Gleanings: A Journal of First-Year Student Writing

Volume 13

Siena College

2022-2023

Cover Image: Sunset over Siena, Italy

Photograph taken by Britt Haas, December 30, 2019

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SIENA

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"This World is a Puzzle": Finding Purpose and Healing Through Songs About Nature

By Emma Andros

Dr. Haas- Music: The Soundtrack of Our Lives

Getting lost, whether it be in a song or along a nature trail, allows individuals to momentarily avoid the monotonous tick of life's clock and remember what it means to not just exist, but live. Nature is a gift supporting the wellbeing of all people, regardless of socially constructed labels of differentiation. Since the natural world is an open resource accessible to everyone, all people are capable of learning from it. Exemplified by songwriters such as Jack Johnson, Gims, and Tim McGraw, nature is an inspiration that encourages musicians, and consequently their audiences, to escape from reality and learn about themselves through the environment. When it comes to songs about nature, it is not just about getting lost, but rather the lessons learned about purpose and healing that come with being found.

Songwriters who are inspired by nature use natural surroundings to better understand their own character. Musicians practice this method of self-reflection by writing song lyrics. For Jack Johnson, nature is something of utmost admiration. In "Talk of the Town," he writes, "I want to be where the talk of the town/ Is about last night when the sun went down/ Yeah, and the trees all dance/ And the warm wind blows in that same old sound" (Johnson 00:00:29-45). Johnson voices the opinion that sunsets, forests, and other elements of nature are more impressive and noteworthy than materialistic gossip. In today's society where someone new is always being slandered, individuals do not think twice before doing just the same. If people refrained from cycles of critical chitchat, and instead spent more time outdoors, they, too, would have the opportunity to step out of the daily routines of gossip and reevaluate their purposes of communicating. The world would be a better place if more people connected to the natural world, either by going outside and experiencing serene landscapes firsthand or by listening to songs about nature that reflect morals of coexistence and peace. Humanity has a lot to learn from the harmony of the great outdoors and social change starts with individuals. The talk of every town should be rooted in respect, but until enough people believe that to be true, the current values of society will not change.

Congolese French rapper, singer, and songwriter, Gims, learns about himself as an individual when he argues against the environmental injustices of humankind in his song, "Le Pire." The title of this rap song translates from French to mean "The Worst." The rough English version of his lyrics emphasize, "The worst is not the wickedness of mankind/ But the silence of people pretending to hesitate/ The worst is to not admit all that's happening to us" (Gims 00:00:09-17, 00:02:29-34). Gims respects nature to the extent that he is willing to call out the indifference of humanity in order to compel individuals to change. Had it not been for his appreciation

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of the planet, this song would not exist; the environment has had a significant impact on him, to the point where he writes songs about it. Advocating for the protection of natural resources and wildlife across the globe is not a common message of rap songs, but Gims brings enough passion into this song that his message is well respected. In choosing to promote what he believes instead of what listeners want to hear, Gims authentically established his own purpose, and encourages others to be initiators of positive change as well.

Both musicians and their fans might argue against the universality of self-reflective nature-inspired music and instead suggest that only certain genres, like folk, view nature as a spark that ignites personal growth. Today, music encompasses a wide variety of genres, each representing a community of different interests, attitudes, and values. According to music critic Carl Engel, the success of some styles of music, like jazz, are not based on the message of the lyrics, but instead on instrumental elements that have "harmonic richness and variety." This makes it difficult for certain genres to focus on the natural world. While it is true that the theme of nature is seen more frequently in some genres compared to others, it does not necessarily mean that the natural world is catered towards certain styles of music. In fact, nature is inspirational to musicians across international borders, races, and languages- not just genres. Nature's morals are present in Jack Johnson's folk song, Gims' rap, and even Tim McGraw's country song. Although it may be presented in different ways depending on the characteristics of the genre, all types of music have the potential to highlight how nature inspires people.

Typically, on the flip side of a fast pace, loud bass, and drumbeats is country music- another genre through which artists utilize the natural world in a journey of self-discovery. In his song, "Where the Green Grass Grows," Tim McGraw explains where he will live in the future by describing that he wants to "plant our dreams where the peaceful river flows/ Where the green grass grows" (00:01:06-16). McGraw not only respects nature, but he also entrusts it to be intertwined with his dreams. Relaxing in the great outdoors is something countless people look forward to as they age. Being outside is known to be calming because when surrounded by nature, nothing else matters. Sunshine heals those in dark times, the ocean comforts the restless, and mountainous landscapes challenge the curious. In what might seem like silent solitude, the natural world speaks and heals. Through songs like "Where the Green Grass Grows," music proves that when an artist feels secure in their understanding of their own character, including what they want in life, they express this to their audiences through song lyrics. The natural world is a catalyst promoting musicians' expressions of self-identity and personal growth. Artists cannot control how an audience reacts to these explanations, but ideally, listeners are emboldened to take what they have observed about a song and apply it to their own lives. By following in the footsteps of musicians, audiences are led to better understand who the universe calls them to be through songs about nature.

If more people listened to songs about nature, with lyrics that suggest the artist has gone through a self-reflective journey inspired by natural influences, then there would be more people embarking on journeys to

find purpose and healing of their own. By following the example of musicians, people will learn more about themselves. Not only does a listener learn about the creator's mindset, but they can also use the lyrics to evaluate their own attitudes. In exploring the depths of oneself, individuals are given an opportunity to change who they are, in terms of their outlook on life, what they advocate for, and their dreams for the future. A restorative process, made possible by one's openness to change, begins to take place. From there, character development and self-improvement flourish. In a world where people only live once, self-reflection and personal growth through songs about nature are virtues that teach lessons of purpose and healing, keeping individuals from getting too lost in life's travels.

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The assignment for this essay asked students to consider a lesson learned from the summer reading text, The Nickel Boys.

Through poignant personal connections to her own life, the author speaks to the importance of

advocacy and activism to honor those who have been lost.

Living Life for Them

By Katherine O. Bisset

Dr. Stein- Out Of Bounds

At some point, we all go through a traumatic experience that can affect the trajectory of our whole lives. The impact the trauma has on that trajectory can vary depending on the intensity of the experience. For some, the changes in attitude or character can be minimal, but for others just a loud noise or sudden movement can be enough to induce panic, discomfort, or extreme stress. In *The Nickel Boys*, Colson Whitehead lets readers into Nickel Academy, a juvenile reformatory school in Florida during the 1960s, focusing on Elwood Curtis's traumatizing experiences there. With no connection to the outside world, Elwood lives every day in fear as he faces beatings, bullying, discrimination, and threats to his life. Those boys who survive, known as The White House Boys, still live in fear and suffer the enduring physical and mental scars from their traumatic experiences. This is true for Jack Turner, a friend of Elwood's, who doesn't find respite from the trauma until much later in life. Like Jack Turner, I, too, know what it's like to live with scars from a traumatic experience. On December 14, 2023, it will be eleven years since a sick man opened fire in my school– Sandy Hook Elementary– and killed 20 of my classmates, six educators, and with them, my childhood. Like Turner, I carry the weight of their unjustified passing and continue to live for them by seizing opportunities that they never had the chance to experience. The effects of such severe trauma never disappear, so it is important to learn how to accept and grow from them. Ultimately, Turner joined other White House Boys in speaking out against the discriminatory acts and traumatic experiences that never should have happened. Personally, I am similarly honoring those who died by bringing concern about and awareness to the issue of gun control when I have the opportunity to do so.

Trauma can be felt physically first, then emotionally afterward. After trying to break up a fight, Elwood is punished by being taken to the White House to be brutally beaten. Elwood is beaten so badly that he spends five days physically recovering in the infirmary. Whitehead explains that this physical trauma was compounded by emotional trauma when on visiting day, Elwood sees his grandmother and "He told her he was okay but sad, it was difficult but he was hanging in there, when all he wanted to say was, *Look at what they did to me, look at what they did to me*" (83). Elwood is too scared to show his grandmother the physical, let alone the emotional scars because he knows by telling her, it will break her heart. This interaction happens only shortly after the initial trauma is experienced, so Elwood, sensitive about the topic, does not yet know how to voice his pain to

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loved ones. Developing the ability to reflect on one's traumatic experiences is a challenging task that all trauma victims face.

One way people can accept the scars of their traumatic experience is by living vicariously for those whose lives have been lost. This is exactly what Jack Turner does for Elwood in a literal sense by taking on Elwood's name. Whitehead explains Turner's decision by saying, "It felt right. He used the name, from then on when anybody asked, to honor his friend. To live for him" (202). In other words, Whitehead gives Turner another chance at life, not only to detach himself from the Jack Turner he was before, but to live his life as Elwood would have, but never got the chance to. Our government, in this scenario, is like Turner, aware of the lives being lost, along with all the pain and suffering, but not wanting to truly acknowledge the trauma. It is only much later that this trauma is brought to light when Turner joins The White House Boys and, as a group, advocates for attention to be brought to their experiences. Even though I didn't take my classmates' names, I, too, want to do things that they would be proud of, like graduating high school, going to college, and learning to grow despite my trauma. It was to honor them that in high school, I was a proud member of Jr. Newtown Action Alliance, which called upon state senators to pass gun control laws, held candlelight vigils for victims, and participated in marches, rallies, and protests. There have been 3,500 mass shootings since the one in my town almost eleven years ago, and the government still remains silent (Silvestri and Jewell). To fully honor those who lost their lives, social and political change is necessary. Nothing will ever justify the lives that were lost in the tragedy I experienced, but pushing for gun reform may prevent similar tragedies from happening again.

My biggest fear when I tell people my story is that they take nothing away from it– when they just say, "I'm so sorry that happened to you," and move on. People think that because the subject is so sensitive, I don't want to talk about it, but that couldn't be further from the truth. The best way to keep my classmates' and teachers' legacy alive is by talking about who they were and what happened to all of us. It took a long time for Turner to realize this and that is perhaps because he did not think people could ever understand. When Turner finally tells Millie who he really is and what happened to him and Elwood, "She didn't get it. How could she, living in the free world her whole life" (Whitehead 204). Because he is finally ready to talk about the trauma he experienced, he doesn't stop there. He explains his real identity, saying that "He hadn't served his time, as he told her years ago, but ran. Then he told her the rest, including the story of his friend. 'His name was Elwood'" (Whitehead 204). This is the turning point for Turner; he finally opens up about his past, and tries to live in "the free world." The free world, to me, is where everyone else is living without fear, or without having this past event looming over your head. This is almost exactly how every conversation starts when I open up about my story; at first, people do not get it. But, like Turner's heart-to-heart with Millie, the best conversations are of course the ones that are two hours long (Whitehead 204). These conversations make me feel as if I'm telling

my classmates' stories. When I share my experiences with others and it turns into long conversations, I hope the people I'm talking to receive the information in a way that makes them want to make change as well. The more people there are to support the cause, the more change we can make.

In an unfortunate way, trauma bonds people. Small groups, large communities, and even entire countries can come together in an attempt to solve problems that result in traumatic events. It took Turner almost 50 years to finally do something about his past trauma. He connected with The White House Boys as a survivor honoring those who died at Nickel Academy. When Turner finally decided to come forward about his past, I think a little piece of Elwood was telling him to do it– to stand up for what's right–because Elwood always believed in the good of humanity. In this way, when Turner gave up Elwood's name, he really adopted Elwood's persona. I think a piece of the lives lost more than ten years ago lives with me. Like Turner, I hope to bring them justice by continuing to live for them and by coming together with those who share a desire to solve the problems that allowed for the trauma to happen in the first place. Since 2012, 3,500 mass shootings have occurred, but I hope advocacy for the end of gun violence will allow them to stop (Silvestri and Jewell).

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The author for this essay presents an original argument about how Franciscan values should inform civil discourse in order to bring about a more just society.

The Power of Franciscan Values and Pragmatics in a Democracy

By Keiarra Collins

Dr. Nadeau- Words as Action in a Mediated Society: Not Just Sticks and Stones

In a democracy, we are fortunate to have the right to use words of our choice thanks to the first amendment; however, the most essential aspect of this freedom is how we decide to use our words. Our words should be used to advocate for the rights of other citizens. Furthermore, such words must be explicit, polite, and collaborative in order to prevent harm to the one with whom we are communicating. Franciscan values form the core of polite communication that is necessary for both communicators to experience satisfaction, respect, and cooperation. If citizens within a democracy choose to use words based on Franciscan values and proper pragmatics, then they can advocate for everyone's individual rights for the collective good and thereby improve society.

To understand why verbally advocating for others' rights in a democracy should be demonstrated through Franciscan values, one must understand what these values entail. Franciscan values, established by St. Francis's behavior, include altruism, serving others, and respect. According to Sr. Margaret Carney, St. Francis exemplified the essential value of serving others when "he became a volunteer, he was doing service work; he helped poor churches... and took care of the sick poor – the lepers who had no social system of protection" (30). Helping the community by serving others is a component of Franciscan values that encompasses altruism. In other words, serving others should be one's goal in any interaction, including through one's words. We can incorporate altruism in our conversations as a way to serve others. As described by Thomas of Celano, Saint Francis demonstrated altruism when he offered his money "with great devotion," to the priest of the dilapidated church (29). When Saint Francis sacrificed his possessions for the collective good and the church's benefit, he portrayed a sense of altruism. Altruism is not limited to philanthropy. It can be practiced when considering the other person's wants and needs when communicating. If we fail to account for the other person's feelings, values, and desires, we would be better off talking to a mirror because then we wouldn't expect to impact anyone but ourselves. In addition to acting altruistically, in Saint Francis's interactions with those he served, he most certainly respected them. St. Francis demonstrated respect to everyone because he understood that respect is what everyone deserves, and is therefore the key in social interactions. Showing respect to individuals, especially in a democracy, is essential to carry out polite conversations. For effective communication to incite any form of improvement for citizens in a democracy, one must avoid being selfish when talking to others, and instead communicate in a way that respects and serves others.

St. Francis inspired people to follow his example and the first female Franciscan, Clare of Assisi, challenged society in a respectable manner using Franciscan values. Living in a democracy, we can learn from Clare's example as one can change their own path if they practice altruism and serving others. Positive communication based on the words we choose to use can change society more than violent actions can. According to Carney, Clare "longed for a radical freedom. She intuited a path of peace, of simple economic structures in which women would carve their own destiny" (31). Democratic societies today allow for individuals' freedom to carve their own destiny and the most impactful method to advocate for one's rights to carve that destiny is to use Franciscan values while doing so; thus, people should communicate in an altruistic, respectful, and selfless way.

In a democracy, people have the freedom to use language to advocate for change. The delivery of the language in terms of tone and diction affects the interpreted meaning. If the delivery of the message is implemented using Franciscan values, then the desired outcome for both parties is more apt to be achieved because the speaker considers the public, along with intending to serve the public. Thus, the public feels heard, so they will be on board for the change. Citizens can use their words to change society by using Franciscan values, similar to how St. Francis and Clare of Assisi carved their own destinies and in doing so, changed their society through altruistic and respectful actions. What we have to do is implement Franciscan values into our language practices in order to advocate for change that would allow everyone to carve their own destinies in this democratic society.

Some people believe that advocating for the rights of others can cause harm because people can feel offended; instead, they believe people should simply advocate for their own– and only their own– rights. It is true that miscommunication can occur. A statement can be interpreted differently than the speaker intended and this can cause a person to feel harmed or offended. This is why it is critical for a speaker to use proper pragmatics when delivering the message. Jenny Thomas, an expert in verbal interaction and pragmatics, explains that "'meaning is not something which is inherent in the words alone, nor is it produced by the speaker alone, nor by the hearer alone. Making meaning is a dynamic process'" (qtd. in Cameron 68). Thomas suggests that words by themselves have no meaning. Instead, the meaning is established when the speaker and listener understand the subject matter. Therefore, the speaker can harm the hearer when the meaning of the utterance is interpreted as offensive, impolite, irrelevant, or inaccurate, regardless of the speaker's harmless intentions. Saint Francis originally talked in riddles to prevent harm to himself and others (Thomas of Celano 28). However, riddles are not processed in an effective manner because they are ambiguous and unclear. There is room for misinterpretation. Saint Francis learned that he had a greater effect on his followers when he spoke directly. There is a way to prevent harm to others while communicating, which is to speak

explicitly, altruistically, and respectfully. Clearly, to advocate for others' rights, one must communicate using Franciscan values and pragmatics.

       Since advocating for individual rights is the most essential freedom granted in a democratic society, citizens must participate in advocating for everyone's individual rights by using their words to better society. A pragmatic arrangement of altruistic and respectful words is essential. Saint Francis, along with his followers, practiced altruism, service to others, and respect and we should learn from his example. Our words can benefit others living in this democracy if the words we use are polite, explicit, and collaborative. Basing our communication on Franciscan values is the most effective way to advocate for others' rights and this effort on behalf of the greater good is what benefits democratic society the most.

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In this essay, the author presents compelling research to support a sophisticated, original thesis and thus expertly balances the "they say" and "I say."

A Dark Fantasy: Lolitas as Victims of a Capitalistic Patriarchy

By Tomoki Cooper

Dr. Haas- Women: Their Voices, Their Values, Their Vision

Japanese society can be extremely stressful and suffocating. In response to immense social pressures, the Japanese seek out artistic forms of expression, one being fashion. A fashion subculture that grew to popularity in the 1990s and early 2000s is the Lolita fashion subculture. Garnering attention for its flashy and unconventional style, as well as its blatantly pedophilic namesake, media coverage of these eccentric women extended to the West. Due to the novel by Vladimir Nabokov of the same name, which portrays a pedophilic relationship, many misconstrue the intentions of Lolitas to be sexual fulfillment. The reality is quite the opposite. In trying to escape the sexualization that adult women experience, Lolitas, as they have come to be called, portray themselves as pure, innocent, doll-like beings. This attempt is proven futile and counterproductive as men continue to sexualize these women even as they take on child-like characteristics. The sinister reality is that these women have been manipulated into portraying themselves as children in order to satiate the sexual desires and pedophilic tendencies of men in Japanese society. This reveals the uncomfortable truth that these women inadvertently become the very dolls that they aspire to portray, only as puppets of the patriarchy. With a growing community in the West, Japanese society has molded the Lolita into becoming a tool to normalize pedophilia and pedophilic aesthetics on an international scale, indirectly endangering young girls across the globe.

The Lolita style and culture were born in Harajuku, the fashion center of Japan, but they were popularized through magazines. Magazines have historically proved to be not only a source of inspiration, but also a form of communication among Japanese women. In fact, Japan has a history of female-dominated communities being formed and cultivated through magazines. In *Reflections on the Way to the Gallows*, Mikiso Hane, a translator and professor of history at Knox College, explains that "in 1921 a group of women organized the Sekirankai, a separate socialist women's group."[1] Here it is clear that women exclusive groups existed in Japan prior to any fashion subcultures, and in the same collection Hane describes that the Sekirankai published its ideas through magazines, which helped increase membership. The Lolitas would similarly create a community through collective consumption of magazines. In conducting interviews with these women, An Nguyen, a professor of philosophy at Western Ontario University, introduces Minami, a former member of the

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[1] Kaneko Fumiko, *The Prison Memoirs of a Japanese Woman* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 126.

Lolita community, who was influenced by such magazines. According to Nguyen, "Minami describes Sachi as her ideal image of a princess. She has been a fan ever since she saw photographs of Sachi in magazines like *KERA* and *The Gothic & Lolita Bible*."[2] Here it can be seen that these magazines featured women such as Sachi dressed to embody the elegance and purity of Lolitas that enraptured consumers like Minami. Clearly these magazines were catered toward young Japanese women through a Pop and bubbly aesthetic. Magazines like *The Gothic & Lolita Bible* quite literally became something of a holy text for these women, except instead of eternal salvation, these magazines promised salvation from sexualization. These very magazines would first use the term Lolita in reference to these women. This was in the 1990s, when a magazine called *Jyosei Seven* coined the term. It was not the Lolitas who named themselves, it was the magazines.[3] The name that was chosen for these women was intentional, as they would help in manifesting a world and society that reflected the pedophilic values exhibited in their namesake. The magazines were a device for manipulation.

A magazine might help create a community, but the goal of the magazine is to harness the consumptive potential of this community in order to generate revenue. The Lolitas are victims of this capitalistic ploy, believing that buying into this culture would help them escape sexualization. Little did they realize that they were doing quite the opposite. The Lolita community generated global interest, no doubt thanks to a name with such shock value. Media coverage drew attention from the Western world as well, expanding the market. A Lolita community emerged in the United States, and many non-Japanese engaged in this culture, holding gatherings and tea parties where the center of attention would be the intricate dresses that adorn the women. Sami Thomas, a member of the Lolita community in the United States, explains that "A dress will cost anywhere between two and five hundred dollars. Sometimes real fancy limited edition dresses will be more in the thousand-dollar range, definitely out of my reach. A blouse, a brand blouse, will also probably set you back another 150 to 175 dollars depending how fancy the blouse is…A brand Cord (outfit) could cost you probably close to a thousand."[4] Here Thomas is lamenting how pricey Lolita outfits can be. This expensive hobby is purely exploitative. Preying on the escapist fantasies of these women, Lolita magazines have sold them a false promise and thereby made a significant profit as did the clothing manufacturers that provide the necessary fashion pieces.

Originating in the 1970s, Lolita fashion is heavily influenced by ideas of European aristocracy. Adorning themselves in frilly dresses, petticoats, and bonnets, Lolitas aspire to transform into an idealized version of a European noblewoman. In many ways, it is an appropriation of western culture and aristocracy. This is not only

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[2] An Nguyen, "Eternal Maidens: Kawaii Aesthetics and Otome Sensibility in Lolita Fashion," *East Asian Journal of Popular Culture* 2, no. 1 (2016):18, accessed April 3, 2023, Gale Academic OneFile Select.

[3] "What is Lolita Fashion? Explaining Definitions and History in an Easy-to-Understand Manner. Introducing Famous Brands as Well!!," Roris, last modified 2023, accessed April 14, 2023, https://www.lolis.jp/articles/111.

