examine educational literacies and how schools work to validate or deny certain literacies, identities, and discourse communities at the expense of others. The essays in this anthology represent important critical work on a topic of increasing importance to the students in this class, and indeed to us all.



HOW I WAS CREATED

Randy Dominguez
Unit I: Mapping Literacies

Growing up in the Bronx, I was accustomed to talking like everyone around me. “Wadd up ma niggas,” was commonly how the boys (my friends) and I greeted each other back home. Though the outside world would consider this language offensive, it was normal to me and I did not know any better. To top everything off, my boys mocked me about being a Mexican who spoke Spanish like them, “como un Dominicano” or spoke Spanish way too fast for anyone to comprehend. We would clown (or joke) around with each other because we were part of an unspoken crew, regardless of my heritage being different from theirs. A normal weekday with the crew meant hanging out on the porch while sipping some Arizona Grape Drink from the local bodega, eating chicken fried rice, and reminiscing about our craziest moments until it was too dark to see. By high school my world had been spun upside down. All my ties with the crew had been severed when I was sent to board at Carson Long Military Institute (CLMI) in Pennsylvania. My connections had been lost because cell phones were not permitted and the few that I had tried to sneak in were confiscated by officers. My parents thought sending me away would be an eye-opening experience for me, and I would be lying if I said it was not.

There, I lived with cadets from all over the world: Russia, China, and Taiwan just to name a few. This was a culture shock to me— new faces, customs, and languages, not to mention candy (☺). I even learned how to speak bits of Russian from my roommate. I quickly had to memorize military code in order to communicate effectively with my platoon and community. This included, but was not limited to, saluting, figuring out what 18:00 meant, and most importantly, acknowledging my superiors. I did not enjoy dropping my books on the floor every time I had to salute oncoming officers or superiors because it made me realize that I was literally less of a person in their presence. I had to memorize countless com-

mands in regards to pivoting and flanking. A small fraction of these commands were right turn, half turn, right flank, rear march, and so on. Learning how to shoot a Springfield rifle that appeared to be dated back from the Civil War was no easy matter (I am exaggerating). The guns were heavy and awkward, but with instruction from my honor guard director, I mastered the technique. I had actually become so skilled with the rifle that I enlisted in the elite drill team and we finished second overall in the state competition. Changing the ways in which I used to express myself back home was not easy but with much persistence it paid off.

I could honestly say that I was the most ignorant person in the institute. I had a bad habit of calling everything I hated or disliked “gay.” I had to learn how to properly express my positive or negative emotions. Time flew by after I had mastered the dialect through countless hours spent in the classroom. What motivated me to learn all the pledges, guidelines, and chain-of-command was the fact that if I did not memorize them, there were consequences. My recreational period would be spent in a classroom. Not to mention that the recreational period only lasted a mere thirty minutes. I was homesick for a month or so, but after I got the hang of the routine, I quickly rose through the ranks. My hard work paid off when I was appointed the rank of lieutenant, but even that was short-lived. I received a scholarship to attend Amherst Regional High School (ARHS) the following year and jumped on it because my brother received the same deal.

Once in Amherst, I realized I had to start all over again, but at least this time I was not alone. The school curriculum left my brother and me in awe of the variety of classes offered. Some of the classes I took were “Women in Literature” and “Gay and Lesbian Literature,” which would have been seldom at any other school. I took advantage of the classes offered and never looked back, regardless of what my boys would say. If the word was put out back home that I had enrolled myself in “Gay and Lesbian Literature” class, my sexual orientation would be questioned, but I did not care because I knew who I was. The opportunities presented to me at ARHS definitely made me a more open person. At CLMI, I learned to disguise inappropriate words with socially acceptable ones in order to express myself. When I had arrived at ARHS, I still thought everything I hated or disliked was stu-

HOW I WAS CREATED

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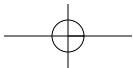
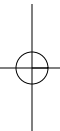
pid or gay. Taking “Gay and Lesbian Literature” made me realize that homosexuals have souls too. I know it sounds stupid, but this was what I took from the class and I was able to kick my bad habits.

Going back home was a challenge because the way I spoke had drastically changed after being away for so long. I no longer spoke like everyone. When I asked one of my boys “where are you,” the first thing he did was ask me if I was now a white boy. Back home, the proper way to ask someone where they are is, “where you at ma dude?” I definitely did not return home the same person I was before I left. Communicating with my boys was not the only problem I encountered on my return.

On another occasion, I was at a Verizon store up the street from where I lived purchasing a new phone. The employee assisting me asked me where I was from. This was funny to me because a couple of years ago this would not have been the situation. I proceeded to tell him that I was from the block, an expression used to imply that I am from around here. He smirked and could not believe me because of the way I spoke. In other words, my English was too grammatically correct in order to be from around these streets. What he said made me feel like an outsider because once again, I was reminded that I no longer spoke the language like everyone else.

Even on a daily basis, I have to deal with other people’s shit. My girlfriend calls me out and teases me because of my tendency to switch dialects when I talk to different people. She travels with me between New York and Amherst, so she would be the first to notice my inconsistency. She asked me if I was embarrassed to talk with my friends back home the way I talk to my peers in Amherst. I denied it at first, but then gave in to her pretty face and told her if anything, I do it unconsciously.

What I am trying to stress is that because of the way I talk, I am perceived as an outsider back home. It bothers me because I will never be part of the unspoken crew again. I do not purposely try to change the way I talk whether I am here or back home. I am aware that my accent is not as thick as it used to be, but I still like to think it is. The time I have spent away from home does not seem like a long time, but it definitely had an impact on my persona today.



MISSING AND REBUILT

An-Chi Yao

Unit I: Mapping Literacies

I didn't have a chance to know my father. When I was little, all I remembered was "Dad is in Europe, Japan, the United States, or China for business; he might come back in the next few weeks." I can hardly remember the details or structure of his face since I rarely saw him. I believe that he knew this as well, because he never forgot to kiss my sleepy face when he came home late at night or early in the morning. I lost my father when I was at middle school. It was all too sudden, and I did not have time to react and think. All I knew was that I would never have the chance to know my father any deeper. The following years after my father passed away, I heard stories from other people's memories—people who knew my father such as family members, church friends, childhood friends, and coworkers.

This is the story from my mother, one that I have heard over and over: "Oh my goodness, Angie, you act just like your father, you know. I couldn't believe it when you said you are going to science field. Ah! Hey! I am TALKING to you! . . . Second children always like their father, and daughters always like their father. Tell you a little secret, he told me a few times not to worry about you. But I did. Hey! Don't make faces, I am being SERIOUS! . . . He loved children, and he knew how they will be in the future. I disagreed with him. I thought you were the troublemaker in the house. Hey, PAY ATTENTION! Let me finish my words! . . . But look at you now, I don't have to worry about you. You are really independent and close to God. And you must stay close to God like your father did. Hmm, your Dad must be really proud of you in heaven. Okay, stop trying to know what I am going to say! Go take care of your little sister." Even as I wrote down this oral story from her, I realized that I could not find the words to describe my mother's mixed emotions and the contradictory atmosphere when she was sharing her memories with me.

This is the story from my father's best coworker. He called my Dad Sy which is the abbreviation of my father's first name. He told me this story in the summer of 2009 when I visited Taiwan: "C'mon, sit down. This is Sy's favorite restaurant and those dishes were his favorite. We always eat here as late night snacks after work. Back then, I was young and new to the job. I met Sy at work, and he took care of me. I followed Sy everywhere. I even quit my job a few times and followed him into another company. C'mon, try this fish, it's very good. The Smart Card (the Charlie Card we use in Taiwan) was invented by your Dad. Sy taught me a lot; knowledge, jobs, family, and religion. He was a really smart man. Wow, you do eat a lot, just like Sy. C'mon, more rice. I heard about you from Sy, but I don't know you personally until half an hour ago, but I can see your Dad in you. Sy loved technology stuff just like you do. Oh, one thing that I remember the most was we always talk about cars, like EVERYDAY. Ah, it was a good time. Sy was waiting for the best van to come out for his five children. He is a good father; I learned to be a love-giver as a father from him, too. Also, Sy brought me into church and introduced me to his God. I can't even imagine what I would be like if I had never met Sy and God in my life." As I wrote down this oral story from him, I found out that I could not explain how proud and happy I felt when I heard the story from my father's coworker.

This is the story of my grandmother. She used to call herself grandma. "Your Dad was really nice, kind and smart. He is a good church boy; listened and did what Bible says. Grandma still have those letters he wrote to us; to his Dad and grandma, when he was at college and then in military. He always called us before he would fly to another country. Grandma did not need to worry about him until now. Grandma still doesn't know why God chose to take him away from me. Grandma is old now, and my legs won't walk. How could He take away my precious son? Your Dad should stay and take care of his big family. Why doesn't God take grandma away instead of your Dad? Grandma is old, and I can't do anything." As I wrote down this oral story from her, I figured that I could not use the words to describe my grandmother's sad face, tones, wonders, and how she couldn't pull herself back from her memory when she was sharing it with me.

Lastly, these are pieces of stories from my father's four God-sisters: "We met your father at church, and we grew up together. We had a good time

MISSING AND REBUILT

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together at Bible study class, chorus for Sunday worship, and outdoor activities,” second God-sister said. And fourth God-sister jumped in, “Hey. Girls! Remember how we loved to pay visits to his house?” Second God-sister replied, “Yup! It’s because his mom always makes good food. I hope she can still cook them for all of us.” They all nodded in agreement. First God-sister said, “I still remember deeply about the church field trips, he always took care of us real well, like our big brother.” Their faces shone with happiness when they talked about my father, however, I could not fully describe the expression on my father’s four God-sisters’ faces when they shared their memories with me; it looked like they were describing how a hero saved their lives.

Some elements were lost when I was writing down the stories. I felt that I could not use words to bring up the storytellers’ tones, their facial expressions, their feelings, and my own feelings when I heard the stories. However, some elements that were gained were when I pieced the stories together and connected them to my memory of my father; I hope that someone who is searching for answers can read this. It is because my father’s life and the way he affected other people around him is a lesson worth learning. Those stories meant a lot to me. It gave me an identity, it supported my religious beliefs, and it also gave me a new attitude towards society.

After hearing and revising those stories in my head, I now know more about me as a daughter of my father. I adopted the personality of my father, such as without noticing, I used to throw humorous facts when the atmosphere was tight and serious. Like my father, helping others without asking anything in return is my happiness. For example, when I was in high school, although my English speaking skills still needed improving, I started a few free tutoring programs and learning classes for people who needed help, were interested in technology or the Chinese language. Moreover, every time when I think of my father’s face, he is always smiling and happy. Therefore, I carry a smile everywhere and bring laughter to other people which led me to the nickname of Sunflower from my closest friends.

My father was born into a Christian family and so was I. I understood all the teachings in the Bible. However, I did not fully experience the teachings in the Bible until my father passed away. For example, the Bible teaches me “Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him; Do not fret because of

Him who prospers in His way” (Psalms 37.7), and “Commit everything you do to the Lord. Trust Him, and He will help you” (Psalms 37.5). Their meanings are easy to understand but hard to do when it happens. When my father passed away, I could have complained “why” to God. Logically speaking, my mother has to take care of five dependent children from age three to seventeen. In addition, we were in the process of immigrating to United States. How could we go through this without my father? I remember the Bible verses and simply trusted God who took my father away. I deeply trusted that He had His plan upon us as my father followed God throughout his life. I did not feel pity about how my siblings and I grew up without a completed love from my father, or how my mother has to take care of this big family. It is because the stories are burnt into my memories and support my belief towards God.

The most important lesson that I learned about my attitude towards the society was patience. When I was in kindergarten, my father drove us back from church once and we were all hungry. Unfortunately, we had hit the rush hour in the biggest city of Taiwan. My father was waiting to make a turn and we started to get impatient in the back seat. He did not say “be quiet” to us, or drive forward and force the cars to let us pass through. He could have thought, “I love my children and they are hungry. So I need to make a turn NOW.” Instead, all he did was calmly say, “Just wait; there must be a chance for us to turn.” From that time, I began to learn to be patient towards others, not to people I know only and not to look for excuses.

Learning from my father’s stories in different perspectives, instead of complaining and comparing as I did before, I became stronger emotionally and became positive about my life. I will pass on the stories to my younger brother and sisters and share the precious memories with them. So when they look at the photo of my father, they would have him in their memories as well. From the stories, I can see my father with my eyes, and I am proud to be his daughter. Now, I write unsent letters to my father and tell him how I am, just like he wrote letters back home and told his parents he was okay and to not worry about him. I pray to God who guides my father’s life to also guide me through my hardships. By doing this, I feel that I am close to my father. The stories rebuilt the missing chapter of the book of my life.

BEING SILENCED IS NOT SO BAD

Molly Chen

Unit II: Bringing Literacies Home

“Do you want to eat lunch with us?” asked the teacher. I nodded with hesitation but then shook my head.

“During my first few months in the fourth grade, which was the first year after I came to the United States, I was silenced by fear. It was the fear of not knowing a different language, of not being able to communicate with a foreigner fluently. Every time my mouth opened to spill a word out, it sunk back into my stomach as my teacher or the kids tilted their heads sideways and asked, “Excuse me? What?” Despite how friendly they were, I could not get myself to interact with them because I did not have a voice, and, therefore, I did not own a personality. Eventually, my experience of being silenced has brought a positive effect in my life by allowing me to withdraw from fearing and conforming. It taught me that not being myself and not having my real voice heard is as painful as being silenced.

My voice was never silenced before I came to the United States. I was neither the girl who did not know how to speak the language nor the girl who could not fit in. In China, I did everything with my friends, my classmates and my cousins and everyone all the time. Individuality was a strange word for me because I never had to step outside the world and outside my discourse community, where it was a peaceful place for me to blend in quietly or be treated just like everyone else. In my culture and discourse community, a child should not be an individual with her own voice; she would distract others, influence others to rebel. Individuality was equivalent to rebellion. The children who silenced themselves when the elders were present would automatically be considered as the respectful ones. Every time my grandfather gave me a lecture on life, on school and on how to be a good “individual,” I would silence myself and nod as if I was on the

same page with him. So it turned out that I was his favorite grandchild because I had the best manners and I always listened to him like a good child. Therefore, in terms of being respectful, it was to silence myself, when on the inside I was a child with a strong voice and big, wild dreams. A strong voice, so sturdy and persevering that it wanted to correct her parents that they were not always right, to tell her grandfather that she did not necessarily have to attend Harvard to be successful. I had big dreams that were so wild and outrageous, the desire to be someone different, someone who wanted to be happy for herself instead of for her parents. For those reasons, ever since I was little, I was always this “special” child. From that moment on, I realized I was that particular kid with rebellious thoughts. I was that “unacceptable” child. But in order to stay in the comforting discourse community of mine, I wore a mask that silenced my mouth and moreover, my wild dreams and fanatical beliefs.

Despite the comfort that my old discourse community provided, I still wanted to escape from a culture in which I had to be someone who I was not. I was devastated by leaving my comfort zone when my parents decided to immigrate to the United States eight years ago. Aside from all the sadness and homesickness, I was positive about coming to a strange country. However, this positive attitude was crushed into scattered pieces when I lost my voice to speak because my English was not fluent, at least not smooth enough to have that voice heard. I had no confidence to stand up and no longer sought to have a voice but rather to fit in.

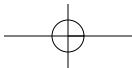
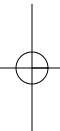
Maxine Hong Kingston, in her essay “Silence,” was too timid to find the courage to speak because she did not own the ability to speak coherent English initially. Even after she attained such ability, her dark past stayed inside her and muted her voice completely. She was silenced willingly. However, she would lose her voice every time before composing a coherent grammatical phrase, “I stand frozen, or I hold up the line with the complete, grammatical sentence that comes squeaking out at impossible length” (79). Just like Kingston, I did not possess the courage to speak up until I compiled a decent phrase that contained proper grammar, and this process usually took at least ten dreadful seconds. Consequently, I did not bother to initiate a conversation with anyone because who knows how long that would take me to arrange the proper grammar? Although my English and

grammar essentially got strengthened and it took me less time to finally compose a decent sentence, I was not being my real self: someone who wished to directly say whatever was on her mind. As years went by, I found myself unhappy trying to fit in even though by then my English was fluent. I felt like a soulless person with an empty core, without a personality, and without my real voice.

I found the courage to speak for myself by learning life lessons and experiencing many struggles. Being silenced during my life, however, brought a positive effect on me and helped me shape who I am today. I have learned how to take risks in order to gain more knowledge that the greatest pleasure comes with a chance of the greatest pain. I took risks like gambling on how others perceive me with my voice that longs to be heard. However, I found myself united with those with courage when I read David Wallace's work, "Take a risk; write the things that you've been hiding under covers of silence or forced eloquence...Write yourself" (110). Wallace came out of fear when he discovered the audacity to show others his identity as a gay professor, including his poems on homosexuality. According to Wallace, it is much easier to be who one really is contentedly than to be someone else to fit in, and this is always one of my biggest beliefs in life. After all, silence is not so bad; it has taught me to accept differences and take pride in them.

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SELF EXPRESSION

Jacob Eid

Unit II: Bringing Literacies Home

What does it feel like to be unable to fully express yourself? In almost any discourse community, individuals that are uncomfortable with who they are often resort to some sort of silence. This silence takes many forms; you can feel uncomfortable voicing your true self both in writing and in speech. Silence, therefore, is an obstruction of one's path to identifying a true voice. Many of the authors in the book suffer some sort of silence; however, in overcoming that silence, they experience self-revelation. Both Richard Rodriguez and David Wallace can be seen as succumbing to some variation of silence. Although the type of silence they exhibit may be different, the source of their silence is the same: their cultures discourage their literacy. In my own experiences, I have chosen to adopt some sort of silence due to my culture's view about what I had to say. When we as individuals break the silence that our cultures impress upon us, we gain insight into who we really are.

Rodriguez is raised to believe that he should be “feo, formal, and fuerte” (92). Those ideals are considered acceptable of a man in the Mexican-American culture Rodriguez was raised in. He found himself particularly at odds with the formal trait. His explanation of formal helps to perfectly illustrate what it means to possess it, as he explains:

I learned a great deal about being formal just by listening to the way my father and other male relatives of his generation spoke. A man was not silent necessarily. . . but a man was not talkative the way a woman could be. . . More important than any of this was the fact that a man never verbally revealed his emotions. (92)

Rodriguez was forced to think that he needed to conform to the formal ideal, even though it was in violation of who he was. Rodriguez violated the ideal in many respects. On its most basic level, the trait prohibited talking the way women did; however, Rodriguez admits, “Particularly in class

or alone with my teacher I chattered” (92). The trait also prohibited him from expressing his emotions; however, he needed to write about his insecurities in order to be comfortable with who he was. Rodriguez talks throughout the whole story about his insecurities with his physical appearance; however, had he adhered to the formal ideal, he would not be permitted to do so. By violating the silence that his culture encourages him to adopt, Rodriguez is able to gain comfort in who he is. By breaking the silence, Rodriguez becomes comfortable with himself as someone who is not formal and who has a dark complexion.

Wallace, as well as Rodriguez, receives cultural influence that inhibits him from making use of his true literacy. Wallace is taught that homosexuality has no place in an academic setting as one of his teachers dismissed any sexual tension between Socrates and his apprentice. Wallace is pressured all throughout his academic career to suppress any talk of homosexuality. Later on in his life, Wallace decides to be more open about his homosexuality by writing poems such as “Lifestyle”. As Wallace tells his students, by expressing himself without any censorship, he is able to “recover from a personal and educational history that refused to let him accept himself” (107). In this case, overcoming a silence that was forced upon him by certain cultural elements allowed him to accept himself.

My silence was brought on by the suppression of my Arab ethnicity as well as my Muslim religion. Coincidentally, I was sent for the first time to public school after 9/11. I was afraid of expressing myself in my writing as either a Muslim or an Arab, due to the fact that the culture at the time was one that was hostile towards both identities. Not only was my writing affected by the fear of expressing myself as a Muslim or Arab, I was also afraid of revealing my identity to my classmates. Over time, I grew to be comfortable enough with my classmates to tell them that I was both Muslim and Arab; they were very accepting. After receiving positive reactions from my classmates, I started thinking of responses to writing prompts that allowed me to express my Muslim and Arab identity. By overcoming my silence about my identity, I was better able to express myself in my writing.

In each of the three cases, the silence was brought on by the surrounding culture’s influence. Rodriguez’s silence was caused by his effort to conform to

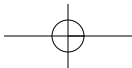
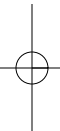
SELF EXPRESSION

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certain standards that his Hispanic culture had ascribed to males. Wallace's silence was due to his surrounding culture telling him that homosexuality was irrelevant to his identity. My silence was brought on by a fear of my identity being hated by the culture I took part in. In each case, the breaking of silence allowed each individual to experience a level of self-revelation. Rodriguez was able to accept himself as talkative and dark-skinned. Wallace was able to accept himself as a homosexual, whereas his culture denied him that acceptance. Lastly, I was able to express myself in my writing as an Arab and Muslim individual without fear of rejection.

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WHAT ARE THE SYSTEMS OF PRIVILEGE?

Boris Gluz

Unit III: Exploring the Power of Literacy and Literacies of Power

In our society, it is very easy to manipulate dialogue with specific wording and terminology. In any type of interaction, nobody has more control over what the sentences mean than the very people who say them. To apply this concept to our readings, we have witnessed forms of inequality that resulted from people using specific terms to categorize certain groups. In “Making Systems of Privilege Visible,” Wildman and Davis state that we classify people on a routine basis based on race, gender and class without even thinking, and as a result, we might provide limited privileges to those who we consider below us. After analyzing the multiple facets of Wildman and Davis’ essay, this concept can then be applied to another reading called “English-Only Triumphs, But The Costs Are High” by Alejandro Portes, which indirectly implied that English speakers are privileged for knowing the dominant language. Both of the writings demonstrate forms of inequality among diverse groups.

In “Making Systems of Privilege Visible” by Wildman and Davis, the authors mention that the word privilege is defined as “a special advantage, immunity, permission, right or benefit granted to or enjoyed by an individual, class, or caste” (Wildman and Davis 142). A privileged person would see his/her privileges as a social norm that they go through and pay very little attention to. As a result, those who have privileges have done very little to help those who are not as fortunate. The story specifies that people are given specific privileges as a result of their race, gender, and social ranking, and a lot of the time this behavior occurs without thinking. In order for a change to happen, we must break the barrier to make others aware of the behavior.

When Wildman and Davis talk about racial discrimination, they imply that race is not a simple question of behavior, but rather of the forces that work during the given moment. A person can be “white,” but this term could easily describe an honest citizen who received special benefits because he/she was born into the race. The racism in this situation is not deliberate, but rather it is caused by the behavior with which the individuals would subconsciously respond to one another. However, the author uses the term “white supremacy” to describe the more extreme behavior in which Caucasians show themselves to be superior, and the people who witness their behavior simply choose to ignore it. The real question that needs to be asked is not whether a person is racist, but whether the racism results from a social force or from an individual desire. “White people know they do not want to be labeled racist, they become concerned with how to avoid that label, rather than worrying about systemic racism and how to change it” (Wildman and Davis 140). Another form of discrimination mentioned in the story focuses on different genders.

When talking about gender discrimination, there are actually two different forms that exist. The first form would be classified as sexism, in which the men are considered superior to women. This is gender discrimination on the outer surface; people are aware of it, but on many occasions would choose to simply ignore it. The story references a feminist named Catherine MacKinnon who believes that “men’s physiology defines most sports, their health needs largely define insurance coverage, their socially designed biographies define workplace expectations and successful career patterns...Their presence defines family, the inability to get along with each other-their wars and rulerships-define history, their image defines god, and their genitals define sex” (Wildman and Davis 143). In these situations, a person would benefit simply from being born into the dominant gender. Wildman and Davis looked even deeper into the term “gender” by saying that the world is “gendered” because there are other genders besides just “man” and “woman,” and by affiliating gender with just two specific types, we are leaving out the others that exist. The gender differences between men and women are common, but they are only a portion of all gender inequality that exists. The final form of discrimination observed by Wildman and Davis is based on class.

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Unlike discrimination based on gender and race, many people think that discrimination based on class does not even exist. Gender and race inequalities are usually based on a specific group, but when people use the word class, they broadly define it with regards to someone's wealth. Many people would not even consider themselves to be poor, but rather on the path towards becoming rich. This method of thinking might actually prevent those who are struggling from seeking help, and as a result, further perpetuate the silence. As time progresses, it becomes harder for people to know that this action is going on, but in the United States this idea is very common. "In a society where basic human needs, such as food, clothing and shelter can only be met with money, the privilege of class and wealth seems clear" (Wildman and Davis 147). Alejandro Portes demonstrates a different kind of system of privileges.

To tie "English-Only Triumphs, But the Costs Are High" to Wildman and Davis, it is indirectly stated that non-English speaking foreigners are given fewer privileges. However, in this story, the ethnic groups do not coexist as easily. In "Making System of Privilege Visible," the diverse groups of people can coexist but the dominant groups have the most power. In "English-Only Triumphs, But the Costs Are High," the dominant groups are the English speakers, and the weaker groups are the immigrants whose English is not as fluent. As time progresses, these foreigners eventually assimilate with the crowd and lose their ability to speak more than one language. "If one defines fluency as the ability to speak, understand, read and write well, no second generation group was fluent in its mother tongue by age 17" (Portes 168). The story discusses whether having multiple groups of people assimilate into one actually benefits society. An argument can be made that foreigners lose their abilities to speak more than one language because of their surroundings, not necessarily because English speakers are given more privileges. However, if the reader refers back to how Wildman and Davis defined the word privilege, English speakers will actually fall under the category of individuals with "a special advantage, immunity, permission, right or benefit" (Portes 142). By these standards, an English speaker is quite privileged.

It is fascinating how two essays that seem different from one another can have similarities. "Making System of Privilege Visible" by Wildman

and Davis, introduced the idea of an unfair distribution of “privileges” among certain groups. Wildman and Davis especially use race, gender, and class as the groups. Then as the word privilege is analyzed through a “lens” it can be applied to other situations. I chose to apply it to “English-Only Triumphs, But the Costs Are High” by Alejandro Portes, which demonstrates through language difference.

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AN UNCONSCIOUS SYSTEM

Nicholas H. Gross

*Unit III: Exploring the Power of Literacy
and Literacies of Power*

Nicholas H. Gross was born on Martha's Vineyard in 1990. He has lived his entire life on Martha's Vineyard with both parents (Mary and Chris) and sister (Olivia). Gross' hobbies consist of surfing, fishing, disc golf, and art. In 2009, he attended his first year at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, where he began to study education. After reading Stephanie Wildman and Adrienne Davis' essay about the invisibility of privilege, Gross decided he was blind to the topic. Gross decided to base his essay on privilege coming from a place where privilege is very invisible. Living on an island whose population is dominated by Caucasians, Gross talks about the ability of making privilege visible and the unconscious contributions made towards the System of Privilege.

Being privileged is a difficult thing to determine because there is no scale to base privilege on. We, as humans, tend to not see the privilege within ourselves as much as we see how we are not privileged. Being privileged in America doesn't come from luck or "occurrence" (Wildman and Davis 138). Being privileged in America comes from a system of power. This system is set up, designed to rank and to judge us, based on our language, gender, and race.

I have never considered myself to be privileged because I am white. It is a difficult thing to admit to, but I have come to realize that I am privileged because of the color of my skin. In our country, I am given more respect than any other race. I am thought more highly of, and expected more of, because I am white. It is a difficult thing to grasp because it is hard to see, but every day we are contributing to this system of privilege. "Privilege is invisible only until looked for" (Wildman and Davis 138). It was when I realized that I was privileged for being white that I realized our country sees race as privilege.

Peggy McIntosh described White privilege as an "invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, assurance, tools, maps, guides, clothes"

(Wildman and Davis 146). In other words, being White automatically puts you ahead from anyone else. Stephanie Wildman and Adrienne Davis both describe privilege as being “invisible” as well. If privilege is invisible, then how do we know who holds privilege over others? Unfortunately in our country, power and privilege are assumed to be held by the dominant race, White.

I believe that privilege and power work together. The people who hold the most power in America tend to have the most privilege. Power is what operates the system that is based on judgment and ranking, because whoever is in power makes the decisions to choose who is privileged. Throughout history, White European men have held this power and used it to run our society.

David Wellman describes this system as a “system of advantage based on race” (Tatum 159). This system has been designed to change our thoughts towards racism and prejudice without us even knowing. Through television, newspapers, media, and movies, our minds are altered to believe that being White is better than being “colored.” These things we see every day contribute to a passive way of thinking, a way that doesn’t directly create racism but has a large influence on the acceptance of it.

A movie such as *Toy Story* (Lasseter Docter, 1995), with all White characters isn’t telling you in words that being White is better, but it is giving the notion, creating the invisibility of privilege. Even the *Lion King* (Allers Minkoff, 1994) contributes to this system, having Simba (the good lion) a light, yellow color, while the bad lions and hyenas are represented with dark colors. We are given the images at such a young age that we aren’t fully aware of what is being shown.

Another contribution to being privileged in America comes from how well you speak English. Every day we hear accents and misused words by foreign speaking people. Madorah Smith was a psychologist in the 1930s, and she believed that “an important factor in the retardation of speech is the attempt to make use of two languages” (Portes 168). These misunderstandings of language helped the English language become so dominant in our culture. In our country, speaking Standard English over any other language will create more respect for yourself. This way of thinking treats other languages as if they are incorrect. People are forced out of speaking their native languages.

Living in a system based on judgment and ranking due to one's ability to speak a language makes me immediately judge someone who has a difficult time using English words. I don't think in my head that I am better than that person. I think when I speak to this person I will have to speak slowly and use words that are easy to understand. Unconsciously, I see myself above this person in our society. Having a conversation with someone who speaks English with a high proficiency and with a large vocabulary also causes an unconscious judgment of believing they are intelligent.

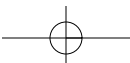
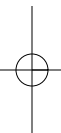
An example of unconscious judgment due to language can be found in Amy Tan's essay, "Mother Tongue." Tan's mother is treated less than "normal," or what an American citizen should be treated, *because of her speech*. Both her New York stockbroker and her hospital deny her rights that most likely would not have been denied if I, a white male, had been put in the same situation.

The system of judgment, due to one's ability, is not a very accepting system. The language of gender, for example, often denies women's acceptance. "The use of he as a generic pronoun, stated to include all people, but making women in a room invisible when it is used, is seen as a norm" (Wildman and Davis 144). This is a perfect example of the system based on judgment and ranking. Without knowing it, everyone who has been put in a situation such as this is contributing to the White male privilege.

In our America, a system of privilege has been set up in a way to glorify the white male and belittle anyone and everyone besides him. Every day, people of all races contribute to this system of White privilege subconsciously. In order to stop the system of White privilege, we as people, need to realize how we contribute to the system and how it influences our lives.

