

UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT  
STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

---

# PORTAL

---



---

SUMMER

2008

---

---

## **THANK YOU!**

---

To the English Teachers — Rebecca Devers, Emily Dolan, Chris Dowd, Ramon Elinevsky, Mary Isbell, Brooke Morrill, and Amanda Tinder Smith. Your diligence to duty and the care you invest in your students help to make our English program the success that it is.

To our English Tutors — Kelvin Ake, Cara Baummer, Jeremy DeAngelo, Erin Haddad-Null, Michael Jones, Sarah McIntyre, and Kate O’Sullivan — who have helped us define and refine our ideas so brilliantly, whether day or night.

To the SSS Residential Staff and Counselors, whose support and encouragement of student success continues to inspire us all.

To Bidya Ranjeet, Director of Student Support Services, and Maria D. Martinez, Director of the Center for Academic Programs. Without their leadership and kind hearts, much of what we accomplish could not be possible.

To all of the CAP office staff, whose behind-the-scenes work holds us all together.

And a special thank you to the students whose well-wrought words you read in these pages, as well as to ALL of the SSS students who strove for excellence in their writing this summer.

With the exception of font and spacing, all student essays appear exactly as they were submitted. My thanks to these students for their continued enthusiasm and interest in free thinking, and for their endeavor to express their thoughts so vividly.

*Andrew Pfrenger, English Coordinator*

## Table of Contents

<i>First Place: Han Zhang</i>	1
<i>Second Place: Thu Lam</i>	5
<i>Third Place: Crystal Pearl</i>	11
<i>Honorable Mention: Steven Ferreira</i>	17
<i>Momin Afrede</i>	22
<i>Damian Bryja</i>	26
<i>Ashley Burney</i>	29
<i>Edgar Cabrera</i>	32
<i>Suria Ceja</i>	35
<i>Raymond Chen</i>	38
<i>Andre Drummond</i>	43
<i>Brice Edwards</i>	47
<i>Grace Marie Figueroa</i>	51
<i>Allan Givens</i>	54
<i>Erica Guerricaechebarria</i>	55
<i>Dennis Hanton</i>	58
<i>Yamile Hernandez</i>	59
<i>Yomary Herrera</i>	61
<i>Castro Jean-Gilles Jr.</i>	65

<i>Aisha Kearney</i>	67
<i>Mylva Lopes</i>	72
<i>Rodrigo Martinez</i>	76
<i>Kally Moquete-Gonzalez</i>	80
<i>Duc Ngo</i>	84
<i>Thien Nguyen</i>	87
<i>Tierra Pollock</i>	91
<i>Kaylani Rosado</i>	94
<i>Kris Scully</i>	97
<i>Richard Smith</i>	101
<i>Carolina Suarez</i>	104
<i>Brandon Sumpter</i>	109
<i>Joel Terón</i>	113
<i>Talicha Vaval</i>	118
<i>Michael White Jr.</i>	120
<i>Melony Wint</i>	124

# Han Zhang

~ FIRST PLACE ~

---

## Transcending Borders

---

In a recent phone call from my sister, a United States Marine sergeant in Fallujah, Iraq, we were talking quite amicably, and catching up on events in our separate life. Then I breeched the topic of the ongoing war, and the disapproval of it. She related to me that, it hurts when people back in the states don't understand them, and instead jeer at them. I realize, as soldiers, they are upholding the country, nation and the honor of the people. It is their job, and it is just a shame that not everyone supports and aids them. It is this obstruction in communication that often times drive soldiers to utter despair, to engage in empowering activities, and become detached from reality.

Tim O'Brien is a realist, judging from his discussion about the actual implications of war. The implicit events happening in war means that the good guys are not always triumphant. War Stories may be twisted to give moral and theme to better men, but that isn't the true method to tell what a true war story is. Hemingway's *In Our Time* does not tell a true war story based on O'Brien's criteria because of one misfire: morality, because O'Brien said there should not be any. O'Brien's war stories are limited; they only involved soldiers. However a war story doesn't just concern the soldier: it also involves the lives of everyone living in a war and touched by it. Hemingway realizes that and covers broad spectrum of subjects who are not only soldiers but also people influenced or relatively untouched by war. Hemingway tells a true war story. *In Our Time* transcends the limited perspective of O'Brien and redefined war stories to be truly "ours" and enlightening to the common individual.

O'Brien uses the soldier's perspective effectively and makes us intimately aware of their reactions to life and frustration at a world that does not understand them. His reaction to no response for the letter, he sent to Curt's sister, was "Jesus Christ, man, I write this beautiful fucking letter, I slave over it, and what happens? The dumb cooze never writes back." (O'Brien 175). Rat: a soldier confident in his masculinity who probably has never let his heart out, is completely baffled and enraged that he poured his heart out to his best friend's sister, and no response was given. There is just such a great deal of pain, and struggle for a soldier. Civilians often times connect unpopular wars with soldiers, and they bash soldiers. It shows the general assumption by soldiers who think civilians don't understand all that they have gone through.

Hemingway's method of stark and bleak situations concerning victims affected by war really helps the reader get a sense of the damage. Victims reading it, not only get a dose of war but also that

of people living in that era who are relatively unconcerned with the war. In directly avoiding the details of war, Hemingway seems to be making a statement about “shell shocked” troops who can’t acclimate to the times. He would rather troops be able to read it too, without going through the gore.

However, Hemingway still attains the detached mentality of soldiers like in “Soldier’s Home.” Krebs who tried out lies, and found it distasteful, also tried out truth. In responding “no” to his mother’s question, “...Don’t you love your mother, dear boy?” (Hemingway 75-76). It is really distressing in both sides, considering what would make a mother doubt her own son’s affection for her, and what action from the son provoked such a question. In using “boy”, Krebs’s mother denies him: the manhood granted to him by war, and thus in Krebs’s view, unmanning him. Krebs might actually question his own capacity for humanity and love as years of frequent trysts with prostitutes and wanton slaughter in war.

The cause of this reckless killing might also be a sense of frustration at life. Rat Kiley visited senseless violence and pain upon the poor baby water buffalo when his best friend Curt Lemon died from a Vietnamese booby trap. The narrator describe it as “...for now it was question of pain” (O’Brien 180). Rat related the Vietnam trap that killed his friend to the baby buffalo in Vietnam and took out his grief in aggression. It shows Rat’s frustration as their powerlessness in the odds of adversary, and in general, the soldier’s fortunes being tied in to fate, and whatever destiny’s whim may be.

O’Brien doesn’t care for the opinions of others and that soldiers are his top priority. His view is only the contemporary perspective of war, with a twist. It is entirely about the soldier and war. There is no space for attempts to understand civilians, and the influence of war on their lives. It is this limited insight that makes O’Brien, a narrow perspective writer. Showing his restricted view, O’Brien, recounts the story of Rat Kiley. Responding to a woman’s opinion that, it was a good story, O’Brien calls her a, “*Dumb Cooze*.”(O’Brien 183) It is plain sight that O’Brien wants people to see through the perspective of the soldier, and, obviously, does not care for the opinion of others. The war story is synonymous to soldier story. It is anecdote of a conflict with no rules, an absolute destructive force of all boundaries. It cleanses all that attempts to give it meaning. He wants to give war as it is, without any moral. He even admits, embellishing the story to make it more violent in it likeliness to war, to be a good one.

The gore and the sheer violence in war, which O’Brien uses, give readers a view of the war itself. It enables the reader to feel the reality of war, the senseless violence, the loss of dear friends, and unconcerned people. However, O’Brien’s writing is just one perspective, maybe the true way in which war stories should be told. O’Brien in using such graphical depiction seemingly desires to shock the reader. It makes us realize, it will be immensely difficult for us to ever understand. That highlights, the very nature of the conflict that, the soldiers have to go through. It is an issue, I, a

civilians will never understand. This intense violent vacuum that draws in the reader and it is a very different contrast with Hemingway's style.

Hemingway has a distinctive style of writing, an academic style which is remote and detached. It's almost like his statement on war, making the reading a lot more influential. Cohen A. Milton, in his essay "Soldier's Voices In *In Our Time*: Hemingway's Ventriloquism" talks about how the writing style"...It deflates emotion. "It suggests a speaker who is psychologically detached--emotionally drained, perhaps stunned, possibly even shell-shocked" (Milton 22). It shows that, the very nature of Hemingway's writing influences the psychological state of the readers, making it much more effective. Hemingway's style, displays a profound insight into the characters, themselves. The emotional detachment is a characteristic of the war broken soldiers. I enjoyed Hemingway's *In Our Time* more, also due to, it including the experiences of other people. Lending a certain air of realism and authenticity, it allows the reader to relate and become concerned.

All of the stories become an aspect of the human mind, once exposed to war. The Spanish Matadors stories highlighted the human's basic aggressive needs, to revel in the pain and death of others. "Cross Country Snow" shows the need for masculine camaraderie and the happiness involved because men, dull from war, just need some time alone, becoming the kids they once were. Each of these many stories gives the reader an insight into the mind of the creature known as man. It is the darker nature of man. In exposing the reader to the torrents of aggressive emotions highlights the inability of civilians to comprehend or perhaps the reluctance to understand since they have become distant from a constant raging war, having never experienced the war, itself. It also shows the dilemma of men, all over. Their domestic problems, and all the problems, a man, may come to realize. The series of stories about Nick shows his exposure to violence at a young age, emotional disregard to affectionate bonds, and later his regret at not forming one. Actually, all of these domestic problems enable the reader to become closer to the being known as a soldier. I realized that, the soldier is one of us, a vibrant human being who might have sad events happening to him, and war visit upon him. He might not be able to express himself anymore. This is the sort of realization, which *In Our Time* by Ernest Hemingway is most effectively utilized for. In knowing that war is inevitable, we need to believe that, every soldier is a sad being, not yet a man, and not quite a boy. Trapped in a state of limbo; caused by frustration and helplessness at the advent of fate and war, they need help from us common civilians.

In this era of social, economic uncertainty and war, what can a common man do? I hoped that my own experiences as a victim touched by war, not directly, but influenced in every aspect of my life, will be able to help my sister in some way. Such insight helps me to know better than to expose those raw wounds of war, and instead to leave them in the purifying cool darkness where they will never see the light of day. It is this broad range of experiences that will bare all the ramifications

made by war, and will truly allow us to be free from this beast known as war, and its supreme ability to distract everyone from what truly is important, the support that everyone needs as well as unconditional, and unwavering love.

#### **Works Cited**

Cohen, Milton A. " Soldier's Voices In *In Our Time*: Hemingway's Ventriloquism." The Hemingway Review. 20.1 (Fall 2000): p22. Literature Resource Center. Gale. UNIV OF CONNECTICUT. 17 July 2008  
<<http://go.galegroup.com/ps/start.do?p=LitRC&u=22516>>.

Hemingway, Ernest. In Our Time. New York London Toronto Sydney: Simon & Schuster, 1925.

O'Brien, Tim. "How To tell a True War Story" Post Modern American Fiction. Ed. Paula Geyh, et.al. New York: Norton, 1998. 174-182.



# Thu Lam

~ SECOND PLACE ~

---

## Popular Media Effects on Gender Expectation

---

America is supposed to be a nation of equality since we have a Constitution and the Declaration of Independence that states, “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal” (Declaration 1). This shows that we are given the right to have the same rights and equality as one another, no matter what. Even though the Declaration of Independence says that we are all equal, but cultural laws set up expectations that make it difficult for women to be seen as equal to men. One major expectation that women have to meet is concentrated on their sexual appearances. However, not only women have expectations that they have to meet in order to be considered a woman, but men also have to deal with social standards of masculinity. Society such as the media, work place, and the public, set up these laws as idealistic ways a perfect man and a woman should act and look, which makes everyone else in society try their best to achieve that look in order to be considered the ideal woman or man. Also, even though gender stereotypes seem to put women through lots of pressure and disadvantage, it actually hurts both genders. One thing is for sure, if men and women do not follow these rules, they are shunned by others and considered different, which forces everyone to follow these types of standards, so they are not seen as an outcast. Society turns to the media to draw in the men and women to enforce these stereotypes, since media affects how we judge one another.

The media is used as a way to tell everyone that to be a woman or a man they would have to follow certain types of standards. In magazine ads for lipstick or diamond rings, women are always portrayed as having a smile on their face to show off how beautiful they look with their red lipstick or how big their ring is. This is to show that women are happy about everything no matter that the situation is. For instance, in “Why Women Smile”, Amy Cunningham explains how in movies, women are always shown as smiling (357). Because of this, women are always expected to smile. No matter if she has a fight with her boyfriend or had a bad day, she had to hide it all with a smile on her face. If she does not have a smile on her face, she is questioned about why she is not smiling. For instance, Cunningham mentioned that when men see women not smiling, they would say, “Hey, baby, smile! Life’s not *that* bad...” (357). Women are taken less seriously on the fact that they are forced to follow the social expectation that they have to force a smile on their face, even if they do not want to.

Smiling is not the only standard that a woman has to meet. Women are expected to be skinny like models and have big breasts and have the perfect butt. For instance, the video “Tip Drills” features artist Nelly and St. Lunatics going to a mansion party, which is filled with skinny girls in tiny bikinis with big breasts and a big butt. Once they see the guys, the girls all suddenly starts to shake their butts and start to touch their own bodies to show the guys that they are ready for them and want them in the sexual way. The girls allow the guys to touch them anywhere they please and throw money at them as they shake their butts. This video is very degrading to both women and men since women are portrayed as always wanting sex and to have guys touch them and throw money and water at them. This is then seen by society as an expectation for women saying that in order for a woman to look sexy and attractive to the opposite sex, they would have to look like models and be willing to say yes to the guys when they ask them to shake their butts or to have sex. Therefore, when women see this type of stereotype in music videos, they think that they have to follow it, so they can be considered attractive and be able to have men look at them. Also, women would then see themselves more of an object rather than a person, since in the video, the guys are throwing money at them. Which would make women think that to be able to be sexy, they would have to try to please the guys instead of doing what they want to do.

Not only do women feel pressured from the music videos to look sexy, but men also have to deal with the stereotype from the music videos. In the music video, “Tip Drills” the guys are portrayed as having no control over themselves and always want more than one girl. They would also have to be willing to throw money around just to see some action. Because of this, society pressures the idea that to be a man, they would have to have the six-pack abs and the endless money supply and they have to be dominating. To be a man, they have to show women who the boss is since according to the music video, the girls are willing to throw themselves to the guys, so it is obvious that the guys are going to take advantage of that. When average guys see that, they are going to try to copy what the music artists are doing, since it seem acceptable to society to use girls for pleasure instead of being a gentlemen and treating girls with respect. They also would perceive women as objects rather than people since it seem as though in the music video, women likes getting money thrown at them. Men would see this as the fact that since they are throwing money at the girls, they own them and can use them for their enjoyment.

Some people believe that the music videos are just harmless entertainment and doesn't have any affect on the viewers. However, there were several occasions where the so called harmless entertainment, became a way for people to mistreat others like at the Puerto Rican Day Parade. This was where women would just try to get through the crowd, but the men in the crowd would violate them. In 2000, Jim Morris, news reporter for CNN, reported that there was about 24 women and girls that reported to have had their clothes ripped off, water thrown on them, and men touching

their butts (1). All the women and girls involved were scared out of their minds and crying, hoping to find a way to escape. This shows that the guys think that it is acceptable to treat girls like that since the media, portrays girls as enjoying the fact that guys are touching them and throwing water all over their bodies. However, in reality, you can see the girls are crying and wanting to be left alone, since that is not what they want the guys to do to them. Therefore, media does affect every day life and how people act and treat the opposite sex.

Music videos are not the only type of media that portrays how women and men should act. Reality shows also enforce the cultural expectation especially “Beauty and the Geek”. “Beauty and the Geek” is a game/reality show about eight beautiful women and eight smart men who will be paired off and have to use the skills they learn from each other to win \$250,000. At first this show sounds fun to watch since it seems as though each pair have to learn how to work together to win the grand prize. However, watching the weekly episodes, shows that the beautiful women all look like models with thin physiques and only worry about how they look, and their only flaw is that they lack common sense and aren’t book smart. The guys, on the other hand, all are very intelligent, but they are all nerds and have no social lives since they concentrate too much on knowledge. They all wear high pants, have thick glasses, and even have pocket protectors. Shows like this, show that to be a beautiful woman, you would have to be dumb and don’t know something simple like what colors are on the American flag. In addition, it does the same to men, since to be intellectual man, you have to dress nerdy and be interested in things others are not like the life cycle of a caterpillar. With these types of expectation, it would discourage woman and men to want to be intellectual since for a woman to be pretty she can’t be smart and for a man, he would try to avoid intellectual in worrying that he is going to be called nerd or forced to dress like one.

Furthermore, Reality shows are sending out the same messages as the music videos are even though they have nerds in one and famous singers in another. “Beauty and the Geek” shows that even though the guys do not have six pack abs, they still have power over the women, since they are the ones that are picking which one of the gorgeous ladies they want to be their partner. This is outrageous since even in this case women have no power to do anything but to try to use their appearance to be picked as a partner. Regardless of whether or not the guys have six pack abs and are hot or lonely men who focus more on education, they still dominate women and are able to use them to get what they want. This not only affects women, but it affects men too, since they are pressured into dominating and having power over women. If they don’t show that they are dominating, then they are considered weaker and unmanly, since in reality shows, they portray men as strong and is the dominating sex.

In addition, superheroes are often representing specific expectations that affects minds of all men and women. Superheroes seem like an innocent idea and are made up just for entertainment for

little kids, but it really shows each social role that women and men have to follow. For instance, Superman and Batman are built and buff and their power is their strength; they are always ready to save the day and be a hero. In addition, the villains are portrayed as short men, who no one wants to be around. This sends out to guys that in order to be considered a real man; they would have to look strong, be the protector, and always coming to the rescue. If they do not follow that Superman masculinity, then they are not considered men but unwanted outcasts. While Wonder Woman is really thin, sexy and her power is a rope. This shows that since she is not as strong as Superman, her power is a truth rope, to make people tell the truth, which portrays women as being the weaker sex since she cannot physically fight the villain. Women, who see this, will think that to be sexy and thin, they would have to appear weaker than guys.

Because of all these expectations that are put onto men and women, it is hard for anyone to be different who doesn't want to meet those expectations. If a man tries to be a stay-at-home dad, he is bullied by others and is called names like wuss, weakling, and loser. Others would start to challenge his identity and question if he is a man or not and bruise his ego. To guys, this is an important to them, since it makes them feel less of a man, since they aren't meeting social expectations at being the strong and macho man that is the one working to support his family. On the other hand, if a woman doesn't dress sexy, they would be called butch, tomboy, or macho. For instance, Steve Kornacki, author of "Men are from mars, women are from ... mars? Gender roles in 21st Century Campaigns", states that if women behave in an autocratic manner they are really disliked for it... But if men behave autocratically, they tend to get away with it" (1). This shows that when women act differently then how they are portrayed in the media, they aren't taken seriously and would be disliked instead of being respected. However, it is ridiculous that when men act dominate, they get away with things, and are respected and if women do the same they are called names and disliked.

Even though some people might say that they don't care about the stereotypes on television and that they are not affected, in reality that is how the public judges one another. If you are a blonde, then you are expected to be dumb since in the media they would have shows that portray blonde girls as not knowing anything. For instance in "Scary Movie 1," at the beginning the blonde girl gets chased and there are two signs that said one to safety and the other to danger, and she chose the one to danger. This portrayal of blondes being dumb connects with Scott Sanders's "The Men We carry in Our Minds" how Sanders saw the men on television as strong rich powerful men since they were "politicians, the astronauts, the generals..." and how even though he didn't identify with them, it did affect him. Since he wasn't one of the men that he saw on TV, he was seen by society as a part of the lower class. The men that were portrayed on TV were rich and powerful, so they must of came from the higher class. This goes to show that society depends heavily on what they see in the media to determine what to consider one another because of the fact that they used the media to see

how to categorize who was in the lower class or higher class. Or who was considered the perfect man or woman by the stereotypes that are heavily portrayed in the media. This shows that there are pressures that men and women have to face.

With society going crazy on standards after standards, on how physical appearance is the most important expectation for both women and men, there is no room for individuality, since it is a sin to stand out and be who you are. Liberating these expectations, it would allow men to have less pressure on mistreating women and being the dominate and emotionless person, they are made out to be. In addition, it would allow women to have their own identity rather than be seen as whores and it would help men see women as an equal and inferior to men. To throw these expectations away, there should be additional positive images on the media instead of idealistic appearances that are portrayed on music videos and reality shows. For example, the Dove campaign is a campaign whose mission is to make women feel more beautiful about them and that what they see in the media is not idealistic. Therefore, what Dove did were show average women who are all types of sizes on their commercials, to show that anyone of any size is beautiful no matter what. It is ironic how back then women were not treated as an equal to men. However, throughout the years, the Women' Movement came about and now women have as many rights as men do. It is stated in America that women are equal to men. Since we change the law of our country to have women and men be seen on the same level or equal, why not change culture laws to do the same?

### Works Cited

Beauty and The Geek. Prods. Ashton Kutcher and Jason Goldberg. CW Network.

Cunningham, Amy. "Why Women Smile". The Writer's Presence. Eds. Donald McQuade and Robert Atwan. New York: Bedford/St. Martin's.2006. 355-361. "Declaration of Independence". Achiving Early America. (1996-2008). 22 July 2008.  
<<http://www.earlyamerica.com/earlyamerica/freedom/doi/text.html>>.

Kornacki, Steve. "Men are from mars, women are from ... mars? Gender roles in 21st century campaigns." Campaigns & Elections 28.1 (Jan 2007): 40(3). Academic OneFile. Gale. University of Connecticut. 25 July 2008.  
<<http://find.galegroup.com/itx/start.do?prodId=AONE>>.

Morris, Jim. "More women, girls tell of attacks by mob of men in New York". CNN.com. 14 June 2000. 25 July 2008.  
<<http://archives.cnn.com/2000/US/06/14/central.park.assault.01/>>.

Sanders, Scott Russell. "The Men We Carry in Our Minds". The Writer's Presence. Eds. Donald McQuade and Robert Atwan. New York: Bedford/St. Martin's.2006. 786-791.

Scary Movie. Dir. Keenen Ivory Wayans. Dimension Films. 7 July 2000.

“Tip Drills”. Artists Nelly and St. Lunatics. Dir. Benny Boom. BET (Black Entertainment Television).

# Crystal Pearl

~ THIRD PLACE ~

---

## A “wrecking ball” that took all that I had away

---

Ninth Ward, New Orleans, Louisiana, August 2005, Hurricane Katrina; these words mean the world to citizens around the country. Residents of the Ninth Ward in New Orleans lost all they had and ended up in different parts of the U.S probably not to return home in New Orleans. Charter Oak Terrace, Hartford, CT, 1996, demolition of the community. This means so much to only the ones experienced this in Hartford, CT. This includes me and my family. These two places have something in common and have some things that are different but not many people know. What is the most important thing to understand about Charter Oak and the Lower Ninth Ward is the fact that close to no one returned home to New Orleans and no one returned back to Charter Oak. The main reason why is because they just could not. The way that these “disasters” did us wrong is we could not return to the place we loved to call and wanted to always call home.