[4] Sami Thomas, "Sami Thomas' Journey with Lolita Fashion," in *Audible,* produced by Juxtaposed Journeys, podcast, audio, 25:00, accessed February 7, 2023, https://www.audible.com/pd/Sami-Thomass-Journey-with-Lolita-Fashion-Podcast/B09Q376314.

portrayed in their dress, but also in the way that they act. Speaking in polite and formal Japanese, these women embody their notions of elegance and femininity. In studying a Lolita magazine, cultural anthropologist Isaac Gagné states, "The phrases in the Lady's Speech column include contemporary honorific words such as *osore irimasu* (excuse me) and *watakushi* (honorific form of I), somewhat archaic and literary word forms, such as polite conjugations in-*seu*, as well as phrases with aristocratic connotations like *sayo de gozaimasu* no (Is that so?) and *go-kigen yo* (goodbye, hello)."[5] Essentially what Gagné is pointing out is that these women turn the Lolita fashion style into a lifestyle by adapting a refined form of Japanese language. At first glance this obsession with European aristocracy may seem nonsensical. This is where a second influence for Lolita fashion comes into play, Victorian era children's literature. Specifically, *Alice in Wonderland* became an integral part of not only the aesthetic, but also the ideological aspect of the subculture. The story of Alice serves as a manifestation of the desire of Lolitas to escape modern Japanese society. For the Lolitas, European aristocracy is so far removed from their actual lives both geographically and temporally that to them it becomes something of a Wonderland, a fantasy world free from the social pressures and sexualization that women must face. In this way, being a Lolita is a form of escapism for these women.

The arguably most crucial piece that completes this escape is *kawaii* culture. This culture that originated in Japan during the 1980s embraces a bubbly, pop aesthetic that emphasizes cuteness. At its core, the *kawaii* aesthetic was an evolution of the *shojo* culture of pre-war Japan, which similarly stressed cuteness. *Shojo* translates to young girl, and *kawaii* means cute, thus Lolitas combine the aesthetics of European nobles with that of cute young girlhood. The emphasis on youth and purity plays an important role as these women attempt to escape sexualization. Although statistics might indicate a relatively low crime rate and sexual assault rate, in analyzing Japan's sexual abuse incidents, Northeastern graduate, and writer of the Northeastern University Political Review, Beza Zenebe points out that in Japan, "less than five percent of incidents are even reported; for children and LGBTQ+ survivors, this rate is likely lower."[6] Zenebe brings to light that most sexual assault cases go unreported, which further exposes the extent to which Japan's society is oppressive and patriarchal. In turning to the aesthetics of childhood and young girlhood, Lolitas try to reclaim the innocence and purity that society has stripped from them. In explaining the differences between the *shojo* culture and the Lolita culture, Asuka, a designer for a Lolita fashion brand, argues that Lolita is "Not *shojo*, but in my mind, it's something even—even more innocent (*junsui*)."[7] Here Asuka is trying to explain that the innocence and

[5] Isaac Gagné, "Urban Princesses: Performance and 'Women's Language' in Japan's Gothic/Lolita Subculture," *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 18, no. 1 (2008): 137, accessed February 9, 2023, ProQuest Central.

[6] Beza Zenebe, "Cracking Japan's Systematic Sexual Abuse Culture," Northeastern University Political Review, Northeastern University, last modified 2023, accessed April 28, 2023, https://nupoliticalreview.org/2021/01/31/cracking-japans-systemic-sexual-abuse-culture/.

[7] Nguyen, "Eternal Maidens," 22.

purity that young girls exhibit not only influences Lolita culture, but is also glorified. This is reflected in both how they dress and a make-up style that emphasize juvenile features such as large eyes and small noses. With the popularization of Lolita fashion in the early 2000s, this childlike aesthetic has bled into the rest of Japanese culture and style, normalizing pedophilic beauty standards.

The influences of Lolita fashion all point towards an idealized maidenhood and girlhood that is immune to the constant sexualization that adult women are subjected to. Despite the ideals touted by the community itself, many are left perplexed at what seems to be a clear contradiction. In their efforts to escape sexualization, these women failed in possibly the most important aspect that determines how society views them: their name. Considering the aspirations of the community, dressing as children's dolls while calling themselves Lolitas is arguably the most counterproductive and impractical choice to make. Infamous for portraying a pedophilic relationship between an adult man and a young girl, *Lolita* by Vladimir Nabokov is the namesake for this Japanese fashion community. As the novel predates even the earliest renditions of the Lolita fashion style, it is clear that the association had existed. This brings a vividly pedophilic and sexual implication to a fashion aesthetic specifically tailored to exude innocence. It comes off as some sort of elaborate joke, an ironic jab at the futile attempts of these women to escape sexualization.

With a name that is essentially the antithesis of the ideals of these women, one might speculate that they are, or were, unaware of its implications. Someone who is well versed in Japanese culture may argue that many western titles do not reach the bookshelves of Japanese people, and that perhaps the Vladimir Nabokov novel is not so ubiquitous in Japan as it is in the western world. The name Lolita itself may have been lost in translation, replaced with a Japanese name in an attempt to help readers. Although valid assumptions, such reasoning falls apart when Loli-cons enter the picture. A Loli-con, short for Lolita complex, is a term originating in Japan that describes an older man who is attracted to depictions of young girls in fictional media, such as anime, comics, or video games. This is no small demographic in Japan, as pornographic material specifically tailored to satiate the desires of these men have contributed to a thriving market. In essence, Japan has created a loophole for pedophilia, claiming that cartoon depictions of young girls taking part in sexual acts does not count as child pornography. The existence of the term Loli-con in the Japanese lexicon reveals that Japanese society is and has been aware of the term Lolita and its pedophilic implications since the origins of the fashion subculture. In fact, the term Loli-con first entered colloquial use in the 1970s, while the fashion subculture was first referred to as Lolita in the 1980s.[8] This reality reaffirms the sexual connotations of the culture, as well as the inconsistent nature of the Lolita community.

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[8] "Lolicon," Weblio, Shokugakukan Inc, last modified 2023, accessed April 14, 2023, https://www.weblio.jp/content/%E3%83%AD%E3%83%AA%E3%82%B3%E3%83%B3.

Not only are these women exploited financially, but they are also exploited sexually. In being labeled as Lolitas and being sold a young girl aesthetic, these women have been molded into the pedophilic Japanese beauty standard. Gagné recalls seeing men taking photos of Lolitas in the streets of Harajuku without permission, and states that "The girls' biggest fear was that they didn't know where those pictures would end up. Several added that they might end up on internet sites, cropped so that the heads were cut off and only the Lolita body was visible, or in other sexualized ways."[9] Here it is made clear that in trying to escape sexualization, these women have inadvertently garnered even more attention from men than they might have as typical adult women. These young women were sold a lie that if they bought enough dresses and magazines, they would be freed from the shackles of sexualization. Instead, they have been transformed into a device to satiate the sexual desires of men. Although purity is such an integral value to the Lolitas, they have been exposed to and become the prey of the most dark and wretched members of society. Like the aforementioned Loli-cons, Japanese society has manufactured another loophole for pedophilia. The justification being that these are adult women who have taken on this role and aesthetic voluntarily. The cruelties faced by these women do not end there. Society has blamed the Lolitas themselves for promoting a pedophilic aesthetic, when in reality, Lolita magazines and the patriarchal society are to blame as they have successfully repackaged pedophilia into a cute, pop aesthetic, commercializing it to appeal to young Japanese women who yearned for an escape. This reveals that the Lolitas have unwittingly contributed to an environment where childhood and young girls become sexualized, which is ironic when considering that these women looked to these things to retain childlike purity. With communities springing up worldwide, Lolitas have normalized pedophilic aesthetics globally. This normalization may inspire men with pedophilic tendencies to act upon their desires, putting young girls at risk on an international scale.

On the surface, the Lolita fashion subculture is merely a form of self-expression. Drawing from European aristocracy, *Alice in Wonderland*, and *kawaii* and *shojo* aesthetics, these young Japanese women create a unique form of escapism in which the self is completely immersed into the character of the Lolita, embodying elegance, purity, and cuteness. Delving into the history of the culture exposes dark truths that conflict with the ideals of these women. Manipulated by magazines, Lolitas have been fooled into playing into the hands of a capitalist patriarchy. Magazines like the *Gothic & Lolita Bible* sold these young girls a false promise, one that offered an escape from sexualization and the stresses of everyday life. In reality, the aesthetic molded these women to fit a pedophilic beauty standard while also draining them financially, essentially killing two birds with one stone. In this cruel society, even a glimmer of hope that promised escape was only an illusion. Furthermore, with the help of media attention, other Lolita communities have formed

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[9] Gagné, "Urban Princesses," 140.

across the world. This globalization normalizes pedophilic aesthetics worldwide, endangering young girls everywhere. With none of their promises fulfilled, and being transformed into a tool that promotes pedophilia, the Lolitas have become a tragic tale of women who have been taken advantage of, in many ways living up to their namesake.

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Immigration is Beneficial for the United States

By Roberto Cruz

Prof. Simonds- True Crime

There have been many debates about whether immigration is beneficial or harmful for the United States, and the focus of such debates often centers on crime rates. This topic has been highly controversial dating back to the 1890s when Ellis Island became the primary immigrant port. In 1924, the U.S. passed the Immigration Act, which limited the number of immigrants that could enter the U.S. from a specific country. Ever since, Republicans and Democrats have tried to come up with ways to address immigration by implementing more policies, such as strict border control and deportation. Based on such policies, it's clear the U.S. government believes immigration is more harmful than beneficial. Although many Americans share that opinion, research shows that immigration is beneficial for the U.S. and does not increase crime rates.

One way immigration benefits the U.S. is by increasing economic growth. Studies show that having more immigrants in the workforce can help businesses increase productivity and reach their goal for sales (Miller). Avery Franklin, who is an expert at Rice University's Baker Institute of Public Policy, points out that "In fiscal year 2018, Texas collected $2.4 billion in state taxes from this group. If all undocumented workers were deported, Texas would lose more than $41.9 billion in direct employment compensation, defined as pre-tax salary and wage earnings. The total loss would be $70.3 billion, which represents a reduction of 7.7% in state employment compensation" (Franklin). Immigrants– even illegal immigrants– do in fact pay taxes, and they pay more than Americans think. They positively impact employment compensation, which are payments received by workers through taxes, but more importantly, the tax revenue helps the economy grow and prosper.

Along with paying taxes, immigrants also increase America's agricultural production. Without immigrants, the country would not be able to produce a sufficient amount of food products for local markets and grocery stores. This is because immigrants make up a significant portion of the American agriculture workforce. Researchers have found that "As recently as 2019, 48.9 percent of all agricultural workers were foreign-born and more than 27.3 percent were undocumented" ("Immigration and Agriculture"). Moreover, they found that "Among workers in crop production, the share of foreign-born workers is even higher with almost 57 percent of crop production workers being immigrants, including 36.4 percent who were undocumented" ("Immigration and Agriculture"). Immigration is vital to the United States agricultural industry. If the U.S. lost all immigrants who work in the agricultural industry, farms would lose revenue and would not be able to produce a high quantity of food products to ship to stores.

The impact of having no immigrants in agriculture was demonstrated on a small scale in Georgia when a bill was introduced to prohibit them from working there. As a result of this bill, the Georgia Fruit and Vegetable Association stated, "$300 million worth of crops would be at risk for that year, and would be spoiled before they could be picked. Across the United States, bills such as this are predicted to cost as much as $9 billion in lost farm production annually" (qtd. in Esses et al. 135). Without immigrants, farms would lose revenue and fail. These problems would also cause a decline in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and lead to harsh economic consequences for the country.

Rather than hurting GDP, immigration— including illegal immigration— can positively impact it. In "The Unseen Economics of Illegal Immigration," Tony Zhou, an analyst for the Roosevelt Institute, says that "The labor of illegal immigrants increases the national GDP by around 11 percent per year, or 1.6 trillion U.S. dollars per year." This is important because having more immigrants in the country can lead to more economic growth, which includes more production and consumption of goods and services, which can lead to increased revenues for businesses.

Despite the economic benefits of immigration, people argue against it because they believe it increases crime in the U.S. when, in fact, since immigration increases economic benefits, crime rates will decrease. Donald Trump did much to stir up this anti-immigrant sentiment, especially when he referred to a 2011 report indicating that "The arrests attached to the criminal alien population included an estimated 25,000 people for homicide, 42,000 for robbery, nearly 70,000 for sex offenses, and nearly 15,000 for kidnapping. In Texas alone, within the last seven years, more than a quarter million criminal aliens have been arrested and charged with over 600,000 criminal offenses" (Farley). Although this information may be true, it doesn't look at the big picture. These are only the number of crimes that were committed by non-citizens and don't include those committed by American citizens for comparison. As noted by a researcher from the Cato Institute, "The arrest rate for illegal immigrants was 40 percent below that of native-born Americans" (qtd. in Farley). The analysis also concluded, "Illegal immigrants are 47 percent less likely to be incarcerated than natives" (qtd. in Farley). This data indicates that immigration doesn't increase crime and that there is actually a higher crime rate among American citizens than immigrants. This is because immigrants, especially those who are undocumented, don't want to get into trouble and shows how the U.S. should focus more on reducing the crime rates of native-born people, rather than illegal immigrants.

Not only do immigrants commit significantly fewer crimes than American citizens, when more immigrants enter the workforce, this increases employment rates for the country and consequently lowers crime rates. Jared Bernstein and Ellen Houston, experts from the Economic Policy Institute, found that "The decline in unemployment explained about 30% of the fall in crime rates from 1992 to 1997. Furthermore, an examination of unemployment, wages, and crime rates by region shows unemployment and crime rates falling

together, and rising wages and crime rates moving apart" (Bernstein and Houston). Having a strong economy, which includes low unemployment rates, can lower the amount of crime in the U.S. Immigrants can help lower crime rates because they increase employment rates by acquiring jobs, which leads to economic benefits such as higher GDP and consumption from buyers. By doing this, the U.S. economy will flourish and unemployment will decrease.

The idea that immigrants are criminals is highly exaggerated and instead the focus should be on how many benefits they bring, including skills that help the U.S. improve its infrastructure and technology. For example, immigrants help build roads, schools, and water systems. There was also a study that documented how "Technology and engineering businesses that were launched in America between 1995 to 2005 had 25.3 percent of immigrant founders and immigrant-founded companies made $52 billion in sales and employed 450,000 workers in 2005" (West 437). This shows how immigrants can bring a set of high-quality skills to the country and can produce new forms of technology. They can also help other businesses by implementing new ideas and innovations. Along with improving the economy in this way, they also help the U.S. become more interconnected, engage in global commerce, and help native-born Americans develop friendships with people from different backgrounds. This can improve progress on issues like poverty, hunger, and inequality, which can make the U.S. a better country to live in (McCarthy).

Not only is immigration beneficial for the U.S. economy, it leads to a richer culture and more diversity. Immigrants bring new customs and traditions that can expand American culture. One study conducted in 2007 by the *Political Science Quarterly* indicated that "Forty percent of Americans said immigrants had made food, music, and the arts better" (West 440). This shows how immigration leads to a richer culture in the U.S., and another study shows how having a richer culture and more diversity can lead to lower crime rates. Economists Sefa Awaworyi Churchill and Emmanuel Laryea explained that "Drawing on data across 78 countries, our empirical findings show, rather unexpectedly and counter-intuitively, that higher levels of ethnic and linguistic diversity tend to aid in the reduction of crime rates and, consequently, lead to lower prosecution and conviction rates" (Churchill and Laryea 239). Culturally diverse countries have lower crime rates, which implies that immigration will lead to lower crime rates in the U.S. because immigrants who come to the U.S. have different cultures and backgrounds.

Even though research shows that immigration is beneficial for the U.S., many Americans have tried to prove that it's harmful. For example, many people state that immigrants take away jobs from Americans. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Immigrants make up 17 percent of the U.S. labor force" (qtd. in Frazee). Former U.S. President Donald Trump made a claim that this statistic is a problem and should be addressed. However, the reason why immigrants make up a large portion of the workforce is that there are a lot of jobs Americans don't take, but immigrants do. Along with the agriculture industry, census data also

shows that "Immigrants accounted for 24 percent of nursing, psychiatric, and home care aides in 2015" (Frazee). This implies that immigrants aren't stealing jobs from Americans. Instead, they take jobs that most Americans don't want and make a difference by helping people, instead of hurting them.

Immigration is a highly controversial topic that's been debated throughout the U.S. for many decades. A lot of people think that illegal immigrants cause harm to the country. They believe that they hurt the economy, steal jobs, and raise crime rates. Although much of the population believes this, research shows that those claims are not true and that immigrants do the opposite of what most people think. They benefit the economy, acquire jobs that many Americans don't want, and have lower crime rates compared to native-born citizens. The evidence also shows that immigrants can help introduce innovations and will help the country expand culturally and technologically, which will lead to future growth for the country. Americans should focus more on how immigrants benefit the country rather than hurt the country because studies have concluded that the impact of these immigrants is far more positive than negative.

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The Power of Sporting Narratives:

Embracing Family Sports Tradition and Identity Beyond Performance

By Caden Kramer

Prof. Collins- Narrative: The Inside Story

For many, sports can be one of the most significant parts of their personal identity. From the day they first picked up a stick or laced up a pair of cleats, their sports career began as did their own sports narrative. Oftentimes, a family's sporting narrative can be traced back generations. As parents teach their children values and beliefs, their love and knowledge of the sport is passed on to their children, who will pass it on to their children. Today, though, sports are too often viewed through a performance oriented lens with parents focusing on whether or not their child is scoring goals or on the best team. This viewpoint can be damaging for children. For this reason, it is crucial to look at sporting narratives in a different light. Sports usually result in a winner and a loser, and therefore the focus is on striving to be the best, who the best players are and the numbers they produce, but that perspective is often pushed on to children who need sports to be about something else. People from big sporting families understand an alternative perspective–that it's about what sports can give to us and not necessarily just what we put into the sports we play and watch. When people create strong familial sports narratives, they teach children to love the game first and foremost and create a strong familial bond in the process.

Sporting families tend to bond around five themes: identity, construction, socialization, tradition, and transcendence (Cooper and Ewing 449). In families that participate in sports, these five themes are built through a growing sporting narrative that helps to bring the family close together. The first theme, identity, has to do with how people are able to form a distinct persona through their personal sports narrative. For those who participate in sports, being an athlete becomes an important part of their identity. Sports researchers Holly Cooper and Thomas Ewing explain that in such a situation, "It [sports] was more than a game, it became a powerful reference point for identity construction, strengthening familial bonds and value continuity" (454-455). When people become athletes, they identify as members of that community. On a larger scale, families can similarly identify as part of a sporting community based on the sports they follow or participate in. Sports have the power to shape one's personal and familial identity, allowing them to benefit from sports in a larger sense than simply the physical development of the body. By allowing sports into our personal and family lives, the true power of sports begins to show as it strengthens bonds and allows people to connect on a deeper, more personal level.

Families with strong sporting narratives socialize about sports, their experiences, stories, and current events in the sporting world. Socializing about sports creates a strong narrative connection among family members. Cooper and Ewing point out that "Storytelling was an important mechanism for the socialization of family members and the development habits" (458). Members of a sporting family share their personal stories to add to their family's larger sporting narratives, giving more depth to the family narrative many members can relate to. These may be stories of success, stories of failure, the good times, or the bad times. Each member of the family can bring in their own personal experiences, socialize about it with their family members and thus add to the larger family narrative.

When family members socialize about sports, this also contributes to construction, which has to do with the sharing of stories to help form a family identity. Often these families take pride in their sporting narratives and share them with their family members (Cooper and Ewing, 455). Adding more stories to the family narrative helps build a sense of identity for the family, something all members can relate to and be a part of. As the familial identity is woven, in part, around sports, traditions surrounding those sports become established. For example, families might play football on Thanksgiving or go together to a sporting event every year. These types of traditions bring families together by getting them in one place where every member can be involved, thus reinforcing their identity construction and socialization, and building their family's sports narrative.

As families build their sports narrative, traditions are passed on from one generation to the next. This phenomenon is called transcendence, which is the ability of sports narratives to surpass generational and geographical boundaries as happens when grandparents and grandchildren connect through mutual love of the game (Cooper and Ewing 457). Further, the sporting narrative would not be complete without those who started it, so allowing older and younger members of the family to relate to the narrative provides a channel for socialization.

In order for a family to build a strong family identity through the five themes, many different types of narratives must come together. As described by John Gleaves, founder of California State University-Fullerton Center for Sociocultural Sport and Olympic Research, narratives can be divided into three categories, "individual, the collaborative, and the collective" (29). The individual narrative has to do with the narrative one tells about themself. Gleaves explains, "Sport's intimacy with our identities makes sense. Our participation in sport emerges from our sweat and muscle, our blood and bones. It taps deep into our central nervous system, our psyche, to reveal truths about us that we could neither manufacture nor deny ... All of this is part of the story we can tell, and this story is meaningful to our identities" (Gleaves 34). The family's larger sporting narrative starts on an individual level as we tell stories about ourselves to our family. They can then relate and share their experiences, bringing the family closer together as they begin to better understand who each

person is and how they tie into their family's narrative. Rather than combing through the high school record book, families with strong sporting narratives often relate to the more challenging times with sports–times they wanted to give up and didn't, lessons they learned that are then passed down to the younger generation, or a time they came up short. These are the stories told around the fire after Thanksgiving dinner–the times when sports were not about winning, but rather comradery or overcoming challenges. These are the moments that are most vividly remembered years after we finish our individual sports career. Being able to relate to hardship often brings families closer than listening only to the good times does. My family never pushed the performance part of sports. They always made it about something we could bond over and this is what more families should focus on when it comes to sports. The individual narrative is crucial to bonding with others who share their own individual narrative allowing for the communal family narrative to grow and strengthen.