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FIGHTING FOR LITERACY

Ha Mi Dinh

Unit IV: Unschooling Literacy

English has never been my favorite subject. I have come to hate its grammatical rules because there are always exceptions to them. Why would we want a rule that has an exception to it? It is as if we are making a law forbidding us to do something but we can break it easily because there is another law allowing us to do so. These exceptions are the contradictions to our language taught to us by our school. We are supposed to learn all these English school grammar rules and exceptions so that we know their existence and somehow apply to our daily life. However, it becomes controversial when the English we learned in school is different from what we speak at home and in society. The way we speak English to others is different from the way we write English in our essays, which creates two different discourse communities. Min-zhan Lu comments that schools should encourage students to be exposed to different voices, or discourse communities, so that students can resolve their conflicts of changing from one voice to another. Yet, our school system only introduces us to Standard English and ignores other types of English spoken in our society. Because our school system continuously teaches us Standard English, we are struggling to acknowledge the existence of different types of English, which leads to bias within our community.

In America, English is the main language to read, write and speak. The school system teaches us the alphabet in preschool, then advances us to grammar and sentence structures in elementary and middle school. It teaches us the perfect grammar starting when we are little. In her essay, Eleanor Kutz states that our school system teaches school grammar for the sake of developing young writers. She writes that our students learn language in school in order to produce edited pieces of writing. Because of that, she states that our school system “ignores most explicit questions about language and how it works” (178). Our school system does not take

into account how language works in our society. It provides “little connection with what learners might need to know about language in the world, and little connection to what they already know about language from their daily lives” (Kutz 178). Because our school system only teaches us how to read, write and speak Standard English, we have a hard time identifying and connecting different voices from various discourse communities together.

From my personal experience, I have tried to study French in school. French is a very hard language to speak because of its pronunciation; however, writing it is not so bad. I practiced French every day with my teacher in class for three years, but I still did not speak it comfortably with the accent I wanted to have. As a result, my teacher did not understand what I was trying to say most of the time. My teacher taught me all the grammatical rules, but she did not teach me how to speak French in a way that French people could understand me. I only knew how to write French, or in this case, standard French, but not the type of French that a person would speak every day. However, it was not her fault because she was doing what the school system required her to do. But if my teacher were to expose me to French in different discourse communities, I could acknowledge what different types of French sound like and gain confidence that people can understand me when I speak French.

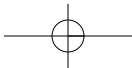
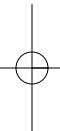
Furthermore, having the ability to switch from one voice to another can only benefit us as students. Many of us have experienced a time before when we were able to speak in one language so well but not in the other. For example, Llarull describes a “strange phenomenon” he has as a bilingual. He expresses how he can easily speak English some days, as if he is completely “wired” into it and not into Spanish. But some other days, he can speak Spanish better than English. He has a difficult time of switching his voice from one to another because he does not acknowledge its presence when with his family and friends or writing his essays. In addition to this, Min-zhan Lu remarks in her essay on how schools should persuade students to be exposed to different voices so they can have control of multiple languages. Earlier in her life, Lu experiences a time where she has to learn English at home and Standard Chinese at school while speaking Shanghai dialect only to her servants. She learns to speak those languages “with no

apparent friction” (191). Because she learns and acknowledges different languages all at once, she does not have a problem of changing them as she goes from home to school and school to home.

Overall, we need to be exposed to different languages and voices so that we can learn to control multiple discourses at once. Our school system only covers and accepts Standard English, which makes it harder for us to accept and acknowledge other types of English in our other discourse communities. At home, we speak English in a different way than we speak and write English at school. Every sentence we say does not need to be completed. When we are texting to our friends, we use instant-messaging language and not Standard English. It is still acceptable because it is just another type of language and voice in our culture. Standard English is not the only type of English that exists in our life because people do not speak just one discourse but multiple discourses. But our school only accepts the Standard English, so it creates a problem for us to know that there is more than just Standard English in our life. In order to resolve this problem, school should encourage students to be exposed to different discourses so that they can acknowledge and control multiple languages at once.

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EFFECTS OF MULTIPLE LITERACIES

Neil Patel

Unit IV: Unschooling Literacy

English is becoming one of the universal languages in the world. Everyone that can speak it speaks it perfectly, with an accent, or by bits and pieces. However, English can cause some issues, especially for bilingual people like myself, because I speak English and Gujrati. There are many versions of English but for me there are two: those are Standard English and outside English. I have to balance Standard English, which is spoken in English class, with outside English, which is more relaxed. Either type of English gets to the same goal of understanding. But sometimes it causes friction in school. Speaking outside English for so many years and hours, writing in Standard English for less than an hour— it just becomes difficult.

I believe Standard English is known to be proper English, as the King and Queen of England would speak. Speaking Standard English is quite the task for me. As I am learning English, I still have trouble to this day. It seems as though if you speak properly, people will not treat you differently. An example would be in my English classroom. If the teacher asks a question and I know the answer but I know my English is not the best, I do not put my hand up. I do not want people to see me differently because I cannot speak as properly as they can to get my point across.

Writing Standard English is still very difficult for me. I am still learning the language everyday and I still feel as though I am “behind” everyone else. When essays are assigned, I feel as though it is a test to prove my English. I can nail thoughts in my head that make perfect sense, but writing them down is the biggest task. The idea of having a subject, a topic, juicy adjectives, subject-verb agreement, and the tense of the verb puzzled me. I would sometimes write the wrong “their” or use the wrong word so other people would be confused when I read them my essay.

On the other hand, Standard English can be easy with the help of the language I already know. Having outside English as a guide, Standard English becomes a little easier sometimes. Even though I have trouble with Standard English, when a teacher or professor communicates with me, it is usually in outside English like simply saying, "Make sure you do the next assignment lickety-split." English that I can understand and relate to helps me understand the assignment a little bit better. I feel I need to write in Standard English because it will show the reader that my essay is good compared to the other essays that were written in Standard English.

Speaking outside English made me feel educated and a part of the society where everyone and everything relies on English. To me, outside English is professional or like Standard English, but it feels there is no wrong answer when speaking it, like there has to be no sophistication when speaking outside English compared to Standard English. Slang is often a part of this language, like saying "Why ain't you coming to English class?" instead of saying "Why are you not coming to English class?" in a sophisticated proper voice. Also, speaking outside English was a way to just get the message across quickly.

I believe outside English is short, sweet and to the point whether it is verbally expressed or on paper. Writing on a sticky note, I personally would not write, "I have gone to the store." Instead I would write, "Gone to store," completely leaving out the subject. It still gets the message across, but the idea is that when I write like that or talk in outside English, there would be no negative effects. If I forgot to include the subject when writing in school, my overall grade would be affected. The habit of speaking in slang and quickly writing essays and talking in class becomes difficult. It becomes difficult because being bilingual, like Gustavo Llarull, I am "wired" on certain days. The days I am wired in my own language, Gujrati, writing in Standard English is the hardest task because I cannot even write the simplest sentence. The days where I am "wired" in English, which is really outside English, I can write, but I still have difficulty in Standard English.

The effects of having Standard English and outside English come together bring friction and conflicts. Sometimes not knowing Standard English can cause problems. When I started to learn Standard English, it

felt as though I was learning a brand new language to add to my list. I personally remember one time I had to write an essay in Junior High English class about a personal task. My task was about riding my bike without training wheels. I passed the essay in the next day and then received it with a big fat red “F” on the page. I was completely embarrassed and I spoke with the teacher after class. She told me it had to be in Standard English and not outside English. My ideas were a blur and everywhere because I had slang and other shortcuts in my essay to get to my point. Back then I thought people understood the way I wrote, but my teacher said to write as if the person reading it had no clue of what you are talking about. She meant that by when I wrote I had to write as though I had to hold the reader’s hand through the essay and guide them, talking about every little detail. Talking in class or writing a quick exploratory, it is hard to write in Standard English. Speaking outside English for the majority of the day and only speaking Standard English for about less than an hour is like having a baby run before it can even walk. When I wrote in outside English, my ideas were just a blur, so then I would have to go back and add the subject, the verb, and the correct tenses just to make it standard.

Having these two different literacies made me feel as though I am not as perfect as the middle class American that has been speaking English all their life. Min-zhan Lu said, “This incident confirmed in my mind what my parents had always told me about the importance of English to one’s life. Time and again, they told me of how my paternal grandfather, who was well versed in classic Chinese, kept losing good-paying jobs because he couldn’t speak English” (192). This is similar to my experience because English is my second language and my parents told me to learn it for my own future. Without Standard or outside English, it is hard to progress in the United States or anywhere else where English is becoming popular.

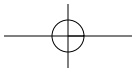
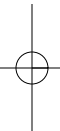
English is the language that everyone speaks, from the United States to across the globe. Standard English is the language that everyone must know and write with. Outside English is the relaxed easy way of speaking and getting the message across. It is the same English when you even communicate to your friends and family. Having two different literacies causes conflict. I speak outside English and bring it to the English class, but as soon as I step foot into the classroom, Standard English falls over me and

the outside English vanishes. But sometimes a little piece stays so when the teacher or professor communicates with me, I can still understand the words they say to help me understand the assignment. Learning more and more about Standard English can only help me in the classroom because Standard English is the dominant English. As my parents stated, English will be important in my life so I need to learn it to make me feel a part of society. If I am a part of society, people would not judge me and would actually treat me at the same level they are.

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PART II
COLLEGE
WRITING



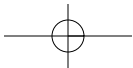
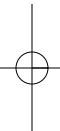
Part II

Preface

Unit I: Inquiring into Self

A philosophical tenet of the Writing Program, and of any writing community, is that writing exists to be read; writers must also be readers—readers of a large and diverse portfolio of works, texts, and genres. Among the important texts and works to be studied, one’s “self,” is a text that absolutely must be read and re-read with great attentiveness, for it serves as the foundation, upon which all future interpretation and interaction with texts can be built. In Unit I, students were given the opportunity to discover new insights about themselves. Through the process of writing, revising, receiving feedback from fellow writers, and re-writing, they were able to take on new perspectives of their own personal experiences. The essays created in this unit were written for a close, personal audience (i.e., fellow class members) and introduced key elements of the rhetorical situation (context, purpose, audience). In this essay, students are the ultimate authorities on the content about which they write.

The challenge to these writers was to look at their stories and their bodies as histories and to examine themselves as they would examine a text. In this way, they began re-seeing themselves through the lenses of larger contexts, and they investigated their experiences as the elements that have shaped them.



WHEN THE MELTING POT BURNS

Rebecca Cottman

Arroz Con Pollo and German Chocolate Cake

My Mom is Panamanian. Her skin is dark like brown sugar and her hair black, like soft raven feathers. Her “b’s” sound like “v’s” and her “v’s” sound like “b’s.” Like Arroz Con Pollo. My Dad is American. His skin is pale, like fresh snow in the early morning before snowplows come and dirty it, and his hair brown, like a river of melted milk chocolate. His eyes are arctic pools of thought. Like German chocolate cake. I am nothing. I have my Mom’s raven hair and my Dad’s thoughtful eyes. My skin is not dark or pale, but in between. Like green mixed with orange, ugly. I am the gray between the black and white. Mixed. Panamanian and American. Which one do I choose? Where do I belong? The Panamanians say I’m American. The Americans say I’m Panamanian. Neither side will have me. I am stuck in limbo, an externally dark place where no sunlight ever penetrates. I am nine years old and I am alone. The only escape is if I choose one. So which one do I choose? Panamanian or American? Orange or green? Black or white? Arroz con pollo or German chocolate cake?

Without a Compass

When I was younger, about nine or ten, my neighborhood was a stranger to me. I didn’t know many people there. To my young mind, their houses were like little tiny ships bobbing up and down on a vast emerald sea. Solitary. Each house had its own story with its own family but I knew none of them. The sun shone but it did not illuminate their hopes and dreams. The only houses and people I knew were the O’Connors who live across the street. Austin and I play when there is snow—but only when

there is snow. I knew Samantha, who lived next door, and we used to play in the sand pile she had but she moved away. I knew Barbara who lives in a brick house and has two brothers. She is mean, so we only play with her when we have to. That was pretty much it. Unlike the rest of the neighbors that moved in after us, we were left alone. New members were welcomed with pies and visits by their neighbors but not us. We were the strange family that built their own house. The family with the dark children and the dark wife. Our solitary ship was marked like the malaria ships in the South, marked with being different. If only I was one thing, if only I had two parts of the same color, but the currents of time have separated me from that neighborhood. Now, I am once again alone on my ship in this vast emerald sea, stuck without a compass.

Go to School to Learn

Back when I was twelve, my Mom always told me that school was important and essential to my success in the future. I remember my elementary school that went up to sixth grade. The white brick walls were dewy with moisture from late summer showers. The black and white tiles would squeak as I walked the long way to the back of the building where fourth to sixth graders would all study and learn. The smell of dry erase markers and coffee was a wonderful smell to me back then. I was excited to learn and eager to please. One teacher, Connie, smelled like peppermint and herbal tea. Her silver glasses' chain glimmered in the fluorescent light as she approached me that fateful Thursday afternoon. You see, I went to a private school in Lexington, Massachusetts, which is predominantly white. Obviously, I was not white, but back then I didn't think it really mattered.

There is a special pizza lunch for people who are "of a different hue" so that those of another race don't feel isolated or separate from the white and privileged community in school. Now, here comes Connie with her silver glasses and her unfortunately large body, jiggling. "Becca," she says, "you should join the pizza lunch today. Maybe you can find something more in common with your kind." *My kind?* I had friends, white friends, but still friends. We had plenty in common except for our skin, and even in my young mind I knew that it didn't really matter. Apparently, this old throw-back, racist woman couldn't see past that. I went home crying that day.

Confused and hating my own color and my mutt status. That is when I denied my Panamanian heritage. I just wanted to fit into what was normal, and mixed was not normal. That was what I learned in school.

Golden House on an Emerald Hill

I live in a house where all the countries are represented. My Mom represents Spain, France, Jamaica, Africa, China, and Panama. My Dad represents France, Germany, Belgium, England, and Canada. So many countries, so many cultures, so many races. All mixed and crammed into one house, one person, one me. Mom and Dad didn't have any trouble choosing their culture, their country, and their race. They know who they are. Confident and bright like the sun. But who am I? Who do I represent in this mini UN of ours? Which country? Which culture? Which race?

To Each His Own

It is June and school has adjourned for summer break. I am fifteen years old, and I feel like the most awkward, pubescent, gawky girl in my entire class. My hair is long, wavy, and unkempt. I let it blow in the breeze as if I were a wild wolf child without any idea of what a hairbrush is. It was getting old though. Being free to run and horse around at recess and during school. It was getting old because so was I, and my interests were shifting from active fun to attracting the attention of members of the opposite sex. All the girls were prettier than I was because they had fair skin, blue/green/hazel eyes, straight and tame hair. I was wild, exotic, and dark. Not very flattering or noticeable to anyone in particular. At least that is what I thought before I journeyed to my mother's home country, Panama.

It was summer break, and the whole family was packed and ready to take the six-hour flight to one of the most beautiful places on the planet. We landed, and the Hershey kisses we had put in our pockets instantly melted from the heat. I noticed that the man pushing our luggage was semi-attractive, and I supposed I had something on my face because he kept looking at me in a very odd way. I turned and wiped my face, avoiding all eye contact with everyone. My mother nudged me. "You have an admirer," she said. I felt confused and then I looked at the luggage man.

No way is this guy checking me out with my wild, brown straw hair, and gawky legs. I ask Mom if I have anything on my face; she says no. I smile to myself. I just got off a plane, and I'm wearing the ugliest clothes in my wardrobe. Yet, for some reason, this semi-attractive boy finds me a pleasure to look at. I guess I just have to count my blessings that Panama is the most beautiful place in the world, that there are semi-attractive boys all over the place, and when it comes to taste in women, well, to each his own.

Hold Me Sister, Hold Me Tight

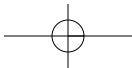
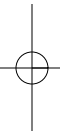
Jesse is older than I am by one year, eleven days, and twelve hours, but we're practically twins. We grew up together. Jesse and Becca. Inseparable. Mom refers to us as the girls. Practically twins, but we're totally different. She's outgoing; I'm shy. She likes loud music; I like it quiet. She doesn't like sports; I love being active. She likes to be left alone; I like company. Practically twins. We do everything together. Play, eat, talk, cry. We have a bond, my sister and I. A bond that is unbreakable. We know each other down to the soul. We can tell when one of us is happy or sad or mad. Together as one. The girls. I know that she'll be there to hold onto whenever I'm scared. Whenever I'm journeying through places where the sun doesn't reach. Dark times in my life. She is my pillar of strength and I hers. Forever here, my double. We are different in one way though. She has pale porcelain skin, while mine is dark and sunburned. How can sisters so similar look so different and be treated so differently?

We were coming back from our third trip to Panama, and we had to go through customs at Miami. The lines were incredibly long, and I had to go to the bathroom and Jesse came with me for support. My Mom and Rachel have already passed through customs by the time we got back, so Jesse and I have to go through alone. We make it to the man behind the desk and Jesse goes through first. His airport shirt is perfectly pressed and stiff around his collar. I wait patiently behind the yellow line as he looks at her passport, smiles, and waves her through. It's my turn now. I cross the yellow tape and confidently place my passport on the pink, speckled, plastic desk. His slightly chubby hand reaches out and grips my passport tightly

as he clumsily flips through the pages to examine the information. The paper makes that scratchy sound as he reaches my photo. I expect him to hand it right back, like he did with my sister, but his eyebrows furrow a bit, he gives me a quick side glance and then one at my sister. Yes, we're sisters, yes, we are genetically related, and yes, we look nothing alike. As he examines my passport more thoroughly, I have time to notice his bristles on his poorly shaved chin. I can tell that he is confused about the way I look, and it's only a matter of time until he starts asking questions. Where are you from, where are your parents, where do you go to school, what's your birthday? Standard questions all designed for suspicious peoples like me. Because as a fifteen-year-old girl, I am definitely trying to sneak back into a country that I have not left in two years. I look at my passport. Under nationality it says citizen of the United States of America. The multicolored holograph shimmers in the light as the chubby fingered man continues to question me. That is when it hit me; I am not the one with the problem. The problem is created and belongs to those who think I don't belong. To this guy, his problem is how in the world my sister can be my sister. Well, it doesn't matter. If someone of such different hues can be so close and genetically related, then skin should not be what stops me from being with those I care for. I am who I am, just like Jesse is who she is.

The Name That Is Me

Rebecca Tayler Cottman. That was the name given to me at birth. To my Mom, it means elegance, wisdom, and strength. To my Dad, it means something new and different. In the dictionary, it means the wife of Isaac or the servant of God. To me, it means power, beauty, strength, dignity, righteousness, me. The small, quiet girl with long brown hair. Rebecca. It rolls off the tongue like sweet molasses. Like white lace on a beautiful red dress. My name. The embodiment of strength and beauty. The name that once belonged to a child who was timid and confused, an insecure little girl. Not anymore. Now the name belongs to a strong, mixed American woman. The gray in-between. Proud and Strong. The woman with wavy hair like the sea, skin as brown as cinnamon, and eyes like two black coals. Rebecca. My name and mine alone. The name that is me.



YOU RAISE ME UP

Xiaona Dong

“You raise me up/so I can stand on mountains/you raise me up/to walk on stormy seas/I am strong/when I am on your shoulders/you raise me up/to more than I can be.”

My neighbor is playing the song “You Raise Me Up” by Secret Garden. Every time I listen to this song it brings me thousands of thoughts about my parents. Especially right now as I sit in the dorm alone. Look around this place where I have studied, slept, and played for almost four months. This dormitory, not big, but warm, provides me with a comfortable and quiet environment to study. “I am so lucky!” I quietly whisper to myself. Everything I have right now, all comes from my dad’s unimaginably hard work in China. In his gray hair and wrinkly face, I see the love of a father who would do anything for his daughter to be better than everyone else, no matter how strenuous it was. My emotions always become uncontrollable when his face reflects in my mind.

Looking back at all nineteen years of my life, I was once the honor of my family. Ever since I was little, my parents held high expectations for me. My sister was so fragile and always got sick. All my parents could do for her was take care of her body and wish for her to become healthier. Health issues were the only topics when they talked about my sister. Even though I was the second child, I was their first priority to educate. I tried so hard because I knew that I was the one that my parents were putting their hopes on; I am the one they will lean on when they get older. I have to fulfill their expectations.

My dad was born into a poor family. He quit school and got a job when he was sixteen because he was the oldest son and the only male in the whole family. He had to take responsibility as a man and take care of his younger siblings and aging mother. Even though he succeeds today due to his persistence and willpower, he still realizes his lack of education is restricting him from so many opportunities that are only offered to educated people.

I still remember the day that he lost an important project from a job and came home disappointed. He said to me in a serious voice, "You can get anything you want from a good education. Without knowledge, you are nothing." I firmly nodded my head and promised him that I would try my hardest to get good grades. I was always a thoughtful kid; I never disappointed my parents in any fields. No matter in school, extracurricular activities, or sports, I was always on top because this is how competitive I am. For almost fourteen years in China, my life seemed so fine. Getting all the spotlights from everyone was definitely satisfying.

But life isn't always the way you wish it to be. I still remember it was just a normal day, and the pure blue sky was as glamorous as it always was. I came back home from school. My dad was sitting on the couch, solemn and quiet. After a long silence, he slowly announced to me that I would be going to America in few days. My brain went blank for a few seconds because I knew this news wasn't like we were going to go shopping tomorrow or going out to eat. It said that I would be going to America! Sending me to America wasn't a quick decision from my dad. He knew that America was definitely a much better place for me to study for a long time. After thinking it over again, he decided to tell me the plan and asked me if I wanted to go to America. After a minute of digesting this news, I accepted the plan without hesitation because I knew all he does is for my own good. Of course, I know it would be hard for me to fit into a new place and learn a brand new language. However, my desire to succeed is greater than all my other minor concerns. September 14, 2003. My life took a sharp turn and brought me to a foreign country where I had never thought I would live and study. I crossed a hundred thousand miles from the Pacific Ocean to the dream land, where a new page of my life was just about to start.

My first impression about America was that it was fabulous. Imagine a little village girl who had never left her hometown in her whole life, then all of a sudden, here I am in one of the richest countries in the world. America was like a heaven to me. I had never been to such a big city like New York, where you can see almost every race of people you can name on the street; you can hear the various languages, which you would have to travel all around the world to be able to hear. One side of my brain was amazed and the other side was lost.

The freshness faded away quickly after my mom and I settled down. Life became so hard without Dad being here. The reality was that my mom, a typical housewife in China, now had to leave and make money to pay for our expenses; but my mom's salary wasn't enough to afford everything, so my dad had to work even harder in order to send Chinese money to the U.S.A. As soon as I realized the financial hardship that my parents were facing, I immediately found a part-time job in a nearby local Chinese restaurant and worked there for the next five years. I had never worked in my entire life, but in the United States, working seems so normal to the people my age. One difference is that they would never give up their time to have fun. I had to work every day after school until 9 p.m. and every weekend because I know I am different from other kids; they have both their parents who can provide them a good quality of life. My dad is just a normal middle class worker in China, and my mom can only get a low-paying job here because she doesn't know any English. I need to work harder to share the burden. The owner of the restaurant told me that I was not supposed to work as many hours as I did, that it was against the U.S. labor laws. I did not care. I continuously begged him to let me work as many hours as I could so I could make more money. He soon surrendered from my persistence.

Working isn't the hardest thing for me because while I'm working, I also earn money, which makes me happy. The biggest problem during the transition period was learning English. Before I came here, I did not know any English words, which meant I had to start from the beginning. All of my good grades in China were gone. I was no longer the honor student that everyone was jealous of and my parents were proud of. I was really hurt and sometimes I even think about it now; I still feel the pain that hides inside of my heart. It is the feeling that you want to talk to someone, but since you don't know any English words, it's like putting a hurdle in front of you to stop you. You lose your connection to the whole world. The fall from the top to the bottom was fast. My self-esteem was taken away and ripped into many pieces. However, I did not give up because I knew it was not just about me anymore; my parents worked so hard for this chance. I couldn't disappoint them.

“Life is like a ladder; you can’t climb up with your hands in your pockets.” I studied hard to try to improve my English. I memorized my vocabulary words every day, listened to the radio, watched news, and practiced my awful English with my classmates. All of my hard working finally got a pay back when I received an honorable senior award from my high school in the graduation ceremony. This award brought the biggest cheers I ever got, more priceless than anything. I improved my English skill a lot, but that was not enough because I knew if I wanted to succeed in the future, I would have to get better. The only way to become a better person is by getting more education which is gained by going to college. But I knew going to college costs a lot of money. I did not want to put more pressure on my parents because they already worked so hard for me in the past five years. I was hesitant. Eventually, I gave up my stupid idea of not going to college because my dad told me, “Education is more important than everything else.” He would do anything to support me. So why did I still wonder if I should go to college or not? If all of his money can give me good grades then everything is worth it.

My neighbor finished playing the song and everything around me became so quiet. I could only hear the sound of the pencil that I was still holding in my hand, moving non-stop. The tiredness of my hand brought me back to the reality. I looked down, and the memories in my mind were already written on the paper. I smiled, amazed how much this song has inspired me. Its lyrics touch me every time I hear it. Who am I? Who made me who I am? The answer is undoubtedly my parents, the loveliest people in the world. Without their support, I wouldn’t have a chance to go to college. Without them, I’m no one. “You raise me up, to more than I can be. . .”

ONE YEAR LATER

Vincent Duong

Years after Massachusetts' legalization of gay marriage, there is still a sense of shame involved with being gay. The fact that gay youths feel the need to hide their identity affirms that barriers still exist. Our children are brought up with a strictly defined idea of normalcy. Though not explicitly, they are taught that anything that deviates from this normalcy is wrong. These are the roots of marginalization. This is what it is to be gay in twenty-first century America. There must be some reason that "coming out" is such a milestone in a gay man's life. Why is there a need to make it official or set it in stone? Why isn't being gay – like our gender or the color of our skin – taken as an unspoken truth? This is the ideal that we have yet to reach. This is the point that my life has yet to reach. I am required to reiterate my sexuality every day because it is not something that I can assume is accepted. My differences are so pronounced, and until this changes, I will remain silent.

What better subject to write about than one that elicits such thought-provoking questions. I remember soul searching for weeks, hoping that I would find something interesting, something beautiful, something unique, something that was of paramount importance to me and no one else. After much thought, I chose to write my college application essay about the struggles I have faced growing up as a homosexual. I touched on the conflict of being raised in a Catholic school system, but the essay itself was mostly about the conflict that arose in my identifying as both an Asian-American and a gay person. Being Asian-American, I was expected to "enter the medical field, to be wed to my bride about five years after college, to give (my parents) grandchildren, to be physically strong, and to be blunt with my words." The essay was a reflection on all I had been through and an exploration of the multiple identities—Asian-American and homosexual—that fought for dominance in my life. I found that the ideas flowed into the essay with great ease. Prior to that essay, I had never before written a piece about

my homosexuality. It was the first time I had no regard toward the rules or outside opinions. It was the first time that I heard one of my essays scream from the surface of its page.

It's been over a year now since I first drafted that essay. Rereading it has confirmed my suspicions that nothing has changed. I have come no closer to telling my parents who I really am and finally establishing which of my identities would have its dominance. I wish that I could say a year was enough. I wish that a year's added wisdom was enough. I wish that in that year, I had gained enough courage to put that essay to rest. After all this time, I still can't call it the past. All the emotions on that page still exist. And even if I had changed, has my family? Has the world?

While I was reviewing my original essay, I found a sentence that underlined that conflict of being Asian-American vs. being gay: "I was fully immersed in the liberality of my surroundings, which ironically created more obstacles because the dichotomies between the views of the city and the principles of my home were undeniable." At that time, I thought that the "views of the city" were relatively liberal and open-minded when compared to the "principles of my home." When I was writing that essay, I thought that I was part of those liberal views. I fooled myself into thinking that I was more liberal than I actually was. I have come now to have a very specific idea of what a gay man should be, and this was all a product of the "liberality of my surroundings."

I feel that the very few gay men that I have met in my life, all a part of the "liberality of my surroundings," are in one way or another, better than I am. I label them as "liberated." To me, that definition of a "liberated" gay man is one who is not afraid to show his differences to the world – whether or not that world is composed of family, friends, coworkers, or teachers does not matter. They are not afraid. In fact, to me, a "liberated" gay man does not view his "differences" as differences at all. Rather, he views them as unique and even empowering. Though I say that I was "fully immersed in the liberality of my surroundings," I find that it is contradictory to the way that I think and even act now. I have now realized that I have not yet reached a point in my life where I can declare one identity more important than the other. I want to be liberated, but I also want to please my parents and be obsequious toward their expectations of me. I know that I cannot

ONE YEAR LATER

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have both; I cannot claim freedom and be subservient to the wishes of my parents at the same time. This is what sets me apart from the other gay men I have encountered in my life.

While I was growing up, I had no one to relate to. As I said, every gay man that I know is out to the world but even more importantly, out to his family. It is something that I cannot claim for myself. I think that the reason why I have such a problem is because I am different from the people that are already perceived to be different. We are both called “fags” on the street, but at the end of the day, they can go home. We are both laughed at each time our hands hang limp, but at the end of the day, they can go home. We can both be out-cast because of the way our hips sway as we walk, but at the end of the day, they can go home. Though publicly humiliated and mistreated every day, they can go home. This is something of which I am envious because my situation of not being able to go home is much graver.

Ironically, the place where I feel the need to hide my true identity most is my home. (It’s just that the way many outsiders view my lifestyle is replicated there.) Over the years, hiding my true self from my parents has become so easy that it’s become second nature to me. Whispering on the phone at night, hiding my journal, and not allowing company over has become how I function. Hearing the daily urgings of my parents, telling me to act more like a man and not saying anything to defend myself has become the normal day-to-day routine. I’ve become numb to it. It is not the hassle of having to censor myself that I resent; it is the absence of comfort I would have knowing that I was being open and honest. It is that comfort that I equate with happiness. I just want so badly to be happy. I want to be a part of that liberality that I wrote so earnestly about one year ago. And so I try to imagine what it will be like when I finally tell them. What scares me is that every time I try and think of that scenario, I see nothing. What if that liberation will never come for me? I believe that being completely open and honest would make me happy, but that only represents one extreme possibility.

About a year ago, my pediatrician told me a story about a friend who is forty years old and still not “out” to his family. He’s since left his family in Cambodia. Though far from them, he is living comfortably and freely in

America. He believes that there is no reason to tell them as it would create unnecessary pain. Would that be all that I was doing? Creating unnecessary pain? To me, his story is a possibility of liberation that represents an extreme just as the completely open gay men represent the other extreme. Having my doctor's friend be in the same situation as me gives me some reassurance. I'm beginning to think that I will never be able to tell them, and this is where the dilemma arises. I wrote in my college essay that "I still don't know whether I owe them anything. I don't know whether raising me has given them the right to control my life." It's become a question of morality, one that I haven't been able to answer. Would it be right if they never knew? At the moment, I cannot comment on morality, but I will say that I have been considering keeping silent. Keeping it in used to be an idea that was so far-fetched to me, but as the years go on, it seems to be getting harder. Knowing that a sense of liberation can come from the silence that I've become accustomed to is equally as appealing to me as being open and honest.