Charter Oak Terrace was a little project in the Capital city, Hartford, CT where I grew up. It was destroyed by the state in about the year 1996. They wanted to make new and improved houses and make it safer for people to live. This meant that all the residents who occupied Charter Oak will be taken out and placed elsewhere. This project was where you can say the “poor” mostly lived; Charter oak was fairly big and took up a decent space in Hartford. But along with this there was drama and also there were some good things about it. Gangs, drugs and violence were the bad parts but the people you meet and get to know and the “families” that develop were what I remember most about it. Now as for the Lower Ninth Ward, everyone knows about it since it is so famous and was way before Hurricane Katrina, but was very similar in its demographic with Charter Oak. There is a difference however when it comes to race while both places have minorities, the Lower Ninth Ward was more of a “Black” community while Charter Oak was a Hispanic and Black community.

Due to the location and demographic of both the Ninth Ward and Charter Oak, these communities were “wiped out.” In the article in *The New Yorker* named “The Lost Year,” by Dan Baum: which talks the conditions in Katrina as he saw when he was down there, he had mentioned that what happened in New Orleans was “social engineering by wrecking ball.” There can be many interpretations of this but what I think this means is the community is wiped out by something that can be avoided or taken in another direction. For example, New Orleans was taken out due to a hurricane that could have saved some of the lives in Lower Ninth Ward, if the President took action the moment he heard how severe the storm was. Charter Oak Terrace could have been taken care of

in another way as well, the state could have just renovated and maybe send in some “advisors” to help those who were in drugs, gangs and had any part of violence to help them.

These communities were “socially engineered” in the relation that the residents all had with each other. I think a community is “socially engineered” if the residents all have something in common and rely not only housing and other state appointed “help” but also each other to get through anything. Since these communities were so small and the residents were on the same level whether it was in race or economic status. After Hurricane Katrina, the residents of the Lower Ninth Ward all needed each other to get out and get help. Some saw others were suffering and were trying to get the point across that they needed aid and they needed it quick. Charter Oak Terrace has many similarities to the Lower Ninth Ward in so many ways and also has very distinct differences. It kind of makes me wonder though, what they are and what they are.

Well, the Lower Ninth Ward is a well-known community and Charter Oak Terrace is not, but yet both cities have a very great historic background with each other. This is something I did not think would be a similarity on the two cities. While I know that New Orleans had a great French history and that’s where some of their ancestors, but after reading a book review on Charter Oak written by Karen Ceraso, I found out that Charter Oak Terrace was originally as “war housing” in which white families were living during WWII (Ceraso 1). While the community did integrate with black families moving in, the white families started to move out. When this happened a lot of Puerto Rican families moved in after (Ceraso 1). This was really interesting to me because I never thought that there would be something this historical for the place I called home for a while. The fact that it has been around since WWII astonishes me. This all started as an all white community but then became very diverse community, as those families moved to places where it was closed off to Black families (Ceraso 1). In the Lower Ninth Ward that is, where there were the “poor” lived, there were gangs and violence, drugs. It is called the Lower Ninth Ward because of where it is located, the town or community is located below sea level. Also, the reason the Lower Ninth Ward is predominantly black is for the fact that many of the ancestors of these families were slave and/or laborers in the past so they decided to stay there.

Living in Charter Oak meant that you were part of a big family that was very close. Even when drama went on everyone had each others back and even we were all in rags and did not have much we made sure we kept our heads up high. Tearing this community down broke a lot of hearts and ruined so many friendships. Me personally I lost contact with those I considered as my brothers and sisters. In between the 1980’s and 1990’s Charter Oak was “invaded” by the Black and Hispanic community the whites moved out of the community, this is when it all went downhill.

Gangs and violence and drug traffic started in the late eighties early nineties. This is when Charter Oak turned for the worst. But still remained the same community it was. As a child I used to



go the community center or YMCA with my friends and we would not be scared because even though so much was going on we did not mind because everyone knew who we were. The problem really was not amongst everyone in the community it was the “outsiders.” I felt safe in my community just because I knew I was not really in harm’s way, it was still dangerous however to be around all that crime and violence. I did not really put any mind into it because it was not something I was afraid of getting into. I knew what was going on and only those who joined were really forced to join by peer pressure.

Now can a natural disaster be the only way a whole community can be wiped off and be forgotten? No, it really is not since the reason that Charter Oak does not “exist” is due to the fact that the State wanted to “renovate and rebuild.” Making a safer place and rebuilding new houses but not offering any of it to those who lived there before is the worst part. How can they just tear a whole community or family apart? As the Charter Oak Tenants President Carmen Lozada expressed “I could see the people hanging out the window in the summer, having their barbeques in the lawns. I had this terrible empty feeling like I lost my family. A part of me died. Then I thought some of the houses have many bad memories. We just had to do this, make this place more open” (Ceraso 1). She expresses how she really felt about the demolition of Charter Oak. What Carmen was saying is she is basically on both sides of what was going on. She felt the same way I do, that tearing down a community that was like a family was hurtful, but unlike me she agreed that maybe it was the best possible solution there was.

Was this the only possible solution there was to making Charter Oak Terrace a better place? Could there have been programs and access to groups, therapy and anonymous groups for those involved with drugs, gangs and violence. There could have been more help for those who needed it. There could have been more assistance for those families whose home was literally falling apart. There are so many “what if” scenarios that could have helped the situation and those who were deeply affected by anything that was going on in Charter Oak.

So many excuses can also be made for those responsible for what happened to Charter Oak but many who lived there will never forget what happened and what it was. It was a community of minorities who struggled each and every day to get what they need to for their families. A family of Blacks and Puerto Ricans who knew everyone, even if they were associated with something they did not want to be a part of. They cared for one another and kept an eye on each other’s children, which made me feel safe and comfortable because it made it seem that every family there even if it was a single parent family, it was full. This showed how we all cared for one another and us being separated and being placed so far from each other can affect us horribly.

Now I do not know if the families in New Orleans were this close but these families were all separated to different parts of the country. This is somewhat similar to what happened to Charter

Oak. Instead of moving to different parts of the world it was different parts of Connecticut. Some moved to East Hartford, Waterbury and Bridgeport or other “minority communities.” Since all of us who lived in Charter Oak were poor, we could hardly afford to pay rent for the housing complex we lived in. So since housing/ section 8 was paying more than we were for rent we had to move to any available place that they were willing to pay for they did had to be in a certain shape and you did get to chose in the end, but it was out of the few choices they gave you.

As for me I just moved to another part of Hartford, this is because housing placed us in different parts of CT. Was this good or a bad to places where more trouble can be caused? Since the gangs had rivalries with “outsiders” this can just be the worse. This was not beneficial to us at all. The side effects and benefits varied by person but the total impact on the whole thing is something we all have in our hearts.

The potential benefits of demolishing Charter Oak Terrace are it is less harm and danger for children to be around. Even though nothing really happened to children relating to gangs but it can prevent them from having to join in the future when they become teenagers. Since most gangs started because maybe they have to join, taking them away from such pressure may lead them into a better life and path to do better for themselves and their families.

Another potential benefit is this sort of move can provide certain job opportunities and a chance to live in a better housing complex/facility. The houses in Charter Oak were all rented so of course it was not kept up in shape. There were insects everywhere and some of the houses were actually unlivable. Also, since Charter Oak was such a notorious project there were not many opportunities for the residents who lived there to have the best jobs. So the move can also improve job opportunities that can change someone’s family low-income problem around.

The last potential benefit I can think of that can take part in the reason why they decided to tear Charter Oak down was to physically, economically and demographically change the “face” of what Charter Oak really is. It was such a “poor” place that it made Hartford seem ugly in that part of town. They wanted to rejuvenate it, there was a need for a change and for it to become more diverse. They wanted those from different economic backgrounds and ethnicities. They wanted a safer and better community.

This seemed like a good reason at the time, but why could not those who occupied it before not be let back in? This was the kind of help we were all looking and waiting for. We needed someone to come and make things better for us. Not be kicked out of a place we called home and be put into somewhere new. We did not know where we would fit in or not fit in. We just had to go by what they told us and where they told us our options were.

This is where side effects come into play and where we know we have lost everything we thought we knew and loved dearly. The first major side effect is something that I feel strongly

affected so many. Our community was really lost and we were just placed anywhere that the state would pay for. It all happened so fast that we did not know where we were going. I lost a lot of my good friends that I thought I would grow up with. I know my parents miss all their friends and the fun they used to have. You know, those days that you can just sit around with your group of friends inside or outside while they children are playing. It might seem like one of those “fantasies” that really do not happen but for me, that is how it seemed. Nothing was wrong while we were all together. So if we were all going to be separated and lost, this fantasy will not be the same in the future. I did not know what to expect or what to think would happen without my friends by my side experiencing it with me. Who was going to be there to watch us grow and make sure that all our parents were doing to keep us from getting into trouble or anything bad was actually working? Who was going to take care of whom? We all had to go out on our own and make it without each other.

This really hurt me the most because most of my friends just disappeared and I do not know where they are. We are really the main reason why so many families stood so close together. We grow up together and our families get into some sort of fight or argument. We keep that friendship alive and well in us. Unlike adults we did not care what some one did to the other. We just enjoyed each other’s company and support that we had through it all.

Another major effect was the fact that where we would move next was based on housing and section 8. We could not tell them that we wanted to live here or there unless it was in the range of the “budget” we had. Housing will give you some options you choose out of like three or four and that’s were you live until you cannot anymore. It was mostly based on your family income than on the size of the family like it is today. As for me, I was in a family of seven living in a three-bedroom apartment. There were roaches and the apartment was very small for all of us to live in. However, they just wanted to know if you can pay the rest of the rent that the “could not” and sent you on your way. Before I got to where I am living now, I have lived in an apartment with only three bedrooms and little room for the seven people living there. Then I moved to a three-family apartment with my family on all three floors, after living there for such a long time we had to move because the rent became too high for us. Now we are in a decent place now that my family is smaller, but we are still struggling to pay the rent because now the rent is higher and we only have one source of income.

The last major side effect I think was the worst possible outcome actually. The fact that the State of Connecticut did not build all the housing complexes they were supposed to. They did build a few but that was recently, it just happened maybe like three or four years ago. Instead, they have a little plaza with different stores and “franchises” there. I now live around the area were Charter Oak used to be and it amazes me on how different it really is. However, the diversity of that area did stay

the same. There are many Blacks and Hispanics living around that certain area. Gangs and drugs are still “popular” around the area.

It is not the “ghetto projects” I remember, it is something entirely different you can say because of the new generation, my generation. So as I come back to my question, can a whole community just be wiped out only do to natural disaster? I think not but it takes a lot out of the community to actually go on after that. I was thinking back to the times I had in Charter Oak and the times when my friends and I were in the community center hanging out. It made me think about the song we used to hear all the time while playing games in the game room, “If I Ruled the World,” by Nas and Lauryn Hill, what would we all do if we ruled the world? I know I would go back to the days I used to have with my friends in Charter Oak, “the good old days.”

### **Works Cited**

Baum, Dan. “The Lost Year.” The New Yorker. Online. 21 August 2006. 16 July 2008.

[http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2006/08/21/060821fa\\_fact2?currentPage=all](http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2006/08/21/060821fa_fact2?currentPage=all)

Karen, Ceraso. {Radcliffe, David.} “Charter Oak Terrace: Life, Death and Rebirth of a Public Housing Project Book Review. March/April 1999.

<http://www.nhi.org/online/issues/104/review.html>

Nas and Lauryn Hill. “If I Ruled the World.” Video. 1996

<http://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/nas/ifruledtheworld.html>

# Steven Ferreira

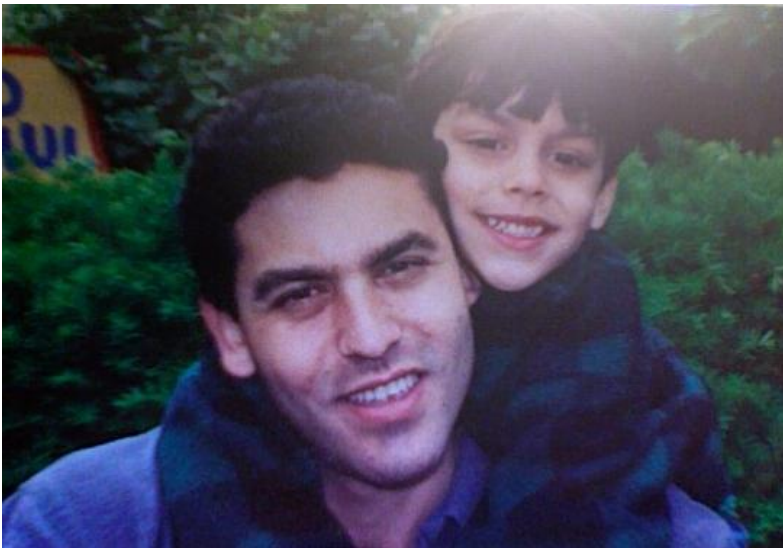
~ HONORABLE MENTION ~

---

## Twelve Years Ago...

---

It's funny how I see myself hanging over my fathers back and think, "when did this ever happen?" I do remember how ever, all the things that the picture reminded me about. The Mr. Softee repetitive jingle signaled that the ice cream truck was in sight, the smell of my father's cologne, the taste of rice and beans with steak and the feeling of dirt between my hands as I dug around the



house trying to find dinosaurs. Now that I have grown up and see the picture twelve years later; the sounds are different, I don't hear the ice cream truck coming but I hear a lecture. The smells are also different. I don't smell my father cologne any more but I smell the one I am wearing. The tastes (Almost the same, I don't like beans

anymore. I only ate them because I wanted to be strong like my father). The desire to try and find dinosaurs in my backyard has changed (I have left the idea of thinking a giant Tyrannosaurus-Rex is buried under the shed) and my perspective on life has also changed.

I'm pretty sure the picture must have been taken on a Sunday afternoon. That's when my father and my mother and I would attend church in the morning and then head to Rogers Park, which was on the way back to my house. The trees in the background remind me of Rogers because I always remember the park being full of trees and having funky colors for slides such as the sign behind us. As for what the sign says, I have no idea (that was too long ago for either my mother or father to even remember). The small details that no one pays attention to can always be found throughout life, in the past and in the future. The clothing I wore wasn't that important before. I was about only six years old (I know this because I don't have glasses on, I started wearing glasses when I turned eight). The green flannel shirt must have been something my father bought for me. My father is a big fan of flannel. I think its because he works hard and he compares the flannel shirts to being a worker's shirt (flannel shirts are often associated with lumber jacks).

I didn't have a care in the world about what store my clothing came from or how I looked, I just wore it because it was what my parents had bought for me. Now that I'm older it matters. It matters because I want to set myself apart from everyone else. How I present myself has a lot of meaning. I want to dress a certain way for a certain occasion, If I'm just hanging out I could care less but if I'm going out to the movies or out to dinner I will dress up and put on my special edition sneakers (one's I bought with my own money), nice Ralph Lauren dress shirt (also bought with my own money), the Abercrombie and Fitch jeans I own (also bought with my own money), and my Nautica watch and Dolce & Gabbana glasses (bought with my own money). Self-expression and a little bit of pressure to be modern are why people buy what they want to buy because they like it and their parents might not. When my parents didn't like something I bought I wore it anyway because I wanted to rebel and show that I could wear it because I bought it. That small detail such as the piece of clothing I am wearing in the picture is just a reminder of how people change and find themselves through time.

In the picture, I'm excited to be with my father but I can see in my fathers' eyes that he was tired. Tired of working, tired of being in a country where he had been treated badly, tired of a place where he didn't know the language and tired of being away from home. Why be in this situation when he could be back home in Brazil on a Sunday afternoon drinking a few beers with my grandfather (his father) and not have a worry in the world? "The pursuit of happiness" and to be adventurous is why he faces all these struggles. In Brazil my parents would live the same life they had already been living. In the U.S it was something completely new which held more promise than sitting on the beach on the weekends and holding a mediocre job during the week. My parents worked everyday of the week besides Sunday in the U.S. This was the only real time I got to spend time with them. During the week I would get home from school to find my aunt watching over me until my father came home (at six and occasionally even later my father would be home). My mother? I knew that she had been working and I wouldn't see her until the next morning when I would tell her goodbye before I left the house to catch my bus to school (my mother worked the night shift at a factory until it closed down when I turned eleven).

While kids had their parents wait for them to get on the bus and as parents waited until the bus stopped at the end of the street at four o'clock. I would be waiting for my parents to get home. When I had been finished waiting and I saw my father pull in I saw the face of a twelve-hour workingman. Twelve years ago I would have never known this but now I see what that face looks like every day. (I would try to wait for my mother but I could never do it, I would be asleep by the time she came home).

Before my mother snapped the picture I'm sure I passed my hand over my father's cheek to feel his rough skin even after he shaved. Having a soft face as I did I could never relate to this. But I

knew that I someday would have a rough face like my father and twelve years later his face is just as rough if not rougher and mine is a little bit but not that much. I felt the connection my father and I had. I did not know this connection until I grew older. As a little kid I felt that my father was a person who looked after me and gave me moral support. Now, twelve years later I can fully understand. I have experienced the things my father had told me about. I have seen the things my father had told me to see. I felt the pain my father had warned me about and I tasted the nasty taste of his cooking he didn't tell me about. Twelve years is a long time and as a little kid you think time never passes by, but when your older time seems to vanish. My mother, on the other hand, I did not feel her hair; I could not touch her skin. She was only there on Sundays where as my father would be home by six thirty. I could not have the same connection with my mother as I did with my father. I'm sure I felt her skin at some time but feeling her face didn't have the same significance that feeling my fathers' rugged sharp skin had.

Now a day when I do go to Rogers Park Its hard to find the Ice cream truck there and I remember the one thing I loved about Rogers was that the Ice Cream Man could be found there any time of the day. Even on the coldest afternoons you could find the ice cream truck's tune playing and see the excitement in every kids eyes as they ran towards him. To me twelve years ago I just saw a white truck with unlimited possibilities for a sweet treat. Again the simplest things can have the greatest meanings. Wrappers of all the different ice creams the man had to offer wallpapered the outside of the truck. Screwballs and snow cones were a regular favorite of mine. But on a Sunday afternoon it had to be something special. It had to be an ice cream I would save for this occasion. It was the sweet taste of bubble gum cleverly disguised in a crazy colored Popsicle of hot pink and electric blue. It was the Bubble Gum Swirl Popsicle (I remember the packaging having a walrus on it but I'm not sure, I was in too much of a rush to eat my ice cream before it melted).

I haven't had one of those popsicles since the days I would hangout with my parents on Sunday afternoons at Rogers Park and that was twelve years ago. (In fact I did hangout with my parents on Sundays but it all changed when my sisters came into the picture years later). After I turned thirteen I didn't really want to spend time with my parents and I spent a majority of my time with friends. Plus, my parents had my two sisters to go to the park with, I felt that they didn't need me to go. My sisters at that time were about ten and eight so they were up for anything my parents wanted to do. I on the other hand would of much rather spend my time hanging out with friends. In a sense I not only gave up going to the park but I gave up spending time with my family. When I turned sixteen and started working I didn't see my parents at all on Sundays because I would be working all day. Now twelve years later I see my parents because they drive me back to school (I guess we traded ice cream in the park for a hour and a half car ride). I'm sure if I had the chance to hear the Ice Cream Man's siren and to see all the kids in the playground suddenly run after the truck,

I would remember the days I spent with my parents more often and forget about the rushed lives we live in.

The world as I knew it was Rogers Park. Now the things I hear are different, I hear the sound of educated conversations and the sound of clicking from the keyboard. I taste a different food, not the food my parents would make for me. The taste I taste is the taste of freedom and a new era of life. I no longer smell that smell of clean park air but the smell of exhaust of people's cars heading to work (As a kid the air was always clean never dirty). I feel different too. I'm not the little kid from the picture (I'm much taller obviously). I feel a greater respect for my father and my mother (even though my mother had not literally been there I see now, twelve years later that she had been with me all along helping me through life just as much as my father). Twelve years later...all my senses have changed and life is something we reflect on through a photograph.





# Momin Afrede

---

## Relearning something I know!

---

Growing up as a first generation student in the United States of America has its advantages and disadvantages. I grew up bilingual, mostly however, at home, I speak a language called Urdu. Urdu comes from Pakistan, and is a very complicated tongue. Growing up in America has made me blend both cultures into one, and forget a lot about Pakistan. Literacy is a very important tool in life, and it was not till last year, when my family and I went on vacation to Pakistan that I had to remember, and adapt quickly to what was once a familiar literacy.

On my arrival, I was greeted with open arms by my family who resides there, and I started to flex my knowledge and literacy in Urdu. I was speaking normally as I do at home in America, and we talked all about life in America compared to Pakistan. As time went on, it was time for dinner. In Pakistan, the tradition for women to cook all of the food thrives, and seldom does the family go out to eat at restaurant or fast food establishments. Today however, was one of these seldom moments! My whole family, and I went out to eat at this restaurant called Phalwans, and unlike the few American style restaurants that have English wordings everywhere, this one was all written in Urdu script. I then felt like an outsider, I realized that I had forgotten how to read and write the Urdu language! Through the coalescing of the American and Pakistani cultures, I had become out of practice in the reading and writing aspect of Urdu, which I had once known. Scanning through the menus was horrible, but I was able to pick out a few words like tikka-boti and biryani, which were all written in the Urdu script. The meal was delicious, and I had a great time, except for that I had a hard time reading Urdu! The next day, my father and I went out with my uncles to their business. Along the crowded streets are lines that stretch on for miles of fruit stands, clothing, and bazaars. I look out the window as we finally get through the crowd and get on a more free stretch of road. The signs for directions are like scribbles, and I could barely make out a rough idea of what they said before we went zipping by them at 60 kilometers per hour. We then arrived at their work place and they began to show us around. My uncles own a small private air plane cargo company, and their office is located on a small run way surrounded my multiple hangers. Of course the whole area is riddled with signs, that post warnings and restrictions all of which I could not read at the time! Walking around, I needed to use the bathroom, and my uncles directed me to go around a building and it would be on the left. It was like a maze, signs, and doors left and right, and I had only the faintest idea of where to go. I walked all the way down, and opened a door that I thought was it, and found that I had walked into some sort of machine shop. Seeing someone there, I asked where the bathroom was, and they replied, that it was right outside, and to follow the signs! Leaving the building, I decided to hold it,

and walk back to my father and uncles. That night we returned to the house, and I finally got the nerve to ask my cousins to help me out, and teach me how to read and write in Urdu.