While the individual sports narrative is important, the collaborative is even more important as it allows people to bond over a shared experience. John Gleaves explains that the collaborative narrative has to do with the narrative we tell about who we participate in sports with (36). An example of a collaborative narrative in a sporting family would be brothers who play on the same team or stories told about that one pick-up basketball game the cousins participated in. These types of narratives can be especially powerful in bringing families together as they focus on memories shared among family members. Cooper and Ewing explain how this happened in one sporting family where "participation in sharing cricketing stories of the past brought the family together, binding each member to the others through collective memories that defined the family's narrative" (457). Sharing sports stories is one of the most important parts of teaching kids to love the game and not the outcome. These collective memories allow a family to bond and come closer through shared experiences, showing children the reason we should participate in sports.

The developing individual and collaborative sports narratives take place in the larger community of sport, which refers to the collective narrative (Gleaves 36). How a family interacts with the larger community of sports is crucial to creating a strong narrative that helps define a family's identity. By allowing sports to become part of the identity of a family, and being more involved in sports than simply participating, sports become a powerful bonding tool. This happens when a family comes together to watch the Superbowl or goes to watch the family's favorite team. These are moments when those still actively participating in sports and those who used to are able to come together around the sport and enjoy the game they all love together within the context of a much larger sports community.

In families with strong sporting narratives, there are some who consider themselves athletes and really identify with that role, while some members of the family may resist that part of their personal narrative. Both types of people contribute to the family's larger sporting narrative. David Carlass, from the Institute of Sport, Physical Activity, and Leisure at the Leeds Metropolitan University, and Kitrina Douglas, from the University of

Bristol, explain that some athletes "resist the part of the athlete," others "play the part of the athlete," and finally the most devoted "live the part of the athlete" (701). Those who live the part of the athlete identify fully with that role and often play a more vocal role in the narrative while those who play the part of the athlete instead understand that there is more to who they are than athletics. Those who resist the part of the athlete may be seen as outcasts in a familial sporting narrative as they may choose not to participate in sport and play a smaller role in the larger narrative. However, even those who resist the part of the athlete are a part of the narrative as they typically will support those who do choose to partake. By supporting those members of the family, they may begin to bond over times they sat in freezing weather to watch the big game, or comforted the athlete after a loss. While resisting playing sports, these members can still become closely bonded to those who participate through their love and support.

All members of the family can identify with the family sporting narrative whether or not they participate in the sport themselves and therefore they can pass down family sporting traditions, which contributes to the family's evolving sporting narrative. Jason Gay, a columnist for *The Walls Street Journal*, shares his family sporting narrative where through fishing he was able to bond with his son and feel a deeper connection to his late father. In "I Hated Fishing. Then Fishing Changed My Life," Gay explains that his father was an avid fisherman, and this was something his father tried to share with him. However, Gay admits, "I was very good at hating fishing for many decades." In his youth, Gay was an example of someone who Carless and Douglas would say "resist[s] the part of the athlete" (701). He reveals, "Fishing became something my father did, separately." As Gay's own son, Jesse, grew older, he became hooked on fishing, and this inspired Gay to give it another try. Gay and his son learned as much as they could about fishing, and Gay fell in love with the sport as a way for him and his son to bond. It offered a way to transcend multiple generational boundaries. He writes that his father "would have chuckled and probably made fun at [sic] me for coming to fishing after decades of rejecting it, but he would have been thrilled to have his grandson along on the adventure. There's part of me that thinks this twist in my life is engineered by the ghost of my deceased father, who is somewhere laughing his behind off about the whole thing." Gay feels that fishing has helped him grow closer to and better understand his father. Transcending this generational boundary, which he was not able to do before, is truly remarkable. Gay ends up concluding, "I know it sounds a little silly when you hear fishermen talk about how fishing changed their lives, because they always talk about how fishing changed their lives, but it changed our lives, too." Fishing became a collective and collaborative narrative that allowed him to better socialize with his son and help him grow closer to his late father as he finally came to understand his father's love of fishing. The Gay family sporting narrative very clearly was crucial to bringing them closer together. The Gay family saw fishing as something more than catching the biggest fish. As Jason Gay allowed fishing to become more a part of his identity, he saw the true power of the sport, a force that can bring us together.

My own family has a collective sports narrative, mostly revolving around lacrosse. My grandfather, whom we call Coach, played lacrosse a little in high school and got his sons, my father and my uncle, involved in the sport at a young age. They often played on the same team. This helped grow their collaborative narrative as they shared experiences and now share stories about them. Both went on to play Division I lacrosse at UMass and Princeton, respectively, and even faced off against each other in the national quarterfinals. While they can agree my dad won the first and my uncle won the second, they still debate who won the third. Like many who played high-level sports, Carless and Douglass argue they "lived the part of the athlete" (701). Having a strong sporting narrative in my family has helped me connect with my father, uncles, aunts, and even my grandparents. Sports are something that always brings us together. Whether it's supporting one another in competition or meeting to watch our favorite teams, sports bring my family together through the shared love of the game.

My dad shared his love of lacrosse with my brother and me. Like my dad and my uncle, my brother and I played many seasons of lacrosse together, both living the part of the athlete. We have succeeded and failed together, and ultimately it made both of us better and stronger people. It also allowed us to bond. Furthermore, as Cooper and Ewing suggested, this family sport narrative transcends multiple generational boundaries. I went on to play lacrosse at the Division I level, a challenge really only understood by those who have gone through it, like my uncle and father, who are ready to help me with the challenge. While I was given my first lacrosse stick the day I was born, my love for the game was learned, not inherited. Until middle school, I loved hockey, and while I played lacrosse, it was not my priority. Similar to Gay, I kind of resisted the lacrosse narrative in my family and saw myself as a hockey player. As I grew older and began to fall in love with lacrosse more, I became closer to my dad and his family and through our love of lacrosse, I decided I wanted to play at the next level as they had. This is the collaborative narrative Gleaves defines, that we share, and it constantly brings us together. Outside of lacrosse, we are all Giants football fans and a tradition of ours is to go see them play once a year. Going to see the New York Giants play football is something we all look forward to and participate in no matter where we live or what age we are. Without the strong collective sporting narrative my family shares, I do not think we would be as close or understand each other as we do, allowing us to always have something to be involved in.

It is unfortunate that family sports narratives are being neglected in favor of a more performance-oriented perspective of sports, ultimately making children feel like they should quit the sport. *The Washington Post* reports that 70% of children quit sports before they turn 13 and, as journalist Julianna Miner explains, "'It's not fun anymore' isn't the problem; it's a consequence of a number of cultural, economic and systemic issues that result in our kids turning away from organized sports at a time when they could benefit from them the most." This is likely because parents are pushing their kids to play the part of the athlete or even live the

life of an athlete instead of focusing on making sports something fun that can be shared with the whole family. Many members of my family lived the part of the athlete, but that is simply because sports became something we loved and shared. Children need sports as an outlet for exercise and socialization, but also because sports helps form a powerful bond among family members. Parents who push performance narratives onto their children further the divide between their children and them. Therefore, it is important that we encourage the family narrative aspect of sports rather than just the performance side. Sports are so much bigger than a scoreboard or stat sheet. Sports can bring families together and help shape an identity that fosters healthy relationships among family members.

Sports can be a crucial part of many families' narratives and serve as a mechanism for families to grow closer together. Further, sports narratives allow families to bond, socialize, and participate in traditions and activities that span generational and geographic boundaries. It is time that the sporting community begins to focus on making sports less about performance and more about bonding with those who share a love for the sport and using this to create healthy relationships. It is essential for the focus to shift from performance to sharing the love of the game with those we love.

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In this original and creative analysis, the author argues that bees should be considered heroes by basing the argument on the defining characteristics of heroism.

Why Bees Are Heroes

By Chase Martino

Prof. D'Souza- Heroes

When we think of heroes, we often imagine powerful figures like world leaders or fictional superheroes, but what if the most heroic creatures on our planet are actually tiny, industrious insects? It may seem strange at first, but bees can certainly be considered heroes, as they play a vital role in contributing to global food security and sustaining human populations. Heroism is something that helps better human life as a whole. While some people may fear or despise bees, the truth is that their absence would be catastrophic, leading to a significant reduction in crop yields that would trigger a chain reaction of environmental damage. While there are other types of pollinators in the world, none can match the efficiency and significance of bees. In this sense, bees are true heroes in their unceasing efforts to pollinate crops, which supports biodiversity and sustains ecosystems. The heroic impact of these bright and mighty insects can be felt in every corner of the world, from the farms that rely on their pollination services to the wildflowers that bloom under their care. Their pollination can save us from falling into a population crisis. Therefore, it is essential to recognize and appreciate the heroic nature of these small but mighty creatures because we would be nothing without them.

Fruits and vegetables exist all around the world, but some may not know that bees play a vital role in the availability of the food we consume. Bees are arguably the most important pollinators in the world, allowing plants to reproduce and thus give us vital food sources. In a book about conservation biology, Claire Kremen and Rebecca Chaplin-Kramer talk about the impact bees have on our beautiful environment. They emphasize that "bees are the most important pollinators of many crops and are record visitors to seventy-three percent of the crop species requiring pollination" (353). Imagine Earth if seventy-three percent of human food was just suddenly gone. The damage that would inflict is inconceivable. There are eight billion people living on this earth; taking away 73% of available food would cause a catastrophic death toll. Heroes save lives, whether that's flying in on a web and grabbing someone who jumped off a bridge or running at supersonic speed to stop a shooting. Bees may not have these superhuman attributes, but they are able to provide us with many food sources, which sustains life and can increase population rates. These very small heroes save lives by providing food for those who could not survive without it.

Some may say bees are not important because other pollinators can provide for us. While it is true that there are other pollinators, like flies, butterflies, and moths, bees are more elastic because they can withstand change that other insects cannot. Thus, bees are much more crucial than other pollinators; they can fully replace all of the other species combined if those species were to go extinct. This is because they are able to adapt to their environment and withstand diseases while other pollinators cannot (Kremen and Chaplin-

Kramer 354). Other insects do help; however, they are not as crucial as bees. Bees help produce much of the food humans need to survive as well as provide for other types of animals that rely on pollination rates. Bees are heroic because they play a vital role in maintaining food security.

Not only do bees provide food, they also provide us with economic benefits. Bees pollinate the crops yielded on farms and they also provide us with many other resources, such as honey, royal jelly, beeswax, propolis, and venom. The U.S. Food and Drug (FDA) states that "honey bees made 157 million pounds of honey in 2019. With the cost of honey at $1.97 per pound, that's a value of a little over $339 million" ("Helping Agriculture's Helpful Honey Bees"). After we account for other types of income that various species of bees provide, the bees are responsible for $15 billion every year just in the US alone ("Helping Agriculture's Helpful Honey Bees"). This allows us to thrive in this ever-changing society that is fundamentally based on wealth and prosperity. Bees allow us to succeed financially and can provide wealth to people around the world.

Furthermore, bees have been shown to be heroic in countries that are underdeveloped. When farms are failing in developed countries due to poor pollination rates, those countries have the technology and money to replace crops or find alternatives. That is not the case in developing nations. Honey bees allow these countries to succeed without the use of technology. Although developed nations use the pollination of honey bees, too, African nations take much fuller advantage of the benefits from bees accounting for at least 90% of managed pollination services (Kremen and Chaplin-Kramer 352). Moreover, African countries do not have the resources to overcome a potential collapse of the honey bee population. In Africa, countries would not be able to import enough food for their growing populations, which currently comprises 1.4 billion people ("Helping Agriculture's Helpful Honey Bees"). Bees provide food security through pollination and they thrive in less than ideal circumstances. This is especially important in developing nations where they provide the people who live under those struggling economies with essentials to live.

Not only is bee-dependent food production important in developing nations, bees produce other helpful products, too; bee venom can be used as a form of medicine. A patient with cervical spondylotic myelopathy, which is a condition that normally requires surgery, was given doses of bee venom from a Korean medical doctor, along with other natural remedies. The hospital he was admitted to was known to prescribe herbal medicines over other types of treatments for cervical spondylotic myelopathy. After about four months, his symptoms decreased and he was able to live a normal life (An et al. 143). The lives of these heroes were sacrificed to give human comfort. Although this may not have been their choice, the bees sacrificed their lives, much like other heroes would. We can thank our heroes for their sacrifice because their venom helps save people's lives.

Bees help sustain human life, yet we continue to destroy these heroes' lives. Climate change is a factor that not only affects humans, but also impacts our mighty bees. Honey bees in particular are having a difficult

time feeding themselves due to the early season changes and the long, harsh winters. In a study providing feedback from beekeepers around the world, one keeper explains that "last year, unlike in the past, we had to feed the honey bees in the harvesting period, otherwise they would have disappeared completely. Fortunately, beekeepers are vigilant and save their honey bees" (qtd. in Vercelli et al. 232). Never before have we had to hand feed bees to keep them alive and now we have to. Furthermore, bees are now being forced to migrate erratically due to climate change. The Earth's warming throws off the perceptions of when the bees know to migrate, in return disrupting the pollination cycle. When bees migrate unexpectedly, this jeopardizes our food sources. Heroes save lives, but sometimes they need other heroes to save them. By monitoring migration patterns and noticing the effects of climate change that have wreaked havoc upon bees, humans are able to save their heroes. By noticing the effects of climate change, we can think of new innovative ways to help sustain the bee population. In order for our heroes to thrive, we need to provide them with adequate living conditions. Preserving bee habitats such as forests and fields, is crucial for ensuring the survival of not only these essential pollinators, but also the entire ecosystem that relies on them, including plants, animals, and humans.

While bees save lives, their impact is often disregarded. Yoori Cho and Dowon Lee, experts in conservation biology, point out that "although there is the remarkable ecological importance of those species in this time of profound environmental and social challenges such as environmental pollution, habitat destruction, and catastrophic climate change, many individuals still refer to them as 'pests'" (448). Bees should never be considered pests, but rather the saviors of human life. These heroes have such an influence on our lives that we shouldn't disparage or hurt them. Their impact on our lives cannot be underestimated as they provide many human essentials such as food and medicine that we need to survive.

Bees are heroic. Despite their small physical size, they are essential to maintaining life on our planet. Bees are diligent creatures who have the sole mission to keep their hive alive. They put in endless hours pollinating crops in the process, and almost three quarters of the food we eat is a result of their labor. Not only do bees provide us food security, they are also a source of economic wealth and therefore help us to thrive. Bees encounter a variety of difficulties resulting from climate change, yet they continue to play a crucial part in pollination. Heroes do not have to be human. They just have to be a living thing that serves a vital role in the community by saving lives. Just like Spiderman, Batman, Superman, and every other on-screen superhero, bees aid all members of society, from the smallest plant and animal to humans, and they do it in the midst of widespread destruction at the hands of the very people they provide for each and every day. The importance of bees cannot be overstated as they are one of the most crucial kinds of heroes to fly the earth, and efforts to preserve them are critical for ensuring a sustainable future for all living things.

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This author explores multiple aspects of the topic of book bans in order to develop a well-organized analysis supporting her claim that repercussive effects of such actions are far-reaching.

Rippling Effects of Censorship and Book Bans in Education

By Tess McCluskey

Dr. Stein- Out of Bounds

According to Pen America's authors Johnathan Friedman and Nadine Farid Johnson (2022), between June 2021 and September 2022, 1,648 books were banned in America, which silenced 1,553 authors, illustrators, editors, and many other literary collaborators. Most of these bans occurred in schools, but some involved public libraries, which affected whole populations, not just students. Many proponents of banning books say they are trying to preserve children's innocence, which makes it seem as if these adults are protecting children from something dangerous. In fact, though, the banned books are often about race, gender, sexuality, or other topics that raise tension in our country. Banning books, a form of censorship, does not preserve innocence in children; it only prevents them from learning about pressing topics that affect American society and that ignorance is what is truly dangerous. Without future generations becoming more aware of topics related to race, gender, and sexuality by reading about them, society continues to perpetuate ignorance, which prevents future generations from solving problems related to discrimination.

Parents who choose to fight for book bans claim they are trying to preserve innocence in children, but in reality, they are just shielding them from pressing issues in our society. Most parents who fight for book bans have the money and time to fully commit themselves to lobby against books, which can be seen in the group called Moms for Liberty. Friedman and Johnson (2022) describe how any such group member will submit a chapter to their nationwide website that can be taken as controversial because it involves race, gender, sexuality, or other controversial topics for all followers to see. Essentially, they upload a chapter and provide no background knowledge about the book. Therefore, to school board officials and other parents who do not know the entirety of the book, these chapters will likely seem risqué for students. However, the parents are blowing these issues out of proportion and end up banning an overall school-appropriate novel just because of one small aspect of the book, proving the point that they are not qualified to make these kinds of educational decisions. This is a method that has become widely successful throughout the country. This is a problem because banning books based on one small piece of the plot ends up removing a book that a student could have related to. It could have been the one book that their gender, race, or sexuality was reflected in that helped them relate to the characters and the plot at the same time it helped them understand their own identity and experiences. Groups who use this method as a way to protect children's innocence are doing more harm than good.

Most banned books come from authors of color, which means it is less likely that students of color will see themselves reflected in the books they read. In an interview by Tat Bellamy Walker of NBC News, a student of color in a mostly white high school in Pennsylvania, Christina Ellis, explains that "If a little… Black girl goes into her school library and can't find a single book that represents her and people are telling her that she doesn't really matter, she will treat herself as such. She will act like she doesn't matter, and that's how a cycle continues" (Ellis, as cited in Bellamy Walker, 2022). Essentially, if children of color see that books containing diverse characters or are about race are the ones getting banned because school officials believe the discussion of race does not belong in schools, it can make that child feel like they do not belong or matter in their school community. Removing books because of content that people disagree with only creates a stigma for students who identify with the topics discussed in the book. Jaiden, an African American student interviewed in the same article, says, "It makes me feel good when I read about characters and they have the same skin color as me and they're not just, like, background characters, like in most books" (Jaiden, as cited in Bellamy-Walker, 2022). All children should feel included in the education system, for feeling welcome in their school environment can only improve their attitudes and behavior in the classroom, and thus their learning. Representation in books is one of the most influential ways to improve how students feel in their educational communities.

Targeting books whose intended audience is minority students has also become an issue because it makes these students feel stigmatized in their school communities. For example, Barrie Hardymon, a lead editor of NPR Books, and Traci Thomas, host of *The Stacks* book podcast (2021), discuss in an NPR episode how a book about sexual health focusing on Hispanic girls just got banned in some school districts. The book contains body diagrams with Hispanic girls as the models and is written in Spanish. Some parents in the district deemed the book inappropriate and pornographic due to the explicit models and diagrams. However, other sexual health textbooks do not get the same backlash. The one difference between this specific sex education book and other school-distributed textbooks is the fact that it was written for Hispanic girls. Despite the fact that the book was targeted due to its intended audience, it is important to point out to pro-book banning parents that it was not the author's intent to write a book about sex for pornographic use. Instead, the author wrote it to teach young girls about their bodies' natural responses to puberty, while ensuring that Hispanic girls could relate to the models shown in the book. Issues such as sexual health should be introduced to all children, for it informs them about what's to come for their bodies. Therefore, when children are faced with physical intimacy or dealing with puberty later on, they know how to handle the situations responsibly. Removing and discouraging these educational books only creates more stigma around minority students because taking these books off shelves places the label of "wrong" on them.

Classrooms, where children are getting most of their exposure to books and new ideas, have become

the most concentrated place for attempts to ban books. Book bans limit what books teachers can bring into classrooms and expose their students to. But even in districts without bans, teachers have become more careful when deciding what themes to educate their students about out of fear of backlash from parents. According to Elizabeth Noll (1994), a contributor of the National Council of Teachers of English, an organization dedicated to improving English education across America, teachers who choose to bring in controversial books are viewed as troublemakers because being a good teacher usually means accepting the status quo and following the norm. While this became a widely known issue in 1994, the same fear that teachers had back then is still prevalent now. In a *Washington Post* article, Valerie Strauss (2022) explains how English teacher Sarah Mulhern Gross faced extreme backlash from parents for discussing toxic masculinity in *Romeo and Juliet*. She received letters containing profanity that accused her of practicing "woke liberal indoctrination" (Strauss, 2022). *Romeo and Juliet* is a book that has not been banned in many districts, yet Gross was labeled as a troublemaker in her district just because she decided to discuss the constraints of gender it embraces in her classroom. While book bans are the most visible forms of censorship, the issue is even more widespread due to teachers being blatantly discouraged from bringing in books deemed controversial and even discussing what could be deemed a controversial aspect of an otherwise acceptable book. Teachers who choose to abide by the status quo when it comes to reading material are only hurting their students' chance to familiarize themselves with topics such as race, gender, and sexuality.

Not only is censoring books widespread, it is easily accomplished. Individuals can simply take it upon themselves to keep certain books from gaining publicity. Bookstore owners and both public and school librarians sometimes hide controversial books and other times warn readers against them. This type of censorship is what Pen America calls "silent bans" (Pen America, as cited in Friedman & Johnson, 2022). School districts and libraries across the country put labels on books that are deemed inappropriate for readers. Not only does this discourage people from reading those books, it also creates a stigma about the controversial topics being discussed in those books. As these silent bans become more popular, school librarians have become more conscious about what books they make available to students. A study done by the *School Library Journal* found that 97% of librarians always, sometimes, or often weigh how controversial a book may be before deciding to purchase it for the school library (Yorio, 2022). Thus, when a book is deemed controversial, it can create a ripple effect whereby other schools and libraries are likely to view it the same way. The result is a compounding number of children who do not have access to books that could educate them on issues confronting the LGBTQ community, or events such as the Black Lives Matter protests, which just creates stigmas about the unknown. Stigmas perpetuate ignorance about the issues discussed in controversial books, and when those books are banned directly or indirectly, we are preventing children from becoming more comfortable with and aware of them.