Many of my peers believe that since my parents raised me, they deserve to know. But what if I was sure they would never understand? What if I was certain that I could prevent pain by staying silent? When I wrote my college essay, I was on the fence about this issue. It is a reoccurring question in my life. Thinking back to my pediatrician's friend tells that a life of liberality is possible even if my parents don't know. I believe it's the same situation. He is literally thousands of miles away from his parents, and when it comes to matters of sexuality and ways of life, I couldn't feel further away from my own. I've accepted the fact that I may never find the right time to tell them. The gay men around me have a sense of freedom and empowerment, and my doctor's friend, though somewhat different, also feels that sense of liberation. It is possible that I am seeking neither of these things. It may be a chance for me to create, chase, and seize my own definition of liberation.

TEETH TALK

Nicole Erhardt

America is obsessed with teeth. We want them whiter, straighter, fresher, more perfect. We want our teeth to fit into the mold our dentists and orthodontists foresee. We want them straight. We don't want gaps or crookedness or any outstanding trait that would give our smiles character. We want white. We don't want yellowed or decayed; we don't even want off-white or cream. We want blinding. We want perfect.

Sometimes I have dreams about cleaning my teeth. In them, I'll brush and floss so furiously that the enamel begins to chip away, as though I'm sculpting tiny marble statues in my mouth. I love a clean-feeling mouth. I can't stand it when plaque clings to my teeth like dust. I look forward to my dentist and orthodontist appointments, to having my teeth polished. I've always felt like people judge me by my smile—like a person can tell how genuine I am by the way my teeth align and lips stretch.

Is it wrong to obsess over teeth? They're vital for chewing, important when it comes to articulating. They should be cared for. However, what used to be fillings and braces has now evolved into an entire industry of reshaping and replacing imperfect teeth. There are porcelain veneers, enamel shaping, contouring, bonding, dental bridging, and gum lifts. Teeth alterations are other forms of cosmetic surgery. It's a less extreme way of changing a person's appearance. Instead of boob and nose jobs, people are turning to dentists. It's called cosmetic dentistry. Dentistry that isn't necessary. It's all part of the never-ending quest to look good. To look like models or celebrities. To look like the re-touched magazine ads. With these computer-generated images as our objective, we are working toward an unreachable goal.

Smiling makes money. When I waitress, I laugh at bad jokes, grin while cleaning people's spills, smile as I dump their leftovers in the trash. I use my straight teeth as tools; expose them and hope it encourages customers to pull an extra dollar out of their pocket. People give bigger tips for friendliness—for that "million-dollar smile." And every coin counts.

My smile and teeth are worth thousands of dollars. The money I make in tips can't compare to the money spent on my teeth. I cringe when I think about the money invested in my mouth. My teeth aren't symbols of happiness: they're symbols of spent dollar bills tucked into cash registers; of unpaid bills sealed in envelopes on the kitchen counter; of receipts littering the car floor. There are teeth advertisements everywhere: commercials, billboards, posters, magazines. Even movies are a type of advertisement, with the teeth of actors and actresses glowing unnaturally. As I type this, Internet ads about white teeth are appearing in the margin of my computer screen. "Do you have yellow teeth?" they ask, showing photographs of a skuzzy, rotted tooth. "Learn the trick to white teeth by clicking [HERE!](#)" I know these advertisements are meant to manipulate me, and most of the time I resist. But there are the times when I don't, when I give in and buy the Crest whitening strips that claim to make my teeth whiter or when I purchase the Trident gum that dentists approve. It's moments like those when I realize teeth are becoming industrial products.

My teeth contradict the rest of my face. My lips, eyes, and cheeks are tools for showing contentment, hilarity, and elation. They express natural emotions and haven't been permanently altered. But my teeth are different. They are arranged unnaturally, arranged by stiff wires into a neat line. People don't see that, though. They see straight and white. Rarely do people see the dollar signs, the bills, the expenses woven between each tooth. My teeth are the result of wads of bills spent on Colgate toothpaste and floss, the result of Visa credit cards swiped in exchange for fluoride, tooth-whitening gum, and at least two toothbrushes a year. And once braces, dentist, and orthodontist appointments are factored in, the price of teeth swells. All this in exchange for perfection.

Or maybe people do see the money spent on my teeth. Teeth can be indicators of a person's financial standing. My straight teeth reveal my middle-class background; they tell people I'm privileged enough to afford healthy teeth. Bad teeth suggest a lack of dental care, which suggests a lack of money. It's not a bad thing to spend money on keeping teeth healthy. But there's a difference between caring about teeth and obsessing over them. This obsession seems to exist only in the United States. Europeans don't care. Their teeth are crooked and it's acceptable. Other countries

can't afford dentistry. The United States is alone in this tooth-perfecting frenzy.

Once when I was waitressing, my boss knocked over a stand of spices. I was left to pick up his mess. As I bent down to pick up the containers one by one, I noticed a foreign hand helping me. Without looking, I thanked this stranger and was about to walk away when I heard him say, "I couldn't resist with a smile like that." I glanced in the voice's direction and saw it was an old man. He was smiling and his mouth was overflowing with teeth. They spilled out from his gums like an art installation, his molars collecting together as the rest of his teeth flowed outward in organized chaos. They were spaced unevenly, positioned at different angles, but his mouth contained them and this created unity.

His teeth reminded me of the mold I have of my teeth before my braces. There are two separate pieces; one is the top and the other the bottom of my mouth. The mold is chalk white; its pockets were teeth that were pulled and lumps where new teeth were growing in. Despite the crookedness, despite the gaps and overlaps, the two pieces fit with each other.

Back in the restaurant, I thanked the old man again, but this time more sincerely.

"Best one I've seen in years," he said. I smiled. My teeth spent three years imprisoned by braces, and I've worn a retainer to bed almost every night for the past two. Thousands of dollars have been spent to build my teeth into the statues they are. My teeth are ideal. This man looked as though he'd never seen a dentist. His teeth were original.

Today, braces are ordinary. In my suburban, middle-class town, it was weird to not have braces growing up. I can only remember two out of the hundred kids in my grade never getting braces. It seems as though America is gradually moving toward an age where everyone will have braces, will "need" them.

We have lost the definition of the word "need." "You need braces" our dentists say. We tell our friends things like, "I need to shave," "I need to work out," or "I need a haircut." We need this and that, those and these. As the want to perfect our image grows, the word "need" weakens. The difference between want and need has begun to disintegrate: the words are often used interchangeably.

Soon we won't want straight teeth; we'll need them. Gradually, perfect teeth will become necessities and not privileges. Studies will be performed, and their outcome will say straight teeth equal healthy teeth. Maybe perfect teeth won't be as necessary as food, but the importance of them will only increase. And, if the obsession continues, we'll eventually be unable to distinguish one set of teeth from another. Our teeth will become identical, one smile sibling to the next, each tooth sculptured to perfection. A society of utopian teeth.

WRITING AS A WAY OF BEING NICARAGUAN

Marta P. Martinez Tom

For at least thirty years, and at almost all times, I have carried a notebook with me, in my back pocket. It has always been the same kind of notebook – small, three inches by five inches, and hand-sewn. By no means do I write poems in these notebooks. And yet over the years, the notebooks have been laced with phrases that eventually appear in poems. So, they are the pages upon which I begin.

Mary Oliver

Writing is like any other daily activity, just like eating or brushing your teeth. It is something I do while waiting for friends, before I go to sleep, in between things. I seldom go a day without writing at least one entry into my Common Place Book. The Common Place Book, which is *locus communis* in Latin, is a term used to describe a book containing a collection of quotations as well as thoughts, poems, and memories by the ordinary individual. The Common Place Book that I have kept for the past 17 years is the passport into the life of the inner landscape of my existence, a Latina living in the USA.

El gayo canta de noche y de día. Ella limpia la ropa de su patron. Ella pasa todo la mañana cocinando gallopinto. Ella corta cebollitas, chiltomas, ajo. Le pone chorizo a los frijoles y tortillas a calendar.

NYC, USA. 1993.

I have kept a Common Place Book since 1992, after a professor in sociology class asked her students to write about the rituals that were practiced in our homes. Much of the semester had gone by, while I still dug through memories trying to fulfill a grade requirement. In not being able to put

words to her query, I started to write: “What is a ritual? What is a family? What is a country?” The classroom discussion never pacified my quest to understand my roots. Consequently, I continued the dialogue on the page long after the sociology class was over.

*The top of the pumpkin fell upon itself, after carved-
Pumpkin carving party-an American tradition,
French fries and ice cream, on summer season*

N.C., USA. 1996

At first, my entries written in a second language were simple—one sentenced, taciturn. As of late, many of the complicated idioms I don’t understand become rhetoric, fueling my scribbles. On the page, I write to modulate my judgments, to inflect new meaning, to adjust my tone, and to grow character. Writing shows me where to step next, one word at a time. Writing provides me with a sense of security—I feel safe tucked between the white spaces and the serifs. Descartes would agree that I write therefore I am, or that I am therefore I write. In a Cartesian sense of the word, I write because it gives me a sense of direction.

*Addissu, a new immigrant from Ethiopia,
Me, a not so new immigrant from Nicaragua.
We meet at the white folks table vis-à-vis English tea and cookies.
Him and I spend so much time together, either in silence or in translation.*

MA, USA. 1999

The search for identity accompanies me like a shadow, forcing me to take notes on all observable cultural discrepancies. By way of writing, I am allowed to investigate relationships, expressions of love, words that depict women and family. I ask questions: “What is the difference between Hispanic and Latino? What is a minority?” The pages of my Common Place Book serve as the *axis mundi* as well as the lens from which I view the world. And with every attempt to write in a less broken language, along

WRITING AS A WAY OF BEING NICARAGUAN 61

with the numerous trials to use a more complete set of words, I plunge out of the birth waters and into my own voice.

*I am looking for strength that is harvested deep in the marrow –
Of bones made of volcanic sand and molten lava
There, where with eyes closed,
I feel strong.*

S.J., Costa Rica. 2003

I write about a land near the tropic of cancer – Nicaragua, my birthplace. The size of the state of Rhode Island in the USA, Nicaragua is comprised of 25 volcanoes. I write about Nicaragua, as if I was sitting by the fire—stoking the coals of a third-world, war-torn country, smelling the sulfur of past volcanic eruptions, and remembering the earth cracking brought upon by devastating earthquakes. Nicaragua, a small country with a massive personality is the place I visit while traveling the pages of my Common Place Book.

Houses have dirt walls and floors – with clean laundered clothes hanging outside. Mangos and avocados fall onto the tin roofs making a big thud sound. Chickens run wild on the dirt roads. Roosters sing loud at dawn – kikirikiki!

Managua, Nicaragua. 2006.

Writing invites me to open the windows of my New England home and to hear the sound of marimbas, wrapped in the smell of fresh coffee and wet dirt after a light rain. On the page, I hear the rolling of the R's spelled in my name: Ma-R-ta Ma-R-tinez Tom. Such is a place where I grow the hips of a woman with skin darkened by a full day of work. In the Common Place Book, the Nicaraguan woman eats rice and beans every day, along with ripe papayas, while wearing white socks and flip-flops. In the Common Place Book, the *émigré* finds a home, where she laughs deeply while telling you a joke, before she can say hello. In the Common Place

Book, the ethnic, the immigrant, the naturalized American can remain in her own right Nicaraguan.

Penmanship is so important. I want to learn how to write clearly and concise. I don't want to skip any lessons in language.

Serifos, Greece. 2009.

Some writers write because they want to disseminate information, state their opinions, or educate. Other writers prefer to write in order to be scientific, poetic, or even humorous. Most writers transform their personal experience into the universal act of being—in their own words—a living breath. And like most artists, writers bring forth a new vocabulary through which the reader can find meaning. I write to understand the inner sanctum of the brown woman who inhabits my flesh. Writing provides me with a rich world separated by lines undivided by cultural norms. In this *beau monde* of the blank page, the universe is still expanding. My investigations cover every inch of a land unscathed by taboo or sensitivities too personal to be divulged. Information that would be inappropriate, preliminary, and prohibited like fantasies, personal goals and aspirations, or even dreams are all exposed on the vignettes I inscribe in my Common Place Books.

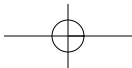
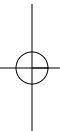
Part II

Preface

Unit II: Interacting with Text

In the first unit, students looked at their own experience and wrote personal essays for personal audiences. As they progressed through the semester, students moved from a more personal audience toward an academic one, and thus began the process of writing for the needs and expectations of more distant audiences—audiences they would not see before them in the form of fellow classmates, family members, or friends. In Unit II, students were asked to integrate their own ideas with the ideas of others by responding to, or “wrestling with,” a published text. Key elements of academic contexts such as the use of textual sources and citation formats were introduced.

The essays in this section of the Student Writing Anthology show students interacting with the work of a published author or scholar, and comfortably speaking with some degree of personal authority. In Unit I, students exhibited authority in writing about their own lives. In Unit II, students used the perspectives they gained from their own lives to write within a larger conversation in which their ideas were still central but were not the sole focus of their writing. No person can respond to a text without using and incorporating their own unique perspectives and contexts—perspectives and contexts that stem from their own history and experiences. In this second unit, students have gradually moved from a solely personal context to a less familiar one, while still finding authority in their own personal perspectives as well as in the content of the essays to which they have responded.



FEEDBACK

Kevin Gallagher

While Michael Pollan's essay "Why Bother" makes a powerful argument for a change in lifestyle and ultimately culture—growing a personal food garden—it fails to address the multifaceted nature of the problem (215). It is a good idea: it encourages the human bond with the earth; it is symbolic in its practice; and it is surely a small act which, if performed en masse, could truly change the world. The somewhat cynical counterpoint to this concept is this: creating a widespread cultural bias towards an ideology is exactly what a Coca-Cola advertising executive with a billion-dollar budget is probably plotting to do at this very moment. Whereas it is true that it is our consumer culture and our "passive, delegated, dependent for solutions on specialists" mentality that created our problem, this same sort of thinking *can* also solve our problem (212). It is no slight task to alter the atmospheric makeup and climate of a planet: this is a testament to the power of technology. The fact that we were able to destroy this planet shows that we have the power to fix it if only we harness technological power to that cause. For example, I'd be willing to bet that the cost of the war in Iraq could have paid for enough solar panels to fill twenty to thirty percent of America's energy needs. Pollan dismisses the idea that politicians will take the initiative to enact legislation in favor of finding a solution to this crisis, but he fails to provide a solid argument against the exponentially progressive nature of technological prowess and its implications for the near future (212). If the cost of technology is suddenly and dramatically reduced, if the price of carbon scrubbers and windmills and solar panels significantly drops, then doesn't that impact diminish an individual's choice to grow a vegetable garden? If that happens, doesn't it make it easier for the politicians to pay for green legislation, and make it more attractive to the average voter as well?

Ironically, it is our culture itself that prevents Pollan's assertions—that individuals can create a viral cultural impact—from being entirely correct

(214). The problem, and the reason most people don't bother, is that our culture is very self driven—sort of a negative feedback loop in itself. Marketing and advertisement are effective in creating bias, establishing trends, and ultimately directing human behavior and culture. Psychological studies have even shown that there are observable physiological stimulations that go along with the sight of a particular brand name: we are all Pavlov's dogs. Our culture is more a product of our environment than of the individual. Large corporations are embedded deeply within our government by way of lobbyists and pure corruption. In the grand scheme of things, a viral culture change is exactly what advertisement attempts to affect, and it is quite successful: it is no coincidence that many large corporations spend huge fractions of their budgets on marketing. It is likely that whatever impact I have made on someone who observed me in my garden would be quickly wiped out by a flood of Hummer commercials. Creating a change at a grassroots level, starting with individuals, is not only swimming upstream; it is like swimming up a waterfall: a torrent of signs and TV commercials and logos and ads and consumption-based culture that floods the senses and the unconscious mind. If these extraneous factors could be reigned in, essays like Pollan's would have a significantly more powerful impact on the average American.

Since the individual's power to affect cultural change has been so thoroughly destroyed by modern culture itself, it remains that the solution to climate change must come from the politicians. Policies must be enacted to create a new industrial revolution that preserves the principles that made it successful while eliminating the pollution that we were so cavalier about spewing across the planet. Efficient, high-tech industry could be encouraged, while polluting, outdated industry could be discouraged. Politicians, however, are meant to represent the people, and as Pollan pointed out, "They will not move until we do" (212). That aside, there is something to be said for corporate America's unhealthy relationship with the government; some industries are simply too deeply ingrained in the economy to be severely handicapped, such as the automobile, electric, and oil industries. So if both our individual power and our collective political power aren't the solution, what is?

There exists somewhere on the grand human journey a thin line between destruction and salvation. This thin line is the line of scientific progress, and if it falls behind our environmental destruction, we will surely find ourselves living in a horrible juxtaposition of various Hollywood doomsday scenarios. Lucky for us, much like climate change, the growth of scientific progress is exponential, and if we are lucky, and the right policies are put in place, it will make environmental engineering a cheap solution to our cheap energy problem. At this moment, there are hundreds and thousands of highly intelligent minds at work on what has become such a well-known problem that it is almost a cliché: global warming. Steven Hawking gives one example of how fast human beings are acquiring knowledge: “If you stacked all the new books being published next to each other, you would have to move at ninety miles an hour just to keep up with the end of the line” (159). He goes on to say that most of that information is garbage, but that’s not the point (165). The point is that there are many fields of science that are just around the corner from discoveries with the potential to revolutionize everything from materials manufacturing, to information processing, to industrial efficiency in almost every field. These new, advanced technologies are exactly what will solve the problems posed by their predecessors.

Nanotechnology may be the key to securing our future. In its primitive stages right now, it promises to allow manufacturers to build from an atomic level. The eventual goal of this field of science is to create tiny, molecule-sized, self-replicating robots. These tiny automatons could create new materials chemistry has never seen, and increase the efficiency of nearly every form of inefficiency. Think of the tree: it takes in carbon dioxide from the air, with almost no waste of ground, and builds itself from scratch; it produces nothing but oxygen as waste. Once this technology is harnessed, it will not only radically bring down the cost of green technology, but it will bring down the cost of nearly everything. Computers are an excellent example of how fast science progresses. Moore’s Law, the hypothesis by Gordon Moore, Intel co-founder, that computer power doubles every eighteen months, has held up for over forty years. To put this exponential quality into perspective, here is an example: if I give you a penny

today, and doubled that amount each day for a month, after thirty days, I would owe you over five million dollars.

There is also the rising field of research in artificial intelligence, which holds great promise, and which, like nanotechnology, will likely have virtually limitless applications. Though a subject of intense debate, it is possible that artificial intelligence could one day surpass human intelligence, a concept that, like climate change, has a feedback loop: as soon as a computer is created which is more intelligent than a human, it would theoretically be able to design a computer smarter than itself, which could in turn do the same, resulting in an exponential increase in intelligence. This computer power could be put to unfathomable use; not only could it be used to create more accurate climate prediction models, but it could be employed across the world for millions of purposes, ultimately leading to further advances in every field of science, including environmental engineering.

Pollan has attempted to solve the problem of climate change without technology and politics, and he has put forth a good proposal for doing so. To become closer to the earth, to get away from “cheap-energy” mentality, and to reduce your carbon footprint all follow from the simple task of growing a vegetable garden; but in many ways, it is too late (214). The carbon is already in the air, the globe is already warming, and the icecaps are already half melted. When the first dark, carbon footprints appeared on this earth, if then the humans looked down and said no more, we may have saved ourselves from such a destiny, but to make these footprints smaller will do no good when seven billion of them appear each time the humans take a step. No, it is technology that destroyed this planet, and nothing but technology will restore it.

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GOOGLE IS MAKING ME STUPID

Eleni Maistrellis

Page one. I'm on a roll. I'm reading, processing, and understanding the words in front of me. Page one and a half. I begin to drift, but quickly bring myself back to finish page two. Page three. Oops, I did it again. I snap back. Page four. I can feel myself getting anxious at this point, waiting for the words to end. That's it; I'm skimming. Page five. Wait, what did I just read? I read it again. At this point, my mind is going in every direction, and there's no bringing it back, even for just three more pages. Total reading time: twenty-two minutes. Eight pages in twenty-two minutes. As I'm reading Nicholas Carr's essay, "Is Google Making Us Stupid?" I am proving most of his points.

In his essay, "Is Google Making Us Stupid?" Nicholas Carr analyzes the effects of the Internet and technology on our thinking, our past, and our future. He begins by illustrating how the Internet affects us today in our everyday lives. We can't focus; we do a million things at once and look for the most efficient way to do so, just as the Internet has taught us. Carr moves on to provide scientific research for the idea that the Internet is indeed changing our brains. While there is no definite proof of this idea, there is concrete evidence that "the human brain is almost infinitely malleable" (Carr 61). This clearly suggests that it is possible the Internet is reforming our brains to work as it does. Continuing, Carr looks back onto previous innovations, such as the clock and Taylor's algorithm, to show how each of these influenced their society as the Internet influences ours. For example, even media must adapt to the speed and efficiency the Internet has brought about. People will no longer take the time to read a lengthy article, so the media must provide them with short, interesting ones. Finally, Carr brings his essay into the future. He uses the ideas of Google to show where technology may be taking us. Google strives to build an artificial intelli-

gence—an artificial intelligence that could possibly one day supplement, or replace, our brains. Is our intelligence really turning artificial?

The more I think about it, the more I can feel my brain working as a computer. However, unlike Carr, that's all I've ever known. I can't think back to a time where I may have read a long, in-depth book or article without previous exposure to the Internet. By the time I was able to actually immerse myself in reading, I'd been acquainted with computers and the Internet for a couple of years. So, I don't know if my brain is "morphing" or if it has already been programmed.

What I do know is that I hate reading. I get bored fast and can't wait to move on to the next thing. Carr notices this in himself too. He admits, "Now my concentration often starts to drift after two or three pages. I get fidgety, lose the thread, begin looking for something else to do" (59). Reading my *Glamour* magazine earlier today, I found myself picking out the shortest articles, reading the headlines, or even just looking at the pictures. It takes a lot for an article to interest me, and even then I'll probably just skim it. When it comes to research, I'll scan through multiple articles, but will probably only actually read one or two. Books. They're the worst. I haven't picked up a book on my own in years. All those words, on all those pages. They seem never-ending and excruciating to me. I don't have the time or patience to enjoy the story; I'd much rather just watch the movie.

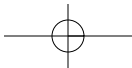
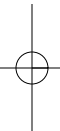
The Internet, however, is something I can spend hours on. You can live an entire life on the Internet: from going to classes, to Skype-ing your friends, to finding your soul mate on Match.com. Carr describes the Internet as ". . . a universal medium, the conduit for most of the information that flows through my eyes and ears and into my mind" (59). Everything you could ever need or want to know is there with a simple click of a mouse. The world is literally at your fingertips. With so many things to do in one place, it's tempting to do it all.

Facebook. U-Mail. Google. WebAssign. These are tabs open on my browser as I sit down to do my math homework on WebAssign. When I get frustrated or lose interest in the math problem, I check Facebook. While Facebook's loading, I check my mail one more time. When I have no new messages, I might Google something random to keep myself entertained. When I get bored with that, maybe I'll make it back to my math homework.

I feel as though my mind is constantly moving like this, clicking over to different tabs to keep myself from boredom. Is my mind simply becoming a computer? Or is the computer taking over my mind, as Google hopes it will? Either way, man and machine are beginning to look a lot alike. That makes me wonder, where is the future headed after all?

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VIRTUAL FRIENDS CANNOT JUDGE YOUR APPEARANCE

Katharine McFeaters

“But is it Facebook official?” she asked with honest concern in regard to the relationship status. Her friend responded with a blank stare, signifying an epiphany and slowly said “no.” “It doesn’t count then.” Multiple friends agreed and shrugged back. As I sat there, I contemplated the meaning of this discourse: I wondered at what point human relationships had become largely digital. A quick glance around the lecture hall filled with people texting on their phones and/or leaning over a laptop, staring at some social networking site or blog, would back up this statement. I believe that the Internet creates a virtual social wall, rendering people dense when it comes to communications; therefore, I disagree with Andrew Sullivan’s main point from his essay, “Why I Blog,” that the Web creates a significant human connection.

The use of the Internet as a form of contact places a barrier in human interaction. Andrew Sullivan describes his communication through blogging: “It renders a writer and a reader not just connected but linked in a visceral, personal way. The only term that really describes this is *friendship*” (282). Sullivan argues that a new type of union is formed when a reader delves into a blogger’s most personal thoughts that have been pensively plastered across a monitor. He takes the Internet socialization a bit far as he describes this interaction. This may be a type of relationship; however, should it really be rendered a “friendship”? Friendship is what someone has with the kid he or she has known since preschool or even the person who they met at a concert after yelling out the lyrics to every song together. This individual is not the faceless screen name reading your opinions in the light of his or her monitor. Traditional interaction being an in-person conversation provides a sustenance that the Internet does not. In the most basic terms, friendship has the reoccurring trait of talking face-to-face, not wireless router to wireless router.

The most basic form of interaction learned as children is to decipher facial expressions and body language, but this is being replaced with emoticons and possibly a three by three picture of a person from their better years or the time they lost weight following a bout of mono. Either way, why should emotion be expressed through a series of punctuation marks and yellow circles with eyes, designed for simplicity. Human interaction requires real sentiment conveyed in the traditional ways and not through keyboard discourse. This new type of communication, in which current and upcoming generations will no doubt be proficient, puts a wrench in interaction as a whole. When publicly speaking, will a blogger or reader be comfortable presenting opinions and information without a glowing laptop and a fenced off, far-away audience?

Sullivan furthers his argument by calling blogging “visceral.” The reader of his essay is left wondering what exactly about modern technology is animal-like. The pure emotion Sullivan is alluding to is just that of someone who has no fear of backlash taking place in person. This is far from what bold animalistic behavior entails. The closest thing to primitive a blogger could get would be to take a personal jab at someone while gnawing on a raw steak.

Of course, blogging, the pastime that attracts large sums of opinionated individuals, has some benefits. Sullivan presents this point when he says, “Now the feedback was instant, personal, and brutal” (280). Instead of dealing with the pain of critique from behind the shield of a newspaper or from the mouths of their publishers, blog authors have direct feedback from the readers themselves who are one click away from typing a cutting malicious comment. With the same kind of high that a frat boy gets by heckling insults out of car windows, the blog readers get a space just begging for their input, the only limit being the number of characters that may be included. Their only identification is a painstakingly thought-out screen name or perhaps an illuminating icon. This kind of sovereignty allows the remarks to be brutally honest without any fear of a mob forming outside your window. In anonymity there is freedom. Thus, the author of the blog is given a bitter-sweet benefit that they may at first wish to brush off as readers too dense and commonplace to understand their style of writing. They are able to use instant critique to directly get the opinion from the audience that formally

VIRTUAL FRIENDS CANNOT
JUDGE YOUR APPEARANCE

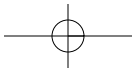
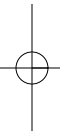
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was represented by a flow chart or summation by a professional analyst. The author is now accountable to the viewers.

Although the Internet offers many advantages to modern society, such as the ease of access to incredible amounts of information, a void is growing in social interaction through actions like blogging. Blogging creates a new world in which an author is immediately responsible for his or her work; however, the essence of communication is lost in it. The lack of face-to-face dialogue in the Internet world is creating a problem for communication in the real world. These issues are occurring because reading body language and facial expression is no longer necessary and is left to deteriorate. People may become less adept in public presentation of themselves. Andrew Sullivan's call upon blogging as a new and more human relationship is faulty because blogging does not require some of the necessary components of having an actual companionship. Blogging creates a world in which something far from conventional communication becomes the social norm.

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COLLECTIBLES

Jessica Nickless

Bring a child to the beach and they will return home with their pockets full of rocks and their towel full of shells. Each shell and rock is chosen for its diversity from all the others, be it a pretty color or how it is shaped. For a while, these pretty treasures will be proudly displayed and shown off, maybe even traded or given away to best friends. Over time, many of these hobbies fade as the children grow into adults. Yet, for some people, collecting spans a lifetime. “Some four million American adults declare that they too collect, and typically something more than pebbles,” writes William Davis King in “My Metaphor Weighs Tons” (118). By saying that it is more than collecting rocks, King means to say that collecting becomes serious and advances from being a hobby to being something more similar to obsession. But, why does this happen?

King’s “My Metaphor Weighs Tons” is about his own collection. He doesn’t even realize how much he has until it is all thrown together into his garage when his wife kicks him out of his house. When he sees the immense amount of stuff that he owns, he feels disgusted. For me, this feeling comes during yard sale season, when I am like a bloodhound chasing the scent of prey. Nothing can make me deviate from my path, and I stop at every yard sale I see. It does not matter whether or not I actually need to buy something; I simply cannot help myself. I will buy anything – from a bowl, to a vintage dress, to a lamp, or a pot. Even if I never use it or wear it, I just have to have it. But . . . why? It is as if I simply can’t pass up a good deal, in which case my obsession, at least with collecting things from yard sales, is my desperate wish to save money. Funny, considering that in the long run I spend more money simply because I buy more.

As much as I love getting these things cheaply, I also hate it. I will spend hours upon hours at yard sales, searching for the perfect item or wondering whether or not I should actually buy an item that has caught my fancy. I hate that I spend money buying another person’s junk. However, every-

thing has its course, and if they had never fallen out of love with the item, then I would never have gotten the chance to own it. I sometimes feel how King feels when he sees beer bottle caps on the road: "I love you for what you do not love," he says, "what you throw away" (118). I live by the saying that one man's trash is another man's treasure. Each of these items holds a piece of their former owner, and, in the end, you will never forget that person because of what you gained from them.

Are my yard sale treasures the only items that make up my set of collectibles? Well, of course not! While they are the only truly random collection, my set does not end there. King mentions how he couldn't avoid collecting and how he saw his life as a collection: his family, his house, etc. He also states that his other set was much more unique:

. . . fifty-three Cheez-It boxes, empty; thirty-four old dictionaries; three dozen rusted skeleton keys; a mound of used airmail envelopes, most culled from mailroom trash; a pipe-tobacco tin chock full of smooth pebbles; many plastic cauliflower bags, all mimicking the sphericity of a cauliflower head; business cards of business-card printers, though I had no business card; cigar ribbons, though I do not smoke (117).