Baby steps and practice are the terms that best describe how I relearned to read and write in my native tongue. This is much like the story, “I Talk Pretty One Day” by David Sedaris, who talked of learning to be literate in another language, and taking it also step by step. I told my cousins what happened at the airport, and they were shocked. They thought I knew Urdu, but then I told them that in America I use English and that only at home do I speak Urdu. Consequently, I had forgotten somehow how to read and write in Urdu. My cousins started with the alphabet, which is pretty simple however, it is when one combines these letters to form words is when they become very hard to make out. I felt like I couldn’t do it, because of the complexity that the letters formed with, making them look distorted, and although beautifully written, very frustrating! Watching television was also a good yet challenging practice, whenever someone watched the news, I would try to read the captions on the bottom of the screen. Although these captions were long, with the help of my cousins, everyday it became increasingly easier to read them. Another exercise that my cousins gave me, when I became increasingly good, was to read a newspaper! Before their help, I would look at the newspaper, and wonder as to how someone could read a bunch of scribbles, and make any sense of them. Now the scribbles began to make sense, and I could read pretty well. One day when I accompanied my father, with my uncles to their business again, I now tried to see if I could find the bathroom again! Walking down to maze of signs again, I was able read the signs and when I saw the one that read “wash-room”, as they say in Pakistan, I anxiously opened the door and there it was, the bathroom! I was very proud that I had relearned how to read and write in my native language, and very thankful to all of my cousins how to do so. It was very scary at the time in which I couldn’t read and write. Although I had not gotten lost or anything that would endanger me, me not being able to find the bathroom made me realize that not being able to read and write is very scary, and potentially dangerous.

Imagine being lost, and not being able to communicate with someone to get help. In Pakistan, no one cares about anyone now days, people get burned alive and nothing happens anymore. If you ever go there, you have to be strong you in order to survive there. Thankfully I was with my family over there for support, and I can speak the language and now read and write in Urdu. One significant experience that I had was at a local market. In Pakistan the most popular way of travel is thorough bus or rickshaw. In order to catch the bus one must wait for one to drive by, and just jump onto it while it is in motion! Once on the bus you must pay the fare, and then have to deal with a swarm of hands begging for money. It was very sad for me to see this, and then suddenly I got to my destination, Malir Canteen, a local bazaar style mall. Lines of beggars assembler in the streets as they see people get off the buses, and it is very heart breaking. Pakistani government doesn’t care

at all, they leave the poor on the streets to fend for themselves. I being from America, and not used to this automatically fished out my wallet, and my cousin instructed me not to. I asked him, why not, and that the poor beggars deserve money. He replied that to do so at my own risk! Once I handed out a few rupees, the Pakistani currency, I was bombarded by hands from all directions. They grabbed my wallet, and tried to escape but I grabbed the man and said come one, man and he replied that he needed the money for his children, so I let him go but asked to see where he lived. He took me to a small gully where he made a makeshift cave along with other poor families. I was shocked and asked how he ended up this way. He replied that as a child he never went to school, and couldn't read or write because he was born into poverty. I was saddened and thought to myself that thankfully I had very supportive family and had a good education. He made me realize how lucky I was and how important reading and writing is. I soon departed the location and returned that night with some home cooked food, and the books that I used to learn how to read and write. The man, whose name was Ahmed thanked me very much and I soon left again. Time went on, and I had a lot of fun in Pakistan. However, it was finally time to go home, back in America!

Literacy gives the power of knowledge. This power, when used in everyday experiences can help one understand a lot about who they are, and where they come from. Myself, being from Pakistan, and living in America can use my new literacy to help me understand a lot more about my roots. Now that I learned to read and write in Urdu, I can now study texts which can unlock any knowledge that I seek. Consequently, I have twice the knowledge of someone who is only literate in one language, by being bilingual. For other people such as Ahmed, the poor man living in a gully, he can learn and finally study, and eventually be successful enough to one day improve his status. Literacy is so powerful, and being bilingual allows for unlocking and garnering knowledge in multiple cultures. Knowledge is the key to success and without knowledge you miss so much information that is so valuable. Of course, in order to garner any sort of Knowledge, one must be literate!

To this day I keep in touch with my family in Pakistan, and enjoy practicing my literacy, both in English and Urdu. I have a respect for the power of literacy, and always remember the poor man Ahmed who never had the opportunity to have an education, and as a result was poor. I hope that he is ok, and that he learned how to be literate thanks to the books that I found very helpful and had given him. In the modern world, it is very necessary to be literate. Education is the key to survival in this world. If you can't be literate, you most likely will have a hard life. Ahmed, the poor Pakistani man is a perfect example of this. I am thankful to God for giving me the opportunity to go to school, and for giving me the power to be able to read and write in multiple languages. I am also glad that I had the opportunity to help others to survive in this grueling world, by giving them the books and literature which helps by giving them the knowledge and powers that literacy provides. My vacation to Pakistan was supposed to be just to see some family and friends, but little did I know that it would

change my life. Now I can read and write in multiple languages, and I have a true understanding of the power that literacy has, I can study and gain knowledge of things both in the Pakistani and American cultures. The power of literacy, when used properly can give you a good life by giving you the power to be in a position to make money in a good job, or it can break you, like my friend Ahmed who was denied education, and consequently could not read and write, ultimately leading to his poverty.

# Damian Bryja

---

## The Importance of Literacy in People's Lives

---

Literacy is an important skill that people around the world need to have in order to be successful. Literacy is not only the ability to read and write, but literacy also pertains to language that people use in order to communicate in a successful manner. Without proper literacy under certain circumstances, people would fail in succeeding in their goals. For example, if a person did not use a proper literacy during a job interview, he or she would have trouble in getting the job. Therefore, I think that people throughout their lifetime have to adapt to certain literacies in order to succeed in new conditions or new circumstances. This is evident by analyzing how literacy is adapted under those certain conditions or circumstances. Moreover, this analysis will be significant to show that literacy is essential to success in life. People that adapt to different literacies will succeed because they are ready for new conditions or new circumstances to occur.

I can recall a recent moment when I needed to use a certain literacy in order to succeed in a new condition. This moment was when I first came to the University of Connecticut for the Student Support Services Summer Program. The new condition for me was that I wanted to make new friends. Specifically, I needed to adapt a formal social literacy. For example, my roommate for the summer was a part of this new condition. When we first met, I was quite professional in the way I communicated. We shook hands and conversed about our thoughts of the program. Another example of this new condition would be when I saw a group of guys at the program and approached them. In comparison to being professional in that way I communicated with my new roommate, I was also professional with the guys I approached. I recall that I shook hands with them and conversed with them quite easily. In addition, in both the conditions with my roommate and with the guys I approached, I tried not to say anything that would embarrass me. Overall, the event of meeting my roommate and the guys I approached signaled a need to use this formal social literacy because I wanted to present myself in a positive way and in a way that would gain interest in them to befriend me.

Adapting to a new condition or circumstance using a formal social literacy is quite common. People want to present themselves in a professional way so that other people can gain interest or befriend one another. Using a formal social literacy is important under new conditions or new circumstances because people want to present themselves in the best possible way. Whether people are taking part in a job interview or simply trying to make new friends, a formal social literacy increases a polite factor in people that causes interest in others. In addition, a formal social literacy

increases chances for people to achieve what they hope to achieve. For instance, I wanted to achieve new friends. When I presented myself in a professional manner to others, that professional manner increased my politeness and the politeness lead me to befriend others. Basically, using a formal social literacy can be useful for people to adapt to new conditions or new circumstances that require a positive reflection to spark interest in others.

Later on, after a couple of days, my roommate and the guys I approached became better and better friends with me. The second encounter that I had with my roommate or the guys required me to still continue that formal social literacy. However, after the second encounter, I changed my formal social literacy into an informal social literacy around my friends, which is reflective of my character; very laid back and outgoing. I found it easier to feel comfortable using my informal literacy around the new friends, which made conversing much simpler. I learned the guys' personalities, nationalities, hobbies, and much more. Therefore, there is no doubt that I had a change in my social literacy after the second encounter. At first, I had to present myself with a formal social literacy to cause interest in the new friends. After that, I had no trouble presenting myself with that informal social literacy I use around all my good friends because a comfort zone for me and the others has been reached.

The transition from my formal social literacy to my informal social literacy was successful because the other guys changed as well. We got to know each other much better and we had no problems conversing about our nationalities, hobbies, high school life, and many more things. So, adapting back to a person's informal social literacy from a formal one is also common when people are faced with new conditions or new circumstances. At first I was faced with a condition to befriend people I never saw before, so I needed to be professional in presenting myself. However, the next condition that occurred was that the guys themselves were becoming more laid back and open to discussion. That condition allowed me to cease using the formal social literacy and easily use the informal social literacy that I have been using all my life. All people, (when they know others are comfortable around them), have this change of social literacy. Under new conditions where new friends are made, people change from formal in their social literacies to informal in their social literacies, which brings out their true characters. Such a change makes people successful in building friendships and furthering their discussions with each other.

My formal and informal social literacies when I was meeting new people are quite similar to a circumstance in Fredrick Douglass's short story, "Learning to Read and Write." At a certain section of the short story, Douglass mentions that one day he saw two Irishmen unloading a scow of stone. As a result of seeing that the men could use extra assistance, Douglass went unasked to help them out. The Irishmen were thankful for Douglass's good deed. After conversing with Douglass, the Irishmen learned that he was a slave and they felt bad for him. As a result of learning of Douglass's

hardships with slavery, they gave him advice as to becoming free (133). The Irishmen's advice was stated as, "They advised me to run away to the North; that I should find friends there, and that I should be free" (Douglass 133). Douglass, out of the goodness of his heart, went to help the Irishmen, and the Irishmen gave him advice and treated him respectfully (which is a dangerous thing to do at that period of time during slavery). Douglass used a formal social literacy when he approached the Irishmen and helped them because that was a good deed to do, and that deed showed a professional side of his character. As a result of Douglass's good deed, the Irishmen were able to adapt informal social literacies because they felt comfortable around him. Furthermore, the now laid back and friendly Irishmen felt comfortable enough to provide Douglass with advice as to becoming free. So, a similarity can be seen in this short story as compared to my condition where I met new people. In both scenarios, formal and informal social literacies were adapted in order to be successful in conversing with new people.

Undoubtedly, social literacy is an important skill that people around the world should have in order to be successful in communication. However, literacy does much more than make friends because literacy is a skill that provides people with endless opportunities to succeed. Literacy is needed in business, in school, in sports, and many other places. Through all the aforementioned factors above, I believe that people throughout their lifetime have to adapt to different literacies in order to succeed in new conditions or new circumstances. Social literacy played a very important part when I wanted to make friends at the summer program. I needed to be formal in my social literacy when I was faced with the circumstance to talk to people I never saw before. After a little bit of time, I could easily see that the comfort level between the new friends and me was increasing. That condition made it possible for me to use the informal social literacy I used around all my friends, which is laid back and outgoing. Without having the skill of social literacy to present myself so professionally at first, I would have had a much harder time making friends. My condition was to make friends, and I succeeded in doing so. People around the world do the same thing when making friends. Like mentioned before, literacy is not limited to making friends. Literacy is a skill to make anything possible. That is why literacy is so important in people's lives: literacy creates success.

#### **Works Cited**

Douglass, Frederick. "Learning to Read and Write." The Writer's Presence: A Pool of Readings. 5<sup>th</sup> Edition. Editors: McQuade, Donald; Atwan, Robert. Bedford/ St. Martin's: Boston/ New York, 2006. Page 133.



# Ashley Burney

---

## Finding My Voice

---

Communication is key in everyday life. People must communicate in everything they do. Whether it be through applying for a job, going to school, talking to friends and family, writing an English paper, or even through arts such as theater, painting, singing and poetry we all must effectively convey a message to our target audiences. Many people don't know how to communicate effectively with other people, so they avoid it by closing society out and remaining in a shell where the only people they talk with is themselves. They are afraid that if they talk normally, they would be subject to being ridiculed, laughed at, or even looked at with a blank stare. I once was like this. So the reason why I decided to write this paper is because I feel that more and more people should take into account how this issue is affecting numerous individuals who are unable to break down the wall of fear and speak up.

I used to be a shy and very timid girl. I didn't want to talk to anyone and public speaking was out of the question. I stayed in my box and only allowed close friends and family members to see the outgoing, outspoken side of me. What I didn't master was how to communicate with people without the fear of being judged based on how I talked. I didn't really know how to talk to people and express my inner feelings so instead, I kept those feelings inside. The thing that helped me to open up was joining a youth organization called Youth Rights Media. This is a non-profit organization that empowers and equips youth with tools, skills and strategies for affecting changes within themselves, the school system, their communities and the juvenile justice system. The way they do that is through community organizing and media production. I became a Youth Organizer and with this position, I am constantly out talking to new people each day.

I started out as a member of the program through the Media Lab portion of the program and I played huge roles in creating documentaries, public service announcements, and digital stories about issues that affect youth in the community. After every Media Lab session there is an event hosted to premiere the films. In order to catch the audience's attention, I had to learn to properly communicate with the crowd to try and move them to action so that they would want to change the issues discussed in the films. It wasn't an easy process especially since I wasn't used to talking to large crowds of people, let alone voicing my own opinions out in the open. Normally I would just write my thoughts down in a journal and the only person who would have access to them were me, myself, and I. The more and more practice I had, the better my public speaking abilities became. The more

experience I had, the easier it became for me to state my arguments and better persuade the crowds that youth issues were just as important as adults.

Many people cannot do the things that I've done. Many people are afraid to learn how to make these transitions to suit what ever audience they're talking to. No one tries hard enough to break them out of their shells and help them to be more confident talking to people. I was fortunate to have a great organization help me because had I not learned how to effectively communicate with others, my college essay wouldn't have been as great, I wouldn't have had the courage to go out and make new friends and talk to new people, and I would be scared to even speak my true opinions to adults in a respectable manner. I was lucky to have found my voice. Many people are still searching for theirs. I understand how hard it is to walk up to someone whom I don't know and start up a conversation. A lot of people are afraid to do this because they fear being judged based on the way they talk, if they have an accent they think they'll be laughed at, and some people just don't take that chance because they may have had bad experiences in the past with talking to people. They may not have gotten a particular job they wanted because they talked a certain way or they may have even been teased as a child if they're from a foreign country. I recently read a passage on Frederick Douglass called "Learning to Read and Write", and what I discovered was that he actually wanted to speak up. He wanted to learn how to read and he strived to be better in a society where an African American learning to read and write was seen as a crime. Some people want to take advantage of the opportunities we have to be able to speak freely and interact with others; however, they aren't sure as to the correct way to go about doing so. Society has this conception that if you don't communicate a certain way you are considered low class. These are connected to race, class and formal education in a lot of ways. Higher standards are put in place for minorities because if you're a minority and you talk a certain way that doesn't meet society's expectations of "proper English" then they're seen as ignorant and failures. White people have more leeway based on their level of class. Society is more accepting of a rich white person who doesn't speak well or isn't well educated. This is due in part to the fact that in certain ways money possesses a certain kind of power that one wouldn't normally receive had he/she been poor. Formal education is also a factor in society's expectations because if you have a public education versus a private school education, you're not expected to be able to hold an intellectual conversation. This is also the case with a high school graduate versus a person with a college degree. If you only have a high school diploma society has this perception that you will not succeed or get far in life. These expectations are stemmed from the idea that knowledge and speech is what's going to get you ahead in life. I know people who still to this day don't know how to speak what society considers proper English.

One of my best friends doesn't read that well and he recently graduated from high school. I can just imagine how he must have felt in high school when his teachers called on him in class to

read a passage in a book. No one knew his situation and they automatically assumed that he was dumb or uneducated. What they failed to acknowledge was that he was well educated in many aspects of life. He knows a lot about the government and the juvenile justice system, he is well informed about his rights as well as laws, and he has made a huge impact in his community by contributing to getting a school moved from an Armory building to an actual school setting. However, people fail to acknowledge these things because society has certain expectations of how people are supposed to be and what effective communication skills are supposed to look and sound like. A lot of people aren't able to master the act of transitioning from how they would interact with their friends in the streets, to how they would interact with someone such as a government official or even a school administrator. Intellect should not be measured in how well you can speak, read, or write but by how much you know, and how much you still strive to know.

People all around the world are shutting themselves out from society because society has made it clear that if they don't talk or communicate a certain way then they are outcasts. They're not worthy of their time. I've seen adults look down on youth because youth talk with slang because that is all they know. No one is showing them the correct way to go about speaking to adults or anyone for that matter whether it be a professional setting or other. If people started being more caring and understanding and instead of judging people they actually lent a helping hand, more people would become as comfortable as I am in speaking out. I have found my voice, but so many people are still searching for theirs. No one person can help everyone, however, if we all contribute then it would be easier for others to speak out and communicate. One of the ways in which I have contributed to making this happen is through organizing rather than advocacy. I organize rather than advocate because with organizing I am able to give others the platform by which they can speak for themselves, rather me speak on behalf of them. If we all work together, we can insure that this happens.

# Edgar Cabrera

---

## The Moral Rule

---

What types of scenarios would be acceptable or fair to legally enforce an un-measurable, unspoken social code? Throughout our daily lives we are presented with such scenarios, but because there is nothing in the laws stating that such actions are forbidden people continue to do them. One of the most common scenarios is when elderly people get on a public bus and young people don't give up their seats to them. Morally this is unacceptable because as humans we should always respect our elders as well as those with unfortunate incapacities. In definition, morality founded on the fundamental principles of right conduct, rather than on legalities, enactment, or custom or in other words moral obligation. Various consequences should be given for this penalty according to how severe the action was. And finally, this is a very unselfish rule, because of the simple fact that as family members and friends, we would never want to see our loved ones struggling to get a seat on a bus. In "The Socks" by Marjane Satrapi, she makes arguments about pointless rules towards women in Iran that aren't morally correct and therefore should be taken away. Unlike my bus idea, the rules applied to Satrapi are morally incorrect and it's the only reason why abolishing them is necessary. Therefore, in order for one to enforce an un-measurable, unspoken social code one must first make certain that such a rule is morally correct in all aspects. Once the bus law takes into account, people will become aware of the moral codes they're bound to follow

As humans progress in life they gain knowledge and experience to understand and know what is right conduct. Children don't know what's right and what's wrong but they learn as they are taught by adults that do know what's right and wrong. This moral respect is a universal diverse for older people, because it's passed on to every generation. This also goes back to the old saying treat others the way you would like to be treated. In this case, old or not people should always give the same respect they expect back. In our world we are bonded to each other because we are humans and that's where all the respect comes from. We think differently but in many ways we act similarly and we know that we are made of the same flesh and bones. It's like a dog, its owner, and the owner's best friend. Even though he cares for his dog as much as his best friend, he would never give the dog the same high respect as he would to his best friend. Because the friends are both humans they treat each other equally. However, when we see an older, handicap, or pregnant person we give them even more respect because unlike the best friend, they need priorities because of their disadvantages. Saying all this, respect begins from the bottom of the chain, children.

In just about every country, children are taught to respect their elders and listen to them. However, this eventually fades and all the respect to adults fade. We see pregnant women trying to get a seat but teenagers and even fit adults who can easily stand up barely give up their seat. This is also a rule that isn't particularly just for them because when we grow old, the new generation will do the same to us. Not just the elderly but the handicap as well. This goes even beyond respect, it's more of an obligation. Able humans should have to give up our seats for someone less fortunate that will obviously have a hard time traveling in the bus standing. Satrapi makes a good point in her story that men shouldn't look at woman if they believe it's wrong for woman to be arousing, instead of having woman veiled and careful of all of their public actions. One gets up for someone in the bus because it makes us feel good about ourselves while rules involving taking away woman rights for the rest of the population is just wrong.

Punishments that can be given for breaking this rule may vary. It basically depends on what type of person you refused to give your seat to. If it's only someone that is about 20 years older than you then it can be as small as community service. In order to verify the age of the person they must show you identification and based on that you are obligated to give up your seat. However, for kids under 18, the age limit changes to someone 10 years older to get their bus seat. For neglecting a seat for a pregnant woman, a day taking care of kids at a nursery home would serve them to understand the meaning of child caring. However, for refusal of giving up your seat for someone of old age or disabled, the punishment can go from taking care of that person and their needs for a month to a week in jail or juvenile conventions depending on the offenders age. Some of these consequences might sound harsh but it's only to get the message across the different group ages.

What if it was your own mother who was not given on a seat on a bus on a regular basis? Of course one would feel outraged and against such a thing, so why not think of it that way for every mother trying to get a seat on the bus? Or even worse, what if your friend had a broken leg and nobody was kind enough to give their sit for him or her? Certainty, we will always feel upset and mad when such a thing happens to a close one, but when it comes to a stranger we don't seem to care. With these rules, such bothersome events will never happen under the law. In Satrapi's story we come to understand that the situation in which woman stand is ruled over the male society. Like my previous ideas of close people being deprived of a seat, Iranian men never put themselves in the shoes of the Iranian woman and the ridiculous laws they have to follow. The men would never picture themselves putting on a veil to become unattractive or punished for wearing red shoes. It's true that certain woman are okay with the rules that the Iranian society established, but it's not how every woman in Iran thinks and it's only fair for all woman to have freedom of their actions. If you had a broken knee and had nowhere to sit on a bus, you'll want somebody to give up a seat for you,

as well as being a woman and having the freedom to do whatever they please under no punishments and restrictions from the rest of the society, especially men.

Especially in South America, getting a seat on a bus is always impossible; it's always crowded and people would never give up their seat. Making this unspoken rule into a law will lead to people giving up their seats or pay the consequences. Also, like I mentioned, a misfortune occurring to a close person who is in need of comfort ability will infuriate one. If the person disobeys the law he or she will serve the severe punishments that come with it. Even though I'm claiming a law that's yet to be written, there are absurd laws, like in Satrapi's case which involve immoral and sexist laws that have to get rid of. Most importantly, it's importantly to follow morals because without morals we will continue to be imprudent to written or unwritten laws.

### **Works Cited**

Nafisi, Azar. "Reading Lolita in Tehran." *TheWritter's Presence: A Pool of Readings*. 5<sup>th</sup> Edition. Editors: McQuade, Donald; Atwan, Robert. Bedford/ St. Martin's: Boston/ New York, 2006. Page 518.

# Suria Ceja

---

## Names: Use it or Lose it

---

Names can bring down power by dissociating a person from their identity like Maya Angelou, whose name was changed involuntarily. Members of the military hold names to the same esteem Angelou does in making sure they are called by their appropriate titles. On the other hand, the use of names can give a person power like it did for Gish Jen or Curtis Jackson. The author and music artist both create names to make a new identity. A name that would represent who they felt they intuitively stood for. The purpose of this paper is to show how names can be misused to bring down power or used to fortify power.

When a person's name is changed involuntarily as it was for Maya Angelou in, "What's Your Name Girl?" it diminishes the respect that individual deserves. When Mrs. Cullinan, Angelou's white employer, calls her another name that is not her own, she becomes rebellious at work. While her real name is Marguerite, Mrs. Cullinan would call her either Margaret or Mary. Mrs. Cullinan also changed Hallelujah's name to Glory. Angelou says, "For a few seconds it was a tossup over whether I would laugh (imagine being named Hallelujah) or cry (imagine letting some white woman rename you for her convenience)" (Angelou. 81). This quote expresses her confusion of whether her change in name would cause her to laugh or cry. Her emotions are torn between the humor or the devastation of being called a name that did not belong to her. Angelou's disapproval of the name changed revealed how disrespected she felt that her real name was pushed to the side.