Moreover, it is important to point out that most book bans are not brought up by school boards themselves. While parental groups still make up a large proportion of book banning proponents, many book bans have been backed by political parties and organizations, specifically those based in the south. According to Britten Follett, chief executive of content at Follett School Solutions, which is one of the country's largest K-12 book distributors, book bans in the past were very different from what they are now because currently, bans are driven by legislation and local governments, with politicians siding for or against book bans (Follett, 2022, as cited in Harris & Atler). Ultimately, book bans have become aspects of political agendas, which makes this issue more polarized than ever. Due to the fact that most politicians who back book banning are from the south, students in the southern region are exposed to much less diversity when it comes to reading material. According to Friedman and Johnson (2022), the states with the most book bans are Texas with 801 and Florida with 566. Compared with a state like Utah with 12 bans, the students in the South will be less educated about topics such as race, gender, and sexuality (Friedman & Johnson, 2022). Without exposure to and education about these topics through books, the next generation will be just as divided when it comes to these topics as we are now.

No matter how many arguments or facts showing the negative effects of book banning are shown to pro-book banners, most maintain their views and believe they are preserving the innocence of children by restricting their access to allegedly controversial books. Many pro-book banners will argue that students do not need to be educated about topics such as race, gender, or sexuality yet, or that they are too young to understand what they are reading. The reality is that students, now more than ever, have access to ways of obtaining knowledge through media. In other words, if they cannot get books that educate them about race, sexuality, and gender related injustices, they can find a TV show or clip on social media that can. Book ban advocates are not eliminating discussions of race, gender, or sexuality, they are just making it harder for children to learn about the topics from a book that educates them better than social media can. Instead of learning from credible sources about current events and talking in their classrooms about injustices suffered by African American communities or the effects of conservative legislation in Florida on gay or trans people, students instead learn about it through non-fact checked sources. Further, by moving these topics and discussions out of the classroom, students lose the ability to have constructive discussions with their peers in school and they learn about these topics without any guidance from an adult. Children are going to find out about these topics one way or another, so it's better if schools and teachers encourage constructive discussions with credible sources that give students the tools to talk about these controversial issues in our society.

Book banning efforts seem to be growing in extremity and power every year. More and more books get added to the banned book list, and those with race, gender, and sexuality themes are the most targeted. If

parents want their children to become active members of society, they should focus more on making sure they are well educated through thoughtful classroom discussions surrounding books that explore important themes. Teachers should feel comfortable having discussions about race, gender, and sexuality to remove the stigma associated with such topics. School boards should not place as much emphasis on parental complaints about books and instead should focus on the books' overall messages to readers, for in most cases, authors are trying to educate readers about an idea, not cause them harm by reading it. Students should be encouraged to read books that challenge the status quo; they should not be removed from bookshelves. As Ta-Neshi Coates, author of the banned book *Between the World and Me*, states, "education is not indoctrination" (CBS Mornings, 2021). The books that are brought into classrooms should not force students into a particular mindset, but rather challenge them to think differently than they have before. It is the only way future generations can solve the injustices in our country.

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In this essay, the author considers three historical periods that have been credited with the birth of human rights and uses both primary and secondary sources to support his claim that it was the 1970s that finally allowed human rights to blossom.

The Birth of Modern Human Rights

By Adam Nellis

Dr. Larkin- Human Rights

What are human rights? Such a simple question posits an equally simple answer: human rights are those legal entitlements applied to people from the moment of birth because of their status as human. A more interesting question is where do human rights come from? Human rights are rarely discussed without cause; in fact, it is the gross violation of said rights that most often sparks these discussions. The lack of political or civil freedoms before the Enlightenment caused scholars like John Locke to work on creating human rights doctrine, the many atrocities of World War II led to the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), and the technological advancements of the 1970's allowed the world to see and understand injustices in an unprecedented way that paved the way for a modern understanding of human rights. One of these periods has contributed more than the others to the development of human rights; although human rights doctrine has deep roots in both the Enlightenment and post-World War II eras, it was the 1970s that finally allowed for human rights doctrine to blossom properly. When we understand when and how our rights were properly founded, we then know what circumstances are necessary and conducive to the preservation of liberty.

There is, of course, a strong basis for human rights development during the Enlightenment period. It was one of the most notable Enlightenment thinkers, John Locke, who contributed the theory of natural rights to human rights doctrine. In his *Second Treatise of Government*, Locke wrote, "Man being born, as has been proved, with a title to perfect freedom, and an uncontrolled enjoyment of all the rights and privileges of the law of nature, equally with any other man, or number of men in the world, hath by nature a power … to preserve his property, that is, his life, liberty and estate, against the injuries and attempts of other men" (Locke). Locke's theory that people are endowed with human rights as soon as they are born was a radical viewpoint for the time, and his philosophy echoed through multiple revolutions in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, especially the American Revolution and French Revolution. It is clear that within the Enlightenment period, human rights doctrine evolved to the point that it helped spur some major political power struggles; however, a major oversight lies within these struggles. The Enlightenment period contributed to civil and political rights, establishing the common people as the true power source of any government, but it did not contribute to the fair enforcement of human rights law. As the Austrian human rights lawyer Manfred Nowak states, "the so-called civil and political rights, especially the right to property, came to be strongly criticized by Karl Marx and other socialist scholars as egotistic and pertaining only to the bourgeoisie" (14).

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During and directly after the Enlightenment period, human rights could not be exercised by the lower classes of citizens. Although communist and socialist thinkers can rightly be said to have often followed faulty logic, they make a valid point that the birth of civil and political rights was not the end-all-be-all for human rights, and thus more change was needed before the world could have sufficiently robust human rights doctrine.

The next significant resurgence of human rights development occurred directly after the atrocities of World War II, which involved the outrageous violations of those rights. Multiple drafters of the UDHR draw a direct line between the horrors of World War II and the document, such as drafter Ernest Davies, who said that "the war by its total disregard of the most fundamental rights was responsible for the Declaration" (qtd. in Morsink 32). The drafters of the UDHR recognized that they had to do something to assure that barbarous nations with no regard for human rights could not take similar actions in the future. The delegates from the Soviet Union specifically saw the UDHR as an opportunity to criticize the human rights abuses that were common in the democratic countries of the United Nations, and scholar Valerie Hébert points out that "Russian delegates to the commission used the meetings to condemn British colonial policies and called attention to the lynching of African-Americans in the United States" (564). Drafters of the UDHR started their work based on the atrocities of World War II, such as the Holocaust and the cruel treatment of prisoners of war, but they also found ample room for the challenging of long-standing institutions. However, it cannot be said that the post-World War II era and the drafting of the UDHR are the true origins of modern human rights because the UDHR is a purely aspirational document. Many nations did not take action to preserve the rights laid out in the UDHR, and Michael Cotey Morgan, an associate professor of history at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, lays out the main reason for this by explaining that "the UN's supreme commitment was to prevent interstate war, not to protect individuals" (239). After World War II, the United Nations saw the protection of individual human rights as less important than rebuilding the war torn countries of Europe after one of the most destructive wars the world had ever seen. Apart from the drafting of the UDHR, the West did not see protecting individual human rights as a priority. The post-World War II era provided the UDHR as a proper declaration of what human rights are, but it failed to be a period conducive to the protection and enjoyment of human rights because of the United Nations' hesitance to actually enforce human rights law.

Prioritizing international peace over human rights continued until the 1970s when a multitude of factors gave rise to a proper envisioning of human rights. Firstly, as Morgan states, decolonization and civil rights legislation were able to "remove one of the chief obstacles that had made American officials wary of discussing human rights internationally. Decolonization had a similar effect on British and French attitudes" (Morgan 240). The Soviet Union had used these western human rights abuses to keep the west silent about human rights issues that occurred in the Soviet Bloc, for fear of sounding like hypocrites. Once they were free of these shackles, it finally allowed for discussion of Soviet transgressions of human rights. However, due to the

Cold War, the West was too afraid to take any serious action to help free the oppressed people of Eastern Europe, thus putting the responsibility of fighting to protect their rights on the citizens of the Soviet Bloc. The human rights abuses that the Soviets carried out were accurately described in Václav Havel's *The Power of the Powerless*, when he writes, "Part of the essence of the post-totalitarian system is that it draws everyone into its sphere of power, not that they may realize themselves as human beings, but that they may surrender their human identity in favor of the identity of the system" (567). Due to the West's reluctance to act against the Soviet Union, it was up to dissidents like Havel to set up much of the groundwork for the fall of the communist regime later on in the century. It was during the 1970s that there was a major decline in the power of the state as imperialistic countries gave up their colonies and the groundwork for the fall of the Soviet Union was laid, meaning that human rights were finally beginning to be exercised around the world.

In addition to the 1970s contributing to a loss in state power, this time period also contributed to the development of modern human rights because of the unprecedented technological advancement in communications. No event portrays how important this is more than the Vietnam War. Morgan supports this when he states, "The Pulitzer Prize-winning photograph of a South Vietnamese police chief shooting a suspected Viet Cong in the head raised questions about the Saigon government on whose behalf American troops were dying. Coverage of the incident reached 20 million viewers on NBC's news broadcast the following night" (Morgan 244-245). The spread of information finally allowed everyone, not just the elite, to get factual up-to-date news about human rights abuses. This is fundamental to the development of modern human rights because, quite obviously, people won't take action to protect human rights if they don't know that they are being abused.

Now that people were aware of human rights abuses, they wanted to be able to do something to safeguard human rights. The 1970s gave rise to a number of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that gave the general public the power to protect human rights and hold governments accountable. Morgan writes that organizations like Amnesty International, a group focusing on releasing people wrongfully imprisoned for questioning their governments, believe that they could "change the policies of foreign governments by bombarding them with mail and publicizing their crimes" (241). The 1970s ensured that it is no longer the sole responsibility of a nation's government to enforce human rights doctrine; now the common people have power to do so in their hands. Havel had written of the post-totalitarian system in which all citizens are crushed under the power of the state, but the 1970s had helped to reverse that dynamic and give strength to the people. And giving strength to the people is what allows human rights to properly exist. As seen with the United Nations' hesitancy to protect individuals and with governments often failing to secure human rights in any true sense, it often comes down to the citizens like Havel to speak out against injustice, but it is with the

rise of communications technology and NGOs in the 1970s that people were given the power to actually safeguard human rights.

The shaping of human rights doctrine has been a long and drawn-out history. Scholars across the globe have continually debated how and when our current rights were spoken into existence. The Enlightenment gave us the theory of natural rights, but failed to secure more than civil and political rights. World War II and the drafting of the UDHR produced a valuable doctrine and gave rise to social, economic, and cultural rights, but those rights went unenforced as the Cold War ruled the international stage. The 1970s is the period that gave life to human rights as humanity finally had a robust human rights doctrine backed up by newfound worldwide awareness and activism. The 1970s formed the circumstances that were necessary and conducive to the preservation of liberty, therefore giving us a valuable viewpoint on how the common people can actively shape human rights. Looking to the future, it is important to ensure that citizens speak up when their rights are infringed upon, that NGOs continue to fight for the cause of human rights, and that media outlets use our modern technology to properly cover these struggles, so as to avoid further instances of governments failing to protect the individual rights of each and every person.

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This is a self-reflective event paper that examines not just what happened at the campus event,
but also how the author was impacted and what this all means for the larger community.

A Personal Newsflash

By Anna Nguyen

Dr. Liptak- Trauma Narratives

Whenever my dad had free time, he would make a cup of black coffee and get a bowl of trail mix with hopes I would come pick the chocolate out of the bowl and watch the news with him. He emphasized how people could navigate life and make the best judgments by being informed about the world. Despite my parents' best efforts and the encouragement of my peers, I never found an interest in any genre of news, especially politics. I am honestly embarrassed to admit that whenever current news came up in conversations or in classes, I couldn't recognize the names of people involved, let alone know any details about the event. The worst part was that I didn't feel like I was missing out; I genuinely believed that what was happening outside my life wouldn't help or impact me at all, so I didn't care enough to listen. It should come as no surprise, then, that I was not looking forward to attending a political science event for a First Year Seminar assignment. I was completely unfamiliar with the agenda for the Political Science Society's first town hall and yet, shockingly, I had strong reactions to the points made by my peers during the open discussion. Looking back to my time before Siena, I was so close-minded about the relevancy of the news. It is difficult to admit, but the biggest lesson I learned from the town hall was that I was wrong about how current news was completely unrelated to my life. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie warns about the dangers resulting from limited perspectives about groups of people in her TED Talk, "The Danger of a Single Story." Pointing out a lack of cultural awareness, Adichie describes how her roommate thought "there was no possibility of Africans being similar to her in any way, no possibility of feelings more complex than pity, no possibility of a connection as human equals" (00:05:09-17). My experiences at the town hall helped me better understand the consequences of the short-sighted views Adichie described and how keeping up with current news is a way to learn to appreciate diversity in addition to seeking the truth in the world. By educating ourselves about current events, we become more knowledgeable about ourselves, others, and ultimately our community, which is pivotal in refuting harmful stereotypes from limited narratives.

The town hall was hosted the day after President Joe Biden's 2023 State of the Union Address, so many students were eager to start the open discussion by delving into controversial political issues noted in that speech. In spite of not paying too much attention to the news, I know that the American political landscape is very polarized with an intense bipartisan divide, so I was surprised that many Democrats and Republicans agreed that New York Representative George Santos should resign due to recent inconsistencies regarding his

campaign and resume. After learning about what both sides had to say concerning this investigation at the town hall event, I agree with politicians like Republican Senator Mitt Romney that Santos did not belong in Congress. I expected all of my classmates to share this opinion because I thought it was common sense that cheating for any reason is morally wrong. Therefore, I was bewildered when some of my peers argued that resignation would be an extreme consequence for Santos. My peers defended Santos, arguing that details about his personal life do not undermine his professional talents and that no one had proven he had broken any laws. Although my classmates asserted that Santos's professional image should not be tainted by personal scandals, I believe that Santos's deliberate fabrication of his background reveals that he does not possess the character necessary to serve as a trusted leader. I was greatly surprised that my passion increased as the discussion continued. In fiercely responding to my peers' comments, I better understand what qualities I significantly value in people, not just our leaders. I realized how honesty and integrity greatly influence how I judge others. In sharing their ideas and opinions with others, many people, like myself, disregard any form of disagreement because they expect their own values and beliefs to be evident and inarguable. After experiencing disagreement at the town hall, I learned how important it is to avoid jumping to judgments as I realized that this blind expectation stems from being uninformed about how diverse the people around us are. By following current events, we become more knowledgeable about different people and perspectives, which is crucial to combating hasty conclusions. Therefore, being aware of what is in the news is an effective way to gain a better understanding of ourselves and those around us.

After discussing Santos, the next topic on the agenda during the town hall was the relationship between China and the United States. Until then, I was not aware that the Biden Administration was strongly considering banning *TikTok* across the nation because of potential national security threats related to the Chinese government spying on America and stealing American data. I thought that a nationwide ban for all Americans would be a bit extreme because I wasn't sure that there was any concrete evidence of the Chinese government attempting to or succeeding in doing so. Because of a history of hostility between China and the United States, I think that my peers' arguments to ban *TikTok* for government officials and on government sites is valid because it is better to be safe than sorry. Many of my peers went on to discuss how China's policies seem to be corrupt and unethical to the Chinese people as well as harm the United States economy. One of my classmates commented, "I hate China." After looking at me, the individual corrected the comment, saying, "Sorry, I meant I hate the Chinese government, not Chinese people." First of all, I am not Chinese. Second, I was so uncomfortable that I was incorrectly targeted that I didn't know how to respond. After that comment, the event no longer felt like a safe space for me as just a regular Siena student. My community at home is very diverse, and my parents raised me to be proud of my Vietnamese heritage and culture. Coming to Siena, I already felt uneasy that there weren't a lot of Asian students, but I didn't expect to feel so singled out for being

Asian. I know my classmate had not intended to offend me, but what hurt was that this comment showed how uneducated the Siena community is about different Asian cultures and people. Individuals do make an effort to be considerate, but it is still hurtful when what they say is wrong. To me, it seems like many people at Siena only have one story of Asian people and that story doesn't recognize the diversity of Asian ethnicities, which makes me feel like a big part of who I am is being disregarded. After taking some time to calm myself down, I realized how important my ethnicity is to my identity because of how intensely I was shaken up. Although I felt uneasy at times discussing current events, I not only learned more about what is going on in the world, but also about the community in which I live and about myself.

Participating in the town hall helped me realize that following the news isn't just a hobby to pursue out of interest, but rather an effective way to broaden perspectives through embracing the idea that disagreement allows people to learn about themselves and others. By becoming more educated about current news stories, I learned more about my own values and identity, and I hope to gain a better understanding of who I am as I become more exposed to different issues, cultures, and ideas. Recognizing the distinct factors that shape individual points of view is critical to understanding, acknowledging, and respecting diversity, especially during disagreements. With so many controversial issues today, being informed about different people and their beliefs can be key to debunking detrimental stereotypes, assumptions, and misunderstandings derived from single stories.

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Incarcerated Pregnant Women: How Prisons Drive Them to Hopelessness

By Rithika Patnam

Dr. Liptak- Trauma Narratives

Although many women's prisons give the illusion of support for incarcerated women, the reality is quite different. An estimated 66% of women in prisons enter with previous mental health diagnoses, and their time in prison only makes their mental health decline further (Howland et al. 494). This situation becomes more complex and high-risk when considering pregnant incarcerated women, of which 80% report symptoms aligned with clinical depression (Howland et al. 494). The prison conditions for these women are often determined based on staff convenience rather than the future well-being of mother and child. The sexual abuse, lack of access to on-site obstetrics care, shackling, and separation after birth all lead to heightened psychological issues among incarcerated mothers. These psychological issues on top of preexisting conditions inhibit women from becoming better mothers. If prisons were to move toward a more rehabilitation-focused instead of punishment-focused program, these women would be able to leave prison in better mental shape than they entered, becoming a stronger part of the mother-infant dyad.

As each pregnant woman is different, requiring varying levels of resources, an attempt at a standardized model of care for all incarcerated women– especially one based on a male standard– only leads to worse physical conditions for these women. In the United States, the incarceration rate of women is the highest in the world, with 205,000 women behind bars, due in large part due to incarceration for low-level drug offenses (Clarke and Simon 779). Even with the increase in incarcerated women, prisons are still primarily designed for men. Due to gender-neutral policies instituted in prisons beginning in the 1970s, nonviolent female felons started being treated the same as violent male felons (Cardaci 41). While practices like physical restraints may be necessary for a male felon with a previous history of violence and escape attempts, the same treatment is harmful for pregnant women who are less likely to escape and ought to be treated out of respect for the health of their child and themselves. Furthermore, the Bureau of Justice reported that only 54% of incarcerated pregnant women in 2004 received any type of pregnancy care (Cardaci 41). Thus, the male-focused prison system facilitates physically traumatic care for mothers.

These physically inhumane prison conditions perpetuated by the male-focused model can lead to chronic health conditions and a lack of social attention, in turn leading to higher rates of mental health issues among pregnant incarcerated women. A major avenue in which physical neglect leads to emotional trauma is through the lack of access to on-site obstetrics care in most prisons, requiring women be transported to appropriate medical facilities (Clarke and Simon 780). This can cause intense anxiety as physical restraints like

shackles are often used during the transportation of inmates. Correctional officers feel no rush to transport an ailing pregnant woman and may make the process far more disorganized, resulting in delayed births. Therefore, women often feel anxiety and fear about their own wellbeing during the birthing process, as this delay can also lead to dangerous, unsupervised births (Cardaci 42).

Shackling of pregnant incarcerated women results in further mental health risks as these mothers feel a severely decreased sense of autonomy. For example, Regina Cardaci, an associate professor of Nursing at Queensborough Community College, points out that shackles could delay procedures for birthing, possibly causing hypoxic damage to the newborn (40). This produces irreparable psychological damage to the pregnant woman who fears losing her child due to the physical conditions she is forced to endure. An incarcerated mother described her experience by noting, "Even when I had to get an epidural, they didn't take the shackles and the handcuffs off. I just had to bend over and just pray that I could stay in that position while they were putting that needle in my back through the whole procedure" (qtd. in Clarke and Simon 781). The memory of feeling helpless and vulnerable will stay with her throughout her life. Shackling can also delay assessments or diagnosis, and interfere with treatment for seizures (Clarke and Simon 783). These women's access to healthcare is inhibited by the conditions of their imprisonment, but it is a right they are still entitled to.

The current policies regarding shackling are illogical considering the small probability that a stressed pregnant woman will attempt to escape, and highlight a deeper issue concerning the lack of healthcare in prisons that can lead to isolation of women and mental health decline. *Nelson v. Correctional Medical Services* ruled in support of the district court, which held that shackling a woman "while she was in labor, without regard to whether she posed security or flight risk, violated her Eighth Amendment rights" (Cardaci 42). Yet, women's health and wellbeing are routinely neglected. Even when the courts are on their side, correctional officers often do not abide by these just policies. These incarcerated women are already not able to be with family members during their birth. They cannot even effectively connect with healthcare professionals while shackled. Thus, women fear physical danger for themselves and their child as a result of shackling, but also painful isolation.

Beyond physical trauma and the psychological trauma related to shackling, unjust policies regarding the separation of mother and child after birth in prison ultimately result in long-term emotional trauma for both parties. Most women in correctional facilities are separated from their children within 48 to 72 hours after birth (Howland et al. 496). This immediate period after birth is essential to developing a healthy mother-infant relationship, and inhibiting it can have detrimental effects on mother and child. For mothers, immediately after this separation, it is clear that they feel an increased sense of loneliness and lack of autonomy, leading to a severe spike in depression. This separation can also have a negative effect on children, in turn compounding the mental distress mothers feel. "Pregnant in Prison," a PBS

documentary, shows a scene in which the incarcerated mothers gather for a class on postnatal care. In the class, the instructor comments, "If you're separated from your baby for some reason, you can do this [skin-to-skin contact] as soon as your baby comes back to you" (00:06:25). This kind of contact is critical to a baby's development. Separation can lead to emotional and behavioral problems later on, such as low self esteem and difficulty dealing with stress that can result in resentment against mothers (Clarke and Simon 782). Thus, mothers are forced to face yet another obstacle when they attempt to rebuild connections with their children.