This part of his collection is like my yard sale treasures. However, just as I collect specific sets of objects, such as Sobe bottle caps, and animals made both from porcelain and glass, he collects "labels of all the food products [he] consumed," "bottle caps (the metal kind with crinkly edges)," and "Brancusi boulders" (118). My own rock collection, which began in my youth, still lies in my room, although over the years it has been slimmed down. The only ones remaining are the ones which are truly unique. King loved his boulders because they "looked like naked bodies in the moonlight, wrapped warm and tight to one another" (118). Prior to reading King's essay, I had never thought to consider my collections as an art form. I've always admired artists, but my artistic ability in terms of painting, drawing, etc. is not quite up to par. Maybe my need for collecting makes up for this lack.

Of course, all of this, from my yard sale items to my glass collectibles, has accumulated to large proportions over the years, and the amount of stuff

COLLECTIBLES

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that I keep in my room is probably enough to decorate an entire house. It drives my mother insane, and occasionally, she gets this crazy notion in her head that she should clean my room. The result is my spending hours tearing my room apart, looking for one thing, and then all of her cleaning was for naught. My room will once again look like a bomb dropped in the middle of it, but I like it when it is in this state of organized chaos. Organized, because I can find anything I want and I know where everything is. Chaos, because no one else understands my logic. Everything has to be perfect in a way that I understand, like King's boxes and cartons which "had to lie flat," and his boulders which he mowed around in a particular manner so that they would be framed perfectly by the grass (118). My glass animal collection, which numbers probably around 100 figurines, has to have each figure facing just right. All the cats are with the cats and merge with the dogs, which merge with the wolves, and so on and so forth. Just as my mother cleans my room now, she used to try to organize my collection, and it would irk me so fiercely that I would have to think up a new way to arrange them so that it would be perfect once again.

King says that he has a "singular multiplicity of diverse collections of nothing, stuff of no clear value to anyone but someone like me" (117). I have a shelf in my room completely dedicated to the collection of Sobe caps, just because of the sayings written inside them. The majority of the sayings don't make sense ("You're gonna have to trust me behrooz!"), but I don't discriminate. Each is unique, even when the sayings are the same. My mother asked me once why I kept them. I didn't really have an answer except that I had to have them. They don't have memories associated with them, nor do I remember which cap came from which flavor, so that cannot be it. But, perhaps, I collect these things simply because it gives me power. Because I have the power to decide whether these collectibles stay or leave. "I am its lord" (119). It gives me power and gives me the chance to play God.

Everything has a memory or significance attached to it, and I fear trashing anything lest I then lose the memory along with the item. When King sees his beach boulders, he thinks of long drives from his house to his job and remembers stopping at the beach and just falling in love with the boulders—it was love at first sight. After his divorce, he left the rocks at his past house,

“and it looks good” (118). When his wife removed all that had memories of him, she did not remove the rocks. Perhaps in order for part of his past to live on there at the house, he left a collection which is part of him. It would have been hard for me to leave something so beautiful behind, but I most likely would have done the same thing were I in his position. The truth is I have trouble throwing anything away because everything has meaning to me, and I know that if I get rid of something, I will end up needing it in the future. So, it all sits in my room, collecting dust, waiting for me to rediscover it. I know that someday it will hit me just how much stuff I have, like it hit King. But I don’t regret it now, nor will I regret it then.

Maybe the reasons people collect are as unique as the things that they collect. There is no one rule or rhyme as to why or what I collect, except that I liked them all at one point. Maybe it’s because I like the power it gives me, because of the memories they carry, my need for artistic expression, or because I want to save a few bucks. At the end of the day, I’m back at the beginning, collecting everything—nothing—without a clear reason as to why I do it. I don’t need a reason, and perhaps that is the true reason I collect “nothing” (118).

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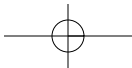
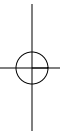
Part II

Preface

Unit III: Adding to a Conversation

In the essays from unit III, writers have traveled even further “into the world” by interacting with a variety of texts in order to take part in a larger conversation around a specific subject or issue. Students began by focusing on a topic they cared deeply about, and then imagined a potential audience that might need or want to hear more about it. Students researched the larger conversation around their topic, and then found a point of entry in which they could contribute meaningfully to this dialogue. These unit III essays are pieces written for a public audience, using research as the primary “authority” for their paper, although personal perspective (in some cases personal experience) are sources of authority as well. Here are essays that move beyond the “academic” world and are meant for an audience interested in knowing more about a specific conversation.

These essays are evidence of how writing serves the community. Larger conversations and contexts are drawn upon as students engage in dialogues centered on issues they find important and meaningful. What appeals to each writer, and what they find important and meaningful, has so much to do with their own histories and experiences. In the following essays, students found their own contexts in what others have written/stated about an issue and responded to these texts. This writing has brought them into the “world” and has allowed their voices to be heard as new and integral participants in a larger conversation.



RECYCLING AT UMASS AMHERST

Emily Benvie

My paper has two purposes. The first purpose is to establish the fact that a significant number of UMass students do not recycle in their dorms, and figure out why that is. The second is to research what makes recycling programs successful and design a more effective recycling program for UMass students living in dorms. The audiences for my paper are two kinds of people. The first is students at UMass, who I hope will improve their recycling habits just by reading my paper. The second are people who work for UMass and have the power to change and improve its recycling program, specifically the Sustainability Coordinator, Environmental Performance Advisory Committee, Residential Life, and Housing Services.

Have you ever seen the Pixar movie *Wall-E*? The opening scene depicts Earth in the future, which is entirely covered in trash. The world's population has been forced to move to live in orbit in outer space because there is no room to live on Earth anymore due to the amount of waste that has accumulated over time. Even though this scene is extreme, it conveys the message that if we aren't careful and responsible, the earth is eventually going to run out of space to hold all of our waste products.

One of the most popular issues of our time is the current state of the environment we live in. According to Wesley Schultz, "Recycling and other conversation behaviors are becoming increasingly important as the harmful effects on human behavior on the natural environment become more evident" (67). Global climate change, clean drinking water, adequate food supply, air pollution, acid rain, and carbon emissions are just a few of the important problems we face and must solve today. Even though recycling is far from a new concept, it is still important that people do it. According to a survey taken by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, "In 1999,

the average person in the United States generated 4.6 pounds of trash every day—a figure that was up dramatically from 2.7 pounds in 1960” (Schultz, 68). This alarming statistic displays how increasingly important it is that people recycle as much of their waste products as possible. If society continues to consume and dispose at increasing rates, the seemingly impossible scene in *Wall-E* could become a real threat in the future.

Young generations are the people who determine the future. In order to change the ways of society, younger generations must be targeted and their behaviors influenced. Convincing an 18-year-old to recycle, for example, will go far beyond the fact that he or she will have a lifetime to practice this environmental stewardship. That 18-year-old is going to be entering the workforce in a matter of years, and could have the power to influence many other people in the world. That 18-year-old has the potential to become the next Al Gore, a man who brought the issue of global warming into living rooms all over the world in the movie *An Inconvenient Truth* and influenced millions to practice environmental stewardship. However, that 18-year-old also has the power to become a wasteful, ignorant consumer who worsens the current state of the environment as well as threatening its future. All things considered, it only makes sense to implement successful recycling programs in places such as colleges, which are filled with people who will determine the future of society.

I myself am an 18-year-old college student. I happen to be on the “tree-hugger” end of the spectrum; I care deeply about the earth I live in. As a “tree-hugger,” I major in Natural Resource Studies and participate in the eco-rep club, a club where students influence and educate their peers about the importance of the environment. During my first semester at UMass Amherst, I have noticed that many students do not recycle, even though a fairly good recycling program is implemented in the dorms of the university. Not only is this fact alarming, but it causes me to ask myself why it is that many students do not recycle. In addition, it brings to my attention that a better recycling plan should be put into place.

In order for me to come up with a better recycling plan, it was important to figure out what students’ main reasons for not recycling were. After interviewing several students, I was able to reach some general conclusions. Whitney Baumiller, a freshman living in a high-rise building said that “it’s

just hard. When I have people over in my room, they always throw all their trash in any of the cans. It's too much work to sit there and go through all my trash before I throw it all away." Baumiller's reasoning was the general consensus for the majority of students that were interviewed. Most students say that it is too much work to sort through all their trash after having lots of people in their dorm rooms. Apparently, on the weekends, when students have parties in their dorms, people tend to disregard the fact that there are specific bins for their recyclables. Another common trend was that students like to have a trash can under each of the two desks as well as a central trash can in the middle of the room. "It's just better that way," responded Alex Swanton, another freshman. Another issue is that many students throw away items that they do not know are recyclable. Common items that students did not know are recyclable were toiletry bottles such as shampoo and conditioner, and food containers such as oatmeal packets and Easy Mac containers. "Dude, I eat Easy Mac all the time, I didn't even know you could recycle those" was the reaction of Claire Kiss, another freshman at UMass. The final reasons that many other students do not recycle in their dorms is pure laziness and carelessness. Many students do not recognize the importance of recycling.

There are certain aspects that are necessary for a recycling program to be successful. Having an easily accessible program that requires little effort is a key aspect in program success. After performing various experiments and surveying individuals, Linda Derksen and John Gartrell reached the conclusion that "The most important determinant of recycling behavior is access of a structured, institutionalized program that makes recycling easy and convenient" (439). Other aspects of program success are establishing goals, incentives, and in some cases, making recycling mandatory (Johnson & Parrott 48). The final most important aspect of a successful recycling program is the education of others as well as normative knowledge, which consists of the beliefs about the behaviors of others. Educating certain key people in communities is especially important for program success. Joseph Hopper and Joyce Nielson performed a study in which "The use of block leaders to prompt community members to participate in a recycling program had the biggest impact on recycling behavior" (197). Linda Derksen and John Gartrell found that "The second strongest predictor was having

friends and neighbors who recycle. Thus peer participation and modeling were important determinants of recycling behavior” (435). Having respected individuals advocate recycling is extremely effective because people connect on a more personal level and feel as though they should follow the good example. If every aspect is considered and implemented, one would assume that a recycling program in any context would be successful.

UMass Amherst implements only one of the main ways of recycling, which is by making it extremely convenient for students. Not only are there bins in the community trash rooms, but each dorm is equipped with recycling bins. In addition, there are usually recycling bins next to every trash can around campus. Making recycling very convenient definitely has a great impact on the amount students recycle. If it was any more difficult to recycle, it is likely that not nearly as many students would practice proper waste disposal. Even though UMass has the right idea in making recycling easy and convenient for students, it could definitely take it a step further.

There are, however, a few important aspects of a successful recycling program that UMass seems to have left out. Providing incentives, for one, would definitely increase the recycling rate. One way to do this could be to have a competition between floors of buildings resulting in some sort of prize at the end of the semester for the winning floor. Not only would recycling rates increase, but new jobs for students would be created in order to count recycled goods. Visually keeping track of progress in recycling is also likely to boost rates. If students were able to see how they measured up compared to different floors, they would likely be inspired to recycle more (Hazlett & Folz 530). Also, involving influential people would have a positive impact. Getting RAs, key figures on each floor, to advocate recycling will likely be a positive addition to the recycling program. The “eco-rep” program definitely has the right idea in having students talk to their peers about environmental issues on campus because it has been proven that people are most likely to respond when interacted with on a personal level. Also, putting permanent signs of things that can and cannot be recycled in strategic locations, such as the trash rooms, would educate students for the future. Even though UMass has made recycling easy for students, advocating recycling more through incentives and communication on a personal

level rather than just placing bins in dorms would likely increase the rate of recycling and therefore boost the success of the program.

After designing this potential recycling program for UMass, I interviewed students to see whether or not they would respond and recycle more, and I got overwhelmingly positive feedback. I asked 100 random students whether they would recycle if my new plan were implemented, and 81 of those 100 students said yes. Erin Burton, a sophomore who does not currently recycle, was especially enthusiastic when mentioning the competition aspect. "I would totally recycle if there was a competition involved; I bet a lot of people would. Everyone likes to win." I also got positive feedback when mentioning signs providing information on typical items college student use that can and cannot be recycled. Claire Kiss summarized the general feedback when she responded, "If I knew half of these things could be recycled, I would obviously do it."

College students today are the people who will be running society in the very near future. It is important to instill responsible environmental stewardship and form environmentally conscious behaviors now so that the future of our environment can be secured. Because there are already technological and convenient means of recycling, the issue is generally the willingness of people. Implementing good recycling programs in areas that are densely populated with young people, such as colleges, is especially important. Even though recycling is just one of the many problems with our environment today, it cannot be disregarded. If society doesn't recognize its importance and throws all its waste into landfills, the Earth could one day become that alarming scene in "Wall-E."

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BREAKING AND ENTERING

Madeline Lund

No matter how much one wants to believe otherwise, all whites are racist. According to Stephanie Wildman, many think of racism to be “voluntary, intentional conduct, done by horrible others,” but it is instead the privilege, or entitlement of advantage, of one race over another (Wildman 21). Racism exists in three forms: passive, active, and anti-racism. Passive racists avoid racial issues but do nothing to prevent them. Active racists, on the other hand, are what we typically consider to be “racist” and commit deliberate acts of racial intolerance, while antiracists actively fight against racism. For example, a hate crime is active racism, but how people perceive it could be considered passive racism. Beverly Daniel Tatum comes up with this analogy of racism: while active racists walk along a conveyor belt, passive racists simply ride along it. Both will end up in the same place unless the passive racists are “unwilling to go to the same destination as the White supremacists. But unless they are walking actively in the opposite direction at a speed faster than the conveyor belt – unless they are actively antiracist – they will find themselves carried along with the others” (Tatum 11-12). Many whites have to accept that racism still exists in order to actively work against it to create equality.

An example of the privilege of whites and racism towards blacks occurred on the campus of the University of Massachusetts Amherst on February 3, 2008. Late that night, two white males, John Bowes and Jonathan Bosse, attacked a black student named Jason Vassell. Shaun Robinson writes in the *Daily Collegian* that “it is essential to emphasize that Jason was in his bedroom tending to his own affairs” when the two white males approached Vassell (Robinson). In the article, “Support Jason Vassell,” John Brown reports that after initially yelling racial slurs at Jason, the assailants “kicked in Vassell’s window and later gained access to an outer vestibule of the dorm, where they attacked Vassell, breaking his nose and causing a serious concussion” (Brown). When Bowes punched and

broke Jason's nose, Jason realized that he could not simply ask the intruders to leave. After backing away and warningly holding a knife in clear view, Jason reportedly was forced to use the weapon in self-defense.

Prosecutors have charged Jason with attempted murder, which carries a maximum penalty of thirty years in prison. On top of this, Jason, then only a few weeks away from graduation, has not been allowed to finish school. John Bowes has only been charged "with civil rights violation with injury, assault and battery to intimidate with bodily injury, and disorderly conduct in connection" (Lederman, Brown). His friend, Jonathan Bosse, faces no charges at all. The two attackers trespassed, broke school property, and both verbally and physically harassed a student. That they are facing lesser charges than Jason Vassell is astonishing. The attack on Jason and his fight for equal treatment in the resulting court cases shows how racism works in today's society; the debate around his innocence shows that awareness needs to be spread.

Many deny that racism still permeates campuses. When Derik Oslan ran to be a senator for the UMass Central residence area, he publicized Jason's situation to many students. From hearing a brief summary of the events, most people found themselves supporting Jason. Some people who are unaware of the entire story, however, have claimed that Jason "should have known better," and some have even questioned why one would have "a vigil for someone who stabs people" (Robinson). These reactions originate from ignorance and demonstrate the necessity for widespread awareness of racism. If people are only exposed to their secluded societies, they will merely view other races as the media portrays them. Therefore, people will not be informed of the accomplishments of oppressed groups, which will form a basis for prejudice.

Then there are those who believe that race should not be taken into account and justice should prevail. Eli Gottlieb, a *Collegian* columnist, writes that the Committee for Justice for Jason Vassell, CJJV, should not demand reduced charges because "Mr. Vassell stabbed two men with a knife" (Gottlieb). He argues that because Jason hospitalized two men, which constitutes armed assault, that he should be punished accordingly. He does, however, agree that the two attackers deserve to face charges as well, because "here in America and especially in Massachusetts everyone

obeys the exact same laws—no exceptions” (Gottlieb). While abiding by the law is reasonable in most circumstances, the situation with Jason seems to be biased and unfair. Gottlieb shows sympathy when he writes that Jason is not a criminal and should be allowed to finish his education. If Jason is charged guilty then “there lay the injustice: That a man who bravely defended himself against assault from bigots cannot walk free” (Gottlieb). Gottlieb does say, “Hopefully Mr. Vassell’s jury will understand the issues at hand and apply their rightful power of jury nullification by refusing to convict” (Gottlieb). Even though he may support Jason, Gottlieb uses the word “hopefully” to show that he is leaving Jason’s fate in the hands of the jury. While Gottlieb believes that all three should be punished according to their crime, Jason does not deserve the punishment he is receiving.

On the other hand, Alana Goodman, another *Collegian* columnist, denies a hate crime has taken place. That she blames Jason for the attack is ironic because she writes that the “two white, non-students” were at “4 a.m. in the lobby of Vassell’s dorm” (Goodman). How and why would these men be in Jason’s dormitory at 4:00 a.m.? Goodman claims that “the 5’10, 200 lb. Vassell armed himself with two weapons before leaving his dorm room to meet up with a male friend, who he had specifically called to help him in the event of a fight” (Goodman). Her claim does not quite match the excerpt from the one police report she uses. The police report reads, “[Bowes’ and Bosse’s use of racial slurs] enraged Vassell. He called a friend to help him. Vassell armed himself with an iron and a pocket knife and went to the ground floor of MacKimmie” (Goodman). From Goodman’s quote, Jason appears to be the instigator; he seemed to expect a fight when he “armed himself” and “specifically called” his friend (Goodman). In the report, however, it appears that the two white men started this incident when they yelled racial slurs at Jason. Therefore, Jason had every right to call a friend for support. Goodman also states, “Vassell stabbed Bowes and Bosse nine times, causing them significant blood loss which resulted in emergency surgery at Bay State trauma center” (Goodman). Goodman neglected to report the injuries inflicted on Jason. She writes that the CJJV purposely leaves out the two white men’s injuries, which is false. The police report states that Jason wore a ski mask and was outside with a Latino man when they encountered the two white males. Goodman uses the phrase,

“whether or not these claims are true,” to suggest that whoever initiated the fight and whether or not the men were outside is unimportant (Goodman). By using this phrase, Goodman accepts stereotypes of violent black and Latino men.

The rebuttal statement of Jason’s lawyers proved many of Goodman’s arguments inaccurate. Records show that both white males are taller and heavier than the 5’9 and 185 pound Jason. The lawyers also point out that “although Goodman claims that Massachusetts law only permits an individual to use force ‘equal to the force received,’ in reality, an individual may use as much force as is reasonably necessary to avoid the immediate danger of serious injury” (Hoose, Ryan). Also, only a few people, such as police and lawyers, have access to the reports and the security camera, so how could Goodman see the aforementioned report? Is her report credible, or did she get a report by illegal means? Goodman also writes as if only one police report existed; in fact, there were several. Jason’s lawyers state that Jason never left his dorm and had only one small pocketknife. Indeed, his Latino friend, Vishan Chamanlal, refused to fight with the attackers and only tried to stand in between them and Jason. Jason did defend himself against the two attackers, but they not only initiated the fight, they also did not back down until Jason used his knife.

The president of the Student Government Association (SGA), Malcolm Chu, supports the statements of Jason’s lawyers, and works to prove Goodman’s account to be a fabrication. Chu comments that Goodman “has Jason, masked and armed with a knife and clothes iron out on campus with an ‘unknown Latino male’ accomplice ‘yelling racial slurs’ at his victims, Bowes and Bosse, before ‘Vassell attacked’ them” (Chu). Chu responds that Jason did not leave his dorm that night and strengthens the argument by adding that the state did not contest this. The state also did not dispute that the “two intruders rushed into the lobby and attacked him, striking him to the head. They continued to circle ‘like animals,’ striking at Jason until he managed to escape behind the locked door” (Chu). While neither Bowes nor Bosse suffered any major injuries, Jason “suffered a broken nose and a serious concussion, and actually lost consciousness” (Chu). Chu argues that if, as Goodman says, Jason had stabbed the men nine times, how would they have been able to continue banging on the

door? In contrast to Goodman's portrayal of Jason arming himself and instigating the fight, Chu points out that Jason has not had a violent incident in the past or even a misdemeanor. Meanwhile, Bowes has admitted to consuming at least eleven beers that night and "was charged with precisely such a crime in his hometown" (Chu). Mark Grinstein comments in another article that witnesses say that Jason held the knife in clear view and asked the attackers to leave, because "he didn't want to hurt them" (Grinstein). While many people offer evidence to advocate Jason's innocence, both Goodman and the prosecutors assume Jason's guilt when they portray him as a violent, black male. While Goodman does not attack Jason in the same, physical way as the two white men did, we must question if her actions label her as an active racist.

The support of teachers and friends for Jason during the confusion after only Jason was charged shows that many believe Jason was wrongfully charged. John Brown points out that Jason is known as a "decent, gentle, young black man and law-abiding citizen described by his professors as a serious, respectful, and diligent student" (Brown). Fred Contrada asserts that students revere Jason "as a tutor and volunteer with younger students and the disabled" (Contrada). At a press conference, Tobias Baskin, a Biology professor, pulls out his own pocketknife to explain how he uses it everyday and says, "If I ever find myself with two large people looming over me with a broken nose—being beaten—that I will take this out and do what Jason had to do. And that is defend myself" (Rosenswaike). This simple statement strongly defends Jason's actions and Jason as a human being. For a revered professor to say he would act in a similar fashion connects Jason to what a dignified, well-respected person would do.

Both a Web site and CJJV have been set up to raise money to support Jason. Brown comments that the day after the attack, several hundred students and teachers turned out in protest of the arrest. Even though Jason has pleaded innocent to stabbing two men, the prosecutors believe that "Vassell's actions cannot be excused as self defense" (Contrada). Despite the implicit racism of the prosecutorial claims, students, faculty, and family all showed up to support Jason during his trials. A professor and member of CJJV commented, "The judge was not glad to see you all here [at the pre-trial hearing]. Your presence highlights the colossal injustice of this case"

(Tylim). That Jason's supporters were not welcomed shows that the judge is uncomfortable with the case and may even realize that Jason is receiving unjust treatment. CJJV argues Jason was only defending himself and this crime shows the depth of the racial issues on campus.

Despite Justice for Jason and other active attempts to prevent racism, it still remains in today's society. People need to become aware of the racism surrounding them, learn to accept its existence, and work to eradicate it. Only then can they do something to prevent other people from being hurt. Malcolm Chu believes the hate crimes, the violence on campus, the ignorance and the lack of education around the issues of race, homophobia and sexual assault—need to stop" (Rosenswaike). Eli Rosenswaike, Collegian staff, explains that the rally and vigil on February 27 were "intended to raise awareness and lessen his charges" (Rosenswaike). A graduate student at one of the rallies commented, "The incident was indicative of wider societal problems where blacks are automatically assumed to be the perpetrators" (Brown). A leader of CJJV said, "An injustice to Jason is an injustice to the community . . . we all have to be aware; we all have to do something. This is not just a UMass issue" (Grinstein). Despite the rallies and statements by many students and teachers, awareness of Jason's incident still needs to be spread. When students know that racism still exists on college campuses, perhaps then they will begin to respect other races. The events resulting from the attack on Jason show that students do not know the extent of racism that still exists around them, and this leads to the question: what does it take for students to know?

Merely raising awareness does not seem to be enough to prevent hate crimes. Jason's case shows that much more needs to be done to prevent racism. Then Chancellor Thomas Cole and Vice Chancellor Esther Terry stated their ideas of how to spread awareness and make UMass a safer campus in "UMass Hit with Bouts of Violence." While they both agree that everyone on campus "should stand together to make [UMass] the safe, free environment that it should be," they did not stop Jason's expulsion (Neale). Some people in UMass Amherst have even been discussing possibilities for a mandatory diversity class. The attack on Jason shows not only how widespread but also local racism can be. Awareness of racism can lead to prevention and advocacy, which may eventually lead to respect between all races.

Stereotyping cannot be prevented, but acting upon the stereotype and endangering another's life constitutes a hate crime, and hate crimes can and should be prevented. The attack on Jason Vassell shows that racism remains a serious setback in our lives. Even though two white males trespassed on school property and attacked Jason because of his color, he is the one under persecution because he fought back. Violence is never a favorable course of action, but in this situation, it was the only solution. Despite the injuries he inflicted on the two attackers, Jason should not be charged this severely. He is only facing such harsh punishments because he is black, and, in this society, whites remain more privileged. If two black men had allegedly attacked someone, they would be charged with more than these two white men are charged with. A black man is being charged when he has been the victim because of stereotypes. Too many people continue to move the wrong way on the conveyor belt, and far too many remain still and let such situations arise. Everyone needs to become aware of the racism around him or her, and turn around to go the right direction, because what we do with these stereotypes moves us toward or away from the violence of racism.

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THE LORD'S RESISTANCE ARMY

Justin Mills

As a member of the UMass International Relations Club, I am honored to attend every meeting that I possibly can, even if it's something I am really uninterested in. One such meeting was the visit from the Invisible Children to discuss what their organization does. Personally, I had no idea who they were, and I would have preferred to hang out with friends instead, but the meeting would also have information that I needed to prepare for my future committee in the Model United Nations Conference, so I had to attend. After going, I learned things that I could have never imagined. The meeting opened my eyes to a problem that was completely unbeknownst to me not an hour before. They described the carnage occurring in Northern Uganda and the central African region, caused by a single factionist army, and the massive problems that this has caused. Invisible Children's main purpose is to help the children who this army, known as the Lord's Resistance Army, kidnap and forces to become soldiers for their cause, forcing them to fight against their own people. I was instantly struck; how could such a travesty be happening with as little news coverage as it gets? The problem they brought to my attention was almost unimaginable, so I needed to learn more about it.

I realize the statistics you are about to read are unbelievable and absolutely horrifying, but the unfortunate truth is that not one of them has been exaggerated. Most were found through the organization which first introduced me to this issue, the Invisible Children. This organization is the one most involved with the conflict. They have done extensive research into every aspect of the past and present of the conflict. They were allowed to attend the conferences last year meant to end the conflict through negotiations, which shows how influential they are on the subject (InvisibleChildren.com). They have several main objectives. The first I

should mention is the one which I have experienced personally, their spread of knowledge on the topic throughout the United States. They travel throughout the nation, trying to spread the word about what is happening in Northern Uganda. Next, and far more importantly, their goal is to ultimately save the children and bring them back to their homes by gathering national support and lobbying Congress; they have even managed to have legislation introduced on the topic (InvisibleChildren.com). They also serve many other goals, such as rebuilding villages and schools in Northern Uganda and doing anything else they are convinced will help the citizens live better lives.

It turns out this problem is one that stretches far back into the past, and it all began with a single man, Joseph Kony. According to *Living with Bad Surroundings*, the conflict started growing in the middle to late 1980s. The book was written by Sverker Finnstrom, a man who has done extensive research in Northern Uganda and now knows what life is like there. In 1986, the ruling government in Uganda was overthrown by a group known as the National Resistance Army, which then placed in charge their leader, Yoweri Museveni (Finnstrom 75). This movement was instantly met with resistance. Many opposed the takeover and the new regime; they hated Museveni and wanted to see him taken from power. From this hatred arose numerous movements against the government. There was even a peaceful movement, called the Holy Spirit Movement, led by a woman named Alice Auma, who claimed to be a prophet and medium, and only sought to heal people spiritually. However, when they entered the national stage, they “were shot at by the Ugandan army,” and decided to take up arms against the government (Finnstrom 75). This movement was quickly defeated and that is when Kony came into the picture. He had been a member of the Uganda People’s Democratic Movement for some time, which was the main factionist group against Museveni’s leadership, and when the Holy Spirit Movement fell, he gathered those remaining from the group and brought them together with his own supporters to form his new movement, the Lord’s Resistance Army (Finnstrom 77).

This movement’s formation signaled the beginning of one of the darkest eras in Uganda’s short history – an era filled with the slaughter of countless thousands, the displacement of millions of citizens, and the abduction

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of thousands of children to be used as soldiers. Kony, like Auma, gained his reputation as a medium and proclaimed himself a prophet of God, hence the name of his movement (InvisibleChildren.com). He told his followers that he took his instructions directly from God and that he would lead them to create a better nation, but this was not really the reason for people who joined in its early years. Most of Kony's support was just the result of people wishing to fight against the country. Finnstrom writes "most of my informants, who were teenagers at the time when Alice [Auma] was leading her insurgency, held that people joined Alice [Auma], and later on Joseph Kony, because, as one young man claimed, they were there as a 'means of fighting' when there was 'no one else to join'" (Finnstrom 78). Most of Kony's support had little or nothing to do with his claims to be in contact with a higher power; his "supporters" just wanted to fight the government and this was the way to do it. However, this initial support could not last for long.

His army was losing momentum. The defeats his army suffered against the Ugandan government were great, and he was becoming little more than a joke to those of high authority in the government. After a couple of years, there were few left who supported his cause, for they knew he had already lost, and they could see his tactics were getting more gruesome by the day (InvisibleChildren.com). The LRA's guerrilla tactics of murdering innocents to send out messages, raping women for their own pleasures, and abducting the children rose when his support began to wane. He could no longer rely on real support, so he had to create his own (InvisibleChildren.com). One of their most loathsome and disturbing tactics is certainly what they do with the children they kidnap.

These children are not only captives; they are turned into the army that abducted them. They are taken from their villages, which are ransacked and destroyed, where many innocents are slaughtered, and the LRA uses the fear that this scene creates to keep the children from fleeing. The children see what will happen if they try to run: if they are not killed, they will have an appendage taken to prove a point to the others (Green 15). This information can also be found in reading each and every source on the topic, but the one cited comes from a journalist named Matthew Green. Green traveled throughout Africa, researching Joseph Kony and trying to

locate him, because it was his goal to hold an interview with him. One of the children abducted described how “they tied up my two younger brothers and invited us to watch. Then they beat them with sticks until the two of them died” (Becker 1). This information comes from a report filed by the Human Rights Watch, which is an international nongovernmental organization and performs extensive research into areas where human rights may be in violation (HumanRightsWatch.org). They are one of the most respected voices on topics such as this. The willing members of the Lord’s Resistance Army have no mercy, no caring in their hearts for any of the atrocities that they commit, and yet they claim to be an army of God.

Their acts are gruesome and awful, but they serve their intended purposes, to keep the civilians in fear. If there is fear that they will attack or of what they will do to those who run, then fewer will try to escape and will just follow suit to stay alive. The children taken are given weapons, shown how to use them, and put on the frontlines to fight against their own people. This has caused a grand array of issues and the belief that any idea concerning how to stop the LRA must be taken into consideration.