As a result of her change in name, Marguerite became rebellious by coming in late to work and leaving early. Sometimes she would leave the dishes half cleaned but nothing really grabbed Mrs. Cullinan's attention. Until one day Marguerite was fed up and she broke Mrs. Cullinan's china. Marguerite jeopardized her job by defending her name because she valued her name more than her job. Changing her name is like taking away her identity. As a white woman in the South during the civil rights movement, Mrs. Cullinan plays the role of a woman who treats her black workers as slaves. She does not keep their true identities; rather she changes them for her own convenience.

Similar to Angelou, a member of the military would not approve of any name other than their position. It is often common to hear a soldier or authoritative figure call each other by either their last name or rankings. Workers in the army expect to be regarded a certain way because it is not only respectful but professional. For instance, it would be rude to call an officer, a sergeant because officers are of higher rankings. Their given title signifies the power they have or their authority. Particular names help to separate and distinguish the various levels of power in the military. Many

military officials would take to offense being referred to a title less than their own. The proper use of names within the military is important because it gives each person his ranking or reference to their degree of power. Names in the military assist in keeping things structured so that the soldiers, like chess players, each represent their unique role.

However, some people may not have a role, or they have not discovered it yet. Writers like Gish Jen recreate their own names to gain power. After she adopted her new name, she began leading a life completely different than her past. From her writing piece, "Name Dropping," She says, "-and I did other things too that Lillian did not do. I snuck out the dorm at night, propping a certain door open; I returned at dawn" (Jen. 174). She clarifies in this quote that her new lifestyle of sneaking out, propping doors and returning the next day is not something she would have done as Lillian. Her new name allows her to do things she was never comfortable doing. She granted herself power when she took on the name Gish. This new name like a new hairstyle for Jen paved way for a new lifestyle. It formed the image she wanted to reflect rather than feeling discontent with the name Lillian. She explains, "All these writers have named themselves into existence and, tickled by what they've gotten away with, gone on to try for more" (Jen. 175). In other words, writers take up pseudonyms to reinvent themselves and astonished by their creation they try new things alongside their new identities. Lillian's new name reinvents her and gives her power by the actions that follow her new name Gish.

Celebrities also attempt to create names to reinvent their identity: one that will better deliver their talent. Curtis Jackson uses the name 50 Cent to advertise his music or to get recognized. 50 Cent is his music entertainment name that reflects someone who perhaps came from a low-income family. The name also suggests the corner stores populated in urban areas where a lot of junk food would cost you around fifty-cents. His goal as a gangster rapper could be to reflect an image of someone who grew up in the impoverished neighborhoods of a city, where crime is most abundant. Similar to Jen who created the name Gish, Jackson has brought his new image to life. The new name creates an identity within the music industry, one that is not tied with his personal life. Pseudonyms help to keep entertainment lives separate from personal lives. A celebrity uses their entertainment names to project an image. Similar to Jen, Jackson's new name gives him power. The name 50 Cent, affirms his identity as a rapper: someone who knows the struggle of poverty and crime. Both Jen and Jackson have created names that will work in their favor, by giving them power.

Overall, names are used to take away or give power. Angelou's power was taken away when she was renamed because it robbed her of the respect that she deserved as an individual and a good employee. The power of any member of the military is taken away as well when they are mislabeled or identified improperly, since their rankings signify their place of power. However, names also give



power as it did for Jen and Jackson, who created names to represent who they wanted to be. Names are like labels that describe us, and no one wants to be mislabeled.

#### **Works Cited**

- Angelou, Maya. "What's Ya Name, Girl?" The Writer's Presence: *A Pool of Readings*. Fifth Ed. Antwan, Robert & Donald McQuade.. Bedford/St. Martin's. Boston: New York: 77-82.
- Gish Jen. "Name Dropping." The Writer's Presence: *A Pool of Readings*. Fifth Ed. Antwan, Robert & Donald McQuade.. Bedford/St. Martin's. Boston: New York: 171-175.

# Raymond Chan

---

## Hunger for Food

---

Hunger is one of the biggest challenges faced by homeless people worldwide. Many are suffering from starvation. We need to step in and help them by figuring out what to do when food becomes scarce, as well as providing solutions. We can find these answers in “Homelessness, hunger on the rise,” by Stephen Ursery, “Hunger USA,” by Patterson, and “On Dumpster Diving,” by Lars Eighner. Ursery’s article talks about surveys that were handed out in 2001, and Patterson’s handed out in 2006. From these surveys, we found out how many people are suffering hunger from lack of resources, and how hunger will continue to rise in the future. Eighner’s story explained one of the things we can do when we have hunger and no income, which is to go dumpster diving to look for any food to ease his hunger. I believe our nation should look for more aids and find more resources for people need of help. As the wealthiest nation in the world, our people should not suffer the effects of hunger. We need to look into this concern, and act to lessen the problem for those in need of food. In order to do that, it is not only our responsibility to organize food charities, but also our government’s responsibility to decrease unemployment rates and population density.

As rich as America is, there are many downfalls. One of them is that there are people suffering from hunger; many homeless Americans are trying to live day by day with the amount of food they can find. In “Homelessness, hunger on the rise,” the United States in 2001 surveyed twenty-five cities regarding hunger. I was shocked by the statistics. The survey reported, “88 percent of the cities reported an increase in request for emergency food assistance in the past year compared to the previous year” (Ursery 12). Eighty-eight percent translates into eight out of nine people who are in needs of food. This means in those cities that were surveyed, eight out of nine people you see on the street are in hunger. It is a scary statistic, which goes to show that the problem continues to exist and the nation did not do enough to lessen it since last year. The American government did make any progress, but instead they turned away people who were asking for food. Ursery states, “Fifty-six percent of the cities said that food-assistance facilities had to turn people away because of a lack of resources. That percentage is the highest since the 1997 survey” (Ursery 12). This is sad to know how half the people did not get the help they needed for survival. It indicates our nation needs to find more resources for the increasing demand of hunger for food or to figure out what might be the cause for Americans who are starving. To help with those issues, our nation can start decreasing unemployment rates and population, and have more funding for education. Even though it might take a while for the government to agree upon, it is a small step we can take for solving the issue of

hunger.

There are many possibilities as to why Americans are hungry. One that stood out to me was unemployment. Without a job, we cannot afford to have many things we want due to the fact we do not have an income. It limits us to many things, such as being able to buy food, drinks, insurance, house, or being able to purchase modes of transportation. According to Usery's survey, the biggest factor that affects people that are starving is unemployment; other minor causes to hunger are medical expenses, health problems, and substance abuse (Usery 14). It showed these are the most important issues for people who are jobless to deal with. These people were doing anything and everything just to support the need for basic nourishment. If this continues, the future would not look very bright. Even the survey stated, "Cities are not optimistic about the immediate future" (Usery 14). It shows many cities do not have plans to solve the problem of people being hungry. Cities know it is a big issue that cannot be solved in a year. This leads me to ask did they even intend to solve or reduce the problem at all since 2001?

To answer that question, we have to look at an article that was published five years later, in 2006. I believe the problem of hunger had gotten much worse and more people had been classified under the hunger category. Our nation did not focus on trying to reduce hunger in a five years span. It shows when we compare the two articles from the previous one and this one, "Hunger USA," issued in 2006:

U.S. Conference of Mayors' annual *Hunger and Homelessness Survey* makes it clear that hunger and food insecurity (not always having access to enough food to meet basic needs) not only exist, but also are on the rise. The increase is reflected in the fact that the two dozen cities surveyed found that requests for emergency food at pantries and similar sites had risen on average by 12 percent. In many cases, moreover, the requests were not just for short-term emergency needs, but also to fill ongoing food deficits. (Patterson 5)

Every year people in need of food are continuing to increase. This means that our nation did not do enough at all to solve this issue. The problem is not just for people who are suffering from food deficit for a day or two; it can last for months to come. With an estimation of thirty-eight million people with food deficits, like in 2001, cities have to turn people away who are in needs of food. This situation occurs when the emergency food providers said, "in almost half the cases, they either had to turn people away or else apportion less than what they had previously provided" (Patterson 5). It is very disheartening for me to read a similar statement in the 2001 article and later, in a 2006 article. Our nation is rich, but we are not taking advantage of it because we did not improve at all over five years; instead, the problem keeps increasing. With the increase of people that were turned down, where are they going to find food?

People who had been turned down by their own country when in need of food were forced

those to take actions for their own survival. Without food provided by the government, many will eventually die of starvation; others might try to hunt animals, steal from others, or go “Dumpster Diving.” Out of those options, the easiest task to find food is through dumpsters. It is because there are dumpsters everywhere, homes, factories, restaurants, and academic buildings. Eighner’s favorite dumpsters were set near academic buildings: “The area I frequent is inhabited by many affluent college students...the Dumpsters in this area are very rich” (Eighner 382). This shows how much knowledge he has about college students and the institute itself because he knew when the students want to throw out their stuff before midterms, finals, or moving back home. In addition, he has scavenged for many years; therefore he has a lot of experience differentiating what is good to eat from what is not. Some items he found were cheese, yogurt, sour cream, and peanut butter (Eighner 382). With all these great items comes a great risk. There are many possibilities of food poisoning, bacteria, or even viruses in the food. One that Eighner mentioned is botulism that can appear in canned goods: “Botulism is almost certainly fatal and often the first symptom is death” (Eighner 381). It is a risk that many dumpster divers have to take for free food. The only way to decrease the risk is through experience, eating many different kinds of food, comparing one item to another. It would be hard for thirty-eight million people or even half of that, to fight for dumpsters in order to find healthy food. Therefore, we need solutions from our nation to help the needs of hungry Americans who are suffering every day.

There are many other possible solutions that can be done to lessen this tragedy of famine. I think when we try to solve a problem we should know what it is caused by. One of the main reasons for hunger is the wrong distribution of goods in the United States and the world. It is obvious that some countries do not have enough fields that enable them to feed all their citizens. However, the global production of food might meet the necessity of all people of the world. From my viewpoint, other reasons that might causes of this hunger issue might be debts of the third world nations, inefficient agriculture, corrupted politics, selfish social structures, unemployment, and the immense population density. It is not impossible to solve all these, but we have to break it down and approach it on different levels.

The problem of hunger can be dealt with on three levels: personally, nationally, and internationally. These three levels are associated with one another so strictly that they must be considered together. Personally, I took it upon myself to help solve the problem of hunger and famine in the world. For many people in America, besides from the thirty-eight million starving people, many do not know what it feels like to be hungry for a day. Every year, I volunteer along with many others at my church to fast for thirty hours, during which we can only drink liquid. The 30-hour famine is an activity supported by WorldVision where we ask for donations such as money, food, and clothing. Then it would be sent overseas to Africa and other under-developed countries

that are in need. Last year, we donated enough to save about three thousand people. For me, it was a great opportunity because it allows me to experience, what it was like to live the life of a hungry person. In addition, it was a chance for me to make a difference and save lives.

We all can participate in the 30-Hour famine activity. In the end, each person individually can do little but if many individuals organize a collection of money, food, etc., together we all can help people in need. Many organizations aid people from other countries. Everybody can support his or her actions as much as possible. An old famous proverb says, "Give a man a fish, he won't be hungry for a day, but if you teach him how to fish, he won't be hungry for years." According to that statement, we should not only feed hungry people but teach them how to avoid famine in their land as well. I find this direction of the national and international aid is still not enough. Obviously, it is easier to give a beggar a coin than to enable him to earn money. Nevertheless, this all leads just to a momentary relief and not to a definitive solution of this problem.

One of the national methods is to decrease unemployment rate. As a nation, we should try to solve this problem by creating an office for employment to develop long term strategies and oversight of the U.S. labor market in order to track trends, analyze data, research emerging problems, and prepare early interventions if necessary. This way, we can predict and prepare to solve a problem before it can have a wide impact on our nation. In addition, our nation should provide substantial tax incentives for businesses to hire in the U.S. rather than shipping their jobs to low income countries. This can decrease the unemployment rates by having jobs in the U.S for its own people, and industries should open up for people who are willing to earn a low wage. Having a job with low pay is much better than not having a job at all.

The last level of international methods for preventing hunger is the control of population density. In terms of supply versus demand, fewer people mean more food is available to each every one of us. Therefore, countries should enforce a rule instilling fewer births per female in order to control population. As for our so-called "rich" country, if governments, organizations, enterprises, political parties, and common citizens should stop spending so much money on armaments, election campaigns, and advertisements. We could take that money and help those who are starving. This can aid the poor, prevent poverty, and hunger in certain countries, like Sudan, or Nigeria. In addition, effective education can teach people how to avoid famine, or what they can do to lessen the chance of having babies. Even though, the limitation to change people's thinking is almost impossible, people should cut down their excessive spending on the unnecessary and luxuries, and instead donate the saved money to a charity like WorldVision to support hunger.

Today, millions of people worldwide are homeless and suffering from hunger. It not only exists in our nation but in every other country as well. Many starving people's future depends on our aid. We cannot wait any longer because it is a long process, and many people are dying from hunger

each day. We must take action immediately if we want to make an impact, and save thousands, perhaps millions of lives.

#### **Works Cited**

- Ursery, Stephen. "Homelessness, hunger on the rise." *American City and County* Jan. 2004: 12-14.
- Patterson. "Hunger, USA." *America Magazine* 24 April 2006: 5.
- Eighner, Lars. "On Dumpster Diving." The Writer's Presence. Eds. Donald McQuade and Robery Atwan. New York: Bedford/ St.Martin's, 2006. (379-389).

# Andre Drummond

---

## Wedding Reception

---

It might be hard to remember an event sometimes. You know, when a person brings up a certain event but you're having a hard time remembering? Well this was the case with the photograph which this essay is based on. One interesting thing about this photo is that on the back, there is a note addressed to my mother from me. I didn't write this note and I don't remember asking anyone to write it for me. It sounds crazy but I feel like somebody plagiarized on my own picture.

So this now I'm trying to reclaim it as my own. If not for this picture I would never remember the particular event, the people that I saw there or any other sensory details. It is weird how one picture can trigger a ton of memories from your past whether it was ten, twenty, or thirty years ago. For example, a picture of the World Trade Center would bring back every little detail of September 11, 2001 for anyone who remembers that date. In my case it was about 11 years ago in 1997 when I was 6 years old. I look at



the picture now and I realize just how big I was at the age of 6. A lot of people used to tell me I was tall for my age but I never realized it. Throughout my life, I always looked older than I actually was, but now my age is catching up with me. Now I look at this picture and I wonder if maybe I shouldn't have let my older siblings push me around because I was the runt of the litter. Some of the things they did to me traumatized me for a long time because I didn't know any better. But now they look up to me, literally.

I remember waking up in the morning and having a knot in my stomach because of how excited I was. I'd never been to a wedding reception before nor have I ever help to set one up. I knew all my cousins would be there because it was an aunt's wedding which would make it even more fun (Back then I used to love hanging out with my cousins, now I can't wait for them to get away from me). I find it interesting to look back on this excitement because it's unusual to see what use to create excitement in my life. Even though it was a hot, muggy day, and everyone else involved

with decorating the reception was already complaining about the workload, I was still excited. You could tell it was a very hot day because of what I was wearing in the picture; White shorts, a yellow T-shirt, a backwards cap and some really flashy white and black sneakers. I laugh at myself whenever I see a picture of how I used to dress back then. Nowadays I wouldn't be caught dead wearing the colors yellow and red in the same outfit (unless they matched with my sneakers). I don't think that I ever remember wearing white shorts other than in this picture. Oh, and if you look closely, there is a rubber band on my left arm. Not that there is any significance of the rubber band, but I'm just wondering why I was wearing one. Back then there were some crazy styles being thrown around but I doubt that any of them involved wearing a standard brown rubber band. Nowadays people wear rubber bands mostly for awareness (such as for breast cancer and other sicknesses) rather than fashion. Also I can't help but look at this photo and wonder, what was the name of those sneakers? I'll probably never remember or even entertain the thought again since it's not important to my life, but since it's in the picture I can't help but talk about it. Someone actually looked at this photo and asked me if the shoe I was wearing was "The Kobe Addidas Sneakers?" (I don't know anything about Kobe Bryant's shoe collection, but just from knowing the history of Kobe Bryant as a basketball player, I know that none of his shoes came out at least until after the year 2000).

Getting back to the story, after I got to the reception hall (which was usually used as a soundstage for concerts and large church gatherings) I started to get scared because of all the things that were left to be done. I remember thinking that the soundstage smelled like an attic and wondered how they would get it ventilated. However even though it was hot and smelly, I was still determined to have fun because, let's face it, what else did I have to do? The older guys that were helping to set up the reception knew I was too small to help set up some of the larger equipment (like the air conditioning which eventually ventilated the building). But as usual, I was always persistent and always wanted to get in the middle of everything. This goes back to me being the youngest in my family. I was always getting pushed around by everyone else that was older and bigger than me and I had to prove my toughness to them at times. My oldest sister always used to try to protect me, even though she occasionally indulged in some of the cruelty. She always said that I would grow bigger and stronger than everyone else in my family because I was always getting picked on. It turns out that the statement was true and every time I look at this picture it reminds me of the sibling rivalry always going on in my home.

After crying a little bit I ended up listening to the older guys and decided to help out with the smaller things like making balloons and tying those colorful things (I call them colorful things because I couldn't remember the names). Now I know that they're called streamers, but back then I could care less what the name was. You see that table in the background? I decorated that table and I was really proud with the work I had done. Looking back I realize how important this task was



because this turned out to be the bride and groom's, as well as the bride and groom's family table. After decorating the table, my Mother saw what a great job I had done and decided to just snap a picture. I really didn't care for pictures back then and I still don't now. This is represented by the dull blank look on my face as the picture was being taken (I almost never smile during pictures). I never thought that 11 years into the future, I would be writing a college paper on such an insignificant thing I call this picture. But I sure am happy with all the memory it brings back about the event.

As I said before, I probably wouldn't remember this event if not for the picture. So I'm going to finish talking about the event itself. After spending all day driving back and forth between the event and my house (which was about a 20 minute drive without traffic) I was worn out by about 5 pm which was when the reception started. It's really important to mention that I did not wear the clothes in the photograph to the reception. When I went home for the last time I got dressed in pretty formal attire (I wish I had a picture of that). There were a lot of pictures taken during the reception, but I doubt any exist with me in my tuxedo. After I got back to the reception (which had already started) I wanted to just look for the best place that I could and just fall asleep. At that point I didn't care about the bride and groom's dance or the cutting of the cake or tossing of the bouquet etc. It was horrible to me that I didn't enjoy the event I had just help to set up because by the time it started, I got really tired of seeing the same place for the whole day. Some people would probably say what was worst was that I had to help clean up after the reception, popping all the balloons, taking down the decorations and putting them into huge plastic bags. I can't honestly say I didn't enjoy doing this because I did. It turns out that the clean up after the bride and groom left and the reception was over, was when the real party started for me. I loved every minute of making an even larger mess and then cleaning it up while music was playing. This is the time when all the adults went to mingle and didn't pay much attention to what was going on. Maybe I didn't want to enjoy the reception because I was waiting for this moment. I can't help but marvel at this revelation because, I mean really, which 6 year old wants to watch a bunch of grown ups have fun? I guess the irony in all this is that children look at situations differently than adults. I now realize that I liked to decorate the place and take down those decorations more than I liked the reception. If I attended a wedding reception right now I know that there is no way in the world that I would want to decorate or clean up.

This is the first time I really thought about this picture and the event in great detail since the picture was taken. I'll probably never write about it again but it offered me some insight about pictures and memory. I always thought that the senses were the strongest things used for memory. Well I'm now inclined to throw a Polaroid into that suggestion because when I smell something that reminds me of an attic, I sure don't remember this picture or the event. Maybe one day I'll sit down

with a nice tall glass of lemonade and go through my old family albums. Sometimes I wonder if I do some of the things now that I did back then if I will enjoy them. It's something to think about when I'm bored, like wearing yellow, red, white and black all in one outfit would definitely be a no. I think I have a lot more energy to help decorate a wedding reception if I wanted to, but I still wouldn't clean up. And to think I almost didn't write about this photo either because I didn't think it was interesting enough.

Remember the note that I mentioned that was on the back of the photo? The actual note says "To my mother from your loving son Andre". This amazed me because I might have another story behind this picture but for whatever reason I can't remember where the note came from. I think it was written by my sister because it looks like her handwriting. But somehow I have two completely different stories behind one picture and one of them has nothing to do with the event happening in the picture.

# Brice Edwards

---

## You Can't Handle the Truth!

---

A true war story is complex and sometimes difficult to understand. It does not need to have an exaggerated amount of blood, gore, glory. If it did then any Hollywood movie depicting war could be considered a true war story. For a war story to be true there must be more to it. In his short story "How to Tell a True War Story", Tim O'Brien suggests what a reader should remember when reading a war story to determine whether it's true or not. After reading "How to Tell a True War Story," I became more capable of analyzing some of the short stories in the book In Our Time, and determined whether or not they can be classified as legitimate war stories. What I discovered was that in Ernest Hemingway's In Our Time, he writes many stories which can be classified as true war stories according to Tim O'Brien. However there are times when he seems to slip back in to old forms of the glorification of war and violence. In my essay I'll explore moments of true war stories and the moments of his glorification.

At the end of Tim O'Brien's first story about Rat and his letter, it is discovered that "a true war story is never moral" (175). What this means is that a war story should not make the reader feel as though everything is right in the world. You should not feel like the story you just heard reinforces all the things considered acceptable in society. A true war story should almost leave you hanging and thinking, "That's not how it's supposed to happen." Therefore, true war story should never end with a happy ending. It should not give the reader something to smile about. They only should be left with the sad but true realizations of war. It does not take place on the set of "300" or "Saving Private Ryan". War is an event that has the potential to permanently traumatize people and change their lives. With this knowledge, it can be concluded that some of Ernest Hemingway's story are true while others are not.

First, using the events in "Chapter VII" I would conclude that it is a true story. The story ends with a man who promised to spread the word of God, going to a whore house and never telling anyone about God or Christianity. There is no moral to this story. There is nothing glorious about a man cowering over what might be his last moments on earth. "Chapter VII" just tells the story of what an average man might do under the circumstances. "And he never told anybody" (Hemmingway 67). "Chapter VII" tells the story of the truth. The story of the embarrassment a man feels after showing weakness.