The mother-child connection is even more difficult to maintain due to the policies surrounding visitation. If a woman wanted to spend time with her child, she would have to register her own newborn as a visitor at the correctional facility, a process that often takes weeks (Howland et al. 500). As this process inevitably delays, the relationship between the mother and child slowly deteriorates simply due to lack of contact. Additionally, the average sentence length for a mother in prison is 18 months; yet, the Adoption and Safe Families Act (AFSA) of 1997 forces termination of parental rights if the child is in foster care for 15 consecutive months (Clarke and Simon 782). Policies like these completely neglect the situation incarcerated pregnant women face, and label them irresponsible mothers when they are not. Policymakers and policy-enforcers make it so that women are punished through separation from their child over one mistake that initially forced them into prison.

As a culmination of all these policies before and after birth in prison, the main psychological issue that arises is the deep sense of failure these women feel. This feeling is one of the reasons that women may have an increased rate of recidivism (Clarke and Simon 782). Many mothers become extremely avoidant after prison. They feel they have failed and are embarrassed. Even for the women who do have visitation opportunities with their children, they may opt out. One incarcerated mother explained to the PBS documentarian: "I asked her [the child] not to come to visit me in prison and I told my sister not to bring her for visits since it was painful and difficult . . . After every visit, the pain increased" (00:01:31). These women often do not have the resources available to process these emotions and deal with these depressive episodes. Thus, they might even purposely act out or cause trouble in prison that would result in punishments like decreased visitation.

Some may argue that motherhood in prison can ultimately serve as a motivation for these women who have made mistakes to change. Some may experience prison as a pause on a stressful balance between motherhood and criminal behavior. One mother recounted her experience when she told a nurse that it was her child's birthday to which the nurse coldly replied, "You must be happy that she got away from a mother like you; maybe she has a chance for a better life" (qtd. in Shamai and Kochal 329). Immediately after, this mother asked to be moved to the rehabilitation unit. In this instance, the mother's immediate and deep

sense of embarrassment, guilt, and depression pushed her to want to reevaluate her path. The traumatic moment of realization brought about by the nurse's brutal honesty acted as motivation for her to enter rehab. While these instances definitely do occur, they require that prisons have rehabilitation programs in the first place. Even when some therapy and counseling services are offered, they are often understaffed and underfunded. Thus, with no support, these women turn toward avoidance of their children as a way to not have to deal with these daunting feelings.

Women's prisons should shift towards an emphasis on rehabilitation rather than punishment. Since these women are often in prison for one time, low-level offenses, they have a strong capacity for change. By offering more substance abuse treatments, sexual abuse counseling, parenting classes, and more, women will be far more equipped to maintain a healthy relationship with their child in and out of prison. Some may argue that the cost of these rehabilitation programs is not worth it and that the money should instead be put into a preventative measure like education. Journalist Paul Muschick argues that the root cause of incarceration is lack of education. He notes that "a 2008 report by Fight Crime: Invest in Kids found that 68% of the inmates at state prisons nationwide did not have a high school diploma." Muschick implies that increasing graduation rates will in turn reduce incarceration rates. While it is true that there is a strong correlation between graduation rates and incarceration for pregnant incarcerated women as well, the real root cause of their incarceration is more due to unfair criminalization of petty drug crimes. Thus, if these women are being unfairly incarcerated regardless, it is important that the care within prison helps them better reintegrate into society when they are released.

To realize that the cost of rehabilitation is worth it, one need only look at the system in Norway where recidivism rates are 25%, the lowest in the entire world ("What We Can Learn from Norway's Prison System"). Norway pays $93,000 each year per incarcerated prisoner whereas the United States only pays $31,000 and in Norway, each person receives recreational resources such as sports, hiking, and more on top of emotional and abuse counseling ("What We Can Learn From Norway's Prison System"). This unique combination of emotional healing through counseling as well as reassigning meaning to life through recreation allows prisoners to be far more equipped to successfully rebuild relationships once they exit prison. The same principles applied to pregnant incarcerated mothers could result in a smoother transition into post-incarceration motherhood.

Pregnant incarcerated women are subject to emotional and physical mistreatment. Conditions like shackling and decreased visitation result in a sharp decline in mental health for these women. They are far more likely to develop depression and feelings of guilt, making it more difficult to connect with their children. This leads to deep psychological stress for the mother and child. There should be an emphasis on rehabilitation rather than punishment for these incarcerated women. Programs teaching women how to connect with their children and deal with their stress will ultimately lead to better mental health for both the

mother and child.

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Effectively addressing audience assumptions, this author overcomes the naysayer to prove her claim about the importance of vocational education.

The Necessity of Vocational Education for Students

By Sara Rockwell

Dr. Stein- The American School System

A common misconception the public has developed in regards to vocational education is that these programs are exclusively for low income, low-achieving, and minority students. It is true that these groups of students often enroll in trade schools in order to learn skills necessary for entering the workforce rather than attending a four-year college. This has resulted in the popular misunderstanding that these courses are designed to replace an academic workload and therefore do not have beneficial educational outcomes. However, Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs are not only exclusively designed for these groups of students and, in fact, provide a myriad of positive outcomes for all types of students. While this educational pathway provides students with valuable skills they can utilize in various jobs, these skills are beneficial for all students and are not limited to those planning on going into trades; they are also valuable for academically-focused careers, as well. Although many high school students believe that a solely academic pathway is their only option within the education system, implementing greater emphasis on CTE programs will be beneficial for all students resulting in increasing student achievement, decreasing dropout rates, and providing students with valuable skills for the workforce.

In order to understand the controversy surrounding vocational education, it is important to understand the background of federal reforms that have shaped these programs. As the American education system has transformed through the years, there has been an increased focus and importance placed on academics. Continually, there are efforts to make curricula more rigorous in order for the U.S. to compete internationally. This increased focus on academics has ultimately led to vocational education being underrecognized as an optional pathway for all students. In recent decades, federal legislation has negatively impacted the public's view on vocational education. Many view trade schools as educationally ineffective and only for low achieving students. According to Aliaga et al. (2014), "this view of vocational education was influenced by changes in the federal legislation during the 1970's and 1980's that added requirements for vocational education to meet the needs of special education students" (p. 130). In other words, during the 1970's and 1980's, federal reforms required students to be assessed and tracked based on their academic performance. This caused many special education students to be classified into tracks that led to trade school programs. Due to the drastic increase in special education students being funneled into vocational schools, many formed the belief that these programs were only for special education students. However, in 1984, the

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Carl D. Perkins Act was passed. This act aimed to recover the reputation of trade schools and address the public's harmful misconceptions. According to researchers, this act was passed to assess the impact of CTE programs on student enrollment (Aliaga et al., 2014, p. 131). With the passage of this act, vocational programs were now required to track students' enrollment, which was supposed to help in reshaping the public's understanding that these programs are not only available to low-achieving students. As students enroll into today's CTE courses, the tracking within these programs showcases that the students are diverse racially, socioeconomically, and ethnically. However, the implementation of student tracking has failed at changing the public's belief that CTE courses are reserved for students from the special education population. These reform efforts are still working towards the public recognition of trade schools as a viable opportunity for all types of students, which will positively impact their futures through the skills learned in these courses.

Although vocational education has positively impacted students' future career options, it is still criticized in regards to whether it has beneficial effects on educational outcomes. Critics argue that vocational education sends children mixed messages about the importance of education. They view these programs as a way for young people to avoid academic learning because they are lazy or unintelligent. Although these programs have historically had large numbers of low-achieving students, they are not a way for students to avoid an academic workload. Contrary to popular belief, the quality of training in vocational education has improved through the implementation of the concept of education about work. Originally introduced by the educator John Dewey, this approach focuses on offering a wide range of work-based skills in vocational courses, which has positively impacted student achievement. Research shows that reform efforts have resulted in trade schools implementing a larger focus on using work as context for students to learn broader general skills that are applicable in any career. According to Castellano et al. (2003), "all students need to learn about social aspects of work such as democratic rights in the workplace, safety, and the prospect of race or gender discrimination. They need to know about career ladders, labor markets, job-seeking skills and job-keeping skills" (p. 245). In other words, the trade school curriculum uses work as context to provide all students with skills that are beneficial in any career. This demonstrates that trade schools teach students essential skills such as how to interact socially in the workplace, which are beneficial for students pursuing any career, even if it is one after earning a college degree. By enrolling in CTE courses, students will be much more prepared to enter the workforce because they are equipped with essential life skills that can be applied to any chosen career.

Every year students across the nation dropout of high school despite the efforts of educators to prevent this. Although the nation's dropout rates have decreased over time, this is still a pressing issue in American society. Vocational education is an essential pathway that can reduce the number of students dropping out and better prepare students for the workforce. Researchers highlight that the real income of a

young high school dropout has decreased by 52% since 1973 (Castellano et al., 2003, p. 239). The effects of dropping out diminish an individual's available economic opportunities and severely impacts their income. Compared to previous decades, it has become even more harmful for individuals to drop out of school and it is essential that the education system become more proactive in preventing this. One approach that can prevent students from dropping out as well as provide beneficial skills to all students is to encourage students to pursue the option to enroll in CTE courses in addition to academic courses. As students learn these important skills through the context of work, their achievement increases, which can be clearly seen in decreasing dropout rates. New findings show that "any participation in CTE decreased the drop out rate of youths by about 6%" (Plank et al., 2008, p. 349). Many students find it difficult to focus or be engaged during lessons when they do not comprehend how or when they will use the information in regards to their own lives. By utilizing work as context, students receive a better understanding about the topic they are learning, causing student engagement to rise. According to several researchers, "CTE can clarify the application of subjects as they pertain to jobs or perhaps the postsecondary education that is needed for a career of interest, thereby keeping youths engaged with school" (p. 360). These researchers are essentially saying that students become more engaged with their academics if it is directly related to their future careers, which therefore decreases the dropout rate among students. Due to the unique pedagogy of vocational schools teaching broader general skills in the context of work, students are increasingly engaged and becoming more successful in CTE courses. Trade school programs appeal to students' different learning styles by connecting work-related skills with real-world activities of the workplace. Vocational courses are a successful and proactive way for educators to prevent students from dropping out due to CTE courses providing those at risk of dropping out motivation to graduate high school.

A majority of students believe that they must attend college in order to earn a high paying job due to the gap between education and income drastically increasing in recent years. Today, young adults without a college degree are experiencing lower pay and fewer employment opportunities. Vocational education offers an option for students who do not wish or do not have the ability to attend college to have equal opportunities as college bound students because there are pathways to a high paying career in areas such as construction and welding. Castellano et al. (2003) explains that "CTE program participants had higher annual earnings 6 years after high school than did non-CTE program participants" (p. 241). In other words, trade school is a viable option that allows all students to acquire high paying job opportunities. Furthermore, as a result of the pandemic, there has been an increased demand for blue collar workers. Champaneri (2021) states, "while it seems that blue-collar workers would suffer as a result of the pandemic because of the shift to working from home, the demands that COVID-19 has created show that these jobs are necessary for a vital economy" (para. 6). Essentially, the pandemic has created a greater demand for workers in the trade industries, opening

opportunities for many more people and it is only expected to grow. It is imperative that the education system allocates adequate funding for these courses and encourages more students to enroll in them to ensure students are fully prepared to enter the workforce and fill much needed jobs.

It is vital for the U.S. education system to increase funding and encourage all students to enroll in career and technical education courses. This will be extremely beneficial for all types of students as it will result in a positive impact on student achievement and future job security in whatever career they choose. Although many students believe that they have to attend college to have a successful career, students need to be made aware that they have an additional pathway since trade schools provide beneficial educational and occupational outcomes. In CTE courses, students learn skills that are beneficial for any career, including how to exercise one's democratic rights in the workplace and job-keeping skills. Career and Technical Education is an incredibly important option for all students to have access to whether they wish to attend college or not.

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Using comparative analysis, the author of this Heritage Unit essay argues that embracing one's heritage allows a person to experience true happiness and thus act heroically.

Embracing Heritage

By Lucy Rosser

Dr. Engh- Heroes

Sometimes people hesitate to embrace their heritage because it makes them feel as though they do not fit in with societal norms. In so doing, that person is not being their authentic self and therefore will never be able to live up to their full potential. Kamala Khan from the comic book *Ms. Marvel* and St. Clare of Assisi are two prime examples of figures who learned to embrace their heritage and therefore became better versions of themselves. Once Kamala appreciates the Muslim heritage that was passed down to her from her parents, she becomes the most authentic version of Ms. Marvel. Similarly, once Clare realized that her faith was the aspect of her culture that she valued the most, she was able to become a selfless Franciscan heroine. The recognition by Kamala and Clare that they could find true happiness by embracing their heritage shaped them both into influential heroes of their respective times.

St. Clare jeopardized her societal rank in order to embrace her religious heritage by pursuing a journey modeled after the life of Jesus Christ. Clare was on a very successful path in life, but none of it made her happy. She held a position in a very powerful family, had advanced education for the time, several men had proposed to her, and she faced the prospect of becoming a noblewoman within her family (Carney 30). Her family held tremendous pride in their familial heritage. Clare, however, wanted to live a life where she, as a woman, could determine her destiny and not adhere to the strict patriarchal norms of the society she lived in. As Sr. Margaret Carney explains, Clare committed "social suicide" by leaving her "shelter of privilege and power" to join Francis and the Franciscan community he created (Carney 32). She wanted to help those in need and used her faith in Jesus Christ to do so. Clare's family prioritized their societal status over religious faith, but wealth was not fulfilling to Clare. By straying from her restrictive familial heritage and embracing her destined religious heritage, Clare was able to accomplish many feats. Her main accomplishment was that she and Francis were able to change the way that men and women perceive each other by disregarding the labels of social classes and replacing them with the terms brother and sister (Carney 37). In that time, women were deemed subordinate to men and so men looked down upon women and their abilities. Within the Franciscan community, however, women and men were presented with equally respected opportunities and that is how Clare was able to become the first Franciscan female as well as a leader to her brothers and sisters. Impressively, Clare had the Pope write into law her Rule of Life as well as bless her before she died. If Clare had allowed herself to stay trapped in her familial heritage, which her morals did not resonate with, she would

have never accomplished all of the feats that made her a historical hero. She was courageous enough to abandon her pre-destined journey that was molded by her family and society so that she could embrace her religious heritage. By committing to what she truly believed in, she was able to dedicate her life to executing heroic actions and helping those in need.

Like Clare, Kamala also has to fight through obstacles, and she ultimately challenges America's negative perspective of Muslims on her heroic journey. She had strict Muslim parents, who enforced a severe dress code and had high expectations of who she should become in the future. At the beginning of the comic book *Ms. Marvel: No Normal*, the reader sees Kamala rejecting her Muslim upbringing. She feels as though it makes her an outcast to her peers and as if she is not a normal teenage girl. In contrast, because of how they were raised, Kamala's parents expect her to be a "perfect little Muslim girl – straight A's, med school, no boys, no booze, then some hand-picked rich husband from Karachi and a billion babies" (Wilson). This is not how Kamala envisions her life because she is born and raised in Jersey City and therefore her ideas have been Americanized. Like St. Clare, Kamala feels an immense amount of pressure from her parents to uphold the trajectory that they want her to follow, but she feels no desire to go down that specific path. For example, she asks her father, Abu, if she can go to a party, but he feels it is unsafe for his young daughter to go out at night on her own. This frustrates Kamala and she storms off from the dinner table because in American culture, a teenager going to a party is common, but in Muslim culture, gender roles deem it unsafe for girls. Because of the constant back and forth between Kamala and her parents, they develop a strained relationship that lacks trust and communication, which Kamala's mother, Ammi, likes to blame on American culture. Kamala tries to distance herself from Muslim culture because it directly contradicts the type of person and hero she wants to become in America.

After suddenly gaining powers on the night she sneaks out to the party and is overcome by a mysterious fog, Kamala strives to look exactly like Captain Marvel because she always thought appearance is what makes a hero a true hero. Kamala thinks that if she has sleek boots, blonde flowy hair, and flies that she will feel confident. However, she ultimately realizes that the only thing that matters is that she is able to save Zoe from almost drowning in a lake the night of the party. It does not matter that Kamala does not look like the typical hero; she can make just as much of an impact with her actions. This realization is what initially leads Kamala to begin to appreciate her unique physical features that are derived from her ethnicity, even though they make her stand out from most people in Jersey City. After having another disagreement with her parents, Abu reassures Kamala that no matter what she is struggling with in her personal life, she should remember that her name means perfection and therefore she does not need to pretend to be anyone else in order to impress those around her. Her father's wise words inspire Kamala to have her friend Bruno make her an entirely new costume that embraces her physical features. From then on, the world recognizes that a Muslim

girl can be just as much of a hero as the other Avengers are. Like St. Clare, once Kamala embraces her heritage, she feels more confident and becomes more successful in her heroic missions. In the subsequent *Ms. Marvel* comic books, Kamala continues to embrace her heritage and that helps enhance her abilities as a superhero.

Kamala Khan and St. Clare of Assisi are both heroes, but their heritages differentiate them from the stereotypical hero. Brian Riches, a developmental scientist and psychologist, along with his colleagues, separate heroes based on whether they are risking their lives physically or socially. They explain that a civil hero is someone who risks physical injuries with the goal of helping others and without wanting any reward (Riches et al. 587). This applies to Kamala Khan because she physically puts her life on the line and fights others to serve justice. Initially, though, she fights using the appearance of Captain Marvel, and therefore feels out of touch with who she is. Because of this, she does not feel like she is authentically helping others. Additionally, she isn't able to save Vick from The Inventor until she decides not to focus on her looks and rather focuses solely on how she is going to help him escape. By embracing her heritage, she becomes the best version of a civil hero. This further demonstrates that Kamala is not able to be successful in her conquests as Ms. Marvel until she practices full self-acceptance.

In contrast to a civil hero, a social hero is someone who does not risk their life physically, but rather risks their social identity, including social status, freedom, or finances (Riches et al. 587). This applies to Clare who went from being at the top of the societal hierarchy to the very bottom. She was a hero by advocating for those in need and using her faith to do so. She sacrificed her role in her family along with her wealth in order to spread her faith and help people through God's service. Had Clare not embraced her religious heritage, she would not have been a social hero and she would not have been recognized as an accomplished female Franciscan leader. Kamala can be described as what Riches and others refer to as an "open, loving, risk-taking" civil hero while Clare can be described as a "spiritual, socially responsible, and prudent" social hero (Riches, et al. 595). While these characteristics differ, both women are heroes because there are many ways to make a difference in the world. Kamala did so in Jersey City by shapeshifting her body and fighting villains while Clare spread her faith and helped those in need. Being a hero involves self-sacrifice in the efforts to help others and Kamala and Clare both sacrificed many aspects of their lives while embracing their heritage.

Some may argue that Kamala was still considered a hero in Jersey City while she was rejecting her Muslim heritage and displaying herself as Captain Marvel. This is partially true because when she is wearing Captain Marvel's costume, Kamala does save Zoe from drowning and thus makes the news. Everyone thinks that Captain Marvel is responsible for saving Zoe and gives her the credit for the heroic actions that, in reality, Kamala executed. It is not until Kamala embraces her heritage that she begins to be recognized as Ms. Marvel, a dark-skinned woman who is unlike any other superhero to date. With Clare, some may argue that she did not embrace her culture, but rather rejected it in a familial sense because she disassociated herself from her high

societal rank. While Clare did reject her familial heritage, that was not the aspect of her identity that made her a hero. Clare's social status did not matter to her and she would never have accomplished the number of significant feats that she did when she embraced her religious heritage. She could have blended in with the rest of the wealthy people in her society, but instead, Clare bravely left her comfortable lifestyle to enter a life of uncertainty where she would help others through Franciscan ideals. Everything that made Clare a hero she accomplished once she embraced her religious heritage and left behind her familial heritage that was weighing down her potential. This demonstrates that not everyone's path in life is straightforward and people may have to actively search for the ideals that promote the best versions of themselves.

Embracing their respective heritages was vital in shaping the heroic journeys of Ms. Marvel and St. Clare of Assisi. Kamala does not want to associate herself with her parents' Muslim culture at the beginning of the comic book because she feels like it sets her apart from the rest of her peers in a negative way. However, by the end of the comic book, the reader and Kamala herself recognize that by being her authentic self, she overcomes all of the obstacles that America's standards have put in her way. Clare realized that she did not want to associate herself with her familial heritage because she knew that she could make a difference in the world if she embraced Franciscan ideals. Clare's strong attachment to those ideals led to her helping others and passing down her heritage to those who similarly felt inspired by God. Once Clare dedicated her life to her religious heritage, she was able to become a hero in her community by helping those in need and by sharing her faith. Kamala and Clare would not have been able to become a civil and social hero, respectively, without embracing their heritages.

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In this engaging analysis, the author uses personal connections to corroborate academic sources' points about the intergenerational impact of trauma.

Intergenerational Trauma of the Holocaust

By Michael Schneider

Dr. Liptak- Trauma Narratives

My grandmother survived the Holocaust, but neither of her grandmothers did. Her uncle, aunt, and cousin were murdered in a gas chamber at Auschwitz. The rest of her family had to make harrowing escapes, leaving behind family members, fortunes, and more often than not, their dignity. My family is unfortunately not unique in this. Six million Jewish people were murdered in the Holocaust, also known as the Final Solution to the so-called Jewish Problem. At the end of World War II, when the concentration camps were liberated, roughly two-thirds of the Jewish population of Europe had been killed. Many of the one-third that against all odds survived, suffered years in concentration camps and ghettos, referred to by the numbers on their arms as they were worked as slaves, their very lives at the mercy of the Nazi death machine. The trauma of these survivors is immeasurable, indescribable, and undeniable. They saw things, suffered things, and sacrificed things that no person should ever have to see, suffer, or sacrifice. When the Allies defeated the Axis, the camps were liberated and the survivors were left to live their lives. Many went on to emigrate, marry, and have children. However, these survivors were haunted by the memories of a life that had been taken from them, the hell they had to suffer, and the burden of the trauma they had to carry. The people of this generation are the Holocaust survivors; some are still alive, but most are not. Their trauma does not simply die with them, though; instead, it is transmitted to subsequent generations, keeping the specter of this genocide alive long after its survivors are not. Descendants of Holocaust survivors are deeply affected by their familial trauma. While they may be expected to suffer as a result of this intergenerational trauma, this is not necessarily the case. Their personal identity is impacted, there is a feeling of burden, and they also experience increased resilience- all of which strengthen descendants of Holocaust survivors as well as their communities.