The first major issue: how can we stop the Lord’s Resistance Army with next to no force? The warriors of the LRA are not Uganda’s, or even anybody’s, enemies; they are the poor innocents, those lost in the numerous raids on villages. A report issued by the Human Rights Watch in 2003 placed the total number of abducted children turned soldiers at around 20,000. In the first sixteen years of the war, the LRA managed to kidnap almost 20,000 children to use as cannon fodder. From 2002 to 2003 alone, they managed to abduct 5,000 children (Becker 1). If these numbers seem extreme and unbelievable, that is because they are. How can one imagine this? In America, we have an Amber Alert and whole states go on alert when one child is missing, but in Uganda, an average of ten children were abducted each and every day that year. How can this be possible?

The United Nations has facilitated quite a few negotiations between the LRA and the Ugandan government. These were aimed at a “peaceful” resolution with Kony and his army, but each and every time, Kony failed to show up and instead sent a proxy. Just as Kony would never actually attend the meetings, the meetings would never produce a true end result. The final talk seemed to be on track to actually bring about a change, and did

succeed in ending the majority of the violence, if only for a little while (Grignon 1). This progress came to an unfortunate end in April of 2008, without having conclusively fixed anything and having only signaled the end of the brief ceasefire (Nolen 1). If this can show us anything at all, it is that negotiations are possible, even with this terribly militant group. Given the very indirect combat method which would be necessary to free the Child Soldiers and not just kill them on the battlefield, these negotiations are still a very viable resource that must be tapped at least once more.

The second major problem that the LRA has created in using the kidnapped children as soldiers is fear. Every person in the region is afraid of when their village will be attacked. They are afraid of losing their homes in the inevitable destruction. They fear losing their lives among the countless slaughters that will ensue. They fear being disfigured and having their appendages removed as yet another "sign" of the Army's control. The women fear being kidnapped to be continually raped until they have "served their purpose" long enough. But ultimately their biggest fear is fighting back because it is their own children, cousins, nephews, nieces, and siblings who are being forced to do these things to them. The soldiers were once one of them, also living in fear of what was to come, and now they are being used as the cause of these fears. Many of those being attacked just can't fight back for the thought of having to fight their own family, friends, and neighbors: thus, many simply don't. This fear of fighting has perpetuated the conflict far more than any other guerrilla tactic the LRA has come up with.

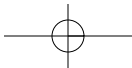
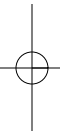
September 11, 2001 created panic and widespread fear of terrorism and of mass death caused by terrorists in America. The attack caused some to never fly again, others feared everyday life for the potential of any random strike in the country, and at one time, caused many to hoard water and duct tape in case of a biological agent attack. This single terrorist attack created this widespread panic throughout the entire nation in a single day, a day which remains on people's minds even now. In Northern Uganda, they have lived in fear of Joseph Kony for twenty-two long years, watching the constant destruction he creates over and over again. I do not compare these two to make light of the losses of the 9/11 tragedy, but to provide perspective on how bad the situation across the ocean is. Citizens of the

United States simply cannot imagine this kind of mayhem, watching children being dragged out of their homes to be used as soldiers while our other neighbors are either being mutilated, raped, or murdered. We cannot think of what it would be like if the latter of those options, murder, could be thought to be the most desirable outcome after our town was attacked. This nation has truly been blessed for that, but this is why we must seek to help the Northern Ugandans.

It is our duty as citizens, not of this nation, but of the global community, to wish to help those in dire need. I can't possibly imagine a worse scenario than the truth that people in the central African region must live through, can you? Losing family and friends all around is a horrific tragedy most in this country needn't suffer, but many in that region must watch it as it occurs. Without international help, the governments of these four afflicted nations, Uganda, Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and the Central African Republic, will not be able to stop the carnage. They have tried and failed with numerous movements, the most successful of which, like operation "Lightning Thunder," freed many, in this case over 400, but ultimately failed to stop the LRA and only made them attack more aggressively (Grignon 1). The only time they ever came close to bringing the children home was when the United Nations held negotiations, so obviously, outside influence is the key to success. Through organizations such as the Invisible Children, we too can help, either by getting directly involved with them or through simple donations. Our nation may be in an unprecedented amount of debt, but what is the cost of knowing that we may be able to save countless innocent lives while we sit by and do nothing to help?

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STEROIDS: TODAY'S DESTRUCTOR OF INTEGRITY IN SPORTS

Jason Olephant

The use of steroids destroys the integrity of professional sports. Sports fans have a plethora of ways to watch and support their favorite athletes, yet the fans can no longer be certain that they are cheering for athletes who have achieved extraordinary levels of greatness solely on the basis of their natural talents. Even individuals who were once record-breaking sports heroes, such as home-run king Barry Bonds and “fastest woman in the world” Marion Jones, have been found guilty of steroid use (“Champ” 4). The use of steroids specifically taints trustworthiness in sports, because the athletes who use these drugs first deliberately violate the rules of their sports to enhance their performance and then compound their criminal acts by engaging in various forms of lying and deception to conceal their wrongdoings. Furthermore, the credibility of sports is also diminished by the fact that the world of sports often turns a blind eye to steroid use and its health risks. Sports officials do so in order to ensure that they continue to produce the best athletes who will attract the most fans by providing the most exciting entertainment for the spectator.

The substances athletes take to enhance their performance belong to a class of drugs with the scientific name anabolic-androgenic steroids, usually shortened to anabolic steroids. These drugs are also referred to by slang terms on the street, such as roids or juice (“Illegal Steroid” 1-2). They are synthetic substances that resemble the male sex hormone testosterone. The term anabolic refers to muscle-building, while androgenic describes an increase in male characteristics (“Illegal Steroid” 1). Anabolic steroids increase lean muscle mass, strength, and the ability to train longer and harder (“Steroid Use” 2). Although these drugs have legitimate uses in

medicine, physicians never prescribe anabolic steroids to young, healthy people merely to help them build muscle (“Illegal Steroid” 2).

Unfortunately, steroids “have a dark and illegal side: pumping up athletes.” In the United States, it is illegal to use steroids without a doctor’s prescription because of their serious side effects. These health risks include liver tumors, jaundice, high blood pressure, increases in bad cholesterol, and decreases in good cholesterol (“Steroid Use” 1). College sports and the Olympics banned their use over 30 years ago, although professional sports have been slower to catch up. For example, Major League Baseball did not make the use of steroids illegal until 2002. Importantly, most sports now test players for use of illegal drugs (“Champ” 4).

Tony Mandarich is an excellent example of an athlete who damaged the integrity of sports through the use of steroids. Even though he had a six-foot three-inch, 200-pound frame in high school, he was not selected to start on his junior varsity team. His solution was to begin taking illegal steroids as a high school senior, which he obtained from his older brother. Mandarich had a specific goal of being a first-round draft choice and making millions as a professional football player, but he deliberately took an illegal route to try to attain it (Telander 42-43). By his senior year at Division I Michigan State, where he played college football, his height had increased three inches, and his physique increased to a ripped 315 pounds. Although he earned the prestigious title of All-American offensive tackle for his achievements and received the distinction of being the only college player ever to be named to John Madden’s All Madden Team (Telander 41), Mandarich did not merit these honors on the basis of his natural athletic ability. Furthermore, these accolades only further entrenched his illegal behavior, which culminated in *Sports Illustrated* magazine honoring him with a cover story that featured “The Incredible Bulk” bare-chested, as the magazine touted him “the best offensive line prospect ever” (Telander 42).

Ultimately, Mandarich paid a heavy personal price for his illegal use of steroids. Although he achieved his dream of playing in the National Football League, his career was a dud. His performance declined because he stopped using steroids, since he was fearful of getting caught by the league’s testing (Telander 42). Clearly, he tainted the credibility of sports because his poor performance on the playing field after so much build-up came as a shocking disappointment to both his fans and his team.

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Two decades after he lied to *Sports Illustrated* that his massive physique came from weightlifting and eating, Mandarich finally revealed the truth about his illegal substance use (Telander 41). Unfortunately, his character reversal does not undo the additional damage Mandarich caused to the integrity of sports. Through his *Sports Illustrated* cover story, he “indirectly abetted the growth of the steroid culture among young athletes, and his chemically induced strength and rage helped him humiliate many clean players he competed against (Telander 43).

Mandarich's experience also illustrates how the media helps ruin the credibility of sports because the media honor and glorify astonishing and extraordinary athletic achievements without questioning them. In fact, Mandarich stated that when he saw the magazine cover with his “steroid-fueled muscles,” it fed his arrogance and made him think he was doing things right (Telander 42). In reality, however, Mandarich was doing just the opposite.

Another important repercussion of this deliberate wrongdoing by Mandarich, or any steroid-using professional athlete, is that trust is violated. The illegal use of steroids makes the playing field uneven, and as a result, fans can never be certain if an outstanding athlete is a superior natural athlete or an illegally transformed star. For example, when sports commentators discuss Barry Bonds breaking Hank Aaron's home run record, some wonder if Bonds' name should have an asterisk in the record books to indicate that his achievement may not have been accomplished with raw talent (“Champ” 5). Clearly, while sports records remain, people can no longer be certain they are valid and compare them from generation to generation. Furthermore, steroid-using athletes who were once idolized by fans have now been proven to be cheaters who broke the law.

The integrity of sports is further eroded when athletes lie about their steroid use. This occurs because the sports figures lose their trustworthiness in the eyes of the fans, the media, and the sports world. For example, baseball superstar Alex Rodriguez admitted to using banned substances only after *Sports Illustrated* reported that he had tested positive in a Major League Baseball test when he was playing for the Texas Rangers. Although he finally confessed, he “further dirtied his sport,” along with his reputation and Hall of Fame chances. His deception and those of other steroid-using athletes, then call into question anything they have said in the past

or whatever they may say in the future. For example, Texas Rangers' owner Tom Hicks bitinglly remarked, "I certainly don't believe that if he's now admitting that he started using when he came to the Texas Rangers, why should I believe that it didn't start before he came to the Texas Rangers?" ("A-Rod" 2). Clearly, the inability to trust an athlete's word further damages credibility in sports.

Another reason that the integrity of sports is diminished by the deceptions of steroid-using athletes is that their actions make future sports figures suspect simply by association. Ironically, Alex Rodriguez's admission of steroid use will probably cost his baseball-playing peers much more than it will ever cost him. For example, sports-marketing experts claim that "the biggest losers in the fallout from Mr. Rodriguez's admission may be young, talented, charismatic, scandal-free players, who, by all rights, ought to be endorsement features by now" (Mullman 1). Rodriguez's steroid use reminded marketers that ballplayers are still a riskier proposition than ever. This exemplifies the shadow of uncertainty that steroid use casts over the evaluation of an athlete's talent and star potential.

When athletes deceive the public regarding their use of illegal performance-enhancing drugs, these formerly idolized sports heroes become objects of mockery and disdain. In 1998, Mark McGwire and Sammy Sosa mesmerized a nation with their competition to become the home-run king. Ironically, however, they mesmerized the same nation "with their laughable and layered-up testimony" at a 2005 congressional hearing on steroids. As McGwire "slithered around the truth" and Sosa forgot how to speak English, their fans and the sports world watched these superstars' credibility evaporate (Wojciechowski 2). Sadly, when given the chance to confess to the truth, McGwire's and Sosa's responses only shed more negative light on Major League Baseball.

Not only do players destroy the integrity of sports by lying about their steroid use, sports officials and others exacerbate the situation by covering for their players, deliberately giving false information. For example, Tony Mandarich was defended by Michigan State head coach George Perles, by his professional football team's strength coach, by several teammates, and by his agent (Telander 42). Despite the athlete's unusually enormous and powerful physique, Perles merely "claimed Mandarich was strong because he ate so much and worked so hard." Moreover, the coach stated he knew

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nothing about the drug tests Mandarich passed, and that the National Collegiate Athletic Association was responsible for them (Telander 43). Perles deliberately ignored Mandarich's steroid use to ensure he had the most competitive team possible.

In addition, Major League Baseball Commissioner Bud Selig's comments in the volatile wake of Alex Rodriguez's admission of steroid use shed more meaningful light on how the credibility of sports is destroyed when sports officials turn a blind eye to the problem. Selig claims that when he tried to institute a steroid policy, it was met by strong resistance by the players' union. The league settled for a less rigid policy, because the organization feared that the lack of agreement with the union would lead to a work stoppage. Selig said he also consulted with several key baseball team officials he trusted, including Yankees general manager Brian Cashman, to get their opinions on how serious a problem the sport was facing. They all claimed that "none of them ever saw it in the clubhouses and that their players never spoke about it." Selig admits that when people question him about how he could not have known about the steroid use, he insists that "we have learned and we've done something about it," asserting that he is proud of the progress the league has made since 1998 ("Commish" 2). Unfortunately, for many fans who try to respect the integrity of the sport, his words came as too little too late.

Furthermore, some individuals in the sports world not only covered for their players but actively participated in driving steroid use. A dramatic illustration is the government-sponsored cheating by the small country of East Germany in the 1970's and 1980's in order to become an Olympic rival of the much larger United States and Soviet Union. The East German government gave steroids to thousands of their athletes in an attempt to prove East German superiority over the West. However, many of the athletes thought they were only taking vitamins. These special pills enabled the nation to double its number of Olympic gold medals earned from 20 to 40 in only four years. After the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, many of these athletes came forward and described how they were given pills and injections of unknown substances ("10 Drug" 2). The East German government's misguided quest for glory, by falsely creating athletic superstars, tainted Olympic history and left people to question the credibility of all Olympic athletes who follow.

There is much evidence that the use of steroids destroys the integrity of professional and nonprofessional sports in a variety of ways. The abundance of controversies across a broad spectrum of sports taints the trustworthiness of and calls into question all athletic performances, as well as record-breaking achievements. Importantly, these sports scandals are not simply isolated incidents that affect the substance abuser, because they have negative consequences on the world of sports. For example, Alex Rodriguez's substance abuse did not just earn him an asterisk next to his name in the record books. As accurately observed by President Barack Obama, "it tarnishes an entire era, to some degree" ("A-Rod" 2). The "lure of big money and the fan's ever-growing expectations may be part of the problem of drugs in sports." Professional athletes feel compelled to come back day after day and perform, like entertainers, giving fans the value they expect for paying such high ticket prices ("Champ" 5). Olympic athletes feel pressure to break records, and many go to illegal extents to do so ("10 Drug" 3). Therefore, sports have morphed from being about sportsmanship and talent to being about entertainment and record-breaking. The increasing use of steroids to achieve this has had a profound impact on people's perceptions both of "sports heroes" and the games they play.

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GET LOST ON *LOST*

Kevin Romani

“We have to go back!” shouts the beard-sporting Jack Shepard to fellow Oceanic 6 survivor Kate Austin in the season three finale of *Lost* (“Through the Looking Glass”). Six surviving members of the doomed flight Oceanic 815 that crashed on an uncharted island were able to return to the mainland after a series of complicated events, leaving the other thirty survivors behind. Jack regrets his decision to leave his friends, which prompts him to declare this seemingly unbelievable statement. “We have to go back” is also the thought that crosses the mind of every *Lost* fan after viewing each episode, as they wish to return to the island just as Jack does. Those who are unfamiliar with the show must wonder how *Lost* can still inspire such interest and excitement in the middle of its fifth season, as most successful shows tend to slip in quality as the seasons add on. So what is it about this television program that has made it such an obsession for its fans and an instant pop culture phenomenon? The answer is one simple word that has been forgotten by most entertainers and ignored by a majority of our society: escapism.

People invest both their time and disposable income in different media because they want a story to lead them into another world. Veronica Scott writes, “Daily stresses can drag anyone down, making escapism and getting away from it all an important part of getting through life. Escapism can be a healthy form of shaking off the effects of daily stress and retreating to an imaginary world” (Scott). This world does not necessarily have to be another planet or set in the future, but it does have to consist of characters that find themselves in extraordinary circumstances. When discussing why viewers love to escape, *Lost* co-creator and executive producer J. J. Abrams states, “I think it’s because everyone relates to being stuck in your life and feeling like something extraordinary is just around the corner” (Burton 1). These average citizens wish to lose themselves in a fictional world so they can temporarily forget all the burdens they face in life, whether it be a

stressful job or family responsibilities. After spending a short time on the *Lost* island, the viewer can then return to reality with a brighter outlook on his or her life. The story may have taught the individual the importance of life, or it may have given the person the idea that there is another life somewhere waiting for them. In simpler terms, *Lost* serves as a way for its viewers to take a break from everything. *Lost* is a story that allows its audience to escape to a world of mystery and wonder. Obviously, no one wants to literally escape to an isolated island after a plane crash, or be in the frightful situations that follow. The audience is, however, enticed by adventure in an undiscovered location that involves heroes, villains, and smoke monsters.

In order to be a truly successful escapist story, the audience must share a deep emotional connection to the characters. Stories cannot succeed if their characters are unrealistic or clearly fictional, as the audience refuses to accept their possible existence and therefore feels no tension whenever they are threatened physically or mentally. When discussing the importance of the characters, co-creator and executive producer Damon Lindelof says “we always approach ‘Lost’ through the prism of the people instead of the island” (Burton 2). *Lost* is rich with memorable characters, and there is at least one character for everyone to relate to. We are all different in this world; therefore we all want someone to connect with and who can represent us to those who do not understand us. Charlie Pace, a rock star of a “one hit wonder” band, is a perfect example of this. Addicted to heroin, Charlie encounters intense withdrawal symptoms after another character refuses to give Charlie his stash. After seeing Charlie’s back-story, the viewer now sympathizes with him, as they see the conditions that made him an addict. They feel his pain and begin to realize how difficult it is to quit an addiction if they have never experienced it themselves. The first three seasons of *Lost* are set up so that “each episode, showing in parallel sequences the traumatic or decisive events of one character’s past and the challenging dilemmas the same character is confronted with after the plane crash, builds the interplay between past actions and present choices into one of the show’s main themes” (Girard and Meulemans 89). This is a superb tool for character development, as the viewer sees the flaws of the character in their past, and then how they start to redeem themselves on the island.

These flashbacks give the viewer a rare opportunity to truly know these characters, as if they had known them for their whole lives. As much as *Lost* fans love the mystery and story of the show, they would be unable to look at the show through the same eyes without the characters that they are cheering for week in and week out.

The characters are the heart of any escapist story, but there are other vital tools required to capture the audience. Followers of escapist stories love to see classic archetypes and mythology included in their story, as these fans have a desire to be the seemingly average person who is catapulted into an adventure requiring them to become the hero they were destined to be. *Lost* is full of mythology, as there are several characters that fit these classic archetypes, referencing stories from the *Odyssey* to the Bible. The biggest influence on the mythological aspects of *Lost*, however, is the *Star Wars* saga. When discussing the influence of *Star Wars* on *Lost*, J. J. Abrams states “As a fan of Joseph Campbell and the use of myth in storytelling, you could argue that it is a classic paradigm but it is the common language among all of us because we are all so familiar with the *Star Wars* canon” (Burton 2). Abrams reveals the importance of the film series on his career, but also on the use of mythology in film itself. Many characters in the show are reminiscent of those from *Star Wars*, such as Jack Shepard, who like Luke Skywalker, is a reluctant hero who does not think he is capable of leading the survivors through the journey that lies ahead of them. He represents the hero that we all see in ourselves, and the hero that we hope we would be in similar circumstances. James “Sawyer” Ford pays homage to Han Solo, who was a character based on both film and literary depictions of pirates and cowboys. Jack Shepard may be the hero we are able to relate to, but Sawyer is who we all want to be. With his witty lines, self-confidence, and aggression towards women, he is the definition of a “bad boy.” Sawyer constantly gives the impression that he cares for no one but himself, yet in the end he is always a reliable hero who “discovers the value of self-sacrifice” (Nigro 31). Audiences may be used to these basic archetypal themes, yet they still prove to be captivating when given a twist that can help them stand alone in the world of mythology.

Philosophy is another tool that encourages the escapism of the story, as the writers “often propose their fantastic universes as a way to promote cre-

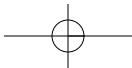
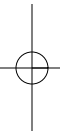
ative thinking and problem solving” (Scott). *Lost* writers have faith in their loyal followers, as they continue to incorporate philosophical ideas that make the viewers think of what purpose they serve to the overall story. The writers’ styles are clearly influenced by several philosophers, as “*Lost* pays homage to history’s greatest thinkers by naming characters after philosophers who mused on man, nature and society” (Keveney). John Locke, named after the English philosopher, is a character that is always learning from new experiences, an idea that was stressed by his namesake. Thinking about what the show is trying to say is a positive exercise for the mind, as it encourages reading the works of past great minds who may offer important lessons on how we should live our lives. Fans of *Lost* may believe they understand the show; however, “there is no more hubristic claim than to say that you know “*Lost*”—know it in every convolution of its intentionally anarchic plot, know it in understanding the real meanings of all of its allusions to Philip K. Dick or game theory, or the Gospel of John, or Nietzsche’s theory of eternal recurrence” (Bellafante 1). Trying to figure out what is really happening on the island makes *Lost* even more enticing, as well as the wait until next week’s episode that much shorter. Fans should look upon these incorporations as a reward from the writers, as the show adds purpose to the escapism.

Lost is in a league of its own, as it has been able to combine mythology and philosophy into a story that has captivated audiences in a way that is rarely seen in our contemporary society. The creators ignored the trends of modern storytelling that focus on mindless action and over-the-top characters that no one can relate to, and instead looked at past successes and thoughtful writings to propel their pop culture phenomenon. During its first season, *Lost* dominated the ratings, such as “when the May 25, 2005 season-ender attracted 20.7 million viewers and earned a 7.8 rating among adults 18-49” (Rice). The DVD sales are also impressive, as season two of “*Lost* is only the second TV DVD boxed set to debut at number one on the video sales chart” (Mahan). Shows like *The Office* and filmmakers like Judd Apatow (*The 40-Year-Old Virgin*, *Knocked Up*) are confident enough to reference *Lost* as often as they do *Star Wars* because they are aware of the connection that the show has had with our society the way that *Star Wars* did in 1977. The writers of *Lost* applied their own original thoughts to past

stories, and just as it used stories as a model, *Lost* will serve as a basis for stories yet to come. Our universal desire to escape is what united so many people together in watching this show, but *Lost* is more than just an average television show. It is full of meaning and life lessons that should not be ignored. If you are not yet lost on *Lost*, then what are you waiting for?

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DITCH THE BOTTLE

Elizabeth Sussky

You are packing your cooler for a long, warm, and beautiful beach day. A couple turkey and cheese sandwiches get thrown in, a few Macintosh apples, and four Poland Spring water bottles to keep you hydrated. Most people will see nothing wrong with this cooler, and they might even consider themselves reasonably environmentally aware people who avidly recycle and love the outdoors. What most people do not realize is how plastic water bottles are affecting the world we live in, one piece of plastic at a time. With the “Go Green Movement” taking flight in recent years, more people are aware that the little things they do like using reusable water bottles, turning off the lights, etc. can add up to larger things for environmental sustainability. Many will overlook the shocking effects the water bottle industry has on this earth even with recycling.

The growth in bottled water production has increased substantially in recent years. Last year, Americans spent over \$15 billion on bottled water, up from \$11 billion in 2006 (Erickson). The question is what does this mean for our environment and the organisms living in it? It means a number of inefficient things. Based on statistics, a lot of fuel energy goes into the production of bottled water. Just producing one water bottle is equivalent to filling a quarter of each bottle with oil (“A World of Reasons”). Making bottles to meet American’s demand for bottled water required the equivalent of more than 17 million barrels of oil in 2008 (“A World of Reasons”). Americans have had no trouble complaining about oil prices in past and recent years, but what they do not realize is the amount of oil consumed each year adds up to roughly the same amount needed to drive ten thousand cars for a year! (Erickson). Not only are plastic water bottles wasteful, but they also mean garbage, and plastic is no easy thing to decompose. Nearly ninety percent of water bottles do not get recycled and wind up in landfills, where they take over one thousand years to decompose (Baskind). Six times as many plastic water bottles were thrown away in the

U.S. in 2004 as in 1997, leaving a total of twenty-two billion plastic bottles being thrown away yearly (“Down the Drain”). Based on scaled down numbers, students and faculty at UMass alone toss approximately 5,500 water bottles into the trash daily. Nothing about these facts is okay. Ignorantly overlooking such data will only lead to the destruction of the environment we have built this country upon; cities, forests, national parks, and even our precious beaches will be affected.

So clearly we can conclude that these plastic water bottles are nowhere near as eco-friendly as some may imagine. The production of water bottles takes a pretty heavy toll on the environment. However, the task at hand is not to just spit out these facts and expect people will care because the reality of it is, not everyone respects and cares about the environment. The task at hand is to stop plastic water bottle production any way possible. In order to appeal to people who do not give much thought to the environment, we must take another approach. Ditching the plastic water bottle will statistically save you money. Bottled water can cost up to ten thousand times more per gallon than tap water (“Bottled Water Myth”). Money seems to be a big theme lately and it is truly shocking how much you can save by shunning that \$5.99 twenty-four pack of bottled water at the supermarket each week and refilling your stainless steel water bottle before heading out for a day of shopping rather than purchasing bottled water from the vending machine for \$1.50. As previously mentioned, Americans spent over \$15 billion on bottled water just last year. Imagine what the U.S. could do with \$15 billion a year. Just one penny will get you 357.3 ounces (over 22 lbs.) of tap water versus a mere 16 ounces of bottled water (“Bottled Water Myth”). Hopefully these facts will concern citizens enough to stop and think the next time they buy that twenty-four pack at the supermarket.

Along with what I have already told you, there is still one crucial fact that most people do not know: tap water is not bad for you. A common argument against the banning of plastic water bottles is their ability to be “purer and safer than tap water.” This is a frequent myth. Much of that myth is due to clever advertising which leads people to believe that bottled water is a healthier and better option than tap water. Enticing logos like “Just might be the best tasting water on earth!” from Poland Spring bottles suggests that bottled water is in fact healthier and just simply better.

However, tap water is actually held to more stringent quality standards by the Environmental Protection Agency than the Food and Drug Administration's standards for bottled water ("Tap Water Quality and Safety"). The EPA requires all tap water to be tested for quality daily, while the FDA checks bottled water standards only once a week, not to mention that some brands of bottled water are just tap water in disguise. Roughly forty percent of bottled water begins as tap water; often the only difference is added minerals that have no marked health benefit ("Tap Water Quality and Safety").

Still worried about certain tap water, especially in cities? Invest in a Brita! You will get way more bang for your buck. The Brita water filter and pitcher combination use simple and inexpensive water filtration. Recently, the Brita Company introduced a line of home water filters that can actually be attached to standard water faucets. If you still don't trust tap, then use the Brita to fill your reusable water bottles. Reusable water bottles are a great investment in both money and health. The chemical used in making plastic water bottles, known as PET or PETE (polyethylene terephthalate) ("Green Guide"), is fine for single use if not placed in drastic temperatures for too long but studies have shown that reusing these plastic bottles may cause DEHA, a carcinogen, to leach from the plastic into the water especially when left in drastic temperatures. Not only do these plastics have harmful chemicals that may leach out, but they are also hard to clean, and because the plastic is porous, the bottles will absorb bacteria from backwash that you cannot get rid of ("Green Guide"). One way to get around these harmful chemicals is to invest in a reusable water bottle like a Nalgene or a stainless steel SIGG water bottle. You can save money, stay healthy, and help the environment one less plastic bottle at a time.

In reality, bottled water is just water. It's costly, wasteful, and just bluntly unnecessary. As the "Go Green Movement" continues to expand, and eco-friendly campaigns continue to flourish all over the country, we can only hope that the distribution of plastic water bottles and other environmental hazards will decrease significantly. All we can do is our own small part one day at a time for the environment, and for all organisms co-existing in such a complex world.

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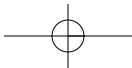
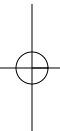
Part II

Preface

Unit IV: The TBA Unit

One of the unique strengths of the College Writing 112 curriculum is its flexibility. Unit IV offers teachers (and students) a space to create projects that address themes, questions, and rhetorical situations of their own choosing. Although these assignments continue to build on the skills of critical thinking, cultural analysis, responding, and revising that have been so important throughout the semester, they also provide occasions to address new audiences, discover additional genres, and analyze texts outside of our required reading materials.

Our teachers and students have been remarkably creative in rising to this challenge. They have produced ethnographies, candid guides to life at UMass, and letters to President Obama. They have written about subjects as diverse as location, sexuality, food, popular music, and the 1990s. Sometimes they focus on issues of local importance, getting students to speak out on issues that directly impact the communities of which we are a part. On occasion, they examine topics they have previously explored in greater depth or using different rhetorical strategies. Whatever the Unit 4 assignment, it is certain to be timely, open-ended, and thought-provoking. And it is fitting that the last formal unit of the semester presents our students with an assignment that orients them not just toward fellow students and academics, but toward the world at large.



DESCRIBING THE INDESCRIBABLE

Felisha Amato

This essay was written in response to an assignment entitled “One Sentence.” The assignment asked students to discover the essence of an essay they had written earlier in the semester and re-see that essay, revising it into one sentence of at least 300 words in length, striving for beauty in logic, rhythm, and music.

We empower with words, they do not empower us, for we use context and connotations embedded within a word to give it meaning, meaning that the word, on its own, does not contain; the letters within a word, the words within a sentence mean nothing without subjective experience, and subjective experience cannot objectively connect you and me, connect your *elation*, *fear*, and *guilt* with my *elation*, *fear*, and *guilt*, for all the words we can say or write, possibly even understand, does not mean we understand how these words feel in each other or know how to put these feelings into writing so they translate from one body into the other; elation, fear, guilt, these are the words we’re addressing here, so we need to ask ourselves, for instance, what exactly *elation* is, a feeling you may experience one second out of thousands in the day, and not only what *elation* is but how to put this feeling into writing, a feeling that contains words which seem trivial when compared to the chemical reaction of *elation*, for lack of a better word—but that’s the thing: we don’t have a better word because words are insufficient, so insufficient that we are left using metaphors such as, “I felt as though there were butterflies in my stomach, fluttering,” and yet, the reality is that there are no butterflies fluttering in your stomach, but it is not the butterfly that fails us; rather, words fail us, and although we basically understand the feeling a person is describing when they use a metaphor, the fact is that a metaphor is not describing the actual inner-body experience, the subjective experience, but instead acts like a middle-

man, which would, after all, be meaningless without all the connotations we attach to a word such as elation—word and meaning are not one—connotations survive because of subjective experience, and yet, we, you and me, are the ones who make language this way, together, using it day in, day out, and remarkably, it still fails to do what we expect of it for ourselves, and each other: convey a precise meaning.

SINCERELY YOURS, UNDERGROUND HIP HOP

Nnenna Ikoro

Autoethnography is a mode of writing in which authors attempt to describe themselves in ways that engage with representations others (the “dominant discourse,” or “center”) have made of them. The audience is the dominant discourse (parents, teachers, coaches, adults, etc.), and the assignment involves using the language of that group, as well as the language of the author’s discourse, to explain the author’s position on the margin.