Another story which seems to be truthful is "Soldier's Home". The fact that this story has the upsetting truth that a man may not be able to love anyone after experiencing war shows that there is no moral to the end of this story. He also lies to his mother saying he didn't mean what he

said. This is the simple truth of what could really happen. There was no glory in this story, no superhero that miraculously saved the day. In this story, Harold also experiences relationship problems as direct results of the war. "Nothing was changed in the town except that the young girls had grown up." "But they lived in such a complicated world..." "Besides he did not really need a girl." "The army had taught him that." (Hemingway 71). The combination of these quotes reveals just how messed up he was after coming home from the war. First it shows that he had interest in the girls in town. However, in war, getting a girl was as simple as walking to a "red house" and paying a small fee. The girls in town however could not be bought as easily so Harold just considered them as complex. It is also show that Harold has almost been brainwashed into believing what the army says about what he does or doesn't need. The army warped his mind so much that to get a girl post-war, he resorted to incestuous behavior with his little sister. "... Couldn't you be my beau, Hare, if I was old enough and if you wanted to?" "Sure. You're my girl now" (Hemingway 74). Harold became this desperate because he had to endure the army's philosophy of not needing women. He also saw things in war that it very hard to cope with afterwards. As a result, Harold can never have a normal relationship with a girl. This is full proof example that Hemingway's "Soldiers Home" has no morals making it a true war story.

However, the story "The Revolutionist" seems to be a false one. This story contains the timeless notion that the young people are always wrong and therefore should listen to and respect the elders. A young man is very optimistic about a movement or revolution that apparently isn't happening the way he thinks. An older man seems to know the outcome isn't looking too good but remains quiet about it. The story makes young people too naïve and older people too wise as popular culture would tell you. According to Tim O'Brien, "The Revolutionist" is not a true war story.

Tim O'Brien also says that believing a war story boils down to your own gut feeling. Somewhere deep inside you, you just have to know whether or not a story is true. This statement posed an issue for how truthful some of Hemmingway's stories could be. "Chapter IX" to me seems next to impossible. "The first matador got the horn through his sword hand and the crowd hooted him. The second matador slipped and the bull caught him through the belly... The kid came out and had to kill five bulls" (Hemmingway 83). How is it possible for two experienced and capable matadors fell to the killer horns of the bulls but a kid, somehow managed to accomplished the feat of not only killing his bull, but the bulls of his fallen matadors. Reading that story just didn't settle right with my gut instincts. I think this is a perfect example of someone exaggerating the story to make it sound more interesting. More realistically, the bulls were aggravated and angered more than usual so they managed to kill the two older, braver matadors first. Then, the young matador who was hiding in a corner stood up and swung wildly at the beast and maybe injured it, possibly killed it. Then the other bulls came and annihilate the poor kid. This to me seems to be a more realistic approach of

telling the story. The way it is written in the book describes a David and Goliath complex. Some little and unprepared kid faces insurmountable odds against a great beast (or in this case, five) and somehow comes out victorious. This is just not the way things work in the real world. This story would better fit in a children's book because of the moral of the story. That you should never give up and nothing is impossible. This makes for a great story, just not a true war story.

A very interesting story in In Our Time would be "Chapter VIII". One aspect of the story, can be looked at two different ways, depending on the way would determine whether it's a true war story or not. In short, it's about a cop who kills two Hungarian crooks on sight. The only problem with this is that he refers to the Hungarians as wops. "They're wops, ain't they?" "...I can tell wops a mile off" (Hemingway 79). In actuality the term, "wops" is a derogatory terms for Italian people, not Hungarians. So maybe this story got mixed in with another by accident or maybe on purpose. If it was accidently mixed in, it's obvious that it's not a true story. If a true story is being told, the teller shouldn't have a problem remembering such details. However, even more intriguing, what if Hemingway purposely had the cop call the Hungarian a "wop". This would imply that the cop imagined the Hungarians to be something they were not. This could happen directly because of war. To be able to kill a mass of people without any feeling, as must be done in the army you have to develop a hatred for the people. You must start to think that they are less than human. It is shown that the cop had previously hated the Italian, and when he returned to his job as a cop, he must have carried with him the hatred so much so where he kills possibly innocent people just because he thought they were Italians. This is why Hemingway mentions that were Hungarian, to point out to the reader that the cop mad a terrible mistake. And his a true mistake a war veteran can make when adjusting to a normal life.

Next, Hemingway's "Chapter VI" could be classified as a true war story according to O'Brien. It shows the side or war with no glory. That people can die, the "heroes" can die. As in "Chapter VI", the main character of the story Nick lies in the dirt, with a bullet in his spine, upon the brink of death. In other war stories, Nick would have still been trying to save the day guns blazing. However, Hemingway writes, "Things were getting forward in the town. It was going well. Stretcher bearers would be along any time now" (Hemingway 63). This quote shows that Nick was accepting that he was shot and there was nothing he could do about it. There is no glory in getting shot in the spine and possibly being paralyzed. Also, Nick seems to be very relaxed, unselfish, and even apathetic after being shot. As opposed to covering over a life or death situation, Nick is more interested in the fact that the battle seems to going well for his army. He only briefly mentions that the medics will arrive soon, and he doesn't even seem to be in any rush for them to arrive. Nick also talks about the battle still going on very calmly. He talks about dead bodies like they were flowers. There's really not too much detail when describing the dead but this is because people do not tend to enjoy the

gruesomeness of war. “Two Austrian dead lay in the rubble in the shade of the house up the street were other dead” (Hemingway 63). Most importantly, as Nick talked to a dying comrade next to him, he says that they were “Not patriots” (Hemingway 63). Nick is flat out saying that what they do is not honorable, not glorious. With two words he is saying that they are not what everyone thinks of them to be.

Ernest Hemingway tried very hard to create a memorable collection of true war stories when making In Our Time. And many of them qualify as true war stories according to Tim O’Brien. However it proved impossible for him to completely succeed because of his experiences in war. At moments he falls back into think violence is masculine and glorious. The way Hemingway kind of battles with himself is relevant because this is the way life is. Nothing in life is a hundred percent definite. People are rarely completely right or wrong. To think that all of Ernest Hemingway’s stories were either true war stories or not, would be glorification life. And like glorification of war, wouldn’t make for a true essay, let alone a true war story.

#### **Works Cited**

Hemingway, Ernest. In Our Time. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster

O’Brien, Tim. “How to Tell a True War Story.” *Postmodern American Fiction* ed.

Paula Geyh. et al. new York” Norton, 1998 174-182

# Grace Marie Figueroa

---

## Evaluating Our Name

---

Is your name important to you? Do you find it special and meaningful for you? Or do you find it cliché, too common, or maybe you think it's just weird? It is amazing to me how our very names can define us flawlessly. How one can grow into a name and build some sort of an attachment. Better yet, how one can never reflect what their name may be defined to be, with the possibility of giving it a new meaning. How our culture impacts our decisions, perceptions, and connections towards a label we might see fit for naming our pets, inanimate objects, and of course our children. The society we find ourselves in play huge roles in our lives when associating ourselves socially.

So as I routinely entered the café the other day with the intentions of hearing some great new aged poetry of our time, I saw a familiar face but could not figure out exactly who. I moved closer to get a better view, I could not believe my eyes, it was Maya Angelou in the flesh conversing with another familiar face. I did not dare bother the woman, for she must have already been hassled enough by others with paparazzi and autograph signings. I wonder how it feels to have to write “With Love, Maya Angelou” ten- million times at every event. I mean her reputable name alone was filled with admiration, with a past that brought much honor and fulfilled achievements. Knowledgeable of her past and of her work, one knew that carrying that name also brought hardships, sensibly having to overcome. Not everybody has it easy, especially Maya Angelou due to society's judgments because of her skin color, and other stereotypical reasoning.

While I was reviewing much of her biography in the files stored away in my brain, this talented, old woman was telling her friend a story of her child hood. Just about the time she had gotten herself a job as servant working for an old white lady. She described it as her “finishing school” (Angelou, 78). The place where she'd learned proper etiquette; as well as the difference between the usage of silverware and their purposes. That was besides the point, it was then she had exclaimed how uncomfortable it made her feel when “the boss”, the white old lady was advised to call her by a name different from her own, “Mary”. She was known as Margret around the premises, even though her real name was “Marguerite”, but because her thick southern accent couldn't get it right, Margret (Maya) didn't mind. Although, the name “Mary” was way off and was not the name given to her, Maya believed she had the right to her own name. It was then I realized how affected a person can be when they are called by another name.

According to her essay, Maya believed that throughout her working at Mrs. Cullinan's home, she experienced a type of racial tension when one of “poor Mrs. Cullinan's” friends had

disrespectfully demanded for “Marguerite’s” name. Angelou a young black female and a servant could not receive the same courtesy as everyone else. Perhaps it is just the mindset that I have now, that may be so different from the one they used to have during their childhood and as they grew older. I know I would feel like I fit in when another person respectfully calls me by the name I asked them to call me or at least appropriate.

Caught up in my own whirlpool of realizations while eavesdropping and trying to take in the mood of the poetry readings, I didn’t notice the two elderly, sophisticated looking women walking over to my sitting area, noticeably smiling. They casually introduced themselves, and this familiar friend of Angelou was non-other than Gish Jen, other well known authors but in my opinion could never measure up to Angelou’s stature. Gish too had quite an experience due to an attachment towards her name. Though, in her case she had no attachment, she wanted a different name, a more “Americanized” name; “Lillian” was the Americanized name that her parents gave her when they immigrated to the U.S. She had highly disliked this name, she believed it was a “weird name”; it had reminded a lot of her Chinese name that meant “water lily” (Jen 173). It just didn’t represent her. She soon adopted the name “Gish”, for she believed that this was who she was. It was one of the many nicknames she was given in her high school years, though Gish, she knew would be the change in her life that she wanted, as her appropriate American name.

She started to explain the story to us as how this new name represented and describe perfectly the identity she withheld all along. “Lillian” to her was too cliché, “too plain” as I can recall her saying.

As these two women describe their experiences I tried to revert back to when I had a bit of adjustment to make due to my name. A couple nicknames that stood out to me were “Fig”, “Figgy”, and “Fig-Newton”. These were spontaneously designated to me when I had the obligation of having to go to Basic Combat Training, for the Army; also known as “boot camp”. When the daily routine was taking course by getting accountability of Soldier personnel, my Drill Sergeant had a tough time pronouncing my name, Figueroa. Of course in the military, everyone goes by the last name, so he came up with simply “Fig”. Then others would joke with it, making up rap songs with the word “Figgy”. Sometimes people would be hungry one day and yell out “Fig, FIG-NEWTON!” Over time, I accepted it.

As I begin conversing with the two authors I enlighten them with my story. Their eyes filled with curiosity and hunger for details, I go on. As I took the oath and swore on my life to fight fo this country, I thought the least that the government could do is to get my name right. And as I heard these chain of events occur, thought to myself literally, “What in the heck, what do I look like, a snack bar?” Though, I had to admit to myself, I was kind of funny, better yet hilarious that nobody could say it correctly. I mean its not that hard, or was it? I wonder, was it just because I’ve learned to



become attached and grow into my name it was of course easier for me, than for others? Over time when it became second nature for me to respond to these wired substitutions of my last name, I realized with an “Oh my gosh” moment, that I had another identity to add on to my many portrayals and perceptions others have of me. I perceived it as a identity, thought it was more than a label that another had of me; not the label that I thought described me, and believed flawlessly represented “me”, who I was. Gish, completely agreed with me that there were other possible names that could represent us as a whole; including personality, mentally, and physically. On the other hand, Angelou, considered it to be a possibility it wasn't in fact always the case. She strongly supported the idea of respectfully being called by a given name, that there was a reason that we were named like that and should embrace it. I agree with both of them, there was no right or wrong solution, of ‘why did our names hold so much power over us?’

It was interesting that as a small group of similar, yet distinctively different individuals were perfect examples of unexpected beings giving their names a whole new meaning. As well as stating to the general public what label they thought best symbolized them. Like Angelou's name in both the social and political societies holds a very prominent standard for herself. Her successes and achievements have been constantly mentioned time and time again throughout history, and American Literature. She has worked hard for her name to earn the recognition it has. Her name alone screams victory overall, and because she has shown that she has always had to put up a fight to confirm to others she was beyond good enough, she was a “phenomenal woman”. Being called the right name, and identified for who she was meant a great deal to her. As for Gish Jen, even though she had a hard time finding her true name the identity she believed was fit, she could not, would not embrace her “given name”. As for myself, I will always embrace my nickname “Figgy”, for it has a funny story for me to tell and very darn proud of it. Even though it took some time getting used to, one should always consider the possible meanings of these “labels”.

# Allan Givens

---

## Killing Men of Steel

---

“Now look at me blowing holes through men of steel and slashing the throats of darknight  
detectives” Mark Millar-Wanted

Intangible, Untouchable, impervious, bulletproof. I'm talking about being unbreakable, always more than capable, Is it possible? Can this power be achieved; have those who've claimed to possess it merely deceived? Should we believe? We fall everyday in greater and greater numbers, but we still say bring the heat, and it's brought like the sun in one-thousand never ending summers. Do we just enjoy pain? Is our species that insane? We may be resilient, tough, hell even thick skinned but that doesn't mean we can't be pinned, Cause we can, and not just held down and injured but completely obliterated, eradicated, decimated, and then we become dust and with a mere wind blow we're gone with a gust, We are no supermen, We break, we bleed, and we need to feed, and it seems our biggest hunger is for our fellow man's blood, You are your species own kryptonite, So how does that make you feel, Killing men of Steel?

# Erica Guerricaechebarria

---

## Happily Ever After

---

A pinnacle part of my childhood was watching the sugar coated, fluffy boy meets girl Disney stories. I remember playing games and always pretending to be the light haired kind orphan, Cinderella while my cousin Lissy was Belle and my friend Katie was Ariel. To this day I still can't resist putting in the DVD and watching the movie. There is something about it that keeps my imagination going even to this day. Disney can be irresistible especially if you were a young girl in the 90's, everything you owned had something to do with a Disney princess and now in the new millennium it has less to do with princesses and more to do with rock stars.

I felt about Cinderella the same way girls now feel about Hannah Montana and the Jonas Brothers. I had all of her dolls and I am pretty sure I had a blanket with her face on it. The fact that we waste our childhoods idolizing people who could never live up to what we make them in our minds now baffles me. Hannah is no more real than Cinderella but for some reason as a kid she was very much real to me. I was convinced that in a far off country was Cinderella living the "perfect" life in her castle with her prince. As much as I still love this movie it gets me to think, are they instilling in the youth of America a false reality of perfection? Life is not all peaches in crème but that's exactly what these movies are saying. In a way they are they just setting us up for the disappointment that at times is life. Maybe if we as teenagers stopped looking for the perfect fairytale romance we would open ourselves up to have real life loves. Most things in life are ruined because we are trying to make them something that they can never be. Living up to the expectations of a fantasy world is impossible but for some people it's better than having to deal with reality.

Watching Cinderella as a kid left me with the impression that when I grew up I would meet a prince and we would live happily ever after. He would rescue me from whatever danger and then we would ride off into the sunset on his white horse and all my problems would have been solved. Childhood is the most innocent and desired time in one's life. The ability to trust and get excited over every little thing is something I wished stayed with me all my days. As a kid you don't think about what happens after they ride off into the sunset or where the wicked which really went. You focus more on the positive and the fact that our "victim's" dream have now come true because

"No matter how your heart is grieving  
If you keep on believing  
the dream that you wish will come true"

As a woman having grown up with strong female figures such as my mother and grandmother I start to look now to Cinderella as less of a role model and more as a feeble woman who could not find a way to better her life on her own. If she was going to be somebody's slave why did she just not run away and find work as a servant girl, where she would have at least been getting paid for her labor. Then she could have saved up and lived an independent life where she relied on herself for what she needed and not a man. Waiting around for love to save her is desperate and pathetic, she should have just lived her life and if she found love in the meantime then more power to her.

If you think about it Cinderella's behavior in this movie reflected the time frame of when the movie was released. The 50's was not a time known for female empowerment. Cinderella reflected the way a woman was supposed to be, submissive, weak, and domestic.

The more reality I allowed to reach me the more I started to unrelate myself to the character of Cinderella. At one time she was the model of the life that I aspired to have and now she has just become the woman in a movie that is still enjoyable but so far from what I want for myself. I wish I could go back in time and remember the exact moment where everything changed. Trying to remember the moment in my life where fairytales went away and reality stepped in is impossible but pinpointing the person who changed it all isn't. My mother has made a good life for herself and me by relying on the help of no one but herself. She has always been a great provider and been there for me; most importantly she has done it without the input of a man. My father left to Spain when I was a child and I have not seen or heard from him since. There are many stories similar to mine except for one difference, I haven't ever missed or desired him to come back in my life. My mother made it okay for me to live without him and she played both roles as mother and father to perfection. I know that I will never need him to save the day and I know that I would never want him to.

Reading the words of Salman Rushdie also gave me some insight into the story of Cinderella. It was common in old times for anything other than the typical beauty to automatically be deemed as evil and ugly. Anastasia and Drusilla are often known as the ugly stepsisters of Cinderella. Everyone automatically sees them as the villain but if you look closer maybe instead you will see two insecure little girls who are scared and dying for the approval of their mother. Then again you could just believe they are jealous, evil, little twits who just want everything for themselves. I bet if you were to do an experiment where you got two females in a room one beautiful and one "facially challenged" and asked a five year old which one she thought was nicer that that little girl would choose the beautiful woman. That is because in this day an age normalcy is strived for, no one seems to want to

break away from the mold and become something other than typical. Most people have a one track mind and think that in order to be beautiful you must look in a way like Cinderella, thin with light hair and eyes.

It may sound weird but I am a sequel girl. I love the sequels to movies not because they are better than the original cause lets face it that has never happened but because I like seeing what happens next. Suspence kills me I don't even like waiting till Christmas to know what presents I got. I will forever be the girls trying to see if I have x-ray vision so that I can find out what are in the boxes before it's time to open them. I bring this up because in class we mentioned that the beauty of books is that we get to make our own ending and guess what we believe is going to happen next. Well in my adult mind the sequel to Cinderella is not so Disney it is instead very Grimes Brothers. I imagine the honeymoon state of the relationship to be over and Cinderella coming to terms with the fact that she has married a man she has only known for one night. This may make you believe that I am a cynic when it comes to love but I instead will use the term realist. Rereading my words shows me how far I have come and how I wish for the innocent times of childhood where everything ended with "Happily Ever After".

#### **Work Cited**

Words & Music by Mack David & Jerry Livingston, Unaccredited, from the Walt Disney movie Cinderella, 1950.

Rushdie, Salman, Out of Kansas. April 1992.

# Dennis Hanton

---

## Rhetorical Thoughts

---

Reality is a hard thing to recognize in the mind of a dreamer,  
for my past, present, and future are in little separation to want I want,  
and want will be, my mind ponders the thought of time and chance,  
I often wonder does it apply to me?, no it applies to all, yet I feel as though  
    It doesn't, why do my movements feel scripted?,  
        why does everything feel staged?,  
yet I ponder the thought of time and chance, where heaven blows  
    my life follows, whenever the winds subside my soul rests,  
    just to be picked up and liad down, as a leaf in a playful breeze,  
what is the meaning of my life?, the thought tires me so I let my mind at ease,  
    the day I know is the day I die, that's why I'm human,  
    yet still ponder the thought of time and chance,  
        as I lie here and wonder.

# Yamile Hernandez

---

## Gliding Strength

---

"You always look outside yourself for strength and confidence, but it comes from within. It's there all the time" she said, and gave me a smile. I stood at the foot of the gate, nervously rocking back and forth on the ice skating blades that stood-as if glued to the black rubber floor- under my feet. My hands clenched around a small piece of fabric, seemingly suffocating it with their tight grip. My chest rose and fell tumultuously as I breathed, trying to calm the set of emotions that raced through me.

Slowly, I peeled off my warm-up jacket, my chin raised and my eyes set on the gate, focused. Despite my confident appearance, a slight tremor shook through my body, revealing my anxiety and excitement to perform. Time seemed to lose its structure as I waited, minutes and seconds feeling longer than they really were. Questions ran through my head, some with answers, others drawing a blank, but never-ending. Would I remember to perform throughout my routine? Could I nail that jump that I had practiced countless number of times, and failed? The rush of cold, crisp air abruptly awakened me from my thoughts and the gate opened. Before I made my way in, I gave my coach a smile. "Remember what I told you," she said with a wink.

The blades slid onto the ice, smoothly making it feel as if there was absolutely nothing underneath my feet but air. I was focused, I was ready, and I was eager to start. As I took my pose in the center of the rink, I looked around. In front of me I saw that the blue bleachers were filled with audience members. Each wore their own sweater or a blanket, huddled under the massive hanging heater above them, and trying to warm up. To my right I saw both my coach and another girl that I was competing against, anxiously waiting for me to begin. Above them, through a glass window that stood as a barrier against the chilled air was a panel of judges. Each had a tape recorder in one hand and a pen in the other; a few already feverishly scribbling on scoring sheets, and others watching me with scrutinizing eyes.

I slowly breathed as the announcer's voice introduced me to the crowd, and focused on my skates that were touching the ice. The blades gleamed as the spotlight shined on me, the reflection on the ice almost blinding me. But I focused on the music, the beats and its tones, and I made my first move. My reflection glided on the ice as I twisted and turned, and the bitter crisp air whipped around me as I moved throughout the rink. The crowd clapped, my coach cheered and I performed. And then it all came crashing down, in one second. The front of my skate got caught in the ice during a prep for a jump and I fell, slamming into ice and skidding to a stop, the ice I had carved scarping my cheek. My head spun, and I looked up. The crowd was silent. I slowly got up and listened to the

music. My arm was throbbing but I took a step and moved back into the routine. My eyes burned, my head spun as thoughts ran through my mind, yet I kept performing. And then I jumped, and in the air held my breath . . . and landed.

It has been five years and I still remember that competition with a crisp clarity, unlike any of the others I participated in. Not because of the bronze medal I won that day, but because of the throbbing pain in my head, elbow and cheek. It was ironic, I had never fallen before a prep until the moment where it matter most. Irony. I practiced for 8 hours the jump, which I had successfully landed, but I fell at a point where only inches would have determined whether I had continued my routine or not.



# Yomary Herrera

---

## Issue of Homelessness and Lars Eighner

---

The issue of homelessness and class inequality has not only affected many families, but it has really affected children under the age of 18. Because these kids don't have homes, or the love and support they need from families, they end up having an educational inequality. They are unable to attend schools because of the costs of clothes, school fees and many of the kids also tend to have discipline problems because they don't have a certain person to look up to. There is a problem that many Hispanic families and other people of color are facing now. There are many kids who go to foster homes at an early age and never get adopted. When something like this happens to kids it really hurts them because they don't know how it feels to love someone or in that case to be loved. This is an issue that has been going on for years and if we don't do something to help these kids get into families now, it's only going to get worse.

A statistic that really caught my attention and helped me notice that something needs to be done is when the article stated that "less than 50 percent of Latino children in foster care are placed in Latino homes" (45). This really affects me because I am Hispanic and I didn't know that there were so many kids of my ethnicity going through this. This really hurts me because these kids do not know what it's like to have a family. I feel grateful for my mom because even though she struggled with me, she never gave up on me. Even though I made her life more difficult, she dedicated all her hard work and struggles to me knowing that I will do the same for her when I got older. Why couldn't the parents of these kids do the same? According to Maria Quintanilla, spokesperson for Adoptel, a project of AdoptUsKids, a federally funded national program that recruits foster and adoptive families for children in foster care, the reasons that there are so many Hispanic kids in foster care are "issues of poverty and substance abuse, mostly in poor areas in large urban centers" (45). Raymond L. Torres, executive director of Casey Family Services, a non-profit child welfare agency headquartered in New Haven, Connecticut, stated, referring to the parents of the kids put in foster care, that "these parents are stressed out, had no good role models, and neglect or abuse their child" (45). I know it's hard, but there are certain parents that aren't cut out to work through these struggles that God truly believed they could handle. That's why I appreciate everything that my mother has done for me.