In order to understand the intergenerational trauma of the Holocaust, we first must discuss how this trauma is passed down from the survivors to the next generation. The methods of intergenerational trauma transmission will vary depending on the nature of the trauma and the community in which it is transmitted. In the Jewish community of Holocaust survivors and their descendants, trauma transmittance is carried out in numerous direct and indirect manners. Some of the direct manners include growing up without family members—like grandparents— who were murdered in the Holocaust, altered religious/cultural practices, seeing a parent survivor suffering the various effects of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and altered parenting patterns from survivor parents (Conte; "Inherited Trauma," 00:04:46). Indirect manners are a little more

varied; however, a very prevalent one is the cycle of silence. A lot of survivors refrain from sharing the details of their past with their children, both to shield them and to avoid having to relive the trauma. Contradictorily, this has been shown to increase the trauma that the next generation experiences. They are left to wonder what exactly happened to their parents and assume the worst. In addition, this dynamic sets up a pattern of a lack of sharing and familial communication, dubbed a cycle or wall of silence (Jacobs 41). This alteration of dynamics will only amplify the effects of intergenerational trauma and increase familial trauma.

One effect of the transmittance of trauma through these mechanisms is that descendants of Holocaust survivors overwhelmingly feel their familial trauma alters their identity. In a set of interviews with Israeli children of Holocaust survivors, nearly all of them described a feeling of being scratched (a Hebrew term that means marked) by their familial trauma (Kidron et al. 4). Many of them denied being traumatized or having PTSD, stating that those descriptions fit their parents, but not them. In other words, they feel this trauma is a part of them, but not traumatizing them (Kidron et al. 4). A granddaughter of Holocaust survivors explained, "To me, being a third generation survivor is something that I feel on an almost molecular level. It is part and parcel of the fabric of my being and it really is what drives my sense of activism" ("Intergenerational Trauma," 00:19:10). Not only does she describe how strongly she feels defined by her family's past, but she also says this affects how she carries out her life. A huge part of her identity is shaped by her grandparents' trauma. She is who she is because her grandparents were Holocaust survivors. Thinking about my own family, my great aunt, who was born after the Holocaust, has published two books talking about how growing up as a daughter of Holocaust survivors shaped who she is and how her parents' trauma affects her on a daily basis. It is common for descendants to feel defined by their familial trauma, but it is also worthy of note that they are not necessarily ashamed or held down by this trauma. The overwhelming opinion among descendants is that their familial trauma is simply an unchangeable fact about them; akin to something like height or eye color, it is simply a part of them.

Descendants of Holocaust survivors also carry with them certain burdens and responsibilities. A lot of these burdens have to do with religion and culture. Increased religious and cultural devotion is common among descendants of Holocaust survivors. Oftentimes these descendants feel the need to be more religious and observe certain practices in order to keep the culture of their ancestors, the culture that survived the Holocaust, alive. An interesting manifestation of this is learning Yiddish. Yiddish is the traditional language of Ashkenazi Jews, but in modern day, it has all but died out. However, many descendants of survivors are learning Yiddish to honor their heritage ("Intergenerational Trauma," 00:27:17). Descendants also feel a strong burden to do something in regards to social justice issues facing the Jewish community as well as other communities. Further, they report feeling the need to make sure society never forgets about the Holocaust. One son of a Holocaust survivor explains the collectiveness of this responsibility when he explains that "We

descendants, we are like an elite unit in the army, we have an important duty to fulfill, we have to make sure no one forgets" (Kidron et al. 5). By comparing descendants of Holocaust survivors to a military unit, he illustrates just how universal and important the sentiment of teaching others about the Holocaust is to all descendants of Holocaust survivors. Just like soldiers obeying commands, descendants of survivors feel it is their duty to teach others about the Holocaust. I would have to say this applies to me as well. As a descendant of a Holocaust survivor I have been doing research to teach others about the Holocaust; I feel it is my responsibility to pass on my insights. Additionally, descendants are also more in tune with the discrimination and trauma of other groups. They are often on the frontlines of protests, debates, and advocacy groups fighting for equal rights for minorities and marginalized groups because they understand better than most the evils of discrimination and hate ("Intergenerational Trauma," 00:13:59). In this way, these descendants are using their trauma and the burdens that come with it to positively shape the world.

The only effect of Holocaust trauma more widespread than feelings of burden and responsibility among descendants of survivors is feelings of resilience. On a near-universal level, descendants also feel they are more resilient specifically because of their transmitted trauma. One would think that trauma should make someone more vulnerable, yet descendants of Holocaust survivors are made more resilient, which is mostly due to pride ("Intergenerational Trauma," 00:22:07). It might seem strange at first to think descendants of Holocaust survivors are proud; however, why should they not be? They take pride in the unsurvivable situation their ancestors survived. They take pride in the fact that every breath they take, every next generation, every holiday observed, and every prayer uttered is proof that Hitler's Final Solution failed. Their very existence is improbable, a miracle. That is something, indeed, to be proud of. When someone takes pride in who they are, they are bound to have greater self-esteem and self-confidence and thus be more resilient. A great example of this resilience comes from a woman named Llana, who is the daughter of a Holocaust survivor, and talks about living with the legacy of the suffering her mother went through. She describes that "it is the self-same legacy of suffering that has constituted collective strength and the will to survive...survivor family strength has contributed to the resilience of our country" (Kidron et al. 6). While Llana acknowledges the painful aspects of the memories and trauma passed down to her, she emphasizes the strength that survivor families derive from these memories and traumas. By doing this, they are able to not only be strong themselves, but to cast this strength on a national level. When I look to my own family, I see resilience reflected in my father. He has been a police officer with the New York Police Department for over 40 years. In this time he has been stabbed, shot at, attacked, and he was also a first responder to ground zero on 9/11. His attitude to any hardship he has faced is always simply "It is what it is." When I asked him if he feels this resilience is due to his mother's status as a Holocaust survivor, he replied, "Without a doubt, throughout my life, I could not tell you how much antisemitism I have faced, but those are just words. I may have a hard job, but my ancestors were the ones

who suffered. Nothing I face can be as bad as what they had to and yet they survived so I will, too" (Schneider). The hardships his family endured serve as a source of perspective and motivation to persevere through whatever he has to face. Using this mindset, major challenges that may be insurmountable for others become almost insignificant to someone whose parent faced the Nazis and survived. Resilience derived from the pride in their ancestors surviving the Holocaust exists on both a national and personal level.

It is important to acknowledge that some people may say the descendants of Holocaust survivors are not themselves survivors of anything, and therefore they cannot claim to have any form of trauma from an event they themselves never experienced. There is even a published study that analyzed a large pool of data from descendants of Holocaust survivors, which concluded that no significant difference in the level of traumatization could be found between them and the control groups (van IJzendoorn et al. 465). To be clear, while descendants of Holocaust survivors do feel defined by their familial trauma, they do not say they suffer from it. They are also driven by this trauma to stand up for their own communities and to speak out against hate. They are made more resilient by their family's history. These effects are widespread and deeply ingrained in descendants of Holocaust survivors, but none of them are necessarily negative, and in fact, they overall appear fairly positive. It is important to highlight that just because trauma is transmitted from generation to generation, does not mean it will manifest itself in the same way across these generations. Holocaust survivors had to and have to deal with crippling PTSD, loss of loved ones, major issues with identity, and so much more. While their children and grandchildren are also affected by the same trauma, it manifests very differently. Perhaps the aforementioned study found no traumatization because the researchers were looking for vulnerability, PTSD, and other typical signs of trauma. They did not find those things because they were not there. The nature of the trauma that descendants of Holocaust survivors carry is atypical. These descendants do not suffer from their trauma like they may be expected to; they, instead, derive strength from it.

While descendants of Holocaust survivors are strengthened by their familial trauma, it is important to remember that every community that suffers trauma is different and the way they suffer trauma will be unique. Due to the long and tumultuous history of the Jewish people, many aspects of Jewish culture center around the Jewish people's relationship with trauma. Many of the major Jewish holidays celebrate the Jewish people's triumph over different instances of persecution. Jews commemorate past instances of trauma and suffering through days of observance, prayer, and fasting. Communal and intergenerational trauma is as much a part of Judaism as anything else. The way modern Jewish communities cope with the Holocaust is heavily influenced by this fact. Having a culture that is united and strengthened by trauma will aid in dealing with other instances of trauma. Keeping this in mind makes it easier to understand how the Jewish community moved forward from the Holocaust in which entire towns, families, and ways of life were wiped out on an immense scale. It would have been very easy for the Jewish community to simply unravel after that. Nobody

could have blamed a survivor of the Holocaust for not being able to continue on with their life or continue practicing their religion. Yet, the community endured, and the survivors went on with their lives with most practicing their religion just as their ancestors had for thousands of years. Even though this community was certainly in mourning, instead of unraveling, it turned inwards, and using its culture of facing past trauma, moved forward together. The next generation was born and even though they faced second hand trauma, they, too, endured and took on the legacy their parents and community handed down to them.

This relationship with trauma goes against how we, as a society, view trauma. We tend to think of trauma as a negative thing, and we shun or stigmatize people who experience it. Trauma is made into a hurdle that people need to get over in order to find meaning and success. Yet, communities that survived the Holocaust allow their trauma to define them, and in this process, they are able to enhance and strengthen their community and their traditions. They are able to remember what was lost to make sure nothing like the Holocaust ever happens again, and they are made stronger and more resilient because of their trauma. Other communities and individuals may not have the deep relationships with trauma that the Jewish community has. However, this does not mean that aspects of the intergenerational trauma of the Holocaust cannot be applied to their situation. At the very least, the community of descendants of Holocaust survivors being strengthened by their intergenerational trauma should serve as a source of hope for individuals and communities suffering trauma. Knowing that the next generation of a suffering community can break the pattern of suffering and come out stronger and even derive pride from the hardships of their predecessors is a powerful image of a brighter future. On a larger scale, examples like descendants of Holocaust survivors have the potential to make society reconsider its perception of trauma and traumatized individuals and groups. We have seen how transmitted Holocaust trauma makes descendants of survivors of this atrocity more resilient, more in tune with their culture, and overall stronger as individuals and as a community. If strength can be derived from as heinous a crime as the Holocaust, survivors of any type of traumatic event can be redefined from damaged victims to empowered survivors who carry the legacy of all they and previous generations have endured into the future with pride, resilience, and a determination to better themselves and the world.

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The Uphill Battle Women Face in the Field of Comedy

By Ellie Shamlian

Dr. Nadeau- Words as Actions in a Mediated Society- Not Just Sticks and Stones

Comedy is a trademark of the modern day entertainment industry. Although there are roots reaching back to the days of ancient Greece, through streaming platforms and live venues, comedy has never had as many points of access for consumers as it does today. While consumers can easily find comedy everywhere, that doesn't mean the field is wide open to everyone. In fact, when people think of comedians, the names that come to mind are typically men. Robin Williams, Jerry Seinfeld, and George Carlin are some of the trailblazers people immediately think of. This is not an accident, but rather the result of powerful patriarchal traditions. Due to the antiquated belief that women do not possess the boldness and laid-back demeanor required to be funny, the field of comedy is less accepting of women than men. It is important to be inclusive of all gender identities in the comedy profession in order for viewers to gain a broader perspective and to make the field more equitable.

Although it is apparent that women in the industry are forces of nature able to overcome gender inequality, women's success, overall, is nowhere near that of their male counterparts. A 2016 study analyzing different professions in the entertainment field, including ten stand-up comics and comedy actors, did not include a single woman (Stewart et al. 790). Despite the strong efforts women make to increase their esteem in the industry, it is still predominantly a man's domain. Thus the image that people have of a comedian is almost always a man in a black t-shirt on stage with a microphone. Including more women would change that image and broaden the perspective people have when it comes to comedy.

Respected female comedians have emerged in the last few decades. However, this begs the question: why has it taken so long for women to gain traction in the field? The history of women in comedy is full of challenges, as noted by Mariana Brandman, a National Women's History Museum predoctoral fellow. Brandman emphasizes that "female comics faced hecklers and hostile audiences." The implication here is that women are under more scrutiny than men. On a positive note, Brandman highlights the power of female comedians since they are able to withstand and overcome such pressures. Shawn Levy, a comedic history author and former film critic, grapples with this very topic in "The Trailblazing Women Who Changed the Face of Comedy." According to Levy, female comedians faced "indifference, puzzlement, nay-saying, and sometimes enmity" when they attempted to showcase their comedy skills. Due to this strong opposition to women entering the field, women must exhibit grit and persistence in order to make it in comedy.

Gender inequality in the comedy world means women must work much harder than men to attain success, but it also means women often have to conform to male standards. Levy explains that "for women to be accepted as comedians, they had to be constrained or distorted in such a way that the womanhood was bled out of them." When women have to strip away their feminine qualities to make it as a comic, it is clear that the field is misogynistic. Women who made it were not able to express themselves for who they were. Rather, they had to portray a character more acceptable to society and male comedy consumers. The instances of women needing to put forward a facade, or address the elephant in the room that is their gender, are all too common. This is clear through a key trope in female comedy– failing to be a good partner to men, which really boils down to whether or not the wife behaves in a way that is suited exactly to her husband's desires at any given moment (Mizejewski 31). This complicity to gender stereotypes is often required for people, especially men, to listen to female comics. Since the field is populated mostly with men, when a woman steps in, many feel that she must still bring viewpoints similar to her male counterparts. In order to accurately showcase the experience of women in a comedic manner, it is crucial to let women be authentic rather than forcing them to modify themselves to fit the male standard. At the same time this would make the field more inclusive and broaden people's perspective of women, it would also broaden their perspective of what constitutes comedy.

Becoming more inclusive would change what researchers Brett Mills and Sarah Ralph refer to as the "old boys' network" of the comedy world that perpetuates gender inequality (112). For that to happen, though, there must be acceptance of fundamental women's rights and a realization of what work-life balance means to women in comedy. There is still the outdated notion that women are a detriment to the field because they can become pregnant and inconvenience their employers (Mills and Ralph 112). Having a child should not be harmful to women's ability to work. Although pregnancy and childbearing is an important part of life for many women, they are demeaned in the comedy field because of it, or treated as a punchline to a misogynistic joke about how hormonal pregnant women are. People often think women cannot make it in the field because if they took their careers seriously, they would not mind putting their personal life on hold. Women should not have to choose between work and family and if the field were more inclusive, they wouldn't have to.

Men are put on a pedestal in the field of comedy, leaving women to have to work twice as hard to make their voices heard. In one study, men and women were asked to create funny captions for images and then vote for their favorites amongst the group. The result was that the men's captions were deemed funnier, but when analyzing differences in humor styles, it was noted that "male authors used more sexual humor and profanity" (Mickes et al. 110). The study's conclusion that men are funnier is based on a very simplistic measure of humor. Most great comedians did not become famous for writing captions. Additionally, the use of sexual humor and profanity is often key to the success of short quips. Therefore, this cannot lead directly to

the assumption that men are funnier than women in general because there is much more to humor than just one-liners. Studies like this add fuel to the belief that women are not as funny as men, even though they are not based on holistic measurements. As a result, the vicious cycle of determining that women are not funny and then not affording them the same opportunities as men continues.

In another bid to deem women the unfunny sex, Christopher Hitchens of *Vanity Fair* discusses a variety of biologic and mating-related factors indicating the importance of being funny for men, and not women. According to Hitchens, "the chief task in life that a man has to perform is that of impressing the opposite sex." This evolutionary perspective signifies why he believes men place more importance on their sense of humor than women. This perspective fails to consider that not all human behavior is motivated by animalistic desire and a need to find a partner. Rather, people can be funny for the simple sake of enjoying themselves and the people around them. Therefore, women should be given the opportunity to showcase their humor in the field of comedy, even if it does not come out in the same mating-type rituals that it does for men.

Despite the fact that gender inequality is well documented amongst women, it is not always in their best interest to speak up about changing the comedy scene. Mills and Ralph note that female comics express the sentiment that "to speak out about issues of representation is to risk being perceived as a troublemaker" (qtd. in Mills and Ralph 108). It is apparent that women are not able to fight for gender equality in the ways they would like and still maintain job success. It is a double-edged sword because if they work towards incorporating more women, they risk ruining their reputation and job prospects, but if they don't, then the field remains exclusive and it's difficult for women to attain success. Both female comedians and bookers alike need to carefully calculate their next move to balance fighting for inclusivity and protecting their career trajectory. Comedy club owner Jiaoying Summers expressed that compared to male bookers representing male comedians, "female bookers generally have more understanding of how unfair the industry is to female comics" (qtd. in Seabaugh). Women face more extensive barriers in finding comedy work, but that these inequalities are not necessarily widely known by men. In order to make real progress in the field, men must be made aware of the rampant gender inequality. Men can help enact change, as their voices have more power in the field.

Although the extensive barriers that women face in comedy are upsetting to see, there are advocates who support the idea that women belong in comedy. A recent study found that women are just as capable as men when it comes to displaying their humor, but that a big part of the hesitancy in female performers is simply an issue of confidence (Caldwell and Wojtach 350). Women's low confidence is not surprising because pushing through intense discrimination is enough to make anyone wary. However, this again goes to show how powerful and resilient the women who make it in the field of comedy are. Not only do they need to showcase a quick wit and an endearing stage presence, but they need the inner strength to push through the backlash

they receive simply for not being male. If the comedy world was more inclusive, then women would gain the confidence necessary to succeed.

The fight for women's equality in the workforce is one that is ongoing, and may never be fully won. No matter the type of work environment, there will always be somebody who prioritizes the input of a man over that of a woman. This is no different in comedy, but the grit and persistence of remarkable women like Tina Fey and Ali Wong prove that women are in this fight for the long haul. Women are aware that their treatment is not the same as their male counterparts, and though it is difficult to make their voices heard and maintain their credibility among male hirers, it is becoming more commonplace to hear them speaking up. However, this does not mean the fight is over. There is still plenty of work to be done to ensure that comedy is a diverse and inclusive field. When women are afforded the opportunities they should be, then the mental image of what a comedian looks like will change and people's perspective of women and comedy will both broaden.

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The author of this expository research paper demonstrates a thorough understanding of his sources in arguing that the way the depiction of a fictional character changed over time reflected broader societal concerns and thus demonstrates how society affects media.

The Evolving Shape of Evil

By Dante J. Sullivan

Prof. Simonds- Villains

The characterization of villains in pop culture is ever-changing. What society deems as vilifying traits is never concrete. Instead, the makings of a villain change as time goes on. Throughout film history, each decade has had particular ideas of what constitutes a villainous character; certain time periods have viewed religious ideologies as the defining villain trait, while others have had a more political focus. In fact, these perceptions of villainy are reflective of the societal fears of the time and a society's perception of villains evolves alongside its cultural fears and mindset. One such character that embodies this change is the main antagonist of the *Halloween* franchise, Michael Myers. Due to the character's long-running history in pop culture, Myers has had many distinct interpretations that align with societal concerns and fears of each respective decade. As such, the character of Michael Myers is evocative of the evolving perceptions of villainy in American society and demonstrates how the public's concerns and anxieties considerably influence the media portrayal of villains.

Ever since the character's original incarnation in 1978, Michael Myers has reflected particular societal beliefs. During the 1970s, the American public upheld many stereotypes that perpetuated the vilification of specific marginalized groups. Among these groups was the mentally ill, who were viewed negatively by society. Research from a 1961 study showcased the general attitude towards those considered mentally ill, highlighting that the average person tended to view such people as unintelligent, insincere, and dangerous (Olmsted and Durham 35). These viewpoints matched a subsequent experiment conducted with college students in 1962. During the summer of 1971, the experiment was repeated with the expectation that there would be a positive change. However, the results showed a similarly negative perception of mental illness (Olmsted and Durham 42). Those with mental illness were still feared as a danger to society in the 1970s. This negative stigma is deeply reflected in the original characterization of Michael Myers, which emphasizes how the concerns of the public drastically affect the process of creating a villain.

In 1978's *Halloween*, Michael Myers has a very striking depiction. In the film, Myers is an escaped mental patient with no rhyme or reason for his mayhem. He is pure evil that targets the unsuspecting suburbs of America. As highlighted by a behind-the-scenes documentary, this characterization of Michael Myers is the product of real-life inspiration. In the documentary "Halloween: A Cut Above the Rest," director John Carpenter shares a story about a field trip he took in college to an asylum where a 13-year-old boy caught his attention.

He described the boy's eyes by stating, "It's a schizophrenic stare. That's what it is. It's a real evil stare and it was unsettling to me and it was like the creepiest thing I'd ever seen just because as a stranger it was just completely insane" (00:29:43-00:30:00). This description matches how Myers is seen in the original film, with his doctor making similar observations about the character's eyes. The fear Michael Myers evoked mirrored what Carpenter felt when observing the mentally ill. While Michael Myers embodies societal stereotypes of the mentally ill during the 1970s, his characterization shifted in the next decade alongside cultural anxieties, showcasing how integral the cultural mindset is to the characterization of villains. When society's fears evolve and change focus, so does the presentation of villainous characters.