America, there has clearly been a misunderstanding when it comes to this conflict between you and me. You think that I am rowdy and ignorant. You blame me for causing violence within your inner cities. You blame me for your son’s violent behavior and baggy jeans, as well as your daughter’s “inappropriate” dance moves. You say I degrade your daughters. You say that I am a bad influence. You tell me that my language is not a language; you say that I am politically incorrect. You forget about my freedom of speech. You see me as one who cares only about money. You use my name as a basis of understanding for every African-American you see, instantly assuming that they all know who I am. But I’m here to tell you that you’ve got the wrong guy.

Hip Hop is only my last name. I come from a very diverse family. We are different shapes and sizes, different sounds and different meanings. We are built upon separate genres with few aspects linking us together and distinct differences holding us apart. I, in particular, am a jumble of sound waves made up of echoes of African drums, jazz scats, saxophones of the blues era, Harlem, Brooklyn, Queens, and rhythmic voices with stories long neglected and waiting to be told and heard. I am a blend of African-American art that is music. I am more than what you see at first glance. My

family started off this way, and I am one of the few descendants that has not forgotten my past.

My siblings and I look very alike; I do not blame you for getting us mixed up, America. You complain about my brother. He does not care much about the important things anymore. He has changed. He spends too much time focusing on material things and has surrounded his life with money. I guess you can tell by the cars he drives or the way that he dresses. Our forefathers liked to be well-dressed for reasons other than flaunting; their clothes expressed the rising of African-Americans economically in America. It was meant to show that African-Americans could be financially stable and comfortable in this country. It's true: those who listen to me today dress in a certain way. It comes with the package. They do not dress to show off or to sexually iconize themselves, but rather to express themselves. It's a part of the artistic opportunity of Hip Hop culture. Attire always makes a statement.

Unfortunately, my brother distorted the idea of "bling"; he thinks that having more money means being more powerful and more masculine. He thinks the same way about violence. Our forefathers discussed violence as stories of past struggle, using music as an outlet to move on. My brother has changed this idea and uses his music to promote more violence, convincing young men that they must prove that they are stronger than others, whether it be physically or with help of a weapon. He uses all of this as a tool to encourage your sons that being like him is the only way to be a man. You must realize that although many men have fallen for my brother's lies, not all of them have—not the ones who listen to me. You have to take a closer look. The young Black men who listen to me do make mistakes from time to time, but my voice is one of encouragement and urgency of changing for the better. And you say that I am a bad influence? As you will soon see, my brother and I move to the beat of a different drummer.

You also complain about my sister. I see her all over the place, scantily dressed in scattered images, gyrating her hips and aiming to fulfill the man's sexual fantasy. She does not listen to what I have to say to her. Instead, she continues to run amok, convincing young women everywhere that they should look like her and be like her. She puts forth an illusion of a new definition of beauty. Because of her, a lot of girls have lost their self-esteem and

SINCERELY YOURS, UNDERGROUND HIP HOP 127

some even resort to following her ways. Any lack of clothing on the backs of my great-great-grandmothers would most likely have a lot to do with the scorching heat of the African sun, not being sexually attractive. The dancing that once illustrated the art of movement and storytelling in body language has become twisted into new meaning by my sister.

Although I understand your frustration with her, America, it is wrong to use her image as a template for understanding the African-American woman. Do not let my sister blind you from that brown-skinned young lady who hears my voice and wishes to be nothing like my sister. You know—the one that writes wordy English papers and solves calculus equations and converses with peers about future plans (I hope you are not surprised that she is in college). The one who believes that true beauty comes from within, unmoved by my sister's weak persuasion. The one who refuses to be acknowledged for her curves, but rather for her mind. The one who aspires to rise above your expectations. The young brown-skinned lady takes my voice into consideration every day, especially while she's taking that twenty-minute walk to Chemistry class; you can hear me flowing into her ears if you're close enough to her. When necessary, she walks your walk and talks your talk as you have indirectly demanded of her, yet you still look at her sideways when she recites my verse-poetry, or moves to the beat of my booming, bass-filled lyrical rhythms of rhyme. You constantly judge and stereotype her, but she does not let it destroy her. There is no doubt that I had an influence in her way of thinking. There is no doubt that I took part in shaping her thoughts to believe that she had the power to escape from the fragile box my siblings wished to keep her in.

Do you see America? I am different. You will seldom hear my voice on your mainstream radio stations or see my face on MTV. My siblings have taken over those areas. Our rhythms are similar, but our voices are very different. If you want to hear mine, you must dig underneath the musical soil. As I said before, Hip Hop is only my family name. My nickname is "Underground."

Please do not mix up my listeners with those of my siblings; my listeners are the same people who listened to the voices of my forefathers. The way I speak does not tell you anything about what I know. My knowledge exceeds your expected level. Unlike my siblings, who fill your ears with use-

less and repetitive gibberish, I use my rhythmic language to rhyme, chant, and rant hooks and verses of struggle, experience, pain, encouragement, and hope. My sounds advocate for the unheard voices of the confused Black men and the young Black women who battle their way through the journey of life. America, you would only go against something so positively powerful if you did not understand it. I only hope after reading this you will understand me just a little more.

Perhaps you need a brief translation. “Make the most out of your life and be grateful for what you have,” says Mr. Blues. “Don’t take love for granted. Love is real, despite what you’ve heard, and you will find it. Cherish it and know it when it comes,” say Miss Soul and Miss Jazz June. “Stand up for what you believe in and be proud of who you are,” says my step-brother Conscious Hip Hop. Each voice is found within the mesh of Underground Hip Hop. My sound is an outlet for expressions, a message of hope and change, and a holding ground for growth of the African-American community in your world.

WHO AM I?: LETTERS FROM A LOST DAUGHTER

Satta Moiforay

Autoethnography, a mode of writing in which authors attempt to describe themselves in ways that engage with the representations others (the “dominant discourse,” or “center”) have made of them, guides Moiforay’s piece. The audience is the dominant discourse (parents, teachers, coaches, adults, etc.), and the assignment involves the writer’s use of the language of that group, as well as the language of the author’s discourse, or “the margin,” to explain her position on the margin.

To her,

In your loving arms I was born: small, naked, and cold. Yelling and screaming, I emerged, my lungs swelling with my first breath of air. Rapidly following the swift inhale is my puzzled cry. Angry, fussy, and so scared, I screamed in confusion, separated from the warm place I had inhabited for nine months. I didn’t, and of course couldn’t, understand why I was suddenly here, a place that was washed with so much brightness. I was not used to this. I wanted to go back—back to the darkness that held me, comforted me, and had loved me ever so sweetly. And all the while, you were there, watching. Smiling, you traced your fingers across my cheek, and feeling the breezy touch, I stilled. Inhaling the warm summer air that was your essence, I was struck with the certain feeling that I was home. Instantly I stilled. Mama Africa, you embraced me.

It was on July 26, 1991 that you finally got to see the being who had kicked, played, and grudgingly shared your body with you for all those months. Held in your arms, young and sleepy from the first hours of life, I had no idea of the legacy I was born into. Throughout my toddler years you watched me grow, become bigger, older, with a little bit more experience, but indeed, we both knew, I was still so naïve. Patiently you waited,

waited for the chance to begin to tell me stories: stories that would help me understand my past and, in doing so, provide an insight to my future. However, you never really got that chance, did you? At six years old, on a hot June day, I was taken from you. Happily, I waved as my plane took me farther and farther away from your clinging grasp, not quite understanding why your eyes wept so. It must have been hard losing a child. With faith only a mother can have, you patiently waited for my return throughout the years. Somehow knowing, you would one day see me again. However, now the bond that had been so strong is slowly breaking.

You gaze at my American way of dressing, cock your head when you hear my American way of speaking, and silently wail as you listen to my broken Creole and Mende. I feel your sorrowful, accusing eyes as your heart weeps all over again with the thought that you have lost me for good. You wonder how a daughter who looks so much like you, with your dark brown skin, deep brown eyes, and whirly hair, could abandon her culture so completely? What you do not understand is – I haven't. I am simply lost. I did not have the chance to understand the gift that was your culture, the profound privilege I have in being one of your daughters. I grew up hearing the melody that was your language but, hesitant and preoccupied by the English music, I reversed myself to the role of a spectator, forever watching, never raising my own voice to collaborate. Now, I find myself partly deaf and utterly mute to the beautiful song that is the Sierra Leonean dialect.

As you hear me struggle to speak words that should have come as naturally as breathing, while fluently speaking a foreign tongue, I read in your sadness a sense of betrayal. You think I have forsaken you, seeing proof in my every mannerism. Little do you know, I can never forget you. I am not ashamed of you because you were where I came from, and in order for me to have a future, I must understand my past, essentially you. Deep inside me is the African girl I used to be, showing my culture in every movement and word that passes my lips. However, please understand that in order for me to survive in the new country I had to call my home, I had to assimilate. Young, innocent, and freshly arrived to the American soil and society, I was excited for new adventures in this foreign place. Arriving at my first day of school, I carried the naïve expectation only a child could truly

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believe, that everything would be the same. For months, I pondered why I was looked at so differently, why I wasn't quite like my other classmates. I want you to understand, truly, how standing on the outside looking in started breaking me down, slowly and painfully. I didn't quite get what it was that set me apart from others. Then one day the jokes arrived, an ugly answer to my questions. Day after day, I heard their ignorant perceptions of you, Africa. They made you sound primitive, dirty, and ugly; and I am ashamed to say I started to believe them.

I realized that like a visible brand, my accent flagged me out as foreign. I would watch people pause when they heard me speak, and then always came the same question, "Where are you from?" I am sad to say this made me ashamed. You see, I didn't quite understand the gift of my uniqueness; that like a muddy diamond, I was cleaning the filthy untruths to show them a shine like no other. Individually, I was breaking down those ugly stereotypes, and in my every word and movement, I was showing them the sweetness of *you*. I wish I had known that, but you weren't there to lovingly hold me, reassure me with your embrace and show me the way. So, young, displaced, and confused, I slowly started to forget your kind embrace, warm essence, and beautiful melody; I started to forget *you*. In my quest to finally fit in and live that "American Dream," I began stripping the parts of myself that I knew made me "othered." Like a played-out costume I no longer wanted, piece by piece I took off the layers that had once proudly proclaimed me as your daughter. In my heart, I forced myself to believe that you would understand and forgive me. I turned a blind eye and deaf ears to your pain-filled questions and gaze. I know you thought I was cutting off all ties and moving on, but please understand it was something I felt I *needed* to do in order to survive and thrive.

No matter how far away I may have seemed to drift, understand that I was always standing right there. For you see, I never threw out my abandoned costume. In my hurry to take it off, I never comprehended the importance of its presence, and so in my closet, it rested, patiently waiting. You see, in the dark caused by my insecurities, I had taken off my clothes, not realizing they were not a costume. They were my skin: the very features that made me, me.

To him,

You were not there for my birth; indeed, you had nothing to do with it. The very circumstances leading up to our meeting were based on pure luck. At six years old, I came upon your shores. Young, dazed, and confused, I raised my arms up for my mother's touch and silently cried when they simply glided through air. Even though I was not your child, like a father you came forth, lifted me up, and comforted me when she couldn't. Displaced and scared, I was so happy to have found a new home in your arms, and though I could never forget my mother's embrace, your rough touch allowed me to have temporary peace. How I wish that scenic peace could have lasted forever, but we both know all too well it didn't, don't we? Your other children gawked at my dark brown skin and eyes, pointed at the traditional dresses of my mother's family, laughed at my speech, and whispered cruel lies. Cut by rejection, I turned to you for support, but you weren't there. In you, I had found shelter, if not love. I was only allowed to glimpse a single moment of tenderness from you before you set me aside and expected me to adjust to my new siblings and surroundings. It was hard and made even more painful by the fact that you did not intervene to save me at the times when it looked like I was going to drown in sadness. My arms were stretched above the water, frantically waving, even as my head sunk lower and lower; and yet you refused to come in aid. You know, I resented you at first and wanted so badly to go back to the loving arms of my mother. Tears I would cry, wondering, why didn't you love and nurture me? Was it because I was not your own, not made from your loins and sharing the same blood? Were you bothered by the fact that I came from somewhere else and so did not have the sleek mannerisms that proclaimed me your child? Was it because I was too much like *her* to ever truly be one of your own? My heart stilled at this question, and after mulling it over and over again, I became convinced that this was the answer to my problems. Slowly, I let the subtle changes take over, for you. Did you not see how desperate I was for your love, but most importantly, for your acceptance?

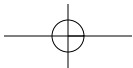
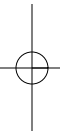
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To them,

To my mother who gave birth to me and my father who embraced me, it is through you that I am here, and I will always be thankful for that. Throughout my childhood, I have always felt a pull from each of you. Though I am sure you did not mean harm, it caused a strain as granting one of you satisfaction meant displeasing the other. Striving to be a good daughter, I have tried to cater to both of your needs, but it has come to a point where I must stop this tug of war. Mother, even though I was taken from you at an early age, I was still born of your womb and so will always be connected to you. In vain, I painfully tried to rip off my outer layer, my own skin, not realizing that no matter what I put over it, there would always be something missing. That something is you, your essence, which is in me. You see, you make up me. Like a foundation, you hold me strong and upright, and no matter what I put over my body, I will always consist of you. Lost without your guidance, it took me years to come upon this epiphany. However, even though I am my mother's daughter, I am also daddy's little girl. Father, for years I hated you. I hated and was hurt by your rejection, and so, sought change in order to become accepted. After many years, I can finally say I do not resent you. In fact, I have come to truly love you despite your faults. In not giving me the acceptance I desperately wanted and had previously readily received, you forced me to explore and learn about exactly what would make you be accepting. Through my journey for this answer, I have grown into the woman you see today. I have faced my struggles and dealt with the question of, "Am I an African girl or American?" I can finally answer that I am neither African nor American, for incorporated in me is both. Father, Mother, I can never be the girl you want me to be as entwined in my body is the soul of an African princess and heart of an American fighter. Even if I can never be that perfect image of what is expected as your offspring, I will always be your daughter.

Love,
Satta Mabel Moiforay



CHILDREN OF MEN

Daniel Marchant

For this assignment, students prepared a film analysis based upon their own careful consideration of a film of their choice, along with research relevant to that interpretation of the film. Daniel Marchant supports and elaborates on his own personal reading of the film with professional reviews and adept use of primary sources.

In 2006, the film *Children of Men* was released to critical acclaim, becoming a contemporary classic. The film takes place in the near future when the human race has become sterile and apathetic to the world around them. However, when a young pregnant woman is discovered, a disillusioned man named Theo is given the task to get her out of war-torn Britain. Despite the futuristic setting, the film's director, Alfonso Cuarón, sought to create a realistic environment that wasn't too far from our own. *Children of Men* takes place in a world that is plagued by terrorism, illegal immigration, famine, disease, and war. This sense of realism makes the end-of-the-world scenario even more terrifying.

Children of Men opens with the death of the world's youngest person. Eighteen years before the start of the film, the human race somehow became infertile. While the rest of the world collapsed into anarchy, Great Britain became a police state, hunting down illegal immigrants "like cockroaches" and selling Euthanasia Kits for the most desperate people. The people have become pessimistic, none more so than the main character, Theo Faron. Theo has slipped into despair and cynicism. As he says in the film, "I can't really remember when I last had any hope...since women stopped being able to have babies, what's left to hope for?" However, when he is asked to help a young woman named Kee leave Britain, he reluctantly agrees. Kee turns out to be pregnant, the first woman to carry a child in eighteen years.

While the premise of *Children of Men* is clearly rooted in science-fiction, Alfonso Cuarón didn't set out to create a futuristic world. He admits that it was the concept of infertility that attracted him, not the science-fiction aspects of the story (Voynar). The film is set in 2027, but this isn't a world filled with laser guns and hovercrafts. The future "is just like today, except tired and shabby" (Ebert). The England of 2027 may be the last civilized country, but it is far from a utopian society. Cuarón wanted to create the sense that in the last eighteen years, rather than progress, technology has essentially stayed the same. Even the newest technology is something we could conceive of: the windshields of cars flash warnings when there is an obstruction ahead, for instance. The goal was to keep the audience grounded in reality, "not transport the audience into another reality" (Horn). In his review of the movie, Roger Ebert writes, "The sets and art design were so well done that I took it for a real place." Its realistic look makes it more believable for the audience.

Another decision that contributed to the film's realism is the use of long takes. Many movies have takes that last for a few seconds or a minute. But in *Children of Men*, takes last four minutes or eight minutes without a single cut. The director, Cuarón states that "[p]art of the reason we chose to tell *Children of Men* in very fluid, long takes was to take advantage of the element of real time." These takes allow the audience to feel immersed in the action, rather than feeling safe sitting in a movie theater seat. Rather than have action scenes cut in a frenetic, fast-paced way, they "seem rooted in sweat and desperation" (Ebert). The purpose of these long takes "is to try to create a moment of truthfulness, in which the camera just happens to be there to just register that moment. That leads into the long shots because then you just register the moments as they go. So what becomes important, then, is not the camera, but the moment" (Voynar). Watching it, you can see the characters react to something in real time. In one instance, a scene lasts for eight minutes without a single cut.

Towards the end of the film, Theo and Kee are in a refugee camp when an uprising against the government begins. Kee has already given birth, a fact which only Theo is aware of. While the British army and a band of rebels begin to tear the ghetto apart in a fire, Theo and Kee try to escape. However, they become separated and Theo has to make his way through the

battle to Kee. This is where Cuarón, and his cinematographer, Emmanuel Lubezki, display their boldest camerawork. Rather than make the battle as impressive and spectacular as possible, Lubezki sought to capture the action as objectively as possible (Debruge). Of the shooting style, Lubezki said, “The camera goes in and tries to find the moments, the way you would if you were in the middle of a war with a camera on your shoulder” (Debruge). When Theo is clambering through a destroyed bus, the camera is very shaky. Someone is shot and blood hits the camera. You begin to feel like you’re in the bus, being shot at. The action isn’t being thrown up on screen for entertainment. It’s unfolding before the audience. You feel immersed in what is happening. Even when Theo is stationary, the camera is always moving, panning around him, and catching something else that is going on. Theo is at the center of the action, but he isn’t always what the camera is looking at. At times, Theo is out of the shot for a whole minute as the camera picks up what Cuarón calls “the state of things”: the environment around the character. This technique immerses you in the action. It becomes more than just an action scene; it becomes a very visceral experience.

Besides creating a visual realism, Cuarón made the film relevant to today’s world. The issues present in 2027 are very much present now. The debate over illegal immigration, combating terrorism, war, famine, and disease are all mentioned or discussed in the film. The future society hasn’t progressed in technology, and has been slowly dying off for twenty-one years. Why would they have solved anything else? Cuarón wanted the film to “serve as a metaphor for the fading sense of hope, that it could be a point of departure for an exploration of the state of things that we’re living in now, the things that are shaping this very first part of the 21st Century” (Voynar). Between 2006 and 2027, the issues haven’t been solved. They’ve become worse. Famine, disease, and war have turned the rest of the world into a chaotic, violent place, and Great Britain has unflinchingly strict rules regarding illegal immigration. Throughout the film, you see holding pens filled with immigrants from around the world. The last part of the movie takes place in a massive refugee camp. People live crammed into tenements, and everything is very dirty and very old. There is no “Third World”; there is only the world and small pockets of civilization.

By creating a world that is realistically shot, designed, and written, Cuarón is able to make *Children of Men* a unique vision of what our future could be. The human race is dying off in a world that has become a violent, desolate place. Cuarón creates a “brutal picture of a society in complete breakdown” (Horn). While it is set in 2027, the world is so similar to our own, struggling with problems that we face today, that it becomes all the more frightening.

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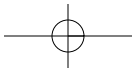
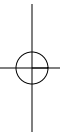
Part II

Preface

Unit V: The Final Reflection

We are very pleased to add to this edition of the Anthology examples of the last paper students compose in College Writing. While students' written reflections on their work are an ongoing and critical part of the course, The Final Reflection, taking the place of a final exam, asks students to review the entire body of work in their portfolios. By analyzing the various roads they have traveled—their struggles, their choices, their triumphs—they compare their past learning with their present knowledge in order to illuminate where they will need to go as writers in their futures. Learning to write well is a never-ending process, so this "final reflection" is final only in the sense of giving some closure to the course. The paper is, in fact, a beginning, launching the student into the world of academic writing. They consider the various "tools" they have assembled in their writer's "toolbox": revision, responding to writing, reflecting on writing, writing for an audience, writing with purposefulness and the consciousness of crafting an idea into a final paper. The Final Reflection casts a light on the challenges students will need to conquer in their futures as academic writers.

While we have always wanted to include this genre in the book, it has been difficult because often the texts produced can be highly dependent on the reader's having knowledge of the goals of particular assignments and the specific drafts of the student's essays. But by calling for a large number of samples, we were fortunate to find pieces that represent this genre yet can stand apart from the particular essays the student has written. The following texts are filled with wonderful advice for any writer. We hope you enjoy reading about three students' journeys through College Writing, and the wisdom they gleaned as they worked throughout the course. Their advice and the insights they share serve as inspiration for us all.



HOW TO SURVIVE COLLEGE WRITING

Sarah Walsh

I was pretty nervous coming into Englwrit 112. I basically thought it was going to be a class where we would have to pound out a bunch of papers to make sure we could keep up with the pace of college. I thought it would be research papers and reports: the kind of class that would make me use all the available resources at UMass. As it turned out, we only wrote one standard research paper. After going through a course that was quite different from what I expected, I have picked out five absolutely essential ideas that will ensure success for future students of *College Writing*.

Be open to new assignments. Make sure to give a legitimate try to all assignments, even if they are outside your comfort zone. Since there are five types of essays that you will be writing for the course, it is almost guaranteed one of them will make you feel less comfortable. Know that everyone in the class is required to be there, no one expects you to be an English major, and therefore, no one is really judging your work at a standard you cannot achieve. My first essay for the class was a personal essay. Writing about myself makes me uncomfortable, so I took an approach where I really did not say anything of meaning. There was no feeling in it because I thought it was going to be bad or was afraid to be judged on a legitimate effort. What I learned from Unit I was that a safe essay does not equal a good essay. If you try to write an essay that has no feelings attached, it will easily show and hurt your writing.

Come to class prepared. It is so easy to blow off assignments or not complete them to the best of your ability. Reading assignments are especially easy to avoid. Everyone knows you can get away with not doing a reading assignment just by sitting in class quietly. For *College Writing*, you actually should be doing all assignments, including reading. They are usually really short, so there's no excuse for not doing them. The reading assignments are

often an introduction to the next essay for the class; therefore, they are important to keep up with. Another preparation is the completion of an essay draft. It is easy to slap together a thousand words of crap and bring it in for peer review. It's just a big waste of time. Bring in the best possible draft for peer review so that you can have legitimate input on a real copy of your essay. Writing a bad draft that you will just have to redo anyway might save you an hour now, but it will end up taking much longer in the end.

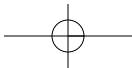
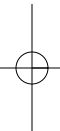
Revise. I would have never thought in the first week of class that I would agree this is a helpful process. It was really stressed in the course, but at first, I didn't understand why anyone would ever think a second version of a paper would be necessary. Revising is basically writing a paper, and then tearing it apart and rewriting it with the help of the original. This, of course, struck me as annoying. I found, though, by the end of the course, I was not only doing it in *College Writing* because it was required; it carried over into other courses. When I first wrote my Unit II essay, it was not organized and did not flow well. When you first write a paper and all your ideas basically just flow out of your mind, they are often a jumbled mess because you are so excited to get them on paper. The revision process allows you to essentially rewrite the paper, organized and without the confusing parts. In order to be effective in revising, it is necessary for you to let go of some of the things you wrote and accept not all of it was perfect. Do not be too attached to your writing because you might end up deciding to chuck it and rewrite something else.

Copy edit. Checking for the simple mistakes seems so evident and simple, but it's crucial for the success of your essay. Mistakes in spelling and grammar take away from the overall effectiveness of your essay. As evident as it is, I feel it's necessary to tell this to a student who is clearly intelligent enough to manage copy editing a paper: we get lazy. Copy editing is not hard; it just takes a little bit of time. I know for me, my Unit III essay was littered with grammar and spelling mistakes because I got lazy. I was so sick of looking at that essay that I did not make myself check for silly mistakes. If you can just take the time to copy edit, it will make your final copy better.

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Find what works for you. Whether it's using an outline or sitting down and pounding out a paper in an hour and a half, find a method of writing that works for you. I know I have never liked outlines. I would rather write a paper and then reorganize it than plan it out ahead. I also find that I cannot edit my paper on the computer as well as I can when it is printed out in front of me. So during this class, know that not everyone's writing processes are the same. Whatever it is that you do, experiment and use this class to find out what works for you. I think that is what it is really designed for.

College Writing is not nearly as scary as I thought it would be. At some point, it was uncomfortable, but stepping out of your comfort zone is important to succeed in college, or else you are not learning. Don't be lazy; give the tips and assignments a chance. You shall succeed.



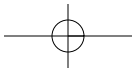
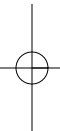
HOW TO WRITE A PERSONAL ESSAY

Ryan Collins

1. Get off Facebook! That is the first step. No distractions. That means no Facebook, MySpace, YouTube, and even no texting. In order to write a personal essay, you need to be able to think without being distracted by anything that could get you away from your work. You need to turn your ringer off entirely, vibrate included. Your friends will still be there when you're done, and they still won't have even started to write the first draft you just finished. So get out of your dorm entirely and make that lonely walk to the library. Once you get there, make sure to find a quiet spot where you can think and type all of your thoughts. A good spot is on a random floor in the book stacks where there is complete silence. Once there, open up your mind to whatever you think of for your essay. Trust me; it will be worth it in the end.
2. Throw every idea that comes to you into your first draft. Keep your options open, and never worry about grammar, sentence structure, or even the flow of your paper. You will be writing quite a few drafts of this paper, and it is better to make sure you write down what you think of now instead of trying to remember it a few drafts down the line.
3. Think outside the box with your ideas. Don't just stick with what first comes to mind when you are writing because that is the same thing that popped into everyone else's mind. Think deeply about yourself and your personal experiences and how they can relate to your topic. Don't overanalyze your experiences now; there will be time for that in the future. For now just write. The more you write now, the less you will need to revise. On second thought, that last statement may not be true. Still, it can't hurt to write as much as you can because at some point or another, you have to reach that 1000-word mark.

4. Get your paper ripped to shreds. You may think there is nothing worse than spending all of your time on a paper and having red ink all over it. You have to understand it is still the first draft and criticisms can only help your paper at this point. This means to make sure you find a peer that you don't know and let them write everything down that is wrong with your paper (do the same for them). Get greedy with their criticisms and make sure you get everything out of them. Examples of this are points of confusion, best and weakest points, and overall understanding of the essay. If possible, try to get more than one person to peer edit your paper. If you cannot find anyone in the class or run out of time, you can go to office hours or ask your roommate to read it.
5. Now make changes. Change drastically. Do not keep the paper the way it is. You do not have to change everything that was criticized, but at least take all suggestions into consideration. What you are looking to do here is find a focus for your paper. You probably have a lot of good ideas down, but you need to make them flow. Change anything you could possibly find a better thought for.
6. Do not get emotionally attached to your paper. This is the time for changes. If something needs to go, it needs to go. I'm sure you like all of your paper; some parts of the paper just won't make the cut to the next draft. Feel free to delete and rewrite full paragraphs. If you think it is necessary, rewrite the whole essay. Nothing is permanent in the rough draft stages, and it will only help you to further understand the point you are trying to get across.
7. Do get personal with your ideas. There is no better way to persuade an audience than a personal story that supports your idea. Do not feel embarrassed by any story. If you are wondering whether it would be appropriate or not to add the story to your essay just remember, it's college. The things going on here are far worse than anything you could possibly be writing about, and nobody is going to judge what you have to say as long as you are sincere in the way you write about it.
8. Repeat steps 2 through 7.
9. Repeat step 8.

10. Repeat step 9.
11. F-L-O-W. Your paper needs to flow. This can either call for many small revisions or the possibility for a huge revision. Either way, do not be alarmed when you realize your paper has no flow by reading it over. Read this paper again and again, and try to find the true identity of the paper. Flow the paper around this identity and make sure you are happy with the result.
12. Read the paper out loud. Whether this includes other people or it is just you, make sure to read this paper as if you had never seen it before. Now, clear up any flow errors that you may have missed from step 11. As you read, account for any time you feel like you have to think about the way you want to say something. Also, cut out unneeded adjectives and add to anything that needs clarification.
13. Make the paper yours. When you read this paper the last time, make sure you read it with confidence. Make sure your personality is in the paper, and you have no regrets with the way you approached and explained your idea. It is your paper, and nobody can take that away from you.
14. Hand in the paper on time, take a deep breath, and enjoy the rest of your day because tomorrow is a new day and possibly the first step toward a new paper.



THE YEAR IN REVIEW

Matt Zingg

Before the first class, I pictured my *College Writing* course to be a large class like the rest, where I expected to write a couple of papers and maybe read a book or two. However, it didn't take me long to find out that this course was more of an English marathon: writing papers, revising, reflecting. Though it may seem unlikely, I wound up finding myself enjoying many of the exercises we did, and I actually felt improvement in my writing skills as the year progressed further with each new assignment.

A memory I have from the beginning of the year acted as a door, a key, to open up the Pandora's Box that goes along with it. I remember sitting on my bed, still a new college student, still with all the feelings of a freshman, opening up one of our *College Writing* textbooks, *Other Words*, and searching for the essay about Google. I began reading. After a few minutes, I ended up picking up a pencil and scribbling ferociously in the margins, underlining important lines, really reading for a purpose. My mind was being blown as I read further into the essay.

I felt like I had never read such a precise, witty, statistical, example-filled piece before. The author seemed to call out to all of humanity as his voice came out, and his arguments made great sense. By using solid examples and playing both views of the argument, Carr was able to convince me in a matter of minutes about the downward trend in human habits that we are heavily in the midst of. The paper begins and ends with a movie scene from *2001: A Space Odyssey*, showing a world where mind and intellect have fallen, and technology, computers, and robots have become the upper echelon. The essay worried me, scared me for our future.

I was used to reading books and novels, with characters and plots, but *College Writing* introduced me to these short, persuasive essays. They were always intriguing topics, and they were always written in original, unique ways. Nicholas Carr's essay reached me the most. After reading his essay, our job was to reflect for two pages in our notebooks, and I went on a rant,

exposing Carr's ideas on deep reading, deep thinking, the concept of time, and the bleak road ahead.