Part of the reason that kids are put into foster care many times is that these parents have limited support and lack access to helpful resources such as parent training (45). Also, there are situations when parents can't afford to provide necessities for their kids. Yes, they can get food

stamps, but they can't but what their baby really needs, diapers, with their food stamps. They need extra assistance, so something needs to be done. For instance, a proposition can be proposed to the state that can help struggling parents with their kids, like money that can go to something other than food because that's not the only necessity that people have, especially where I'm from. In my hometown, Hartford, there are many kids who are neglected by their parents and often turn to the streets for direction and guidance. They end up getting kicked out of the house, become homeless, drop out of school, and do nothing positive with themselves. Another thing that we could do to reduce homelessness is help those families that are having domestic issues. When I say help them, I mean as far as teaching them how to communicate with each other. One way to do this is by having parents go to an adult class that teaches them the right way to approach their kids without turning them away. Also, they could read books and other source materials that allow them to become more open-minded towards their kids. Not only that, but the kids could talk to other adults and get their viewpoint on their home issues and get different advice. If kids are becoming stressed and frustrated, they can do after school activities like sports. Sports are a great cure for relieving stress. According to Adria Silverman, LCSW, a Miami-based psychotherapist who runs her own private practice, Family Resolution Services, Inc, "children need support, structure, love, patience, and guidance. If there's no intervention, they're at risk for emotional problems, never completing education successfully, lacking social skills and at risk of becoming part of the criminal justice system" (45). Adria worked for the local state attorney's office for 20 years interviewing children involved in allegations of abuse so I also believe that a kid seeing a therapist is a great idea. Quintanilla says, "Kids who end up in care are at risk for future unemployment and homelessness, poor educational achievement and pregnancy" (45).

A case from the article "America's Forgotten Children" that really touched me was the one about 20- year old Oscar Roman. He was actually one of the fortunate foster kids that ended up in a loving home. His story really touches me because he grew up in Hartford where I grew up and still live. This case just shows me that the kids from my hometown can make it through many hard times they just need that person that can really believe in them and push them through obstacles. Oscar went into foster care at the age of 5 and was adopted by his foster family at the age of 9. He has been through a lot, but what really made him courageous, in my perspective, was the fact that he was one of four siblings and he was separated from his two brothers and sister. He also remembers staying with 3 to 4 foster families before being adopted. These obstacles are very traumatic because there are many kids at this age whom, when separated from their siblings at such a young age, become depressed and angry frequently. As stated in the article "America's Forgotten Children", "all children need a family in which they feel safe and loved. But for a shocking number of Hispanic children languishing in foster care throughout the U.S., the dream of a home remains elusive. It is an

issue that not only affects the child's future, but that of the community as a whole" (44). So, when I read the case about Oscar I felt a little heart lifted because I would love to see more Hispanics become adopted by a family that will love them like Oscar is loved by his foster family. I want more Hispanics to have the opportunity to be loved and learn how to love someone. Oscar expresses, "my family is great. Growing up, I had a lot of discipline problems. I adjusted to the rules, and they gave me the attention that had been lacking" (45). His adoptive mother, Virgen Roman, said "he needed love and we wanted to give it" (45). Oscar is currently attending college in Boston. This is a great achievement that more Hispanics in foster care need the opportunity to achieve.

I believe that having families that are having domestic issues speak to therapists is the best idea because it helps them vent out their problems. There are things that kids can't talk to their parent about, and vice versa. Parents think that hiding troubles and problems from their kids is the best thing to do so that the kids don't become worried. However, I believe that this is worse because when the kids end up finding out, which will happen, they will turn from their parents. Then the kids will think that since their parents hid things from them then they could do the same. If kids don't vent on their domestic issues along with their parents, they could end up like Lars Eighner dumpster diving. Lars Eighner in "Dumpster Diving" talks about how when he goes through dumpsters before becoming homeless he rather it be called "scavenging" because it is "a sound and honorable niche, although if I could I would naturally prefer to live the comfortable consumer life, perhaps—and only perhaps—as a slightly less wasteful consumer owing to what I have learned as a scavenger" (380). Even though dumpster diving was a new experience that Eighner learned plenty from, he still would prefer to have a "regular" life. So, kids could learn from this story because the kids that take what they have for granted and sometimes, they don't even know what they have. Then, there are the less fortunate kids who have no family and no one to love them, so they never had the opportunity to love that comfortable consumer life. If the kids who run away from home because of issues they are having with their parents, they end up like Eighner having to look through dumpsters to be able to survive, but there is a better solution. They could just talk about their problems to each other or go to a therapist and have separate discussions with the therapist so that the therapist could get to the root of the problem and try to fix it before it gets to the point of the child leaving the house. Talking something out and solve many problems, but it could definitely help reduce the percentages of homelessness, especially of children in foster care. "The necessities of daily life I began to extract from Dumpsters" (Eighner 380). Do kids really want to end up like this? I know I wouldn't if I already live in a good home. If all I have to do to fix my problems is communicate with my mother I would be willing to learn how to talk to her about certain problems that I have difficulties with.

In conclusion, many families are affected by the issues of homelessness. However, homelessness has especially affected kids under the age of 18, whom many end up in foster care

because their parents can't afford to take care of them. The article "America's Forgotten Children" informs us that "about 20,000 children age out of the system every year, and there are currently 17,000 Hispanic children in U.S. foster care waiting to be adopted" (44). The article also informs us of another solution that has been recently tried and has helped see some improvement: "May is National Foster Care Month, a time when many outreach organizations work to increase visibility of the issues and recruit people and groups to support children and families year- round" (46). So, we need to try what we can to reduce the percentages of homelessness, of the children who are in foster care awaiting adoptions, and the kids who actually age out of the system.

#### **Works Cited**

Rousseau, Millie Acebal. "America's Forgotten Children." Social Issues. April 2008: 44-46.

Eighner, Lars. "On Dumpster Diving." The Writer's Presence. Eds. Donald McQuade and Robert Atwan. New York: Bedford/ St. Martin's, 2006. (379-389).

## Castro Jean-Gilles Jr.

My family is run by two of the most diligent people I know, my parents. My father, born and raised in Haiti, grew up in a hard-working family and came to the United States when he was in his early twenties in search of a better life. My mother immigrated to the United States from Haiti with her family when she was about fifteen. My father works from midday to midnight, as my mother works two jobs in the morning and still has the discipline to go to school at night. Due to this combination of intense work-ethic, my parents believe in nothing better than for me to work and to take responsibility for my actions, no matter what. Even during breaks!

Every summer my family and I may go to Haiti for vacation for about two to four weeks and ever since the summer before my eighth grade year, my parents have had me work with my uncle, Gerrald's, contracting crew. I would work from about nine in the morning until maybe one or two, mixing cement or shoveling rocks and gravel, then go home to get something to eat. And every year I would work more and more little by little, eventually paving the sidewalks with cement or helping build the interiors of buildings. It is the ideals of hard work that my parents have instilled into me that made the job so enjoyable.

Every time that I went, there would usually be a completely new troop of workers, except for maybe four or five who were consistent. I feel the best part of the job was that I got to talk to these complete strangers and these men would always share stories during breaks or spare some words of wisdom. I give importance to simple things that I have learned from them. For example, Jean-Jean, one the workers, exposed to me his point of view of the political situations in Haiti such as the recent ousting of former president Jean Bertrand Aristide, and Erson convinced me to start eating "Maïs Moulin avek Pimen Zwazo" or Cream Corn with very hot peppers. These quirky guys made the job more tolerable and gave a sense of levity to that serious and hectic environment.

And every summer, as I got older, around fifteen, the regulars would start asking me about what I wanted to do with myself. I always cowered when they would come to ask me those questions, mainly because I did not want to sound as if I were superior or better than the workers. Jean-Renard would ask me every year, "Èské ou vlé alé nan université pou docteur o avocat?" "Do you want to go to college to be a lawyer or a doctor?" And I would tentatively reply "Mwen vremen pa kone" "I really don't know" "Èske se sa ou vle fè pou toute la'viv ou?" "Is this what you want to do for the rest of your life?" referring to the construction work. Meaning that he understands that

furthering my education will be the most beneficial option for me and that going beyond high school will keep me out of ending up with a job like the construction I was doing part-time.

Don't get me wrong the construction circuit is not some dead-end job, these men are very hardworking and are the keystones and breadwinners for their families' and are content and thankful for their jobs. Although Jean-Renard, Erson, and the other workers are still limited to the job due to their situations and limited education, my uncle Gerrald, for example, is a college graduate from Florida and went back to Haiti to start a business. He chose to do what he does and he is happy and feels that he is giving back in best way he can.

After those experiences I feel that those simple words of wisdom will stick with me now and hopefully through my whole life. Besides all of the things that my parents and teachers have said to me, I will take what the Jean-Renard told me as inspiration for my life. I feel that in order for me to fulfill the expectations that my comrades have expressed I must take full advantage of all the opportunities to me and things that I strive for.

# Aisha Kearney

---

## 300 Years Later: They Are Still Homeless

---

Sometimes it seems like the major issue of homelessness will never go away. More and more people are becoming homeless and the numbers are increasing each year. In 1729, the author, Jonathan Swift, wrote a publication, titled *A Modest Proposal*, in which he spoke about the poverty in Ireland. His stance included the fact that many women and children were becoming beggars on the street instead of being a family. Who would have thought that this would still be a critical problem more than 250 years later? Now, it is more than just a critical problem in Ireland, but a very serious issue throughout the world. Publishing a piece in such a controversial and direct way about this topic would lead one to believe that more would have been done by now to either eliminate or at least decrease the intensity of the issue. Still, today, there are so many people who are out on the streets. Millions of them live in America, the majority of those people are children and a huge amount of these children are of Hispanic descent. These children are the forgotten, neglected, and thrown-away adolescents of America. Something needs to be done so that the history of poverty in the Hispanic community will cease and become just that: History.

The immigration policy in America makes the issue of poverty in the Hispanic community very complicated. It is one of the reasons why so many children of Hispanic descent are abandoned. Many families immigrate to America in attempt to provide better lives for themselves and for their children. Some even come here illegally. It is hard as it is for a mother and her child to get into America legally. Bringing an entire family would be near impossible. The eligibility to become a legal citizen of the United States is very slim. The following is the criterion, found on [ForeignBorn.com](http://ForeignBorn.com), which one must meet:

- You must have a relative who is a United States citizen or a lawful permanent resident of the United States who can provide documentation proving their status and is willing to sponsor you for lawful permanent residency by filing the I-130, Petition for Alien Relative.
- Your relative must prove they can support you by providing documentation that their income is at least 125% above the U.S. poverty level for their household size, including you and all other sponsored family members. For more details about the meeting this criteria and filing the Affidavit of Support, see [Filing an Affidavit of Support for a Relative](#).
- If your relative is a US Citizen and they can legally prove you share one of the following relationships, you may be eligible for lawful permanent residency (please see [Preference Categories & Visa Numbers](#), below):

- Husband or wife;
  - Child under 21 years old;
  - Unmarried son or daughter over 21;
  - Married son or daughter of any age;
  - Brother or sister if you are at least 21 years old; or
  - Parents if you are at least 21 years old
- If your relative is a lawful permanent resident and they can legally prove you share one of the following relationships, you may be eligible for lawful permanent residency (please see Preference Categories & Visa Numbers below):
    - Husband or wife; or
    - Unmarried son or daughter of any age. (ForeignBorn)

This criterion is very precise and is the very reason why many immigrants that live in America are here illegally. The strict rules and regulations sometimes even disable them from finding work or finding work that will pay them more than minimum wage. So they are here with barely any money to support their families. They are in a foreign place and trying to make ends meet in a country where that is hard to do even for Americans.

These mothers, as well as single parents, eventually become stressed out with the pressure of providing food and shelter and raising children at the same time with no guidance from their family. As stated, it is nearly impossible to bring an entire family to live in the United States legally. In the article, *America's Forgotten Children*, it is stated that, "Part of the problem is these parents have limited support and lack of access to helpful resources such as parent training. This is especially true of immigrants who may not have relatives in this country to turn to" (2). The lack of family support for them is one of the main reasons why they are unable to care for their children. The negligence of these children eventually leads to them being taken by social services or the parent may just give them up. They become a part of the system and are put into foster care. These experiences can become detrimental for the children and severely change their future. Many never finish high school, become trouble makers and even homeless in their adult life because of the neglect they endured during adolescence. (*America's Forgotten Children 2*) Their future becomes laid out on the streets.

Foster care is a great head start towards placing a child in a home, but many children age out of the system instead of obtaining a real family. There are 17,000 Hispanic children waiting to be adopted who are currently in foster care. (*America's Forgotten Children 1*) The foster care system is not a stable option for these children. They are moved from home to home for a number of reasons.



No home that they are placed in is a guaranteed family. As stated above, these children are not accustomed to love and stability. Many come from broken homes and single parent families. Putting them in several homes that will not actually become their home only reminds them of where they came from: homes of instability. Almost 300 years ago, Swift states, “These mothers instead of being able to work for their honest livelihood, are forced to employ all their time in strolling to beg sustenance for their helpless infants: who grow up either turn thieves for want of work...” (826) about the poverty and homelessness in Ireland. It is sad to think about the fact that this image is still present in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, but at the same time taking the children out of bad homes just to bounce them back and forth does not solve the problem of negligence and will only influence their minds in a bad way. Statistics show that out of the 513,000 children who were reported to being in foster care in the year 2007, 94,000 of those were of Hispanic descent. Raymond L. Torres, spokesperson for National Foster Care Month said, “...one in five are Hispanic or Latino [or of Latino descent]” (America’s Forgotten Children 1). Many of these Hispanic children age out of foster care without ever knowing what it’s like to have a real family. The constant feeling of neglect may take a toll on the way they will live the rest of their lives. The emotional problems disable them from making good and healthy decisions, therefore posing as a threat to themselves and their future. About 20,000 young people age out of America’s foster care system. An abundant amount are only 18 and do not know where to go and what to do. A little more than half of those people graduate from high school, but a majority of them become parents. Half are or have become unemployed and a fourth is or has been homeless. (Foster Care Alumni of America) The statistics do not lie. It is a proven fact that children who are put into the system end up with long term issues that often lead to them being unsuccessful. Not getting a proper education contributes to not finding work which leads to not having enough money to support oneself which will eventually cause homelessness. If they had the family support that they needed when they were children, much of this would not happen. As stated, foster homes are great temporary homes, but children need permanent love, not occasional comfort.

So, why are foster families or any eligible families not adopting Hispanic children in need? Many are worried about the state of mind that the child is in. Abandoned children, especially ones of a Hispanic immigrant background, may be really traumatized. The parents may be nervous about how they will act once placed in a permanent home or what they will need. The children may need special help in which a lot of attention and money is required. Oscar Roman, a native of Hartford, Connecticut who was a foster child said that, “[His] family [was] great. Growing up, [he] had a lot of discipline problems,’ he says. ‘[He] adjusted to the rules, and they gave [him] the attention that [he] had been lacking,’ he says about his adoptive family” (America’s Forgotten Children 3). Many of these children may have many behavioral problems because they long for attention. They think that

this is the way to be noticed and that maybe someone will finally give them the attention that they have always wanted.

Some parents also fear the cultural barrier. Many Hispanic children are not taken care of or adopted by families of their own nationality. There are not many good homes in the Latino community. Torres says, "Less than 50 percent of Latino children in foster care are placed in Latino homes," (America's Forgotten Children 3). Not being placed in a home where there are people who speak the same language and have the same ethnic background can confuse the child which can lead to self-identity confusion. Some parents may not want to deal with the rigor of understanding or even having to assimilate the culture of a Hispanic child. Not knowing who one is another thing that factors into adulthood problems.

Today, American citizens deal with and see the murderers, rapists, thieves, and most of the time, harmless homeless on a daily basis; a great amount of those being Hispanic. These troubled adults were once troubled kids who sought out to find the love, protection, and care that every child deserves, but had no such luck obtaining it. There are so many obstacles that stand in the way of Hispanic children becoming successful adults in the future. These obstacles consist of not having a proper foundation because of immigration laws, the foster care system and the fact that people are not adopting these kids once they are put in to the system. America's immigration laws can be adjusted so that families, who are not a threat to the United States, can enter this nation as a whole family. Many Hispanic people lose more than half of their family because of these laws and therefore do not have the support that they need. Also, America's system of handling neglected children has to be fixed. This nation needs to strive for a better way to place kids in homes; not just homes, but permanent families. As said, foster care is great start, but it is not stable if a child is just tossed around from family to family. It is understandable that many families do not want to adopt because of fear, but if these organizations took more time to persuade and show them how important it is, more eligible parents would adopt and potentially save these children. The government has more power than what is being used. They can save these children who cannot save themselves and overall decrease the amount of homelessness in the Hispanic community.

#### **Works Cited**

"Family Immigration." Foreign Born. 2005. 16 July 2008

<[http://www.foreignborn.com/visas\\_imm/immigrant\\_visas/3family\\_immigration.htm](http://www.foreignborn.com/visas_imm/immigrant_visas/3family_immigration.htm)>.

"National Facts About Children in Foster Care." Foster Care Alumni of America. National Foster Care Month. 16 July 2008

<[http://www.fostercarealumni.org/resources/foster\\_care\\_facts\\_and\\_statistics.htm](http://www.fostercarealumni.org/resources/foster_care_facts_and_statistics.htm)>.

Rousseau, Millie A. "America's Forgotten Children." Hispanic Apr. 2008: 44-46. Academic Search Premier. EBSCO. University of Connecticut. 15 July 2008  
<<http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/detail?vid=4&hid=112&sid=cb1adcf8-ffc6-4167-85df-8b523a706880%40sessionmgr108&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZW9vc3QtbGl2ZQ%3d%3d#db=aph&AN=31706692>>.

Swift, Jonathan. "A Modest Proposal." *The Writer's Presence*.  
Eds. Donald McQuade and Robert Atwan. New York: Bedford/St. Martin's  
2006. (825-833)

# Mylva Lopes

---

## The Effects of Unemployment on Homelessness

---

In our now weakened economic society, issues that were not a major threat to the general public are now beginning to raise a great deal of concern amongst our politicians and our community. Since the presidential election in the year 2000, when the United States was amongst the wealthiest and more powerful country in the world, our economy began to deteriorate in a sequential manner. We are currently going through a period of crises, whether it is the lack of employment, lack of health care, lack of affordable housing and the ever increasing gas prices. We have reached a point that we, the soul root of our democratic political system disagree with the ideals of our very own government. Many American companies are moving their businesses to foreign countries to make more profits. With this being established, the major issue that arises from companies relocating their businesses to foreign countries is playing a major role on decreasing the employment rate. Since the fall of the Twin Towers on September-eleven, the lack of employment is something that has dragged our economy to practically rock bottom. The lack of employment is one of the main causes of homelessness in the United States. The topic of homelessness conjures about a great deal of concern in our community. Writers such as Lars Eighner and Jonathan Swift both tackled and addressed the common misconceptions of homelessness. Whereas Eighner used his experience of being homeless to clarify the perceptions we have of people in destitute. On the other hand, Jonathan Swift took a very different approach to addressing the issue, where he used satire to show the extreme ways of solving the problem of homelessness. In my opinion, in order for this problem to be eradicated, the only way to begin is for us to come together as a society and work with our government to create more job opportunities.

What does homeless look like? When we think of Homelessness we get an image of an old single, uneducated, lazy guy with dirt stained and worn out clothes and maybe even a missing front tooth. These are amongst the common misconceptions we have of people living in the streets. Eighner, himself was a well educated man who was frequently in and out of the homeless situation throughout his life. Homeless people as a matter of fact are one of the hardest working people. He quoted, "I began Dumpster diving about a year before I became homeless. I prefer the term "scavenging" and use the word "scrounging" when I mean to be obscure (379)". The term "scavenging" is the progressive forms of the word scavenge. The definition of the word is to search through for salvageable materials. Homeless people are constantly on the go, constantly scavenging

for food for their next meal, shelter and materialist items that they need. It's not that they are lazy, these individuals are willing to work but only if anyone would be so kind as to hire them. Being that these persons are homeless employers don't trust them because they might steal from them. Homeless people have rights just as well as we, the more fortunate. The homeless should be given a chance because if they are able to provide for themselves they won't have any need to steal.

The lack of education plays an immense part on the high unemployment rate. The shortage of employment is something that's affecting everyone in one way or another. Many working people are finding it stressful having to worry about losing their job to someone with more experience or worrying that their boss might lay them off because of budgeting. To those who are not employed, finding a well paying job can be quite pestering, especially for people without a post secondary education degree. Having a proper education in this country is what makes people accepted in all the avenues of our society. If a person is not well educated in this country, they are in our minds inferior to everyone else; they are not taken seriously. People begin to questioning their credibility. They can't find well paying jobs and they can't afford to make a comfortable living. The few lucky men and women who find employment are for the most part able to make some sacrifices and learn to manage their money well enough, are capable of improving their living conditions. Without a proper education, people find employment that fails to pay enough to make a proper living. Workers who earn minimum wage can only afford to pay rent and not the other essential necessities, such as food, clothing, health insurance, and money to pay the bills. According to the article *Homelessness: A Solvable Problem*, "no more than 30 percent of a person's income should be used for rent"(5). This situation can be exceptionally difficult for a family who consists of children, because parents have to support and cannot deny their children food. So basically the parents would have to make some extremely difficult decisions, whether to feed their children or pay the rent for a place to stay. Many of these people end up losing their apartment due to the inability to pay rent on time and are left to be homeless ,where, they resort to sleeping and living under bridges, at the parks, and many other public places.