By the 1980s and early 1990s, American society shifted to more religious-based concerns. During this time, there was widespread hysteria regarding cult practices in what is now known as the Satanic Panic. While American society's main fears involved devil worshippers, its concerns were rooted in how this affected child safety (Hughes 692). There were significant anxieties regarding child abuse. In a *New York Times* article entitled "It's Time to Revisit the Satanic Panic," Alan Yuhas explains that "early in the 1980s, baseless conspiracy theories about cults committing mass child abuse spread around the country." Concerns about child endangerment were at the forefront of the American mindset. In turn, this fueled the fear of immoral people corrupting the youth of America. The characterization of Michael Myers in the *Halloween* films at that time reflected this widespread panic.

The depiction of Michael Myers took a dramatic shift at the midpoint of the *Halloween* series, specifically in *Halloween 5* (1989) and *Halloween: The Curse of Michael Myers* (1995). In both films, Myers is characterized as a member of a demonic cult known as the Cult of Thorn, which thrives off the blood of the innocent. The cult is shown executing satanic rituals, such as human sacrifice, and Myers himself demonstrates a desire to kill his nine-year-old niece, Jamie Lloyd. The previously motivationless and crazed killer evolved to represent the origins of the Satanic Panic. In these films, Myers's obsession with killing Jamie is notable as it is the only instance where he is targeting a child. This is representative of the fears regarding child abuse at the time. With Jamie as the primary protagonist, Myers's attacks portrayed what America felt was the most despicable action to partake in at the time. This portrayal once again demonstrates the influence a widespread mindset has on storytelling, with villains' depictions adapting to represent public fears.

Looking back at the late 1980s, the Satanic Panic received heavy media coverage. Both tabloids and news stations were giving their opinions on the hysteria, which only fueled the terror to new heights (Hughes 702). Amongst the chaos was a shared concern about the suburban lifestyle. This worry is reflected by historian Sarah Hughes, who states, "News stories fueled and legitimated recent laws punishing those who seemed to violate the sanctity and morality of suburbia and the nuclear model" (694). Hughes argues that the comfort of suburbia was under attack during the Satanic Panic. The public believed that devil worshippers and

predators were corrupting the safe havens of the suburbs; places that were thought to be secure to raise a family were now believed to house depraved members of society. The panic's original concern about child safety evolved to focus on the deterioration of morality amidst suburban homes. Michael Myers mirrored these concerns on the big screen.

In the *Halloween* films of the 1980s and 1990s, Michael Myers has a specific location he attacks. The ritualist crimes Myers participates in, such as kidnapping and sacrifice, are all based in the suburb of Haddonfield. These attacks involve Myers lurking in the shadows and disrupting the peace of the area. The murders usually occur when the victim has their guard down and is enjoying their day. With these actions, Michael Myers embodied what society feared the most at the time: outsiders infiltrating the idealized American dream and destroying it from the inside. Myers sacrificing suburban residents showcased the belief that Satanists and other evil individuals embedded themselves in suburbia and removed its promised safety. While Michael Myers's characterization at the time was a result of religious concerns about the Satanic Panic, this once again shifted in the 2000s to reflect society's more complex understandings of villains.

During the 2000s, a new phenomenon was arising concerning villain characterizations. Unlike in previous decades, there was an increased focus on backstory, and oftentimes there was more than one antagonist (McClure 27). The reason behind this evolution can be attributed to the events society endured during the 2000s. At the start of the decade, America was reeling from the devastating 9/11 attacks and then the latter half of the decade saw a significant economic recession resulting from banks mishandling loans. Both of these moments in American history shaped the cultural mindset of the decade. As researcher Kelsey McClure explains, "Deception throughout the decade is an underlying theme which leads to everyone questioning the motives of others" (21). The increasing distrust of the time led to heightened suspicion, thus perpetuating the idea that there is more than one villain in a story. In addition, many felt compelled to understand people's true intentions and the reasoning for their actions. The new characterization of Michael Myers once again reflected the changing American mindset.

At the start of the 21st century, the *Halloween* franchise went in a completely new direction. The films released during this time, *Halloween* (2007) and *Halloween II* (2009) were much darker in tone and subject matter. An indicator of this change is the town of Haddonfield becoming a secondary antagonist of the story. Throughout both films, many scenes spotlight the heinous actions of the Haddonfield residents. From severe domestic violence to doctors assaulting patients, it is clear that the residents of Haddonfield are just as much monsters as is Michael Myers. The choice to add a villainous aspect to Haddonfield mirrors the paranoia that was lingering in the 2000s. It perpetuates the idea that anything or anyone can be corrupted and the catalyst for a more severe issue to arise, which was representative of American banks having been the catalyst for the 2008 recession. This idea is encapsulated in a behind-the-scenes documentary entitled "Michael Lives: The

Making of Rob Zombie's Halloween." Director Rob Zombie explains that "It's never really said, but you get the feeling at the beginning of the movie that Michael kills everybody to protect his mom. Really the only person he has a strong relationship with is his mother and the baby" (1:11:15-26). Michael Myers is the byproduct of the deceitful nature of his town. The villainous actions of Haddonfield were the trigger to Myers's eventual crime spree. With Haddonfield being a villain itself in the 2000s films, the character of Michael Myers reflected society's desire for a logical explanation involving an extensive backstory.

The depiction of Michael Myers in the Rob Zombie films features a fleshed-out motivation for the character. During the first act of 2007's *Halloween*, audiences are shown the living conditions of a young Michael Myers. He lives in an impoverished home with his mother, sister, and abusive stepfather. At school, he is routinely bullied, with the encounters always turning aggressively violent. These additions to the character make Myers a much more emotionally-driven character than in previous iterations. His killings are more about taking his rage out on a town that tormented him rather than random attacks. This new direction is emphasized in the behind-the-scenes documentary where Myers is described by members of the cast. One member, Malcolm McDowell, states, "There's a sort of pathos to him. He's sort of a bit like Frankenstein's monster that you feel for. There's some kind of heart there" (2:37:51-2:38:00). Due to Myers's new backstory, he is portrayed almost as an animal who is backed into a corner and lashing out. This exploration into the character's backstory encapsulates society's desire to understand people's motivations. Thus, Myers went from a motivationless bogeyman to an enraged and tortured human.

Michael Myers represents the changing idea of villainy in America because his characterization has continually changed throughout the years. The character began as a silent mental patient, who changed into a religious cult member, until finally becoming a broken individual. These distinct traits of the character coincide with the evolving fears of America. In the 1970s, Myers was the embodiment of society's negative outlook regarding mental illness (Olmsted and Durham 42). This portrayal shifted to a religious focus in the 1980s, coinciding with America's hysteria during the Satanic Panic. When society experienced severe paranoia and suspicion in the 2000s, Myers once again changed, with the focus placed on his backstory and societal corruption (McClure 21). Whenever society's concerns changed focus, the portrayal of Michael Myers changed as well. Therefore, the character of Michael Myers is indicative of society's evolving perception of villainous attributes. These connections significantly highlight the power common beliefs have on the depiction of villains in popular media as this single character underwent a multitude of changes and iterations based on public perceptions of what constitutes evil and therefore elicits fear.

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In coming up with a topic that was of personal interest to her, the writer was able to develop an original argument about the ways music can be used to treat depression and thus adroitly balanced what the sources had to say with her own ideas.

A Chemical Explosion: How Alcohol and Music Affect the Brain

By Sarah Tanner

Dr. Haas- Music: The Soundtrack of Our Lives

Music penetrates every corner of today's society. From the car radio to the speakers that play pop pieces in every major store, it is impossible to go through the day without hearing a tune. Music is so common that it is easy to overlook the immensely complex processes that occur in the brain as a result of hearing it. These biochemical processes can be observed through neuroscience in order to understand the effects that arise because of a song. One of these effects is a destressing property. Many people find it easy to use their imaginations to relax while listening to music. The beneficial impacts do not end here, though. This is especially seen in how music and alcohol both influence the chemical makeup of the brain and how the similarities between the two can be exploited in order to help rehabilitate recovering alcoholics. Through a treatment of interacting with music in various ways in order to modulate emotions, or music therapy, an alcoholic's altered brain can be reversed back to its natural state. This is a much less invasive path to adjusting a person's neurological chemistry than the treatments commonly used today, particularly the use of prescription drugs, which only replace one vice with another. Due to this, music therapy should not be written off as it has been in the past. In fact, it should be introduced as a primary treatment in alcohol rehabilitation centers across the world.

In order to understand the biochemistry of what occurs in the brain as a result of music and alcohol, some simple concepts must first be known. The nucleus accumbens is a part of the basal ganglia, which is a group of structures found deep within the grey matter of the cerebrum that are responsible for the executive functions of the body. It is the interface between motivation and action–the pleasure center– and a structure that predicts reward and releases the catecholamine dopamine. As Maia Szalavitz, a reformed addict and neuroscience journalist, puts it, "dopamine is best known for its role in *pleasure*. In the popular press, dopamine is delight; the brain's code word for bliss."[1] Szalavitz is recognizing dopamine as one of the primary neurotransmitters that cause happiness. In addition to improving mood, dopamine can increase motivation, heart rate, and attention, among other effects. Both alcohol and music affect the nucleus accumbens and therefore can control the release of dopamine and its many impacts on the human body. However, they do so

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[1] Maia Szalavitz, "Dopamine: The Currency of Desire," *Scientific American,* January 1, 2017, accessed February 9, 2023, https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/dopamine-the- currency-ofdesire/#:~:text=A%20new%20theory%20posits%20that,how%20much%20 joy%20we%20derive.

in different ways. Even while looking at a basic level of understanding of the brain, the potential for music to change the negative effects of alcohol shines through.

The biochemical effects that long-term alcoholism has on the brain are undeniable. One goes from a completely rational person to someone whose inhibitions are left behind. This occurs because the nucleus accumbens is overstimulated by the presence of ethanol. Boris Tabakoff and Paula L. Hoffman, professors in the department of pharmacology at the University of Colorado School of Medicine, report that "GABA-A receptors are considered to be mediators of 'tonic' inhibition of neurons on which they reside."[2] Essentially, GABA-A receptors are stimulated by dopamine and this stimulation signals to the nucleus accumbens to stop the release of any more dopamine so that it does not over flood the system. However, ethanol can also bind to these receptors, and when it does, dopamine is unable to. Subsequently, the beneficial effects of dopamine are not enacted throughout the body and the nucleus accumbens does not receive the signal to stop secreting dopamine. Additionally, Tabakoff and Hoffman describe how "The δ subunit-containing GABA-A receptor is, however, significantly more sensitive to ethanol."[3] In other words, the specific type of GABA-A receptor that exhibits the delta component is especially sensitive to ethanol. This is significant because the delta GABA-A receptors are most abundant in the nucleus accumbens. As a result, down-regulation, or the desensitization of the receptor cells by decreasing the number of binding sites on its surface, occurs. The level of dopamine that is released rises exponentially, causing an influx in the system and therefore receptor down-regulation due to their overstimulation. In the context of mental health, this means that dopamine is not being received enough. This results in the all too well-known depression that comes with alcohol abuse. Moreover, it causes addiction as the abuser chases that initial influx that took place before down-regulation occurred. Although this neurobiology is rather disheartening to come to understand, it is essential to do so. Without complete comprehension, cures that address the root of the problem would remain elusive.

Unlike previously thought, if the biochemistry of the brain is observed while it is under the influence of music, there are real changes that occur. In neuroscientist and musician Alan Harvey's Ted Talk, he reveals that "when you are listening to a piece that you are familiar with, there is often an emotional peak in that music, and you're expecting it, you're anticipating it. A group in Montreal showed that during that anticipation phase, when you're expecting this emotional peak, there is a release of this neurotransmitter called dopamine."[4] Harvey is stating that the anticipation of a beat drop or a person's favorite part of a song is enough to stimulate that reward prediction center known as the nucleus accumbens to naturally release dopamine. This draws a

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[2] Boris Tabakoff and Paula L. Hoffman, "The Neurobiology of Alcohol Consumption and Alcoholism: An Integrative History," *Pharmacology Biochemistry and Behavior* 113, no. 1 (October 2013): 24, accessed February 9, 2023, https://www-sciencedirect-com.ezproxy.siena.edu/science/article/pii/S0091305713002529.

[3] Tabakoff and Hoffman, "The Neurobiology of Alcohol Consumption and Alcoholism," 24.

[4] Alan Harvey, "Your Brain on Music | Alan Harvey | TEDx Perth," produced by TEDx Talks on June 27, 2018, YouTube video, 17:17, https://youtu.be/MZFFwy5fwYI.

parallel to how the brain initially responds to the presence of alcohol. Harvey then goes on to say, "When the emotional peak arrives- you can call it, if you like, the musical climax- there's a sudden burst of dopamine in another part of the brain that is associated with the reward areas."[5] This means that once the part of the song that a person has been anticipating is reached, the nucleus accumbens explodes with a substantial release of dopamine. This is very similar to the effect that occurs when there are high volumes of alcohol in the brain, but in the case of music, it is done without adding extra substances to the body. Music will not cause an unnatural amount of dopamine to enter the system because it does not have that extra layer of ethanol competing for the GABA-A inhibitors. Consequently, the final outcome is not the same. Dopamine levels are able to return to their resting state and down-regulation does not occur. Music brings about the same beneficial immediate effects that alcohol does without the long-term ramifications, which is why music therapy should be used to treat alcoholism.

Due to the indisputable benefits that come from simply listening to music, it is not a stretch to say that music therapy can help alcoholics in rehabilitation centers. The Cleveland Clinic defines music therapy as "the clinical use of music to accomplish individualized goals such as reducing stress, improving mood and self-expression...music therapy experiences may include listening, singing, playing instruments, or composing music."[6] Music therapy is a practice that is very subjective to the goals of the individual participating in it and what they are most comfortable with. Music therapy, to be effective, should be done clinically, or in a controlled setting supervised by professionals. The backbone of the practice lies in the fact that the patients are able to listen to music that they enjoy in a calming setting, triggering that natural dopamine release. For instance, if one partakes in composing their own music, the brain will release dopamine as a reward for completing a composition. Of course, this must be done by a willing participant and be coupled with traditional therapy and monitoring in order to be successful. By doing this daily, though, patients are able to reaccustom their nervous systems to the correct amount of dopamine that should be present in their bodies. This allows the person to obtain the same small bursts that they are used to experiencing through drinking alcohol. However, because there is no long-term effect of the dopamine released by music, the receptor cells in a music therapy patient would begin to up-regulate back to their normal state. It would effectively treat the root of the problem, which is the desensitization of dopamine receptors in the brain due to overexposure. This would take time, but it would be much more effective than other mainstream cures.

Although there are already procedures in place to help recovering alcoholics, music therapy needs to become one of the principal treatments. Currently, one of the most common treatments for recovering

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[5] Harvey, "Your Brain on Music."
[6] "Music Therapy," Cleveland Clinic, last modified November 24, 2020, accessed March 21, 2023, https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/treatments/8817-music-therapy.

alcoholics involves counseling coupled with medication to assist with altering brain chemistry. One of the drugs used today is Mirapex, which, as Maia Szalavitz describes it, makes patients go "from essentially not having enough motivation to having too much—or, at least, the motivation that the drug ignited was misdirected."[7] Mirapex may solve the depressant effects of alcohol, but it does so excessively. The administration of the drug results in an unnatural influx of chemicals in the brain, which causes patients to become hyper-stimulated. The reason that this occurs is because the drug is simply replacing the same exact effect that alcohol has on the brain. It floods the system with too much dopamine and causes down-regulation without actually solving the problem at hand. The only difference is that ethanol is not present to doubly inhibit the receptors. This leads to a person becoming dependent on the drug, just as they had been on alcohol. Thus, alternative methods like music therapy must be considered.

Music therapy is a natural and non-invasive way to treat long-term alcoholism, making it a much better option than prescription drugs. In addition to this, it has been proven to work effectively in clinical settings. Domantė Kučikienė and Rūta Praninskienė, two doctors of neurology, convey that "Music therapy is also beneficial for patients with schizophrenia."[8] The use of something as simple as listening to music in a therapeutic way has been able to help those with a mental disorder as severe as schizophrenia. Moreover, these patients are often prescribed the same Mirapex drug that alcoholics are given as a treatment. The connection found here indicates that the chemical issues in their brains are similar to those found in alcoholics. This demonstrates a very promising prospect for the use of music therapy in the case of alcohol abusers. Music therapy is already being used to treat very serious mental illnesses and thus, should also be used to treat alcoholism.

There are thousands of rehabilitation centers for those attempting to address alcohol abuse across the world, but very few of them promote music therapy as their primary treatment, which is something that needs to change. Music therapy is an innovative, cheap, and organic solution that does not introduce more chemicals into the body and solves the true issue behind alcoholism. An institution such as The Crossroads Centre in Antigua, established by Eric Clapton, should take the first step in promoting this treatment. In Eric Clapton's autobiography, he reminisces about when The Crossroads Centre first opened its doors "with Anne Vance at the helm and a weekly program, based on the twelve steps in place."[9] This twelve-step program was very different from others of its time. It was a much more holistic approach that focused not only on the individual, but also on their family and friends. Music is something that has a unifying effect on people and because of

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[7] Szalavitz, "Dopamine."

[8] Domantė Kučikienė and Rūta Praninskienė, "The Impact of Music on the Bioelectrical Oscillations of the Brain," *Acta Medica Lituanica* 25, no. 2 (August 2018): 104, accessed February 9, 2023, https://www.journals.vu.lt/AML/article/view/21305/20417.

[9] Eric Clapton, *Clapton: The Autobiography* (New York: Crown Publishing Group, 2008), 271.

this, it can bring the friends and families of recovering alcoholics together through participating in music therapy. Moreover, The Crossroads Centre has historically used less mainstream approaches to alcohol addiction and abuse. Therefore, it is the perfect candidate for using music as a way to rehabilitate its patients. Furthermore, Eric Clapton is both a musician and someone who struggled with alcohol addiction. He should welcome a solution that applies the beneficial connection between the two. The center is a well-known, luxury rehabilitation center. This means that it is in the public eye and therefore has the influence to promote the utilization of music therapy world-wide. That way, its benefits can spread to the maximum number of people possible.

Both alcohol and music affect the nucleus accumbens and therefore can control the release of dopamine and its impacts on the human body. While alcohol produces a response where dopamine receptor cells must down-regulate, music can cause the same cells to undergo the opposite transition. This link demonstrates how music therapy can successfully reverse the effects of long-term alcoholism. Although there are other treatments that are currently used, music therapy is a much needed addition to the standard repertoire. This is because today's solutions often require prescription drugs, which only add to the chemical issues occurring in the brain. Music therapy must become a regular practice so that those who are suffering from addiction to alcohol can obtain treatment that does not come with lasting side effects. In order to reach the most people, it should be promoted by rehabilitation centers such as The Crossroads Centre, which can use the media to identify its benefits. The result just may be a world where true rehabilitation from addiction is not only attainable but enjoyable to its patients.

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The writer of this research paper presents a clear position explaining how a Critical Race Theory framework would help diversify education and make it more inclusive.

I Want My Child to Understand History: Let's Talk Critical Race Theory

By Holly Teasdale-Edwards

Prof. Glynn- Racism and the Pursuit of Social Justice

It is important to teach about Critical Race Theory (CRT) in schools because it provides a framework for teaching about what happened in United States History. Not learning about systemic injustice makes people ignorant of problems that still occur, and hiding historical truths from students makes it possible that when they grow up, they will repeat the same mistakes as earlier generations. Putting limitations on what students learn affects their teachers, as well. If teachers in a particular state feel they are unable to teach facts, they may be prompted to go somewhere else where there is more academic freedom or leave the profession altogether. People who are against teaching CRT in schools believe it will make children feel guilty about something that does not affect them; however, this is not a reasonable criticism. Understanding the inequities in society can sometimes lead to a feeling of guilt among students, but guilt is not always a bad thing. A lot of times guilt is what drives people to evoke change. Curriculum informed by CRT helps students better understand and connect with the past as well as create a more equitable future. Implementing a CRT framework will provide students the diverse education they have been missing. The goal is to encourage students to learn more about different races and empower them to spread the importance of embracing diversity to their peers.

Over the last couple of years, the debate about teaching CRT in schools has made mainstream media headlines, which has led to misconceptions about what it actually is. Critical Race Theory is not a subject. The term was coined by Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, a UCLA law professor, in the mid-1990s. Crenshaw and other scholars used CRT to explain that institutionalized racism exists. In a 2022 article published in the *Vanderbilt Law Review*, legal scholar Mary Lindsay Krebs notes that CRT "theorists share a common interest in unpacking the historical underpinnings of racial inequity and describing white supremacy's ubiquity within the United States legal system" (1929). Implementing a CRT framework in schools could help students identify racial problems and their historical roots. Education law scholars Theresa Montaño and Tricia Gallagher-Geurtsen state that acknowledging racism, particularly for white privileged children who have not experienced oppression, begins with teachers helping "students identify and name it" (91). Using CRT allows the problem— racism— to be named, and this is the start to not only acknowledging racism, but trying to prevent it in the future.

Unfortunately, many people in the United States would prefer that schools ignore that racism was and still is present in society. Krebs states, "As of February 2022, fourteen states have passed prohibitions on teaching about race in potentially divisive manners, or what are colloquially known as 'anti-critical race theory' legislation or 'CRT bans'" (1927). However, what is divisive is a matter of interpretation. As Krebs says, "Conservative proponents purport that these laws protect objective, unbiased, and balanced teaching" (1927), while CRT proponents assert that they encourage the "prohibition of truthful history teachings . . . thereby denying the lived experiences of students of color and perpetuating harm" (1931). Scholar Robin DiAngelo argues that this denial is a form of white fragility. She suggests that this refusal to learn "functions as a protective force field preventing further growth" (172). Most white parents have not directly experienced racism, which makes it easier for them to ignore systemic injustice and deny the importance of teaching their children about oppression.

Politicians such as Ron DeSantis, the current governor of Florida, have played into this tendency to deny the role of racism by using the term CRT as a red herring. One veteran Florida teacher quoted in a National Public Radio article written by Greg Allen said of DeSantis, "'I feel that maybe, possibly he's pandering to a base for re-election and that's very hurtful'" (Barbara Segal qtd. in Allen). DeSantis and others gather support from the conservative base of the Republican party by manipulating white parents into believing that CRT is somehow harmful to their children. According to Arian Campos-Flores and their colleagues at the *Wall Street Journal,* DeSantis's anti-CRT policies are "generating fear, confusion and upheaval . . . with varied consequences in schools across the state."