"Carr makes the future seem frightening, but by thinking deeply and allowing for growth, some of us won't be flattened like pancakes by the spatula of our own invented intelligence, a dark prophecy to foreshadow." I concluded my reflection with this Carr-esque line, a spooky warning for change. I feel as though my reflection could have been an essay, a topic that could be continuously examined deeper and deeper, even past Carr's essay. He describes our current status, a world on a timer, rushing from one conversation of meaningless drivel to the next. Carr's persuasion worked, but not with smooth talk—with hard facts and evidence amidst a strong argument. "He showed me a light of his idea, followed with many strong cases, until he really allowed me to agree with him at the end, so swayed was I by his convincing, truthful look at how the Earth is evolving today."

I had never read the types of essays we read in class, persuasive with meaning, or a story with purpose, in great detail. I also remember the story where the descriptions of the bar-goers almost allowed you to know everything about each person. The writing always challenged me as a reader to reflect after, to think about the topic, and to draw my own conclusions. And the writing was always so clear and so detailed, all the stories became examples for me to steal ideas from or find unique ways to write or explore. The essays we read were just one of many steps we took in class to further our writing, to allow it to reach a college level, and I definitely feel like I made the jump.

After the Google essay tested my intellect, I gained much more interest in the class and the work we had to do. I began to improve when I put forth the effort needed. I have even told a few of my friends of my improvements, my honest progress in my writing skills, and I think I have the key: revision. For all twelve years of my pre-college life, I would write the final draft the night before my paper was due, and by the time I finished it, I would print it, pass it in, and basically forget what I wrote. However, this class pushed me to revise, forcing me to run through my paper multiple times for copy-editing mistakes, or even all-out reductions. My papers have improved by leaps and bounds.

By cutting down on the accidental typos, misspelled words, or grammar mistakes, my paper becomes much cleaner and more professional. My thoughts are clearer, and it is easier to read a flawless paper than a rough draft with plenty of accidental blunders. By revising once, and then revising your revision, and then revising that revision again, it becomes like sifting through each and every detail until you know the paper like the back of your hand. By traveling in and out of the editing session, the paper will be nearly perfect by the third time around. It has finally become clear to me.

The revision doesn't just stop in this class. I have begun to revise and look through my other class papers with a keen eye, finding all the small mistakes that make the paper seem careless. What a huge improvement for me, a person who never revised a rough draft in his first twelve years, and now I do it not because I am forced to, but because I realize the benefits from a nit-picking run-through. My motto seems to be that you can't make your paper worse by editing and revising it.

I can target certain areas in my writing that I usually need to keep an eye out for while revising. I feel like I have cut down on my run-ons, and loose phrases are often changed to fit or be removed. I look for good sentence variation and try to keep strong organization between paragraphs with transitions. A new word has also joined my repertoire: diction. By finding the right word for the right situation, a sentence can have much more meaning. Changing around adjectives, nouns, and verbs to better suited words is a skill that is learned through practice and knowledge, or sometimes with a thesaurus.

The class also required many straight-up reflections in our notebook, writing freely, openly. For a while, I felt forced and had trouble writing a page. However, by the end of the year, I enjoyed reflecting, finding it easy to develop my writing, just by talking, just by writing. As an English major, I have to say that this *College Writing* course was about the best possible course I could have taken freshman year, one that challenges my writing, but also teaches me new techniques and gives me great new habits (revision, reflection). We covered the basics, details and diction, and read interesting topics and persuasive arguments, and the class left me with a basic foundation that I can now build on until I get my degree.

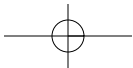
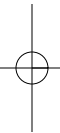
Could it have been reading “Is Google Making Us Stupid?” that supercharged my love for the class this year and passion for improvement? Thinking back, it seems clear, as the essay was so powerful to me, so convincing. The essay was frightening, speaking of the technological world, the need for speed, the business and hustle-bustle of everyday life that has trapped nearly all into a Facebook world, a commercial world, an advertisement world, a brief world, a thoughtless world. Where are thoughts and intellect going?

Carr explained that when books first became available, the people of the time argued against printed literature, feeling it was a downgrade in intellect and thinking, a way to think without your own thoughts. Years later, our world is filled with people who can't read a book, who need to sit in front of a television or a computer, lured by the distractions of an ugly humanity. It's an ugly irony for books to be viewed as distractions, and now, to be distracted away from books.

But it can't be that way. I'm an English major; I'm prepared to devote my life to reading and writing, the passions, the arts. Now I feel like it is my job, or at least my generation's job, not to be sucked into the Space Odyssey world that Carr prophesizes. The reins are being handed down, and I hope we can carry the burden, but it looks bleak. This world seems set down a path with no chance for a savior. But how can there really be change? Not even Carr has the answer.

At least I know that I can still do my part. I don't need to fall in line with the rest of the world and join the imbecile generation of conformity. I can still have a handle on the art of writing and reading, even while the rest slowly lose their intellect. This class set me on the path for improvement. Carr writes how writing and reading are slowly becoming lost arts, lost passions, but now I can still hold on tight.

PART III
JUNIOR YEAR
WRITING



Preface

Part III: Junior Year Writing

The first time Junior Year Writing texts were included in this book was last year's edition, and from the enthusiastic responses expressed by First and Junior Year teachers and students, it appears we are on the way toward our ultimate goal—to create a book that will become a campus-wide resource, used at every level, a book that will become a key part of the University's effort to both celebrate and improve our students' writing.

This final section of the Anthology again includes texts from the Junior Year Writing Program. More than 70 Junior Year courses are part of UMass Amherst's two-part writing requirement. While the essays from Basic and College Writing that precede this section come from first-year courses in general expository writing, junior-year courses are discipline-specific and designed to help students improve the advanced writing skills needed in their chosen fields of study.

This year saw a dramatic increase in submissions from Junior Year instructors—three times the number we received last year! We revel in this enthusiasm, and hope that we receive even more texts for the next book. However, it did make selection highly competitive since all the essays were excellent pieces of work. Ultimately, selections were made based on choosing texts that would appeal to the widest audience and represent the greatest diversity of genres.

The texts that follow are from junior year courses in Anthropology, Economics, Psychology, and Women, Gender, Sexuality Studies. The course name and number and a description of the assignment appear immediately before each text. Because this incarnation of the book is so new, we are all still finding our way. Therefore, the number of essays we published is small, and our ideas about the structure of the book are still evolving. But the genres represented here, as well as their goals and topics, have broad-based interest—from an informative response paper, to a reflective power essay in the narrative genre, to a collaborative multimedia photo poem. In each assignment, no matter what the discipline, we repeatedly see the instructor's emphasis on the writers' need to write with deep intellectual engagement in the academic assignment and also draw on their personal contexts to inform their work.

Special thanks go to Mitch Boucher, Lindsay Demers, Beth Jakob, Betsy Krause, Sarah Malone, Deb McCutcheon, and John Stifler, all of whom went on the hunt, at very busy times in their schedules, to search for papers to submit to us. Their enthusiasm for this project, their willingness to do whatever needed to be done were constant reminders of how fortunate we all are to be part of an institution filled with people who care deeply about students, their learning, their success, and, in particular—their writing.

STRAIGHT SPINES AND BATHING SUITS: A REFLECTION ON POWER

Stephanie Amon

Anthropology 364: Problems in Anthropology I

The assignment that Amon responds to below is called a reflective power essay. This narrative genre asks students to build on skills of critical thinking and comprehension. The additional challenge here was to add self-reflection to the mix in a way that integrated a power analysis yet allowed the reader to hear the writer's voice. Students had to imagine that their audience consisted of educated laypersons unfamiliar with anthropology. Hence, theory may inform the essay but should not encumber it.

It is early morning, and parents are bidding their children goodbye as they step out of minivans. Hundreds of feet walk through the sets of blue double doors that have on their other side a middle school like many others. My preteen self joins classmates and young teenagers to mingle in the cafeteria, passing time recounting television shows, whispering about crushes or unflattering outfits spotted around the room, and laughing at inside jokes as we wait for the bell signaling a stampede to homerooms. At the shriek of the factory-style bell, we children—or half-children on the verge of physical and social adulthood—run to lockers and find our desks for attendance. Today, however, each female student finds a paper on her desk that will distract us from the announcements and continued classroom chatter. We are informed that the school nurse will soon be conducting scoliosis screenings. This is distressing news: to the middle school girl, there are few things more horrifying than the removal of the t-shirt.

Mandated in schools across Massachusetts, these screenings were endured by countless adolescents and may not seem to be a memorable event. I remember going through them because of the nervousness I felt as I read the notice, which we were to bring home to our parents. They had to

be informed that we would be taking off an article of clothing before our school nurse and reminded them that if their daughter was not yet regularly wearing bras, on this day she should be sure to bring a bathing suit top or training bra. Consumed by the physical and social issues that can feel cataclysmic, even apocalyptic, to a twelve-year-old girl, I was both ashamed to be in the bathing suit category and concerned with the shedding of any articles of clothing, let alone those which would make my concavity all the more apparent. I brought the paper home to my mother, and she signed on the bottom with little concern or attention. I donned a pink and green bathing suit top and, after all the anguish, came out with a certified straight spine.

At first glance, this seems to be little more than a memory of adolescent mortification, but we may have a different take on it if we consider the roles and feelings of the adults involved through the lens of a Foucauldian notion of power. Foucault suggests that the history of sexuality, and indeed all analyses of power, must be examined “from the viewpoint of a history of discourses,” locating in what is said, and in what is not, the reinforcement of power (Foucault 1978: 69).

The middle school administration felt obligated to address, even in such indirect terms, the sexuality of children, which was quietly present in the minds of the principal, our parents, and the school nurse. In order to address the taboo and delicate problem of making visible a childhood sexuality, a letter was drafted to our parents; we, the undressing, were simply messengers. Printing a hundred or so copies of this notice was enough to rid the school administrators and the nurse of their sense of responsibility to police the situation of a student undressing before a teacher, of a young patient undressing before a doctor, of a child undressing before unrelated adults. These “policemen” had to allude to this tension, this suspicious and tireless focus adults are expected to train on the emerging sexuality of children-students at all times (1978: 25, 28, 42). Once it had been typed up into a clothing memo, it was gone. Or was it?

There was a widely detected pressure to address sexuality and the power inherent in an interaction in which a child-student is vulnerably under-clothed for the regular dynamics of their relationship with the authority figure of the teacher, the medical professional. This decentralized pressure to

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A REFLECTION ON POWER

address the sexuality we have come to police and obsess over could be pointed to as an argument for a notion of power, which suggests that rather than action being demanded from a single source on high, we are all enforcing norms and expectations of one another without a hierarchy (1978: 42, 60). The note to our parents was also an instance of a transformation of sex into discourse (1978: 61). The nurse, concerned with potential suspicion directed towards her, may have suggested to the principal that the parents be notified. She may have wanted chests covered to keep herself from considering the sexuality of her patients. The principal may have anticipated an outcry from parents if they were not warned that their children's burgeoning sexuality would be unmasked in some way before a medical authority. Perhaps in the past, parents had protested the lack of regard the school showed for a sexually charged procedure in which an authority figure is inspecting, recording, gazing at the budding bodies of their children. It doesn't matter which of these possibilities explains the appearance of the notice on our desks that day, or if it was from another suspicious and tense source altogether. It is because all of these are plausible that one must consider the lack of a direct source of this pressure and the possibility that all members of this interaction could have been interpellating each other (1978: 42, 45, 46). The spiraling tensions of relations supposedly blind to sex and sexuality, such as those of teachers and students or patients and doctors (operating to approve or reject appeals to normalcy) combine with the pressures to define oneself in terms of conformity to certain norms (such as those suggesting that adults would not take notice of the sexual characteristics of children).

Is it possible that the nurse and teachers and parents were all simply concerned about making easily chagrined middle school girls more comfortable during a harmless medical exam? Might they have sent out the letter as a discreet courtesy to the undeveloped, the bra-less, and thus otherwise more exposed? I think not. The tension felt by adults in this situation is undoubted, since the conversation about this issue was among adults only. It was necessary to notify the other policemen of emergent sexuality, the parents, that a charged situation was about to take place. However, it was not necessary to address the child-student-patient directly. Were my classmates and I a part of this dialogue, I would concede that the note was possibly a reminder given out for our own social ease. The tension felt by adults can

be considered via the curious point of the bathing suit as a possible outfit for the screening. If a child-student-patient were not yet to the point of physical development to be wearing a bra, why would there be any tension felt by the nurse as she looks at the asexual body of a child, or by the administration as they facilitate these examinations? Rather than a concern for the social comfort of the undressing, this note was more likely a manifestation of the horror adults have of the potentially precocious sexuality of their children (1978: 146). It suggested the enclosing gaze on the sexuality of pubescent children (1978: 30) and indicated the ever-necessary surveillance of the child's body (1978: 98). Most powerfully, perhaps, the notice was an attestation of the self-questioning posed to adults when the sexuality of the child is introduced to an interaction with an adult (1978: 99), especially a person with a three-fold authority over the child (as the adult, the teacher, and the medical professional).

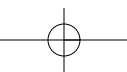
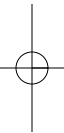
Of course, none of this occurred to me at the time. At twelve, utterly wrapped up in frantic comparisons of my own development with that of my peers and stricken with fears about the social ramifications of anything about myself I deemed to be sub-par, I wasn't quite equipped to consider the power implications of the discourse around my scoliosis screening. I wasn't questioning the quiet frenzy among my teachers to address this tense procedure, and I didn't realize that I had been reduced to an intermediary between my teachers and parents as they stared. I wonder today how many of these "policemen" were even themselves consciously considering these discourses in terms of power. Perhaps when doctors and teachers are concerned about the spines of my children or grandchildren, there won't be such nervous suspicion of the examinations they undergo at school, and I will laugh at this instance of adolescent drama (1978: 157). I don't suspect this will be the case, however, because it is an aspect of these power relations, these continual spirals of policing the normalcy of others and the questioning of ourselves, that make the discursive implications about power seen in the note on my desk that day generally unexamined by its writers, recipients, and readers. These unspoken or carefully phrased concerns that we have are hegemonic, operating as discreet technologies of power that allow the continuation of these tensions and uncertainties, which imbue interactions. Amid the hugeness of humiliation about the bathing-suit top, or the pervasive silence that prickles

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hairs at the back of the neck when we wonder if we are conforming, we can forget all about power, and thereby multiply it.

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EDUCATION: IT'S SERIOUS BUSINESS

Joshua Slocum

Economics 397W: Writing in Economics

*The following paper is a discussion of the author's experience with school-related local politics. The assignment was to incorporate ideas from the book *Freakonomics: A Rogue Economist Explores the Hidden Side of Everything* by Steven Levitt and Stephen J. Dubner into a paper describing the author's high school education. Slocum's use of an ironic voice both entertains the reader while underscoring the ironies implicit in much "educational" decision-making.*

There is nothing quite like the smell of freshly sharpened No. 2 pencils and bubble sheets in the morning. From a young age, this essential tool of testing becomes a fundamental, albeit tedious, part of our education. I encountered my first bubble sheet in the fourth grade in Mrs. Loftus' classroom at Sutton Elementary School, just five years after Massachusetts was graced by the birth of the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System in 1993. The Massachusetts Department of Education designed the MCAS to evaluate school, student, and teacher performance, as well as to inform and improve curriculum and instruction. While those two purposes are sensible, students do not generally recognize the effect of the exams on future curriculum design. If those were the only two purposes of the MCAS, it would be difficult to get students to take the exams seriously. So, to get the students to take the exam seriously, the creators of the MCAS added a little incentive for the students: pass the exam, or you will not graduate. High stakes indeed, but can they get higher? You bet they can.

The No Child Left Behind Act, or NCLB, introduced by George W. Bush and Ted Kennedy, raises the stakes significantly. If a school fails to meet adequate yearly progress standards for five or more years, it must be restructured; it must undergo rapid and dramatic changes in leadership and

methods of instruction. Furthermore, if a school is not meeting its expectations, the NCLB will provide funding for students to go to another school, or to get extra tutoring. The NCLB essentially added for school administrators and teachers what had already been in place for students, a strong incentive to score high. If the students do not score high enough, they may not graduate. If a teacher's students do not score well overall, then that teacher may be out of a job. While it is not clear that this new incentive has led to consistently better performance on exams, it has induced some creative interpretations of testing protocol. High-stakes testing has created the incentive for teachers to cheat.

That teachers now have stronger incentives to cheat sounds dreadful, but so what? Steven Levitt and Stephen Dubner already covered that subject in their book *Freakonomics*. While they may have studied Chicago school teachers, they also have now heard accounts of teachers cheating right here in our great Commonwealth¹. A travesty to be sure, but high-stakes testing and the NCLB have affected schools in more ways than giving teachers an incentive to cheat. The NCLB has drawn attention to chronically underperforming schools, as it was intended to do. The very name of the act implies a focus on the struggling children and schools at the bottom of the pack. I do not wish to imply that attention should not be paid to these schools, because it definitely should, but does that mean any less attention should be paid to schools that are scoring well but are insufficient in other areas? Struggling schools and cheating teachers make for nice headlines; schools and teachers that are merely getting by and doing well enough do not. In the frenzy to attend to the children struggling to keep up with the pack, we have left those already doing well enough unsupervised. What are those unsupervised rascals up to?

Well, we rascals are coping decently enough. We may not have the most up-to-date technology or the lowest student-to-teacher ratios, but we manage. We may not get the most funding or have the most extracurricular activities, but we make do without. At least this sort of experience builds character, right? We may not have had matching carpeting in every room, or matching paint for that matter, but those things do not affect learning, right? Perhaps someday I will tell my grandchildren that when I was their age, there were 25 students in every classroom, and they will laugh and ask

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me why anyone thought educating so few children at a time was a good idea. I will remind them we did not have the same technology and back then 25 was a lot of students for the size rooms we had, and some teachers had trouble maintaining order and making sure everyone was at least learning something.

That was the type of high school I went to. I could count the number of AP courses offered on one hand. Some classrooms had pastel pink paint peeling off the walls, others a gorgeous shade of green. I rarely used the bathroom at school if I could avoid it. There was something about the ancient sinks and soap dispensers I found unappealing. Or maybe it was the overcooked-oatmeal-colored tiles covering the walls and floors. The desks in the classrooms did match, though. Well, most of the time, anyway. But fancy things like projectors and white boards only distract from the learning process. As anyone at Sutton High School could tell you, a black or green board and some chalk are all that is needed for a solid education, and with the addition of some old textbooks you have a first-rate learning institution.

There was a book in the library that speculated whether man would ever set foot on the moon. That same library also had some solid dot-matrix printers kicking around in some dusty corner. We did have a few televisions on these nifty mobile carts so they could be wheeled from classroom to classroom as needed. They even came equipped with VHS players. Later some cheap DVD players would be added, but most of the older teachers couldn't figure out how to use them. Luckily for them most of the students, even the younger ones, knew what to do.

There was absolutely nothing spectacular about Sutton High School. It was shabby, but probably not the shabbiest. We had a small selection of sports teams, but they were decent, as you could tell by looking at the disproportionately large trophy case by the gym. Our soccer, basketball, and track teams had won some district titles over the years, as well as a few state championships, and were perennially competitive. I suspected there was something in the water; it seemed as good an explanation as any as to why such a small talent pool produced numerous multi-sport athletes. Alas, while good, they were usually not good enough to be recruited to play for a top university.

Given the popularity of sports and band, there was little demand for other clubs or extracurricular activities. In a school with fewer than 400 students, it seemed we had everything we needed. There were not enough students to support more clubs or AP offerings, or so some administrators said. A bogus argument indeed, as I can attest there was at least enough interest in getting other AP offerings. There may have even been some interest in starting something like a drama club, but we knew better than to ask for things they could not give us. As everyone in the school was acutely aware, there was simply not that much money to spare. At times, athletic fees needed to be increased, or an art teacher let go, or students living a certain distance from school had to pay for busing if they could afford it; anything in the name of thrift. We did not have the same things that bigger, better funded schools did, and because our MCAS scores were not lagging, the state and federal government did not pay all that much attention to us.

Someone else did pay us some attention, and they told us we needed to make some improvements.

The NCLB is not the only acronym schools in New England need to be concerned about appeasing. The New England Association of Schools and Colleges, or NEASC, is of just as great importance. While NCLB may determine your school's standing with the federal government, it is NEASC that determines your school's standing with colleges and universities. NEASC is the organization that gives schools and colleges in New England academic accreditation.

In the relationship between high schools and colleges, NEASC accreditation tells colleges whether or not a particular high school has given its students adequate preparation for college-level academics. If you are a school administrator or parent, you certainly want your child's school to be accredited. Every few years, an accreditation team from NEASC would visit a school and evaluate everything from the quality of the textbooks and teachers, to the peeling paint and crummy carpeting. My high school went through this process at the beginning of my sophomore year.

It was late in the month of August, and I recently returned from a stint at the Johns Hopkins Center for Talented Youth summer camp. With my mind still elsewhere, I reluctantly got ready to jump, or rather tumble, back into the morning routine. The month of September passed by, and so far

classes had been a breeze. In October, the NEASC committee drops by Sutton Memorial High School for a visit. We're told by our principal to be on our best behavior, and to answer with total honesty any questions the NEASC evaluators may ask. We also had to "memorize" (read: vaguely know) our school's "mission statement" in the event the NEASC evaluators asked us about it. We were all told what the stakes were; we might have a harder time getting into college if the school lost its accreditation. Truthfully, this was a bit of a scare tactic; my class would have already graduated if and when the school lost its accreditation, but we didn't know that.

The NEASC committee did not really tell the administration anything they did not already know. Most of their recommendations involved fixing things the faculty had identified during their self-evaluation. The only difference was that the NEASC recommendations are binding; you have to address them or you lose your accreditation. To quote the faculty directly, some of the schools "needs" were²:

- The amount of time the staff has to evaluate, revise, and correlate curriculum and instruction to assessment is inadequate.
- The staff could increase the use of rubrics and alternative assessments in the school.
- Inadequate time and resources exist for teachers to share student work for the purpose of revision of curriculum and instruction.
- A need exists to develop concrete assessment tools to measure if the students meet the school's stated civic and social expectations.

The NEASC evaluation committee also recommended specifically that the school come up with more electives, renovate some of the facilities, and expand extracurricular offerings³. All of these things also require more money. In a school district that already has the 22nd lowest per-pupil spending out of the 329 districts in the state⁴, the necessary funds just are not there. In a school that has already been stretching its dollars, there is simply nothing extra left to cut, except maybe a few fine arts courses that have managed to survive.

Unfortunately, the school's MCAS scores are too high to qualify for NCLB funds. By state and federal standards, SHS is not a school in crisis.

The spring following the NEASC visit, 33 percent of my class would score advanced on the English portion of the MCAS; another 49 percent would do so for Math. Only three percent would fail English, and a paltry four percent would fail math⁵. Since it is these scores that the state and federal government use to determine school performance under NCLB, SHS does not come close to qualifying for more money. Why would a school not only meeting, but exceeding, its adequate yearly progress standards need more money?

What is a school to do? The government won't give us more money and a bake sale on the scale necessary would defy the laws of physics. The only solution is to kindly ask the taxpayers of Sutton to give the schools more money. In a town with a median income⁶ of \$80,000 that shouldn't be a huge problem, right? Wrong. The sums were done and property taxes would have to be increased by more than the 2.5% allowed under Proposition 2 1/2 to raise enough money to fix the school. Still, with such an ostensibly rich town, even an increase of four or five percent would not be a major burden. Wrong again. Here is where things get messy. In order to increase the property tax by more than 2.5%, a town meeting would have to be called and an override proposed. The override would then have to be voted on and would pass with a simple majority of the vote. That spring, the night of reckoning would come: the vote to override Proposition 2 1/2.

I have attended two town meetings in my life. One of them was boring; the other made my blood boil. The high school gymnasium was packed with townspeople ready to debate the merits of the override. A neighboring town, Uxbridge, had the unfortunate experience of going through the NEASC process a few years prior, failed to make the grade, and was placed on warning status. They then went for an override and failed. The school became so troubled that it began hemorrhaging students at a rate of over 200 a year to neighboring districts⁷, and with those students went valuable money.

Proponents of the override used the example of that poor town ad nauseum. It became so repetitive that one man even stood up and shouted: "I'm sick of hearing about Uxbridge!" The opponents of the override responded with the argument that "we're not that town. Our students are smart and will be fine. You administrators are smart and can figure out another way of doing things, and we don't need to give you more money. In fact, many of us can't give you more money anyway." Apparently this argument was fair-

ly compelling. While the override managed to pass that night and appear on the ballot, it would end up soundly defeated when the actual day of reckoning came. Sadly this is not unusual. Of the 4,449 overrides proposed since Proposition 2 1/2 went into effect in 1982, only 1,798 have passed.

For me this result was puzzling and deeply troubling. I spoke with my parents and teachers at length about why the override failed. The answer was simply demographics. To understand why the opposition won, we must look at the demographics of the town. An examination of the demographics can also better explain why the students of SHS do so well on the MCAS despite the myriad shortcomings of the school.

In *Freakonomics*, Steven Levitt and Stephen Dubner examine eight factors that they found to correlate with test scores, including the fact that a child has highly educated parents, that those parents have a high socioeconomic status, that they speak English at home, and that they are more involved in the PTA. Given that SHS was already in such poor shape, we can rule out the school as the cause of the significantly higher than average scores. In order to measure the effect that a town's demographics have on test scores, we would have to remove the possibility of the school being a factor. What better way to do that than at a school that already has so few resources? After all, if having a plethora of out-dated books in the library was linked to better performance on exams, then SHS should routinely be sending students to top-ten colleges, which is something that does not happen.

The census data say that 70 percent of the town's citizens, age 16 and over, worked in white-collar occupations, thus classifying as at least upper-middle class. A further 36 percent of the town's population over the age of 25 have obtained a bachelors degree or higher, and 90 percent have obtained a high school diploma or higher. These statistics hint that the average child's parents are highly educated. However, we cannot be certain, given that the majority of the adults do not have a bachelors or higher, and ages 25 and up covers at least two or three generations. While we cannot directly measure the educational attainment of the parents without asking them, we can infer some things from the census data.

First, the median age of the town is 36, and roughly 40 percent of the population is between the ages of 36 and 55. Roughly 17 percent of the population is over the age of 55. Historically, we know that the first age group belongs to the generation where it was becoming increasingly com-

mon for high school graduates to attend college. We also know it was significantly less likely for those in the older age group to do so. Also, 17 percent of the population also moved into the town prior to 1969 and a further 13 percent in the years 1970 to 1979. Nearly 30 percent moved in during the period 1990 to 1998. Property in the town was significantly cheaper in 1969 than it was in the 1990s. Prior to 1969, Sutton was not the bedroom town it is now. As my father can attest, it was significantly more rural, and the population demographics reflected that fact. Given these data, we can infer that it is likely that the parents with children in school are more likely to be the ones with a bachelors or better, and those with only a high school education or better are likely to be significantly older or younger than the 36-55 age group. This analysis of the data shows that the educational attainment of the parents correlates with the test scores of the children. I can personally attest that parental involvement in the school system, whether in PTA or otherwise, is strong. I cannot count the times that my parents and my friend's parents volunteered to chaperone field trips, and I always looked forward to the annual visit of Mrs. Volopigno, the mother of one of my classmates, where she would make our class latkes with applesauce for Hanukkah. The census data also show that 95 percent of the population speaks only English at home.

That the children of affluent, educated, English-speaking parents perform well on standardized tests is not particularly shocking. What those parents found shocking, however, is that the override failed. "How could it fail?" they ask. To them, the choice was obvious. The override was essential to the future of their children, and anyone could plainly see that. Now we will take a different look at the data to answer their question.

The voting was done over one day in the middle of the week from the hours of 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Given that the majority of the parents were likely those white-collar workers, it is no surprise that they were working during most of that time, and when they got home they were tired and hungry. Nobody really wants to go out and fill in the bubbles on lengthy ballots after a hard day's work. Besides, other people could see how obvious the choice was, right? Think of the children!

Well, for a segment of the population the choice was abundantly clear; the override could not succeed. This segment is really the composition of two segments. First, you have the very wealthy portion, the 30% of the popula-

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tion wealthy enough to afford the McMansions in the fancy sub developments and send their kids to private schools. They were perhaps not so much against the override as much as apathetic towards it, since it only taxed them more, and their children would never directly see the benefit. Here is Milton Friedman's logic at work. Friedman argued that the neighborhood effects of education were tenuous at best, and that doing such things as raising taxes to further subsidize the school was inefficient and only hurt taxpayers. He argued that government-subsidized schools held an unfair advantage over private schools. Friedman thought that the recipient of the education, and not the taxpayers, should bear the cost of the education.

The more important segment in play here is the elderly. Given the town's significant portion of people over the age of 65, it is likely they are retired and living on very modest fixed incomes, having moved to the town long ago and not had high-paying white-collar jobs to begin with. Tax hikes hurt those with small fixed incomes the most, and so it is no surprise they were adamantly opposed to the override. Of course, ardent opposition is not enough; they would also have to get out and vote. And vote they did. This segment had the desire and opportunity to make their voices heard on voting day. They had the motive and the opportunity, and the power to organize. It is a small town, and it is no surprise that those who have lived there for over twenty years know each other well. I had teachers who had taught my father, and who knew my grandmother when she was on the school board back in the '80s.

The override failed because the people who would benefit the most assumed that it would pass and neglected to consider that such a measure would have dramatic effects on a sizeable segment of the population: a classic example of the Free Rider problem. It is not necessarily the case that the incentives for the opposition were stronger than those for the supporters, but the majority of the supporters failed to recognize that the two groups were responding to different incentives. I suspect that if I were to look at the data for Uxbridge, a similar story would unfold. Two years later, another neighboring town, Northbridge, would endure budget cuts from the state and attempt an override; they would also fail.

Perhaps the override would not have failed if it was not an all or nothing proposition. Could it have been possible to just raise taxes for those families with children in the school system? That is what Friedman would have

argued for. But while that solution appears to be good, can it really be put into practice? As long as the choice is this false dichotomy between everyone paying and no one paying, situations like this will always create heated political battles. Who are the real losers when finding a middle ground is impossible? While our parents argue over who should pay what, we, the students of SHS, languish in our intellectually uninspiring surroundings. But then again, this is all we have ever known, so how can we know if we are truly missing out on something?

In the end, SHS managed to meet their two and five year goals that were set after the NEASC visit by doing what had always been done: raise sports and extracurricular fees, beg for more money from the state, and have teachers find creative ways of fulfilling the goals. SHS continues to be a relatively high performing school, with 63% scoring advanced in English and 55% scoring advanced in Math on the MCAS. Nevertheless, SHS still has some of the lowest per-pupil spending in the state and is severely lacking in electives and extracurricular activities as compared to similarly performing schools. Demographics can compensate only so much. If the goal is now to be “good enough” and not “the best,” then clearly SHS and schools like it are meeting that standard with full marks. Why try and create a meritocracy when a mediocracy works just fine?