Consequently, along with unemployment comes a shortage of affordable housing. Now a days, as soon as we turn on the news we hear people conversing about homes being foreclosed and people just losing their life investments on their homes due to foreclosure. The most common reason a person's property gets taken away by the bank is because that person is unable to follow the rules and regulations on their loan contract. It is not that people who lose their home due to foreclosure just wake up one day and randomly decides to stop paying the mortgage. The only reason people fall short in paying their mortgage is that they are unemployed. For this, I propose that the

lender of a loan has to be more lenient when it comes to foreclosing a house. They should take that person's situation into consideration before they make a hasty decision that perhaps will have a strong impact on the person's future. According to the article *More Homeless, Less Housing*, "As the search for housing by poor people grows more desperate year by year, the phrase "lack of affordable housing" has assumed a mantra-like quality"(1). In other words, even though poor people are attempting to rent a place to stay, the rise in rental costs makes it difficult for these people to actually afford to pay rent. From personal experience for example, Bridgeport, Connecticut is one of the most expensive housing markets in the entire Fairfield County. The average cost for a month's rental payment is about a thousand dollars. For a minimum wage earner in Bridgeport, who is a full time employee, earns about \$8 per hour. At the end of a month he would have earned \$1,280.00 and about \$20.00 would be deducted from the check for tax purposes. Now, clearly, his salary is not enough for him to pay the water, electric, gas, phone, cable and other miscellaneous bills. Rent alone is about a \$1000.00, which leaves him \$260.00 to pay the bills, purchase groceries and clothing, if that be a necessity to his case. According to Federal Reserve Bank of New York statistics shows that, "A family must earn about \$38,640 to afford the \$966 fair market rent for a two-bedroom apartment in the Bridgeport area. This translates into wages of about \$18.60 an hour—more than double Connecticut's minimum wage of \$7.40". Being that our economy is at a horrific state, landlords are really not going to try and bargain with an individual about rental prices because they too have obligations to compensate their mortgage fee on time. Statistically, a report by the *National Low Income Housing Coalition, Out of Reach* states, "the cost of rental housing is indeed beyond the reach of the majority of low-income wage earners. In only four counties in the nation, the report states, can workers who earn the federal minimum wage afford the cost of rent and utilities for the modest one bed-room apartment." This, in fact reinforces what I stated previously, that the majority of minimum wage earners cannot afford housing, and even if they can it's by sacrificing other necessities in order to meet the expected rent on the apartment. The inability to afford affordable housing can push someone on the brink of homelessness.

In addition to unemployment, low-income and the lack of resources also contributes to the inability to obtaining proper health care. Homeless people have a much higher risk of becoming ill because they eat from trash cans and dumpsters and they don't have proper hygiene. In relevance to Eighner, where he talked about eating safely from a "Dumpster" and then acknowledged that even then it's not always safe. He said that one had to be a professional in order to do this. According to him, "although very rare with modern canning methods, botulism is a possibility...botulism is almost certainly fatal and often the first symptom is death" (380-381). Therefore, it is not healthy to live in a homeless condition and have to eat from the dumpster because it can cause fatal diseases. Most

homeless people sink deep into depression or become mentally ill due to psychological trauma of being homeless. Some become compelled to take up substance abuse because drugs can make them feel better to the point that they become mentally ill or die. Psychologist, Lisa Goodman argued that homelessness itself is a risk factor for emotional disorders (American Psychologist). Without proper health care, children of homeless parents aren't able to receive proper treatment, such as immunity shots, medications to deal with a specific disease or ailment; they are also unable to receive proper dental and vision care. Although, there are clinics for the homeless, many people are turned down due to budget cuts.

Unfortunately, there will never be a solution to putting a complete end to poverty and homelessness in America, but there are ways of decreasing the number of homeless people in our nation. As I proposed, we need to work with our government to come up with ways to provide better resources to the homeless. The government should cut budgets somewhere else somewhere else, for example on the billions of dollars they are basically throwing away to support the war in Iraq and use that money to make it possible for every American Citizens to obtain proper insurance coverage and to create more jobs. All in all, we just have to start somewhere because at least we'll be a step closer to lessen the nationwide problem of homelessness.

### Works Cited

- Goodman, Lisa, Leonard Saxe, and Mary Harvey. "Homelessness as psychological trauma. (Cover story)." American Psychologist 46.11 (Nov. 1991): 1219. Academic Search Premier. EBSCO. [Library name], [City], [State abbreviation]. 30 July 2008  
<<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=9112161687&site=ehost-live>>.
- "Homelessness: A Solvable Problem." America 05 Mar. 2007: 5+. Academic Search Premier. EBSCO. [Library name], [City], [State abbreviation]. 30 July 2008  
<<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=24157649&site=ehost-live>>.
- "More Homeless, Less Housing." America 28 Feb. 2005: 3+. Academic Search Premier. EBSCO. [Library name], [City], [State abbreviation]. 30 July 2008  
<<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=16184640&site=ehost-live>>.
- Eighner, Lars. "On Dumpster Diving." The Writer's Presence. Eds. Donald McQuade and Robert Atwan. New: Bedford/ St. Martin's 2006. (379-388)
- Swift, Jonath. "A modest Proposal." The Writer's Presence. Eds. Donald McQuade and Robert Atwan. New: Bedford/ St. Martin's 2006. (825-832)
- Smith, Rick. "The Rick Smith Show". AM 960 WHYL'S. 7/28/2008 <<http://ricksmithshow.com/being-homeless-hard-work>>.

# Rodrigo Martinez

---

## Morals = Rules?

---

There's always been the good, and the bad, and it'll always be like that, because none of these concepts would exist without the other. We label things as good (or bad), just because we consider they are better, or worse than others. We try to avoid what we consider bad by creating laws, but there's a little problem: we don't have rules for all the things we consider bad, and that's why we have moral codes, which sometimes work as good as laws do, so good that they could even become rules. Determining what is right or not can be a discussion without end, because it all depends on the perception and every person has a different point of view, even if it's on the same topic. So, if people have their very own perspectives regarding an issue, are these definite positions? Or could they be affected by society (and our surroundings in general)? If that's the case, then what is strong enough to redirect the way we feel about something, and how does this artifact(s) works to cause an impact in our thoughts?

Just as we build our own opinions, these ideas could get influenced by the simplest and most irrelevant events in our life. To be more specific, I should say that the media plays a huge role in this process of coming up with a determined position about an issue. Movies, TV shows, commercials, texts (this is a huge one, because it can transmit so many different things through the powerful effect words can have on people), and music are only some of the examples of how our surroundings can get our perceptions changed.

All these forms of communication have an objective, which they try to achieve in the best way. In the case of visual entertainment, they (the producers) need to show us things we like (action, violence, that kind of stuff), in order to get our attention. If a movie or a TV program lacks of interesting content, we will just ignore it, even if they're transmitting the right message. Regarding music, sometimes the lyrics are pretty self-explanatory, and since I don't know anybody who hates music, it's always an easy way to get a message into people's heads, especially teenagers, who can listen thousands of times the same song. However, the most effective way to change somebody's mind, I think, is text. Books do not need to display a video of what's going on in the story, or whatever it's about, because our own imagination will do the job. We form vivid pictures in our heads, and, depending on the plot, we can feel angry, sad, happy, mad at the story's villain, or even mad at the main characters, which usually does not happen because we tend (at least I do) to identify with the characters involved in the story. Sometimes, we don't even need to travel to know the world; it's enough with having a good book next to us. There's never going to be a better movie than the one we can create in our own minds, where anything can happen, no matter how impossible



might be to recreate in real life. It's because all of these reasons that literature has a great power over the reader, and authors, therefore, need to first clearly decide what the purpose of their writing will be, and then, try to deliver its message in the best manner, because if they don't do it, and their creations get misunderstood, then the readers will not appreciate as they should the text they've just read.

Looking into the many categories of texts that form that big concept known as literature, we find the novels, the poetry, the tales, and also the short but meaningful fables. These fables are usually no longer that half a page, but the various messages behind those lines are enough to fill some more pages. Basically fables are intended to teach lessons or morals to people. To do this, the author will use animals or unanimated objects as characters, but not humans, because that'd make it too obvious. The morals these fables try to share might be things we know but may have been forgotten, and fables can be the perfect reminders that there are certain things we should, or shouldn't do in life. The Aesop's fables we read are mostly about characters who find out (too late), that they should've made smarter decisions, like the astronomer, who realized that if you dream too much, then you don't pay attention to what it's in front of you, your reality, because you're too busy looking into the future. Of course, all these stories were written by a man, just like us, and we shouldn't think he was a hundred percent right, or think the lessons he was trying to teach are still applicable to our times (Aesop was born in 620 BC). The fable I was interested in was the one about the travelers and the apes, where the honest traveler got killed for telling the truth, and I found that in the real world this situation happens all the time, where people prefer to listen to what they want, not to the truth. It's ok to lie? The fable says the travelers "could only" tell lies, or the truth, so it kind of sounds like if they had no choice, so the question now is, would the story be different if they could choose what to do, depending on the situation? Most stories and people have always taught us that if you do wrong things, you'll go to hell, or some kind of punishment like that, but this fable tells us that the bad guy actually got away with it, and saved his life, while the honest man wasn't so lucky.

Another story we read was "The Beauty and the Beast", which I can no longer look at it the same way I did when I read it for the first time, when I was a kid. I think it's kind of obvious just by looking at her name, but was necessary to make the character a beautiful woman? If she was all these great things, a good daughter, sister, etc, then wasn't that enough to consider her the perfect woman, especially when the story tries to give us this lesson about the insignificance of the physical appearance. The message, at the end, I think it's positive, that we should look right through people's defects and value them for what they really are, but I think the story kind of betrays this lesson, because the spell is broken and the Beast gets transformed into a handsome prince, which according to the moral they're trying to teach, was not necessary. The Beauty would've still loved him, beast or not, right?

Keep in mind, all these moral codes are given, not imposed, and you don't have to follow them if you don't really want. Will people look at you in a bad way if you decide not to adopt these morals? Probably, but at the end, it's your decision. On the other side, we've got rules, laws, call them the way you want, anyways you have to obey them. There's no point on discussing that, you either follow them, or you get in trouble with the authorities. I bet many people would love a world with no rules, so that they can choose to do whatever they want, and don't be restricted by the thought of going to jail.

But, are morals so different from rules? Let's see. Morals are certainly not imposed, but are what people expect from you, and that pressure put on us is comparable to the anxiety that breaking a rule causes. Laws apply to everyone, but, doesn't a moral kind of do the same? I know there might be some exceptions, where morals are different for an individual, but besides that, I think, for instance, that most adults agree that kids shouldn't drink or smoke, that girls should wait until marriage to have intimacy with a man, etc.

I'm just repeating all the things parents would say, even when they know their kids are not exactly saints. My son what? No! He would never do that! (But we all know they would, because we live in a time where being innocent is very rare). As well as in reality, moral codes are also broken in texts like the fables, with disastrous consequences (they're trying to scare us, so that we don't do stupid things), such as the story of the little crab who adventured into the meadows because he was sick of living his whole life in the shore. Once he got to the meadows he found death when a fox captures him, and "just as he was going to be beaten up, the crab said, this is just what I deserve, for I had no business to leave my natural home by the sea and settle here as though I belonged to the land (Aesop, 182)". The moral says he should have stayed where he was and be happy with that, but I strongly disagree, because you are way better as a loser, than being the person who never tries, and will never find out if he/she could have succeeded. Also, the example of the mother denying his son's mistakes, occurs because that's one of the main reasons why we still keep some morals, because of the embarrassment that would cause the fact that the rest of the people find out that there's no such a thing as a perfect family. That's why. Again, there might be some exceptions, and this does not have to apply to everyone, but I'm sure some people don't really care about doing the "right thing", but they're more preoccupied of what people can think about them.

There are certainly people who still think these morals and rules are two very different things, but as I'm realizing, they might be more similar than what we could imagine. For instance, we, as a society, decide what's best for us, and what's not. If we consider something is a threat for the community, we'll do whatever is in our hands to get rid of it. So, what can we do to make sure nobody attempts to do such a thing, which we don't want? We create laws, to stop (or at least try to stop, because there's always those risk takers who think rules were made to be broken) people from

getting involved in anything we don't welcome. It may take some time, arguments, and maybe even an election to see if the law is approved, but morals, eventually, can turn into rules.

Whether we want it or not, our culture is also a big factor that shapes those morals and rules we live with. Even our background, our race, and where we come from may affect the way we see things. For example, in some Middle East countries, it's still accepted that a man marries many women. We can think that's really disgusting, but for them it's almost like a tradition, it's completely normal, whereas some things Americans are used to do, might seem totally crazy for the people across the ocean.

To sum up, my point is that morals are closely related to rules, but still, they're not the same thing. As I said, morals may transform into laws, but that's not for sure. If there's a big difference between these moral codes and the rules we have to follow, it's that morals are kind of more flexible, they give choices. A law, a rule, unless is removed, will be always there, while our morals evolve. Just as we grow up, they change because we start to know more about our world, we start to ask questions on topics we once thought were taboo or indisputable, that there was no point on discussing about them, because they would always be the same. We start to be more open-minded and, probably someday, we finally realize that it's us, and only us, the ones who should determine what's best for ourselves. In others words, we are free to do whatever we want, as long as we are fully aware of the possible consequences of our actions (and don't forget we still have to follow the laws, ok?). In this world we "can" be influenced and tempted by so many things, but the key word right here is that we "can", that means, we don't have to. All the experiences we have throughout our lives, as well as our decisions are what really determine not only our morals but also the kind of person we are.

#### **Works Cited**

Aesop. *Aesop's Fables*. Storrs, CT: Uconn Co-Op, 2008. 54-223

Jeanne-Marie Leprince de Beaumont. *The Beauty and the Beast*. Storrs, CT: Uconn Co-op, 2008.

# Kally Moquete-Gonzalez

---

## Where Did I Go Wrong?

---

Why me? This is the question many domestic abuse victims ask themselves everyday of their lives. Why were they gullible enough to believe that he was going to change because he really did love her? It always begins with a simple conflict that leads to the first argument and ultimately leads to the first push, to the first apology and the promise to change, this is the first warning. Many women are led to believe that it is their fault, that they did something to make him snap because if only they had never said “that” it would have never happened. But over the years many have come to realize that this is never the case, that he was the culprit and not her. Yet every year the number of discovered domestic abuse cases increases significantly. Why is this? If everyone agrees that domestic abuse is an awful thing then why do so many women still find themselves in these violent situations? The answer is simple, they do not have enough support/knowledge, and financial stability to avoid or leave the situation they are in.

The American Bar association’s article on the commission of domestic violence has statistics that show that “ Approximately 1.3 million women are physically assaulted by an intimate partner annually in the United States.” But Bush is constantly cutting back funding for prevention and relief programs. For example, in an article about domestic violence prevention programs they mentioned, “In a single day, domestic violence programs served more than 53,000 adults and children in the United States. However, a significant number of requests - more than 7,700 went unmet because domestic violence agencies lacked the funding and staff to meet the demand. This data comes from the release of the National Network to End Domestic Violence's second National Census of Domestic Violence Services” (NCDVS). So why does this happen? This happens because Bush has decided to cut \$35 million from the Victims of Crime Act Fund (VOCA ), a key funding source which serves over 3 million crime victims each year; and cuts \$2.1 million from the Legal Assistance to Victims program. However the reason why Bush decided to cut funding from such an important program was never mentioned in this article.

By Bush cutting back on funding for prevention and awareness programs it makes it very difficult for these programs to do their job and raise awareness. Not realizing that in the end we end up spending more money in the long run, on support services anyway. A prime example of this is, The Department Of Children and Families (DCF). “The mission of the Department of Children and Families is to protect children, improve child and family well-being and support and preserve families”(www.ct.gov). What this means is that DCF will do what ever is necessary to live out their mission statement even if it removing a child from a domestic household. “DCF asserts that all

children have a basic right to grow up in safe and nurturing environments and to live free from abuse and neglect. All children are entitled to enduring relationships that create a sense of family, stability and belonging”(www.ct.gov). DCF’s first obligation is to children and then their families hence the name the Department of Children and Families. DCF is a federally funded agency and if Bush would have not cut back so much money from prevention and awareness programs he would not have to spend as much money providing for the children that were removed from abusive environments because there would not be as many.

Many women feel that they can only dream about leaving a domestic relationship because they have been brainwashed into thinking that no one will believe or help them. Some of these women can in fact make it on their own, but for some their significant other is their main financial and mental support and these women almost always return. But only because there has not been a full proof plan created for women to leave their relationship with out fearing that they will only fail out in the world by themselves.

I understand how difficult it is to want to get out of a violent situation but not having the proper support system in place to actually do so makes it even harder. When I was younger my mother, older brother, and I were advised to leave my household because my father was abusive. My mother was very afraid to even attempt to do such a thing because she had no where to go and no family in the U.S. My brother and I convinced her to at least try for us. We spoke up in school and were taken to a domestic abuse shelter for women and children. At this shelter there was a two week limit of time a family as allowed to stay. This was because this shelter like many others, experienced budget cuts and could not afford to house residents for a long period of time. We were forced to constantly move from shelter to shelter and from city to city because my mother could not afford to get her own place, did not have anyone to help her attempt to find the right support services and found it very difficult to live in New Haven and commute to her job in Hartford. My mother eventually began to loose faith until she could not take it anymore and went back to my father.

Unfortunately I cannot say that my family situation was unique. Some cases were similar to mine and in some cases even more severe. Domestic violence is something that has been going on for many, many years. No one should have to live in a situation that is mentally, physically, or emotionally unhealthy. A domestic situation is it is all about a man having power and control, as stated on the University of Connecticut Women’s Center website, “ an abusive male uses economic abuse, intimidation, coercion and threats, emotional abuse, isolation and male privilege to get their partner to stay in the relationship and every 15 seconds a woman is beaten in our country.” Yet no one seems to question what more we can be done to stop something this horrific. It is not only about someone cutting funding or there not being enough prevention programs. It is someone’s life that it

put in jeopardy every 15 seconds and all some people want to talk about and discuss is how long it is going to take to get this to stop, but fail to realize domestic abuse did not come about overnight.

Many women who are in abusive relationships tend to not fall under the same criteria some do not think “very highly about themselves and that's why it's easy for somebody else to put them down and control them and manipulate them," (Nicolai, capital times). The women who fit in this criteria are not even aware that they are and that it is wrong, to these women it is their familiarity and that is it. By having the proper systems in place for everyone we can minimize the number of women being battered instead of sitting here appalled by the significant increase of deaths and victims. By proper I mean a system that does not rely on one method more than another it must be balanced. For example, we are going to need awareness all year round, not just in October, which is domestic abuse awareness month. In October there are speakers and exhibits to show the women the type of danger that they could potentially be in; how to get out of it, and many different types of work shops. We need more hands on activities and interactive plays for women in domestic situations. For example the University of Connecticut’s Women’s Center has a group that puts on plays and slideshows to raise awareness of all the types of domestic violence there is. We are also going to need financial support available to these women who are trying to leave their home and rebuild their lives. These women are also going to be in need of affordable therapy to help them cope with the pain of what they have encountered for so long.

The stories of the many women who have survived domestic abuse are unbelievable, what is even more unbelievable is that many have built up the courage to share their stories, with other women to show them that women in domestic situations can get out and make a difference. I have a dream as did Martin Luther King Jr., as does Barack Obama. My dream is that future generations will never know what domestic violence is because the word will no longer exist. We, victims of domestic abuse have a dream that the day will come that women will never feel inferior to a man because she fears his strength. In order for the arrival of such a day to come a man must be able to admit to himself that he is only human and capable of mistakes and seek the help necessary. Women must be able to look at themselves in the mirror and see that they are also human and equal to a man, that she deserves the exact amount of respect he does and that she is powerful.

### **Works Cited**

- “ Commission on Domestic Violence” American Bar Association  
2002. Survey of recent statistics  
July 21,2008. [www.abanet.org/domviol/statistics.html](http://www.abanet.org/domviol/statistics.html)
- “ Dating Violence” Women’s Center  
May 6,2008. University of Connecticut  
July 21,2008. <[www.womenscenter.uconn.edu](http://www.womenscenter.uconn.edu)>

“ Domestic Abuse survivor speaks in Madison Wednesday.” The Capitol Times  
June 23,2008. Capitol Newspapers  
July 21,2008. [www.madison.com](http://www.madison.com)

“ News report shows short supply of resources to met victims need.”  
January 31,2008. National Network to Domestic Violence  
July 21,2008. [www.yubanet.com](http://www.yubanet.com)

“ Those battling domestic abuse fear federal funding cuts” CWT  
April 8,2008. HOI abc 19  
July 21, 2008. <[www.hoi.com/news](http://www.hoi.com/news)>

# Duc Ngo

---

## Hollywood Films and Family Values in Telling the Histories

---

Have you ever question our histories, should we consider them trustworthy to believe? In “Family Values” written by Barbara Ehrenreich and, “Stories Hollywood Never Tells” written by Howard Zinn, both demonstrated how histories influence us and shaped our lifestyles. Ehrenreich discusses the importance of histories through her family experience; on the other hands, Zinn revealed the actual truth behind our histories base on his perspectives of Hollywood films. In my opinion, there were a few benefits and disadvantage from each author perspectives on the values of histories that gradually shaping our minds and lifestyles. Ones histories can be identifies through ones family and their essential family value.

Barbara Ehrenreich utilized her family as a way to demonstrate her own identity and history. She came from a family whom devalue any aspects of religion, the great grandparents showed lack of respect, even though, they accepted god into their lives and attended church regularly. Mamie O’ Laughlin, the great grandmother, raised in a Catholic church and considered God as her essential of her life. However, upon her father death, the priest performed a very cruel deed, which was completely against his religion. He declared that he would come to Laughlin father’s funeral if and only if, Mamie pays the necessary fee. Because of this, she despised her religion, especially what the priest had done to her until her very last moment on earth. “But Mamie was not dead yet. She pulled herself together at the last moment, flung the crucifix across the room, fell back, and died.” (674) This quotation clearly explained how much she disgusted the priest, and she still remembered his horrific acts on her deathbed. Likewise, the great grandfather, John Howes, was also raised as a Catholic; however, he became exiled from any nearby churches due to his idiotic actions at the church altar. For instance, “According to legend, he once abused his position as an altar boy by urinating, covertly of course, in the holy water.” (675) This quotation discussed John Howes showing no sign of respecting toward his religion, because of this, he couldn’t marry the one he loved, since he was notorious for his urinating on the altar. Based on Ehrenreich’s atheist background, she doesn’t value religion as much as others, and she believes if one visits any worship building frequently, but don’t abides by the commandments, then that person is basically a hypocrite; performing deeds similar to an atheist. For example:

Millions of Americans threw their souls and their savings into evangelical empires designed on the principle of pyramid scams. Even the sleazy downfall of our telemessiahs--caught masturbating in the company of ten-dollar prostitutes or fornicating in their Christian theme parks--did not discourage the faithful. The unhappily pregnant were mobbed as “baby



killers”; sexual nonconformists--gay and lesbian--we re denounced as “child molesters”; atheists found themselves lumped with “Satanists,” Communists, and consumers of human flesh.” (677)

This expressing explained that countless numbers of Americans accepted god into their lives; became very religious of what they're doing, however, they soon found themselves on the opposite sides and doing all sorts of disgusting things against their God's wills. These hypocrites tend to place money as the most important part of their lives, even if they have cheated and prevented the truth from being revealed to the public, especially the entertainment industrials such as Hollywood.

From Howard Zinn's essay “Stories Hollywood Never Tells”, perspectives on the American histories that Hollywood mostly hides the truth from what actual occurs because; the Hollywood want us to have a certain mind set, and they can persuade us to support their ideology. “We need to think about telling the story of war from a different perspective.” (873) Zinn's angle of telling the histories through Hollywood films caused the audiences to reconsider about what we used to believe in our own histories. Most importantly, Hollywood is an entertainment industry, which mean money is essential. They require to add films that will appeal to the majority of the population, even if they have to edit the truth in making an almost make-believe truth, in order to obtain the maximum profits. Zinn unraveled the real truth behind the American history. The Philippine War, for example, considered the most bloodiest confrontation lasted within a few months, the American government drafted the majority of minorities over Philippine, they eventually saw their enemies in the same shoe as them, not long after several battles, the American soldiers soon defected and fight for what right for them. For instance, “A number of black soldiers deserted and went over to fight with the Filipinos.” (876) This quotation clearly explain that most of the black soldiers abandon their regimes and joined the opposition forces.