One impact of this divisiveness is its effect on teachers, who may feel that politicians and parents are forcing them to eliminate discussions of racism from the curriculum. According to Kmele Foster and her colleagues, a group of cross-partisan scholars and writers, CRT critics would prefer to block "any teaching that would lead students to feel discomfort, guilt or anguish because of one's race or ancestry." Teachers caught in the crossfire fear they must censor their lessons in order to remain on the right side of their students' families. Krebs states, "teachers are censoring themselves and school administrations are 'diluting' their efforts to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion" (1931). By limiting teachers' ability to use CRT to frame their lessons, politicians and parents are not protecting children. Instead, they are ensuring that their children grow up ignorant to problems that could be solved if those children understood their nation's racist history.

The idea that being exposed to CRT will damage children is primarily a concern of white parents. People of color are well aware of systemic inequities and must cope with the legacy of racial trauma. Censoring conversations about race in the classroom could lead to the impression that the experiences of historically underrepresented groups are insignificant compared to those of their white peers. Sometimes racism is lodged so deep within an institutional system that it is invisible to white, privileged people. Changing the system

requires that teachers inform their students about these inequities. Our next generation of leaders will not be compelled to evoke change within their communities if they do not understand the need for that change. Inequities will be impossible to fix unless teachers are allowed to teach about them. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 says that there cannot be discrimination within the education system, meaning that teachers should be required to educate students from multiple perspectives ("Education and Title VI"). CRT provides a framework for introducing those perspectives.

For a long time, the curriculum that was taught seemed to be appropriate because white privileged educators ignored historical truths, but CRT provides a framework for changing and modernizing outdated history lessons. Montaño and Gallagher-Geurtsen note that K-12 students should be exposed to these modernized lessons. In their words, "we need all classrooms to explicitly challenge the endemic racism in our schools in society that serves to dehumanize students of color. We believe that if you are against CRT in schools, you are for racism in schools" (98). Age-appropriate lessons could be introduced that focus on teaching students about past and contemporary efforts to change the racist legacy that still exists in the United States. From kindergarten through middle school students could learn about overarching ideas and the achievements of diverse leaders. Materials on these topics would present examples of role models that all children can look up to. Having this background will be helpful for students once they reach high school. Each year of high school history could focus on one century– that way students could learn about important events in more detail. The curriculum could conclude with a senior project where students pick a topic in history and relate it to a problem that is still happening in the U.S. Montaño and Gallagher-Geurtsen argue that youth should participate in "civic engagement, direct involvement in social movement[s] or critical community projects" (95). Completing this project would encourage students to connect the past with the present and make changes so what they have studied does not continue to be an ongoing problem.

Many people do not even realize what Critical Race Theory is and how their children would benefit from being taught through a CRT lens. Misinformation is spread by politicians who create false narratives that portray CRT and its effects on students in a negative light. When politicians and parents promote this false rhetoric, they force teachers to adhere to a curriculum that diminishes the lived experiences of people of color and inhibits all students from accessing a more diverse education. CRT is an important framework for the type of historically correct curriculum that empowers students. Once they are educated, they will be more likely to evoke change within society. The future will always look like the past unless people make a concerted effort to change their way of thinking.

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In this Heritage Unit essay, the author presents an argument about how the male-female sibling relationship is harmed by gender expectations passed down in families.

Don't Be Too Much Like Your Brother:

An Examination of How Gender Roles Affect the Sibling Dynamic

By Julianna Tourangeau

Dr. Haas- Women: Their Voices, Their Values, Their Vision

Too often, girls are raised to be prissy princesses and boys rambunctious and manly. The toys are no different; girls play with Barbies and boys with GI Joes. In households where there are siblings of different genders, these societal norms are likely to be more blurred when they are young, and start to reappear as they get older. This is because in the younger years, siblings have built-in play buddies, so boy toys end up intermingled with girl toys. As siblings get older, the societal norms creep in as girls learn how to run a household, and their brothers learn that their role in the household is to be taken care of by the women in their lives. The rules and expectations tend to become different for the brother and sister. When this is the case, the message being sent to young girls by their parents is that gender decides what role a person will play in the family dynamic. Ultimately, the shift from girlhood to womanhood changes the sibling relationship. Girls are forced to go from being equal playmates to subordinate women who serve the men in their life, including their brothers. When the sister reaches the age of having more restrictions and expectations placed on them, the close knit loving relationship dulls and becomes distant, and feelings of resentment emerge. This is heartbreaking because a sibling bond is one that should never be broken; it is a support system that should help carry one through life, and definitively shapes the person one will become. Therefore, the process of helping a child grow up should remain gender neutral and equal for both the brother and sister in order for their relationship to remain strong through the hardships they will inevitably face.

In childhood, different gendered siblings who grow up in the same household are allowed to be similar because they are young, and are oblivious to the way their genders will shape them in the future. This sense of gender equality allows the sibling dynamic to develop in a strong and healthy way from a young age. During early childhood, parents tend not to put up societally-dictated barriers between the girl and boy siblings because they are at an age when the children have no real responsibilities in life. This is extremely healthy for the siblings' bond to flourish, and for the children to develop their own sense of self without social pressures. In "X: A Fabulous Child's Story," Lois Gould, an American writer who believed raising children against society's gender norms was key to their development, describes a boy breaking societal expectations by running around pushing a baby stroller and singing in their football uniform (111-112). This display of gender neutrality would

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be viewed as sweet and innocent during youth, but would eventually be shut down by their parents as they got older for being inappropriate behavior for a boy to be exhibiting due to its feminine nature. Siblings are allowed to be as masculine or feminine as they like when they are children playing together, but in most cases society's gender norms will eventually catch up to them. It is unfair to say that it is acceptable for girls to be like their brother when they are younger, but once they reach the age of maturity, it is only respectable for the sister to start acting ladylike and removing herself from the equal relationship with her brother. Not only is this limiting for the sister, it damages the sibling bond.

As siblings of different genders reach adolescence, the equality and security of the sibling dynamic often begins to fade. This is due, in large part, to the fact that the responsibilities placed on a boy becoming a man and a girl becoming a woman are very different. Now, instead of playing outside in the mud with her brother, a girl will be confined to more feminine activities such as reading, crafting, or baking. Similarly, it is no longer acceptable for a boy to play with Barbies with his sister, so he is forced into more manly activities such as hunting or sports. A significant part of society's expectations regarding becoming a woman is learning how to perform household duties. In this way, girls mature faster than their brothers, and will take on more of a caretaker position. Jamaica Kincaid, a woman who did not follow the traditional norms of womanhood when becoming a writer, wrote in her poem, "Girl," about how these gendered expectations are taught to daughters. The mother in the poem says, "This is how you iron your father's khaki shirt so that it doesn't crease [. . .] don't swat down to play marbles-you are not a boy, you know." Kincaid expresses how at a certain age a girl is taught that her sole purpose is to serve the men in her life, and to leave the innocence of childhood behind. This highlights the oppression that girls have to endure that boys do not suffer from. Siblings are pulled into two contrasting worlds, and this negatively affects the strength of the sibling bond. When sisters and brothers are no longer allowed to participate in the same activities, a disconnect becomes apparent. Furthermore, a sister will be taking care of the brother versus their childhood dynamic where they were equal, and no one was in a position of power. Society has cultivated the idea that this disconnect is a part of growing up. However, having the ability to maintain a close relationship with a sibling is crucial because they are family and should act as a support system for one another. Enforcing gender stereotypes once siblings reach a certain age is cruel because a significant relationship is being hurt when it does not need to be.

Just as the responsibilities of male and female siblings change as they grow up, the rules placed on them become vastly different. This contributes to the isolation of siblings forced into their gendered roles, and the barriers they place between themselves. The girl in the sibling relationship will encounter gender issues such as sexualization that will prompt parents to feel the need to be more protective and strict with their daughter than their son. Due to the harsher restrictions placed on the sister, such as a dress code, earlier curfew, or no partying, resentment or jealousy can develop towards her brother. These feelings will cause an

already distant sibling relationship to become even more removed. Each sibling will be co-existing in a household, but living entirely separate lives. This is extremely damaging not only to the sibling relationship, but to the family as a whole. Family is supposed to be the backbone of life and the people who shape a person the most; so when the children of the family are no longer as close as they used to be, this backbone is broken. Therefore, the rules placed on the brother should be the same as the rules placed on the sister. In reference to the parents protecting their daughter from sexualization, the daughter should not be punished based on the misogynistic views of society. It is not the daughter's fault that girls are oversexualized. Whether parents think harsh or flexible rules should be placed on their daughter, they should be the same for their son. Maintaining the equality established in childhood into adolescence and beyond will prevent any resentment and jealousy regarding leniency in the sibling relationship, and will allow them to remain close.

The sibling relationship is a very important part of growing up. A brother who knows everything about his sister can be someone to lean on and vice versa; this is crucial for them to navigate life in a positive way. Parents who allow their children to develop a close relationship with their siblings from a young age and then place different gendered expectations and pressures on the children as they grow older, are stunting the healthy sibling dynamic. The disconnect between siblings when they are older should no longer be blamed on the act of simply growing up, but should be placed on the outdated societal pressures that parents enforce. Gendered expectations should not even be present while raising siblings, and instead parents should keep a gender neutral home throughout childhood into adulthood. This way siblings will maintain their connection, and will be able to decide who they want to be on their own.

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Using specific evidence from a variety of sources, this author explores the ways in which stereotypes contribute to discriminatory perspectives and policies for this Diversity Unit essay.

The "Abject Immigrant": Adichie's Single Story in the Context of American Immigration

By Madeline Trotta

Prof. Collins- Narrative: The Inside Story

In her TED Talk, "The Danger of a Single Story," author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie discusses why it is harmful to base our perception of people, groups, and places on a single story or a stereotyped, limitational view that only incorporates one small perspective of what they are. As Adichie says, marginalized and powerless groups are almost always the ones subjected to the single story because "power is not just the ability to tell the story of another person, but to make it the definitive story of that person"(00:10:11). This problem of very narrow identities being attributed to unique, complicated people and specific marginalized groups is one that is certainly applicable in many contexts today; one of them is the context of immigration and how the media chooses to portray it. The single story is detrimental in the context of immigration because it contributes to xenophobic and discriminatory attitudes that result from stereotypes based on consistently negative portrayals.

The single story impacts perceptions of immigration by leading to the emergence of negative stereotypes about immigrants that foster and prey upon the widespread fears and anger of the public. When people are continually represented in a way that draws attention to or exaggerates negative characteristics supposedly related to danger, people will take this single story to heart and see all members of a group as embodying those dangers and characteristics. This phenomenon is not new in America and can be seen in the way Haitian immigrants were viewed and treated in Florida in the aftermath of 9/11, which writer Edwidge Danticat describes in "Not Your Homeland." This article details the conditions of a hotel and detention center where these immigrants were housed, including the fact that there was little edible food, a lack of adequate clothing, and even beatings from guards (Danticat). One man's reaction to this treatment was that he was "not used to prison" (qtd. in Danticat). This draws attention to the jail-like conditions of the compound, which both reflect and encourage the tendency of Americans to view all immigrants as inherently dangerous and criminal in nature due to the stereotypical profile we ascribe to them. Danticat tells the story of David Joseph, a Haitian refugee who was detained and eventually deported since he "posed a threat to national security" due to how Haiti "harbors Pakistani and Palestinian terrorists" (qtd. in Danticat). Joseph, however, had come to the country out of desperation and the American government refused to publicly provide any evidence to support its charge (Danticat). This further demonstrates how believing that a negative single story accurately represents a whole group of people or a whole country is detrimental since here a single story that promoted fear

contributed to xenophobia and discrimination against Haitian immigrants. Therefore, single stories that attribute negative characteristics to immigrants are directly harmful to specific individuals as well as entire groups of people searching for better lives.

Not only does using a single story to disparage immigrants have a long history in America; it is also a current issue. In 2022, Donald Trump used lyrics from Al Wilson's song, "The Snake," as an allegory for immigration (Papenfuss). In addition to creating fear, wariness, and disdain for immigrants, this comparison also attempted to make people believe that it's possible to fully understand everything about all immigrants in the first place. Wilson's 1963 song– which features lyrics written by a civil rights activist whose children were deeply saddened by its appropriation against immigrants– tells the story of a poisonous snake that kills the woman who saves it from freezing to death, which Trump directly likened to an immigrant retaliating against the United States after coming into the country (Papenfuss). In addition to obviously creating an extreme and overly negative generalization about a large and diverse group of people, Trump's use of the song also forwarded the idea that it's possible to have knowledge of every immigrant's feelings towards the United States and their plans for when they come into the country. For example, in the song, the snake makes the condescending comment to the woman, "You knew damn well I was a snake before you brought me in" (00:02:43). If interpreted as an analogy for immigration, this statement supports the idea that Americans should assume that every immigrant is treacherous or vindictive, and that therefore preemptive action should be taken to stop them from coming into the country. This form of xenophobia is a direct result of the undue confidence that the single story gives the people in power who tell it. Thus, in addition to creating fear and negative stereotypes, the single story can also be used to convince listeners that they have full knowledge of people who are inherently more complex than one perspective could ever convey, which clearly aligns with Chimamanda Adichie's claim that single stories and stereotypes are harmful because "it is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete" (00:13:10). It is precisely the single story's lack of diverse perspectives that allows it to become so widespread in spite of its overly negative and discriminatory nature.

In "The Danger of a Single Story," one of the personal anecdotes Adichie shares is one about how she was surprised upon traveling to Mexico from the United States and realizing that, unlike the single story wanted her to believe, Mexicans were not all the vision of "the abject immigrant" that had been continually presented through the media (00:09:18). As Adichie learned for herself, single stories that encourage a wide range of negative emotions, such as fear and hatred, as well as an inappropriate confidence in one's view of immigrants have become worryingly prevalent and detrimental in our society. This issue is a very important one to address, for until we can spread and understand a wide array of accurate representations of immigrants and their stories, the violence and deprivation seen in the Krome Detention Center in Florida and the hateful

language with which Trump described immigrants will only continue to flourish and negatively impact many innocent people coming into the United States.

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In this Social Justice Unit essay, the author draws on contemporary affairs while incorporating elements from required course readings to address several human rights concerns in Iran.

Veils and Violence: Social Justice in Iran

By Natalie Wrye

Dr. Larkin- Human Rights

In *The Complete Persepolis,* author Marjane Satrapi uses satirical, beautifully-illustrated portrayals of her experiences growing up female in Iran. Although she published her book long before the death of young Mahsa Amini, Satrapi's account illustrates protests and government reactions similar to those of September 2022 when the United Nations removed the Islamic Republic of Iran from the Commission on the Status of Women, signifying that the regime has repeatedly implemented unjust punitive measures. The present lack of social justice in Iran mirrors the circumstances depicted in *The Complete Persepolis*. The regime's over-utilization of the death penalty is a leading example of Iranian authorities using excessive violence to invoke silence. As it dismisses human dignity and freedom of consciousness, the Islamic Republic disparages its people and promotes an atmosphere where social justice perishes. Consequently, Iranians' cries for social justice have grown more piercing and widespread. Iran's ongoing struggle for social justice, which traces back to 1979, stresses the crucial role of governments in protecting human rights. Furthermore, Iranians have exposed the frailty of social justice under oppressive rulership.

Satrapi's book emphasizes the Islamic Republic's denial of women's rights in Iran and its hostility toward female citizens. For instance, Marjane discovers the appalling fate of Niloufar, a young woman who was arrested and killed for being a communist. During this devastating revelation, Marjane's mother explains that it was "against the law to kill a virgin," indicating that a Guardian of the Revolution forcibly married Niloufar in order to steal her virginity before her execution (Satrapi 149-150). This suggests the Iranian government endorsed rape and senseless death sentences for women. Such actions violate Article 16 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which holds that "Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses" ("Universal Declaration of Human Rights"). Niloufar was arrested for her beliefs and forced into marriage, presumably with neither free will nor consent. Her unfortunate fate reflects countless untold stories of women throughout Iranian history. The Iranian regime has created harmful conditions over time, resulting in the persecution and demoralization of its women.

Iran's human rights abuses were addressed by international authorities, spotlighting the desperation and disheartenment of the Iranian public. The United Nations (UN) Watch, a global organization dedicated to preserving human rights, published its "Victory: How Iran Was Expelled from the U.N. Women's Rights Commission" in December 2022, which details the UN Economic and Social Council's removal of Iran from the

Commission on the Status of Women. Director of the UN Watch, Hillel Neuer, claims the Islamic Republic "is a regime that beats, blinds, arrests, tortures, rapes and kills women protesters" ("Victory"). Neuer's assertion about Iran, paired with the abuse of women's rights today similar to what Satrapi describes, indicates the UN Women's Rights Commission had sufficient grounds to expel Iran for its transgressions. According to UN Watch, a draft resolution for this expulsion was submitted around the time of Mahsa Amini's death. Alex Shams, writing for the *Los Angeles Times*, explains how the young Kurdish-Iranian woman's death while in custody of the morality police triggered a series of widespread protests. Shams highlights the role of young Iranians in these protests, saying, "The regime has for years warned people that protest could lead to chaos, pointing to neighboring states ... torn apart by foreign intervention. But in recent weeks, the wall of fear has been broken." Youthful Iranian protesters, many of whom were females, continued their demonstrations despite looming threats from the regime. Looking to the past, Shams further explains that such events have become far too familiar to the Iranian people. These protests have exposed the Islamic Republic's oppressive nature while showcasing its people's resilience to the world. The daring Iranian dissidents who defy their oppressors have been instrumental in exposing human rights abuses in Iran. Without resistance from the public, it would be far more challenging to unveil the regime's iniquities.

Human rights violations and accompanying protests have become recognizably frequent in Iran. Tim Brinkhof, a journalist for *JSTOR Daily*, draws connections between Iranian protests today and those of previous decades. Although he identifies several elements (like technology and social structures) that differentiate recent protests from those prior, Brinkhof emphasizes the enduring features of the Iranian people. He clarifies that "one can still identify characteristics that connect Iranian demonstrators across space and time, such as their diverse makeup and refusal to be intimidated by violence" (Brinkhof). Brinkhof emphasizes the Iranian public's long-lasting battle for social and political freedom. As described in *The Complete Persepolis*, Marjane and her parents attended such demonstrations, despite knowing the dangers of possible government retaliation (Satrapi 20-22). Brinkhof's insistence that the Iranian people do not wish to be "intimidated by violence" was also true of the protests leading up to the 1979 revolution, as Satrapi details. Despite the regime's efforts to scare the public into compliance, Iranian protesters have consistently resisted such abuses. These protests prove that Iranian citizens value autonomy over security.

While women in Iran have suffered particularly harshly, the entire Iranian public has been affected by its government's actions. Similar to popular resistance to the 1979 Islamic Revolution, Mahsa Amini's death in September 2022 provoked animosity and broad-based opposition to the government. Brinkhof explains that "Demonstrations initially aimed at abolishing compulsory hijab laws [after Amini's death] are now calling for a complete dismantling of the republic itself." For small-scale protests to morph into such far-reaching government opposition, the catalyst for this movement must have embodied social injustices much more

expansive than hijab mandates. Articles 19-21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights establish specific liberties for all, including freedom of expression and assembly. However, the Iranian government has disregarded the UN General Assembly's directives by penalizing protestors for defying its commands. As a result, the regime's actions have only provoked more widespread protests. The government in Iran has been fighting its people rather than listening to them, proving that it does not stand for the Iranian public.

The use of torturous punishments by the Islamic Republic has created a climate of fear and intimidation. Amnesty International's 2022-2023 report on global human rights strongly condemns Iran's reactions to citizens' expressions of discontent with the government. This report documents the censorship, arbitrary arrests, brutal penalties, and militarized responses that have devastated Iran (196-201). As Amnesty International reveals that thousands in Iran have been subject to arbitrary arrests, it also exposes the dreadful conditions Iranian prisoners must face: "Prison and prosecution authorities, working under the judiciary, held prisoners in cruel and inhuman conditions characterized by overcrowding, poor sanitation, inadequate food and water, insufficient beds, poor ventilation and insect infestation. Dozens of people died in custody in suspicious circumstances" (198). Not only has the Islamic regime wrongfully detained countless Iranians, but it has also subjected arrested victims to cruel treatment under harsh circumstances. The Islamic Republic's punishments reflect the most immoral ambitions of the regime, which provoked the escalation and unfolding of events in late 2022. Arguably the most menacing of these punishments is the death penalty. According to Amnesty International, Iranian officials have "used the death penalty as a tool of political repression against protesters, dissidents and ethnic minorities" (200). As it systematically detains those who are or may be against the Islamic regime, Iran censors its people through brutality and intimidation. The Islamic Republic has neglected its duty to safeguard human rights and denies Iranians their freedom by using force to govern its populace.

Aspects of Marjane Satrapi's *The Complete Persepolis* mirror recent affairs in Iran, particularly the unjust killing of Mahsa Amini that sparked widespread demonstrations throughout the nation. Because the Islamic Republic of Iran has failed to prevent recurring protests, it resorts to problematic methods for crushing dissent. Nevertheless, Iranian citizens exhibit outstanding courage, refusing to let their government harass and victimize them. As protests grow more resentful, it becomes clear that Amini's death exposed the Iranian government's most sinister inclinations. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights establishes guidelines for achieving a socially just and free society, but the Iranian government has repeatedly rejected its message. By suppressing defiance, tormenting women, and implementing harsh punishments for any opponents, the Islamic Republic of Iran deprives its people of social justice. Iran's perpetual struggle with injustice underscores the immense power governments hold over the rights of individuals. As pleas for justice continue to stimulate aggression from the Islamic Republic, Iran becomes a symbol of oppression and societal inequality.

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