Notes

- 1) “Fish gotta Swim, Teachers Gotta Cheat?” *Freakonomics*.blogs.nytimes.com, January 26, 2009
- 2) Sutton Memorial High School Self-Study Report for NEASC Evaluation, March 2004
- 3) NEASC: Two Year Progress Report, September 27, 2006
- 4) 2008 Per-Pupil Expenditure Report, Massachusetts Department of Education
- 5) MCAS Tests of Spring 2005 Percent of Students at Each Performance Level for Sutton, Massachusetts Department of Education
- 6) http://www.boston.com/bostonglobe/regional_editions/specials/average_income_by_zipcode/
- 7) FY06 School Choice Pupils and Tuition, Massachusetts Department of Education, June 2006

AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR AFTER PLAYING OR WATCHING VIOLENT VIDEO GAMES

Nicole Clark

Psychology 392: Junior Year Writing

The following essay is the result of Nicole Clark's taking a much longer paper written for a specialized audience in a scientific journal, then summarizing and rewriting it so an educated lay person (such as a reader of the New York Times) would not only be able to understand it, but would remain interested enough to keep reading.

Children spend over 20 hours watching television and almost 9 hours playing video games each week. Several studies have shown that exposure to violent media can increase aggressive behavior; however, it is unknown if an increase in aggressive behavior occurs only after actively playing a video game, or if these same effects can also be observed in children who are passively watching the same game. To examine this, Polman et al. (2008) observed changes in children's behavior under three different gaming conditions: playing a violent video game, observing the same violent video game, or playing a non-violent video game.

The researchers observed children 10–13 years old at their school. Children played or watched one of the games for approximately 15 minutes and then completed a questionnaire about their own gaming habits. For example, they reported how often they played video games and how familiar they were with the games that they played or viewed in this experiment.

Acts of aggressive behavior were measured by peer nominations during a free play session during school; the students wrote down the names of their peers who showed physical or verbal aggression during the session. The children noted whether or not they thought the aggressive act was intentional-

ly hostile or only intended to be a joke. Only the aggressive behaviors that were viewed as deliberate by the peers were included in the analysis.

Evidence from the surveys showed that boys displayed more aggression after playing the violent video game than after watching the same violent game. Boys who played the violent game were also slightly more likely to engage in aggressive behaviors than the boys who played the non-violent game. However, these effects on aggression appeared to only last for a short time after exposure to the game. Boys were more likely to engage in aggressive acts immediately after playing or watching the video game, compared with an hour after playing or watching. No relationship was found between violent media consumption of any kind and aggressive behaviors in the female subjects.

Polman and his colleagues proposed that the difference in the displayed aggressive behaviors between girls and boys might be due to the children's normal daily activities. The surveys found that the boys played violent video games more often, so they were regularly exposed to more video game violence compared to the girls. The researchers concluded that the boys might behave more aggressively because they recall past violent experiences from being routinely exposed to violent video games. Although the effects of aggression were only subtle, they could have a more significant impact on aggressive behaviors over time.

This study supplied more evidence that video game violence may increase aggressive behaviors in children, particularly with boys. Furthermore, it provided evidence that children who watch the same violent game may also show aggressive behaviors, although not as strongly as children playing the video game. Although the aggressive behaviors had short term effects, repeated violent media exposure could potentially increase the occurrences and durations of aggressive behaviors over the long term. Perhaps any violence that a child sees in the media, regardless of the source, may slightly increase the likelihood that a child will display aggressive behaviors. Therefore, it is important for parents to monitor the amount of violence that their child is watching in the media. By decreasing violent media exposure, this could possibly reduce the likelihood that a child will engage in aggressive behaviors after watching a violent show or game.

CONGRESSIONAL TESTIMONY

Alyx Akers

WOST 391W: Writing and Queer Representation

In this speech, Akers applied persuasive techniques such as storytelling, statistics, and appeals to emotion and ethics in order to persuade congressional members to legalize same-sex marriage. She also performed this piece for the class, making appropriate pauses, pointing to audience members to emphasize the personal responsibility of each individual, and using tone of voice to emphasize her points.

My name is Alyx Akers, and I'm here to represent the Human Rights Campaign. My friend Lisa died alone. She took her last breath on this earth alone. But alone was not the way Lisa lived her life. She was committed to family and friends, always surrounded by those most important to her. She was a light to each of us; she was the friend you could always count on to be there for you. She was devoted to her three children and committed to Janice, her partner of twenty years.

My friend Lisa died alone, but she didn't have to. The day before she died, Lisa, along with Janice and their three children, boarded a cruise ship in Miami for a family vacation. While the ship was still docked, Lisa suddenly suffered an irreparable brain aneurysm. She was rushed to the hospital, with Janice and their three kids racing behind in a local taxi.

Once at the hospital, Janice tried frantically to get into Lisa's hospital room, but was denied access because she was not what the state considered "family." Lisa and Janice were prepared for such an event, though. Years before, their lawyer created durable powers of attorney for each other, living wills and advance directives. But without copies in hand, the documents were of no use.

Within an hour, I faxed the paperwork from their home to the hospital, but Janice was still not allowed to see Lisa. Janice was told that she was in an anti-gay state, that she would not receive any information on Lisa's condition, and that their family unit would not be recognized as such. Janice

and their three children sat in the waiting room on the other side of Lisa's wall while Lisa took her last breaths – alone.

Shortly after Lisa's death, Janice requested a copy of Lisa's death certificate in order to collect life insurance and Social Security benefits for their children. Her request was denied by both the State of Florida and the Dade County Medical Examiner. Now Janice is left to raise and financially support their three children – alone.

Marriage, as it currently exists, provides nearly two thousand benefits and protections; one of these is hospital visitation. I have heard numerous stories from families who love well and deeply, as many of you do, and who are denied the basic rights and protections that would accompany the right to marry the one you love.

The attachment of rights to the institution of marriage isn't just an issue for the LGBT community. For those heterosexual couples that consider themselves a family, but wish to remain unmarried, the same legal battles exist. As long as families are defined as only those couples who have entered into a marital union, loved ones will be denied basic legal rights, including access in emergency situations. Eventually, we would like to see these two thousand rights and protections detached from the institution of marriage and available to everyone equally. Until then, we choose to ask for your support to work within the system to ensure that situations like Janice's don't ever happen again.

No one should die alone (pointing to a few Representatives) not you . . . or you . . . or you. I'm here today for all the families, the partners, and the children who love deeply and with their whole hearts. I urge you to overturn the ban on same-sex marriage by voting "yes" on Bill 3151 because it is a question of equality and fundamental human rights. I urge you to vote for equality and fairness for all people so that children can see their adoptive parents in the hospital before they die. I urge you to vote for equality and fairness so that individuals can live and love knowing that they are recognized and protected by their own country. I urge you to vote "yes" on Bill 3151 so that no one has to live with the sorrow of knowing that her beloved died alone.

RHYTHMS OF LIFE, DEATH, AND DANCE

Zurima Cisneros and Gesibela Sousa

WOST 391W: Writing and Queer Representation

The following multimedia piece, the center of which are two photo-poems, “Punto al Pie,” by Gesibela Sousa and “Two of a Kind,” by Zurima Cisneros, was made into a final conjoined performance piece literally at the last minute. The authors had come together for a peer-editing session, and after they read one another’s poetry, they both realized that they had similar elements in their writing and finally chose to collaborate on their work.

The photograph that Gesibela used for her poem is of a young woman who lives in a small coastal city named Loiza on the island of Puerto Rico. She was the Bomba Dance instructor who taught Gesibela to dance when visiting with her high school’s Bomba Dance Group in April, 2004. She brought with her a more authentic street-style of Bomba. Gesibela was inspired by the teacher’s dancing because she was strong and powerful in her movements, and simply because she was a woman dancer.

Zurima’s photograph was that of her two brothers sitting on the earthy ground in her native Venezuela, back in the early 1980s. She was attracted to this particular picture ever since she could remember. Zurima’s interpretation of this photograph played with the idea of metaphorically comparing one brother to life, and the other to death (indeed one of her brothers has passed away), while at the same time uncovering their different social identities: class status; race relations (white and black); and social opportunities (employment and education). The complete description of their performance, including their poems, follows.

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Both wearing beautiful yellow blouses—Gesibela with her flowing multi-colored skirt and Zurima with pants and straw hat—enter from opposite ends, meeting at the center of the classroom. On the blackboard behind them both are the lyrics to the songs, translated into English. These folkloric songs are orally passed down from generation to generation through Bomba music and dance. Keeping eye contact, Gesibela states the title of her poem and waits until Zurima slaps five beats (tum tum tum tum slap!) ending with the Sicá drumming rhythm to finally open up her piece. . .



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“Punto al Pie”

(Zurima drums as Gesibela dances and recites her poem – hitting on her lap continuously... tum tum tum, slap!)

Her movements are flawless
 The leading drum is following her
 She knows what she is doing
 And the drummer?
 He has no clue, no cue
 Her foot work, a wave with wings
 Unpredictable like the ocean
 Flowing like the wind
 Her body has no gravity
 Nothing can hold her down

She has pride, authority
 Ella tiene el poder y control
 She is not part of the music
 She is the music

Her next movement is unfolded
 Soft and gentle, fast and furious
 The floor is hers, the world is hers
 Through her movements
 She is telling you about her struggles
 Her happy days, Her childhood ways,
 Her familia, su país, su pueblo, her nation
 Sus sueños, sus gustos, y sus disgustos, her dreams

She is unpredictable
(Zuri stops drumming)

Del punto del pie, (*slap, slap, slap. Slap!*) Comes a mother
 El repique, con hueso, (*drum roll, then slap!*) a dancer
 Los movimientos de la cadera, (*double slap, slap, slap*) a teacher
 Movimientos de los pies y mucho más, (*four double slaps!*) a friend

¿Quizás mañana sea diferente....?

You never know what she is doing next

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(Zurima begins Sicá drum beat again — tum tum tum, slap!)

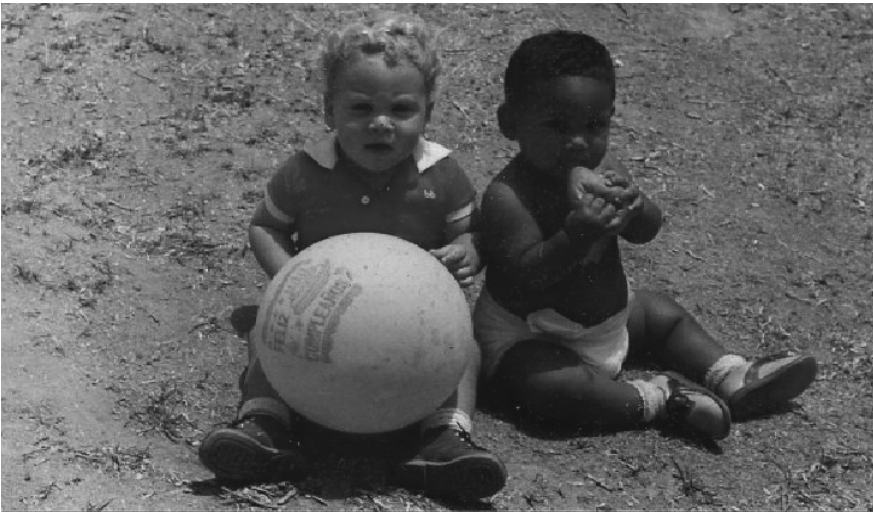
She is a superwoman
 Mi reina de la Bomba (*drumming stops*)
 My queen of Bomba!

Gesi and Zuri now begin to sing an Afro-Caribbean folksong creating a connecting bridge between both poems.

“Oí Una Voz” – I Heard a Voice

Oí una voz } x 2 — I heard a voice
Oí una voz divina del cielo que me llamo – I heard a divine voice from
 heaven that called upon me
Oí una voz divina del cielo que me llamo – I heard a divine voice from
 heaven that called upon me,
Una voz que me dice aquí estoy yo – a voice that said, I’m here
Será mi hermana que se murió, una voz que me dice, ten valor – could it be
 my sister, who has passed away, a voice that said, be strong?
Oí una voz } x 2 — I heard a voice
Oí una voz divina del cielo que me llamo — I heard a divine voice from
 heaven that called upon me

At the end of the song both standing side by side, Gesibela takes a seat and waits for Zurima to state the title of her poem as a cue to begin clapping the Clave beat...



RHYTHMS OF LIFE, DEATH AND DANCE 181

“Two of a Kind”

(In the background of Zurima’s poem, Gesibela lightly claps the Clave rhythm...dun dun dun, bam bam!)

I see the way his hands are steady
 the way he strokes them casually on the *Conga*
 influenced by Afro-Caribbean sounds like Tambor, Folklor, y Bomba
 the way he plays shirtless under the Carib-Sun
 sweat dripping from his golden skin
 his hands get dirty with raw talent
 under the blue moon he soon gathers a crowd to tell *his*-story

(Gesibela continues the Clave beat but now on her lap. . .)

I am not the only body that listens. I am joined by family and *mis amigos*.
 I watch his eyes, his silence.
 He meditates with every quick dun, dun, dun, dun-slap!
 I watch his lips speak a secret
 an unknown presence is there beside him
 when he plays, he is reminded of lost memories
 now awakened by a soul-full solo
 he is reconnecting, a beating heart loud, proud and resurrecting

(Zurima — with the beat of Gesibela’s Clave beat mimics the sounds against her heart, chest)

his brother-spirit is now dancing.

(Zurima begins a quick salsa dance to the beat of Gesibela’s Clave...then Gesibela will cut off the Clave beat, and listen to the rest of the poem...)

Two of a kind
 together on the ground, they once shared space and time
 both sit comfortably, equally rooted to Venezuela’s earthy ground
 Venezolanos, *hermanos*
 one holds the future, Andrés
 a happy-birthday balloon in his hands, an inflated world
 one year ahead, he will learn to fall and then stand
 the other, Kelvin, will be cast as a shadow
 he is the silent witness to deflated lives and cheap lies

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destined for murder – Death.
 his half-brother is destined to move further – Life.

One brother half-glares at the camera
 collar-shirt will travel his inflated world,
 his light-skin will shake clean hands.
 One brother half-cares for the camera
 shirtless, the shadow will climb dark barrio foothills
 his dark skin will dirty his own kind
 A mirrored childhood, reflecting love, innocence-unity, and equality
 Projecting outcomes, free opportunities and oppressed barriers
 success and failure

Those cherished moments are now gone and in the past
 Andrés drums rhythms that stir ancestral roots

*(Gesibela begins the Clave beat once again — as if reconnecting to an
 ancestral spirit)*

spiritual colors – red, yellow, the power of *Changó*
 sounds that keep alive the truth, the memories, the living and the
 non-existing
Mi familia chants and dances to celebrate life and death
 But my brother Andrés, in my eyes, drums music for his missing compan-
 ion, *hermano*.

*(Gesibela now stops the Clave beat, rises, and joins Zurima to sing the last
 song.)*

“Me le da Memoria” – “Give them my Greetings”

Me le da memoria que yo le mandé } x 2 – Give her my greetings that I have
 sent her/him

Que yo le mandé, ay que yo le mandé – that I have sent, oh that I have sent
Dámela memoria, a las que yo mandé – give them my greetings that I have
 sent

MR. MIAMI!: *THE REAL WORLD OF EXOTICISED OTHERS, MASCULINE WHITE MEN, AND THE CAPITALIZATION OF RACIAL DRAMA*

Anissa Sukkar

WOST 391W: Writing and Queer Representation

The assignment for this text was to enter into a scholarly conversation about gay representation and reality TV that was begun by José Muñoz in his article, "Pedro Zamora's Real World of Counterpublicity: Performing an Ethics of the Self." Sukkar argues that the agency available to individuals who participate in reality television, and in particular by JD on Real World, Brooklyn, is limited by the conscious construction of "reality" that the producers create.

MTV's *The Real World* is an influential television show for today's young adult population; the show trains young viewers in the art and structure of reality television (Park 166). To be successful, *The Real World* editors must produce an item for easy consumption that viewers will come back to time and time again. The editors use fast editing, screen cuts, and various other tools to rearrange conversations and create interest and drama from seemingly boring, everyday events. Park points to this when he writes, "by employing a variety of narrative devices, producers construct an entertaining show out of random and mundane events, while simultaneously benefiting from... unscripted interaction among ordinary people and the privilege to use controversial materials such as racial prejudice" (154). Because *The Real World* is known as reality television, the editors have more room to air controversial statements by attributing these statements to the "reality" of the show's structure.

In this essay, I use episode 2 of season 21 entitled “The Outs and Ins of Brooklyn” to explore issues of queer and racial representation. Focusing on the conflicts and conversations between JD, the gay Cuban/Puerto Rican character from Miami, and Chet, the white Mormon character from Utah, I show that *The Real World's* editing techniques create stereotypes of JD that undermine his realness as a queer person and represent him as an exoticised person of color. This process is hidden behind a veil of unscripted “realness” that allows the show to stand above criticism in the popular eye. Despite appearances of having a diverse or multi-cultural cast, the show serves to uphold normativity through silencing JD and thus reifying dominant social structures.

JD and Chet are characters on *The Real World*. Describing the structure of talk shows, Gamson writes, “through specific organizational practices [the editors] structure and enact the opening and closing of sexual and gender boundaries, actively creating a series of popular narratives in which categories are popped open and snapped shut like shutters in a windstorm” (143). In saying this, Gamson brings to light the ability of the editors to portray enough deviance (read: homosexuality) to create interest while simultaneously maintaining this deviance as firmly outside the norm. While I realize that the cast members are people with agency, the editing process used to create *The Real World* is so intense that in the show, the cast members effectively become characters; they are created as stereotypes that are easy for the audience to understand.

The Real World works to naturalize power relations through the editors’ storytelling choices. This naturalization works to create stereotypical dialogues and easily recognizable characters; as Gamson writes, “the show structures pick up on and promote these [characterizations], in order to recoup the threatened loss of difference telling ability” (149). In the case of this episode, JD is simultaneously characterized as gay, effeminate, and Latino. These identities are loaded and complex, and I will further explore them and their implications later in this paper. Gamson continues to describe how this different telling ability allows the viewers to learn how to see the “difference” in their own lives (see Gamson 160). One can imagine the scenario: “My male roommate is caring, thus effeminate, so he must be gay.” Along with the formation of characters comes a character-oriented

narrative that Park describes as “suppress[ing the narrative’s] potential to engage with the serious subject of racial prejudice in America because... [it] highlights the clash between individuals” (Park 159). This draws attention away from the characters’ differing levels of power in whatever situation and puts the blame on personal flaws in a person’s nature, communication techniques, or character.

As I previously mentioned, Chet is a white Mormon from Utah. When he is first seen on screen, he outs himself as a virgin and states in his confessional, “I’m a very religious person, but I want to show people that Mormons are fun.” Here he sets the precedent for how the viewer should think about his identity; he is already legitimating his desire to produce more fun. We find out from a conversation in the car between Chet, Ryan, and Chet’s mom and sisters that JD’s dad is Cuban and his mom is Puerto Rican. JD never once talks about his racial identity to the viewers of the show before others name it for him. JD is exoticised by Chet’s sister as she says, “His eyes are awesome, like, they’re so deep set.” As far as discussing his gay identity in this instance, Chet’s mom states, “Well that’s why he’s so nice!” and Chet replies, laughing, “. . .because he’s gay!” We see as the group returns to the house that Chet’s mom now assumes that being gay means being nice and nurturing and in turn, she looks at JD in a completely different way, telling him, “You take care of Chet.” Butler illuminates what is happening here is her discussion of norms: “Although we need norms in order to live, and to live well, and to know what direction to transform our social work, we are also constrained by norms in ways that sometimes do violence to us and which, for reasons of social justice, we must oppose” (206). We see this violence in the naming of JD’s identity and forcing him into certain roles.

“The Outs” moves into another interrelated storyline where pranks are being pulled on JD. Chet and Ryan decide to use their alarm clock to trick JD into thinking that the doorbell is ringing. There are a variety of shots showing JD running around the house, back and forth between the front and back doors, looking confusedly for the source of the bell. To pose some questions: Why is the prank pulled on JD, the queer/Latino member of the house? Does it have to do with his identity? Why do two white guys feel the right and ability to pull pranks on JD? I am arguing in this case that iden-

tity does matter when the viewer sees the enacting of these pranks, who is pulling them, who is embarrassed, and what the repercussions are. JD is made into a visual joke as we see shots of his confused face paired with shots of Chet and Ryan laughing with the alarm clock in their hands. The audience is given the context that JD cannot take a joke, is unintelligent, and that Chet and Ryan are fun-loving guys.

The pranks continue as a second one is pulled on JD. We see a banana with a condom on it floating in the fish tank in the center of the house. Chet and Ryan both laugh heartily at the display, calling it trashy. JD asks Ryan if it is his condom, and Ryan replies that it is one of the NYC condoms. We then see Chet in his confessional saying that people are given these NYC condoms on the subway all the time. However, JD suspects that Chet has been going through his things. He claims that his backpack and drawers are open, and he states in his confessional, "You don't fucking go into people's drawers and take their shit." JD reacts by meeting with his other housemates; they agree with him that the prank was out of line, and they decide Sarah should talk to Chet first as follows:

Sarah: "I guess what people are really concerned about is their personal space and personal property and stuff like that. <cut> Some things, like, are funny and some things aren't funny. . . . You know, you went in JD's drawers and pulled out, like, a condom."

Chet: "I didn't go in his drawers and pull it out."

Sarah: "He was under the impression that you had gone through, like, his backpack was open. . . ."

Chet: "I didn't go through his backpack! I never went through anything."

Sarah: "Do you want to cause a divide in the house or do you want to. . . ?"

Chet: "Give me a break, Sarah. As non-judgmental as everyone claims to be, they're pretty judgmental."

Later he talks to JD:

Chet: “Why is it that you find yourself accusing me to other people that I took your condom and put that around the banana.”

JD: “Because all my stuff was open yesterday.”

Chet: “I didn’t open your stuff!”

Chet: “Oh my gosh, it’s a *prank* dude!”

JD: “Are the pranks going to stop?”

Chet: “I don’t know yet...”

JD: “Well I’m telling you right now they need to stop with me.”

Chet: “You need to quit being so sensitive.”

One can easily see Chet being continuously defensive and uncommunicative. He is not open to even talking about how he could possibly be wrong. He enacts his power through leaving as Sarah is talking. Butler writes, “To find that one is fundamentally unintelligible (indeed, that the laws of culture and of language find one to be an impossibility) is to find that one has not yet achieved access to the human” (218). We see this in the above scenario that JD is considered by Chet to be unintelligible enough, his emotions and concerns illegitimate enough, to feel okay about dehumanizing him through pulling pranks. This is reified by the editors’ choice not to confirm or deny to the audience whether Chet went through JD’s stuff despite complete surveillance over the house. I see this choice as meaning one of two things: (1) Chet did not do anything; (2) They made the choice not to show it. Let’s rationalize this second option: on one hand, it is more interesting to the viewer not to see what actually happened; viewers are able to create more drama in their imaginations. On the other hand, something more sinister is at play where the editors do not feel the need to show Chet messing with JD’s things. They are conforming to societal norms that do not require explanation for violence done to marginalized bodies. As Butler writes, “We continue to live in a world in which one can risk serious disenfranchisement and physical violence for the pleasure one seeks, the fantasy one embodies, and the gender one performs” (214). As critical viewers, what we are allowed to see is as important as what we are not allowed to see.

These pranks and other conversations between these two characters are an example of the recurring theme on *The Real World*, showing “the conflict between a racially sensitive Black person (usually from a city) and a racially naïve or bigoted White person (usually from a small town in the South)” (Park 153). Although the editors neither confirm nor deny whether Chet took the condom from JD, the prank is contextualized by an earlier conversation between the two characters, which similarly exoticises and oversexualizes JD as a gay Latino. The conversation portrays a complicated tension between JD and Chet similar to that which is described by Park. JD and Chet are in their room unpacking their things, and Chet spots JD placing lube into one of his drawers:

Chet: “Personal lubricant, what’s this for? You’re planning on doing the dirty!”

JD: (in confessional) “I don’t think he’s ever been exposed to, like, a gay guy before.”

Chet: “I’m just really intrigued by this extra-large condom.”

JD: “Why?”

Chet: “Because I wanna know exactly what equates an extra-large condom. . . I mean are we looking at about a 6 by 7. . . Huge penises are a rare commodity, they really are. I think they are. I’ve been around enough people in the fraternity house to know that they are a rare commodity.”

In this scene, JD refuses to answer Chet’s questions. He seems disbelieving that this conversation is even happening. Chet moves into the kitchen and yells to Ryan:

Chet: “He’s rocking an extra-large condom!”

Ryan: “He’s Latino.”

Chet: “Extra-large though? (JD walks into the room.) There he is – Latino heat!”

Ryan: “Mr. Miami!”

The assumptions happening in this scene are astounding. Here we see JD created as an exoticised and over sexualized Latino lover. Chet imbibes pornographic images on JD's body and turns it into something to joke about and question. Park poses the question "What are the social implications of a popular reality series that consistently displays people's different racial views and racially charged conflicts as a thriving narrative?" (153). In this case, we see the conflict in JD's obviously strained responses, or lack of response, to Chet's probing about his racialized dick.

So we have JD's race, body, and sexuality constantly questioned throughout "The Outs." I would like to now focus on the delegitimization of queerness on the show through a couple scenes. In one scene, Sarah (straight, white) and Katelynn (white transwoman) are having a conversation in the kitchen about gender roles, living in a misogynistic society, and the repression of human sexuality as Sarah says, "I hope that we enter a modern renaissance where we can appreciate life the way it should be and not repress things like human sexuality." This conversation is completely delegitimized by cutting it with shots of Ryan's confessional where he is rolling his eyes, wearing a shirt that says "SARCASM" on it, looking around, and *just waiting* for the conversation to be over. Ryan says, "So, the lame bus just pulled into our kitchen and dropped off yet another discussion. My head is going to explode!" Through a series of three or four confessional shots we see an incredibly important discourse, one that is not often seen in the media, being made completely unworthy and inauthentic.

Further delegitimization of queer identities occurs when JD, Sarah, Chet, Ryan, and Baya go out to a gay bar in Chelsea. JD offers Ryan \$100 to dance with the drag queen at the bar. He doesn't really dance with her due to embarrassment, so the bet changes to him receiving the money if he lets her kiss him on the cheek. Ryan agrees, and at the last moment, the drag queen kisses him on the lips resulting in his being extremely disgusted. He proceeds to wipe his mouth off with his shirt and continue to make nauseated expressions. What this does is create the queer and trans identity as something to be disgusted by. To further complicate this, however, JD remarks on this experience in his confessional, "My first impression of Ryan was that he was closed-minded. And now he's definitely opened up and he seems to be more open-minded." We see a contradiction in JD focusing

Ryan's act of kissing the drag queen rather than his homophobic reaction. This reaction is further reified in Ryan's conversation with his girlfriend on the phone:

Ryan's girlfriend: "So you kissed a dude slash girl?"

Ryan: "Yeah, I think!"

Ryan's girlfriend: "That is disgusting!"

We see a trans identity made completely un-genuine and unreal. Trans identity is mocked and othered through essentializing the drag queen as a "dude slash girl" and trans-ness is simply said to be disgusting. This becomes even more painful to imagine when we think of how much of the audience relates to Ryan's (straight, white) character. As the editors create this show "for a world of *potentially* politicized queers and Latinos; for a mass public that is structured by the cultural forces of homophobia and racism; for those who have no access to more subculturally based cultural production and grassroots activism" (Muñoz 146), we see this implicitly negative message about transpeople sent out to the public.

I wanted to now move into how, despite the above explored naming and stereotyping of identities, there may still be space for authentic counter-publicity and subversion; however, this episode has not lent itself to displaying any moments of that space being enacted. Nevertheless, I will try to bring this paper to a more radical note through mentioning that JD is a queer person of color. Being on the show, JD is able to enact a working on the self for others that Muñoz defines as, "the enactment of resistance to the reductive multicultural pluralism that is deployed against them; the production of an intervention within the majoritarian public sphere that confronts phobic ideology; and the production of counterpublicity that allows the *possibility* of subaltern counterpolitics" (143). JD is able to force himself into the public's eye through a performance of self on television. He is given the space to perform his politics, ethics, and sexuality through his interactions and dialogue. Muñoz adds, "Work on the ethics of self ultimately allows us a new vantage point to consider the larger games of truth that organize the social and the relations of these games to states of domination"

(144). JD's role and agency on the show give the audience a character who is on the margins of society. Perhaps some of the audience is happy to see a queer brown man on television; perhaps they are as critical as I am. JD offers the possibility to disrupt people's notions of race, that Latino men can also be queer. We are able to see meaningful interracial interactions, perhaps not in this episode or in my above examples. But, the possibility is there as Park writes, "Although reality shows appear to function to reinforce the dominant beliefs about race, they may simultaneously produce critical racial discourses that might be oppositional and progressive, to the extent that they may disrupt the audiences' perspectives on race" (156). Muñoz describes the confessional space on the shows as one of the places where the cast members may enact their own formation and ethics of self. We can see the possibility for JD's confessional space to act as a place of agency as it "resist[s] dominant modes of subjection [and] entails not only contesting dominant modalities of governmental and state power but also opening up a space for new social formations" (145). However, in this episode JD rarely makes use of this confessional space in a way that furthers non-dominant discourses; he uses it to express his opinions.

At the end of "The Outs," JD and Chet have a conversation where JD explains his difficult past and apologies and forgiveness are given for the pranks. JD describes growing up with five brothers and one sister, all from different fathers. He himself grew up in foster care. He explains how he wants to be able to make his own family, his hopes and his dreams. In the confessional, Chet talks about how he realizes that there is not a lot of common ground between them, but that he respects and appreciates that JD would open up to him. In JD's confessional, he says that Chet has been apologetic for his actions and that he is coming around. We see here JD and Chet's complicated interracial relationship reduced to personal feuds that are easily resolved. Through this interaction we can see the contradiction Butler points out, "When the norm appears at once to guarantee and threaten social survival. . . then conforming and resisting become a compounded and paradoxical relation to the norm, a form of suffering and a potential site for politicization" (217). JD is performing a political act through being out about his family structure. He is able to create an alternative discourse to more normative ways of being brought up.

Muñoz would write that JD is using, “the power of celebrity to make counterpublic interventions by way of using the mainstream media, a mode of publicity that is usually hostile to counterpublic politics” (151). In many of the above examples this does not happen, exemplifying how the power of editing serves in this case to create a mostly oppressive discourse around queer and racialized characters. However, in JD resolving the conflict with Chet and continuing to be able to have conversations with him, JD is allowing boundaries to remain fluid and open. JD is a queer character of color, so if homosexuality is an inherently political project, then through his presence on the show he is challenging the dominant narrative of sexuality, race, and gender. Through looking at where power is placed on the show, who has a voice and who is silenced, what assumptions are made about individual characters, and the structure and editing of the show, we can see popular discourses surrounding sexuality, race, and gender simultaneously reified and resisted against.

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