From my experience, I truly believe ones belief system derive from both the media and/or family. Ehrenreich is partially correct about the family shaped her identity, and she became an atheist through her family value. I believe Barbara Ehrenreich could have become religious if she choose to be because; she will eventually understand the value of her religion, and she must investigate to further the truth behind her family's religion history. I recently converted to Christianity after I discovered the real truth of my religion, Buddhism, it neither a bad truth or good truth. My religion status was very similar to Ehrenreich, my family religion influence the way I think and my lifestyle and, I was growing up in a Buddhist family. However, we weren't quite religious and shortly after, I noticed the majority of Buddhists aren't highly devote in what their religion taught them, their actions are identical to an atheists, only a few however, remain true to their religion and abide to the commandments. Like I said earlier, the media have a big factor influence our ways of thinking and gradually transforming our society into a disgust, horrifying, aggression, violence behavior toward our

people. I strongly have the same mind as Howard Zinn perspective about how the history influence us through media. Hollywood films most of the time include heroism and/or others aspects portraying the American as “The Good Guy,” thus, we tends to ignore the actual negative effects. Hollywood exclude parts that will leave a pessimistic character in illustrating the good American.

Base on my understanding, Howard Zinn exhibits the concepts of Hollywood deliberately concealing the truth from the public because his main desire in the story was to educate the later generations and demonstrate us, as educators, the truth behind our American histories. The media had greatly impacted our lifestyles in such way that we are oblivion to our histories. For example, president Lyndon B. Johnson drafted countless soldiers over to Vietnam during the 1960s-1975, in order to prevent the spread of communism in Vietnam. Little did we know, our own friends, relatives, and family members are being sent to their own graves without a clear military objectives, the America soon found itself in a position where the America must withdraw its troops; victory was very slim from the very beginning. The government declared that we did the right thing to cease the communists, but they completely ignore the grievance back at home, the soldiers are constantly meet their dooms not to long on the battlefield. In addition, Zinn wants the audience to aware that the movies are not trustworthy because; they’re bias and left out several events that can impact our ways of thinking. Similarly, Ehrenreich selected the family values in her story because; she wants to understand that the families are a major factor in shaping our lives as well as our belief system. Ehrenreich, however, did not discusses the possible outcome with the catholic church when her great-grandparents abandon their religion. As matter of facts, the churches support the immigrants in helping them to find an occupation and shelters, it is no doubt that the church charity aid the needy. Her story is indirectly unsupportive the catholic religion, thus, her story is not completely correct, she is partially true at certain points.

In conclusion, Howard Zinn portrayed the purpose of Hollywood films through his short story,” Stories Hollywood Never Tells,” they prevent to leak the truth from the public, for their own purpose to gain domestic policies, and persuade us to think at a certain ways as a method to tell the influence of our histories. Likewise, Barbara Ehrenreich utilized her own family and its values as a way to discuss the our histories. Both authors approach differently in telling how the history influence the audiences lifestyle and mind sets have me investigate the purpose of why these authors selected certain topics in their stories.

# Thien Nguyen

---

## War is Suffering

---

When it comes to telling a war story, you expect to hear a first hand recollection of triumph, or even a story of glorified death. Sometimes story-tellers throw in a casual lie, or the whole story could be entirely made up. Whatever the case, both Ernest Hemingway and Tim O'Brien have their own definition and style of what a true war story is about. But in the case of writing a *true* war story, Hemingway and O'Brien connect on several points to create the surreal accounts of what a true war story really is.

In Tim O'Brien's, How to Tell a True War Story, O'Brien points out several requirements that would dictate what a true war story really is. By following these guidelines, you can then successfully show a war story to anyone. One of the main points that O'Brien touches upon is morals. He explains that "A true war story is never moral. It does not instruct, nor encourage virtue, nor suggest models of proper human behavior, nor restrain men from doing the things they have always done." (O'Brien 175) War is suffering; there is no type of "moral lesson". One perfect example of this is when a soldier enters combat. When faced with having to actually kill someone, where is the moral lesson? Is there any justification in taking someone else's life? The moral is the silence in language. Whatever the soldier may be feeling or thinking, that is what he walks away with. You essentially walk out none the wiser; you don't have any type of worldly knowledge, but instead you walk away with this unanswered emptiness. In Hemingway's "Inter-Chapter VII", you can see first hand this lack of morality. As this unnamed soldier struggles internally, he pleads for help. He struggles with the brink of death and pleads with Jesus to spare his life, "I believe in you and I tell every one in the world that you are the only one that matters." (Hemingway 67) Death gone, his safety no longer threatened, he ventures away the next night to Mestre. Unscathed, the soldier "[doesn't] tell the girl he went upstairs with at the Villa Rossa about Jesus. And he never told anybody". (Hemingway 67) Where are the instructions on being a "just" person, the virtues, and the moral lesson? There is no closure or solution, but instead the reader and the soldier walk away with this void, this meaninglessness closing where life just carries on.

In a "Soldier's Home", Hemingway again demonstrates this lack of morality. Just returning home, Krebs is a former American marine veteran. He finds himself returning too late for any type of heroic celebration. Instead he feels like he comes home unwelcomed, like no one even really notices, and as a result copes with being treated as this outcast. As he tries to adjust to society, you begin to see how socially awkward Krebs is. Reflecting on Hemingway's minimalistic style of writing, you realize that Krebs is indeed a simple man. He doesn't enjoy anything complicated; rather than

investing in himself like getting a job, or getting a steady relationship, Krebs would rather sit back. Taking pleasure in playing sports, practicing his clarinet, or watching his sister play indoor basketball, Krebs comes off as this dormant soul. But herein lies his faults, because you get this sense of aimlessness, that he doesn't seem to care about anything really. His mother worries that, "you have lost your ambition, that you haven't got a definite aim in life". (Hemingway 75) Continuing on with this sense of emptiness, you see Krebs' battle this mentality of how to behave. When asked if Krebs had loved his mother, he replies "No", even the humble task of praying with her, Krebs refuses, exclaiming that he can't. This disturbing scene makes you wonder, what is wrong with Krebs. He's become this disillusioned soul that doesn't even know how to act around family, how is he even expected to behave around friends, or society for that matter. This conflicting issue of discovering who he is, and how he thinks makes me question where his morals, his values are?

"If at the end of a war story you feel uplifted or if you feel that some small bit of rectitude has been salvaged from the larger waste, then you have been made the victim of a very old and terrible lie." None of the stories in, In Our Time are uplifting; in fact they all end quite miserably. In "A Very Short Story", any thoughts of Luz or any of the other characters living "happily ever after" is completely blown away. Instead, what ends up happening is that the nurse never even marries. The major she had an affair with never followed through, and Luz just ends up contracting gonorrhea from a sales girl. Similarly in Inter-chapter VII, the soldier is safe now, but never kept his promise to Jesus, instead he went and mingled with the "girl at Villa Rossa". Finally in "Mr. and Mrs. Elliot", their unending battle with having a baby is never answered. Instead, their unstable relationship is met with this curiosity that the reader has for Mrs. Elliot's friend. In all of these stories, Hemingway seems to reiterate one major point, the question of love. He never ended any of these stories with any type of successful relationship; rather there was always some sort of turmoil that the characters encounter. From the simplicity of a "boy-girl love", to the complexities of successfully having children, to never following through, the characters seem to constantly find some sort of obstacle that prevents them from "finding true love" let alone finding companionship. Hemingway effectively portrays this lack of affection by presenting characters like Luz, the soldier, and Mr. and Mrs. Elliot with this attitude of being detached from society. They all have this nonchalant connection with one another that almost makes it impossible for them to find true love. Take for example the soldier in Inter Chapter VII, the battle he has with his integrity, of not being able to feel and come off as a man, makes his battle with finding love that much more difficult. Or even Luz, his attitude for having this undying love for the nurse was his downfall; he went in with all his cards, thinking that she felt as strongly as he did for her. In the end, she labeled their relationship as being too simple and immature. The fact that they weren't true to themselves and their lack of knowing ultimately led them to where they are now – not having anyone.

Thus far, according to O'Brien's guidelines on "How to Tell a True War Story", Hemingway has indeed successfully told war stories. He has written several stories that don't incorporate any type of morals. The reader doesn't walk away from any of his stories with any type of wisdom or understanding as a human being. Instead the reader walks away with this sort of unfinished chapter, that life just continues onward with no type of definite answer for the character's conflicts. Additionally, he doesn't feel inspired, there isn't any sort of grander picture that the reader learns, but instead he is left with this almost open-ended uncertainty.

If I had to sit down with a friend and discuss what a true war story is, I would pray that my audience is prepared for what I'm about to say. Aside from my grandfathers, no one in my immediate family has served in the military, let alone battle in war. I don't have any first hand recollections, or stories of victory and defeat. What I do have though, is the experiences that my parents and aunts and uncles had. The only thing I knew about my paternal grandfather was that he was a captain. He had helped the US military as a reconnaissance officer during the Vietnam War. I never had the opportunity to speak to him about it, to learn what his experience was like. I would never be able to hear when he was most scared, what was most rewarding, or the things that agonized him. What I do know though was how difficult it was for my Dad. My father had explained that my grandfather was killed early on in the battle, and as a result he never had a father figure in his life.

Around the age of 5, it's no surprise that he can't even recall what my grandfather was like. Whenever I got in trouble as a child, I always remember him mentioning how difficult it was for him and his 2 brothers to grow up without a father and that I should be grateful that he's even on my case about anything. As I look back now I hate to admit it sometimes, but I can't even begin to fathom what it would be like without having my father, he practically made me who I am today.

Ironically, my maternal grandfather also served in the war and as a general, he too helped the US military. For my mom and her family, it wasn't as difficult because during the war, he would be able to periodically come home and visit. However the memories that my uncles often tell me were what happened when the American troops were forced to leave. In brief, the Viet Cong had captured my grandfather, and held him as a captive for several years for treason. There weren't any type of visits now. Knowing my father's experience without having a father, I can't even imagine what it was like for a family of 8 brothers and sisters. That being said, when I think of war, I think of despair. Aside from the images of fighting and death typically associated with war, I have always connected war with this feeling of loss. The stories of growing up without this guidance or direction, has always lingered in the back of my mind when war is brought up. In my opinion, Hemingway successfully tells a war story by embodying these feelings that I tie with war.

However, one thing that I would point out is that not all of In Our Time is about war. Only a few stories actually mention anything about war. Passages like “Inter-Chapter VII”, “A Very Short Story”, “Soldier’s Home”, and “The Revolutionist” briefly elaborate on war. Stories like “Cat in the Rain”, “Cross-Country Snow”, and “Indian Camp” don’t mention anything about war. When I think of war, I see images of violence, gore, political conflictions, and brute violence against mankind. But in reality most of the stories in, In Our Time don’t even begin to depict any type of crazy melees, or even mention anything about the political gore. Instead they analyze the character’s development and how the character’s life plays out to add to what a war story really is, it’s a gathering of stories that adds to the grander scale of what a true war story is.

### **Works Cited**

- Hemingway, Ernest. In Our Time. New York London Toronto Sydney: Simon & Schuster, 1925
- O’Brien, Tim. “How to Tell a True War Story” *Post-modern American fiction* ed. Paula Geyh et.al New York: Norton, 1998. 174-182

# Tierra Pollock

---

## The Complexities of War in a True War Story

---

I remember in the eighth grade a Vietnam veteran and a Cambodian war camp survivor came to visit us. They spoke about their experiences in the war and what they went through over a period of time. The woman who spoke to us, a refugee from a war camp in Cambodia told us many disturbing stories about her life during this time. There is one story that really stayed with me over the years. She told us how enemy soldiers would come and take women's babies and throw them in the air onto knives and blades. This was shocking to me, especially as a thirteen year old girl. But not only was it shocking, it was sad, it was uplifting it was horrifying all in one. After they spoke I felt different because I never imagined hearing anything like this. I felt happy to be alive and sympathetic for what every person experienced at that camp. The Vietnam War veteran spoke about his duties in the war. This man witnessed a lot as a soldier; he even lost the majority of three of his fingers in battle. This proved as a constant reminder of Vietnam no matter how many years went by. Despite this, when the man came home he really didn't get any recognition, people pretended as if the war did not happen, as if the fingers on his hand were never there. After I read "How to Tell a True War Story" by Tim O'Brien, I realized that these were true war stories. They involved real people and real events so appalling that they almost didn't seem real.

Tim O'Brien explains in his essay that war is unclear and "right spills into wrong"(175). He brings up a good point; there is no clarity in war. It tears people apart, but also brings people closer together. The travesties of war are sometimes inexplicable and no one can pinpoint exactly what happened or how. O'Brien has his own definition about what makes a real war story. He explains that "A true war story is never moral. It does not instruct, nor encourage virtue, nor suggest models of proper human behavior, nor restrain men from doing the things they have always done (175)." I agree with this idea because war is raw and unpredictable and most of the time there is no happy ending. "How to Tell a True War Story" certifies the stories of In Our Time by Ernest Hemingway as a book about war. The short and to the point stories of In Our Time embodies all the criteria that O'Brien needs to qualify any story as a war story.

Hemingway is good at creating short and simple, but striking stories in his book In Our Time. The story "Indian Camp" is a great example of this. Hemingway doesn't make any specific references to war in this story, but the reader cannot help but feel the same sad and deep message of warfare. Hemingway comments on how calm that the father of the child had been lying on the top bunk. Then he continues "The Indian lay with his face toward the wall. His throat had been cut from ear to ear" (18). There is something poetic about this. The woman is struggling to bring a child into

this world and a man takes his life because it is too much for him. It is terrible, but it has this profound meaning to it. “How to Tell a True War Story” amplifies Hemingway’s In Our Time. This lies under the umbrella of O’Brien’s words because the reader does not feel rectified at the end of “Indian Camp.” This story was grim not only because there was a young boy in the room, but just because of the excruciating pain this woman is going through. The agony she experienced with a breached birth and a suicidal mate are nonsensical and confusing, much like war. Death is sharp and in your face. I get this image of pain and suffering after I read this. Yet out of all this darkness comes some light, a baby is born into the war of life. He’s fighting a battle and he doesn’t even know yet. O’Brien argues this in “How to Tell a True War Story,” In the end, of course, a true war story is never about war. It’s about the special way that dawn spreads out on a river, when you know you must cross the river and march into the mountains”(183). This may seem like a contradiction (which it is), but it also further explains his point. The utterly complicated and confusing aspects of war lead people to explore the value of life and the simplicity of their surroundings.

Personally, I have always thought that a war story should be full of heroism and defeat maybe with a little bit of sad elements. After I read “How to Tell a True War Story,” I realized that this isn’t the case at all. The main reason why I have always seen a war as this valiant act of heroism has a lot to do with television, movies, and the media. Popular culture has greatly influenced my opinion about war. On the news, stories of someone saving a fellow soldier or escaping from kidnapping are the main reasons why I have seen war as this intricate and noble battle. O’Brien is not afraid to obliterate all the wrong ideas the reader may have about war stories. He is telling the reader that he or she is wrong, that this idea of a happy ending in a war story is wrong. War is grimy and unpleasant, confusing and interesting. He believes that most people don’t know what a true war story really is; and he’s right. Our culture sees war as an obligation that some heroic individuals pay to society.

Where did this idea of obligation come from? War veterans are obligated to tell stories about their battles and to make there be some type of heroism or act of courage. But why? People want to know what goes on in war. No matter how gruesome it is human nature. This is much like the bullfighting in the inter-chapters of In Our Time, people come to see a fight. No matter how gruesome it is they are curious and eager for action. They want a hero, but they don’t mind seeing someone fall either. War stories are much like this, they are not meant to have any moral or point, and they are only stories, only battles. Hemingway included the bullfighting inter-chapters to represent war. The people in the audiences are much like people at “home,” when a soldier is in battle. They want to see a good fight, they want their hero.

Death is described so quickly and harsh in both of these books. This is because it happens suddenly in life also. People who were loved, who lived and breathed, worked, cried, and fought are



taken away in a matter of seconds. O'Brien explains that "At its core, perhaps war is just another name for death, and yet any soldier will tell you, if he tells the truth, that proximity to death brings corresponding proximity to life" (181). He is right. War opens people's eyes. It is like witnessing birth, it is fascinating and it allows people to appreciate their life and recognize that they are alive. Death and birth can be so amazing. When someone is born, it is hard to explain what that looks like; I imagine it is the same with death. With all these stories which relate to war and death comes this philosophy. When the man is killed by the bull in Chapter XIV the reader cannot help but feel pained by this death. It seems so unnecessary like war deaths often does.

Love is fleeting and friendship is cut short. "The End of Something" and "A Very Short Story" help the reader to understand Hemingway's view on relationships. Luz is made out to be an opportunist she is supposedly in love, but she sleeps with the General and claims that her and her lover only had a "girl-boy love." When her lover ends up in the backseat getting gonorrhea from another woman the story has this foreboding idea about love.

This is what war is about. There was no point to their relationship, just as quickly as it began; it ended leaving them both with nothing, leaving the reader with no satisfaction and no chance of a happy ending. Hemingway is blunt and not afraid to tell a brutal war story. This story doesn't leave any point to their relationship. "And in the end, really, there's nothing much to say about a true war story, except maybe 'Oh' (O'Brien 179). This is exactly what I felt after reading every one of the stories of *In Our Time*. There was no moral, only a story, only a complicated piece of the puzzle which made me think. Milton A Cohen explains that "...all the depictions of the war combine to form 'the' Hemingway depiction of the World War: absurd, unpredictable, unheroic"(100). He is right. Hemingway tells these stories in this way in order for the reader to know what a war story is. *In Our Time* not only portrays the message he was trying to prevail, what World War I had done to his generation, but the futility of war. So what is a war story? Is it only a story? Or is it safe to say that through the meaninglessness of the story the listener or the reader is able to extract some deeper meaning? After listening to the narrative of two people who experienced the Vietnam War, to this day I find myself wondering what it is that their stories meant. I'm still not sure; all I know is that they embody something special, something beautiful and tragic that I can't quite put my finger on.

#### Works Cited

- Cohen, Milton A. "Soldier's Voices in *In Our Time*: Hemingway's Ventriloquism." *The Hemingway Review*. 71 (2000) 22-29
- Hemingway, Ernest. *In Our Time*. New York: Scribner, 2003.
- O'Brien, Tim. "How to Tell a True War Story." *Postmodern America Fiction* ed. Paula Geyh, et al. New York: Norton; 1998. 174-182.

# Kaylani Rosado

---

## The Silence

---

It was 3AM and the deafening sound of silence of my house drew me out of my most satisfying slumber. My arms pulled back the blue, green, and yellow flannel sheets as my freshly painted toes settled on the wood floor. It sounded just like it did in my grandfather's hospital room after he had been diagnosed with cancer, hopeless. I opened the creaky door in slow motion so I wouldn't wake anyone. After sneaking through the empty hall and down the stairs I finally made it to the kitchen where I poured myself a tall iced glass of water. After getting a drink I started to make my way back to my room. Something just was not right. I took a detour and passed by Matthew, my brother's, room on my way up, but he wasn't there. There was a blue fleece comforter laid flat on the bed as if to say no one had slept there. Now wide awake, I walked through the whole house including the bathroom in search of my brother. He was nowhere.

Soon, the house began spinning until I could no longer make out the pictures of me and my family on my mother's wall. My fingers managed to find the light switches. The glow coming from the bulbs was blinding, but I was still able to see at least one thing. I was completely alone. Mom, Matt, and Uncle Joshua were all gone; every trace of them had been erased. The vacant feeling in my heart told me I had to get help. I called dad, Uncle Edwin, Aunt Maria, and every friend I had. Not a single person answered me. 911 was next, but what would I tell them? The excitement began to bubble inside of me. Nothing like this has ever happened. The adrenaline pumped through my body I could feel a real adventure coming on. As I threw on my jeans and t- shirt I ran through all the different ways I could turn myself into a hero in this situation.

No one. Neighbors, friends, pets, cops, doctors, family and strangers were all gone. I could not find a single person anywhere. I went through my whole neighborhood and even the local corner stores and no one was in my sight. It now became my mission to find them, and a certain feeling of terror struck me. People I cared about were missing and without one clue as to how to find them I set out for the newly empty world wondering if I would ever return. My footsteps echoed in the city streets giving my ears comfort. Nothing else even seemed as though life had ever once existed among it and I was happier than I had ever been. The world was finally quiet enough for me to think, and all of the pain people caused me was silenced.

After the sun had risen the knot in my stomach began to gnaw at my insides. I sat down at a park bench to try and relieve some of the pain, but it was no use. My venture was not even close to being over and I knew the longer I waited to find my family, or anyone else, would prove detrimental

to them. Although the world was a lot quieter I could barely hear my own thoughts. It was as if every corner of the world was rushing at me, and I was too amazed to move out of the way.

Pieces of clothing and hair were all over the place. Every size, color, and texture could be found growing out of the sidewalks and streets. As I made my way through the bizarre roads more and more remnants of what used to be life were catching my attention. Thoughts started to rush through my mind about whether or not I was even still alive. A situation like this could not be real, but I was wrong it was real and I was all alone. However, I was not as distraught or panicked as one might think. This situation was ideal; I could spend a few days searching for all the people and maybe get some time to myself. When I finally find them everyone will be grateful to me and I will be a hero. All my life people have been casting me aside ignoring me like a piece of furniture in their all too normal lives. Well, now they need me and it's amazingly wonderful how the tables have turned.

It had been about three days since my initial encounter with the silence. There was still no sign of anyone, but I knew I was getting close. Every now and then I could hear a faint whisper crying from a direction I could not distinguish. I was too far away from home to turn back and even if I could I would not. I still had to find these people and cash in on the glory I so deserved. Every bone in my body was telling me to follow the crying. So I spent a few hours just sitting and listening to it until I finally figured out where it was coming from. I wasted no time and sprinted in the direction I heard the cries.

I ran until I hit a big black wall with a handle on it, and when I turned around to look back at the city once in the horizon, it was not gone as well. With nowhere else to go I pushed at the handle. As soon as that wall opened it was as if my soul was pulled out from underneath me. I fell to my knees and my tears streamed down my face instantly. Although the salty water in my eyes burned and clouded my vision I could still see the bodies of every living person mangled along the wall. This happened without warning and no sort of explanation. What had these people done to deserve this? And why was I the one who had to find them?

My family and friends were dead. Everyone I had ever known was dead and I was left with nothing. To think that the whole time all I was worried about was getting credit for finding them. It never occurred to me that they could be in danger. I was too wrapped up in my own selfish crap to even realize the bigger picture, and for all I know it's my fault they died. I walked through the bodies trying to identify who I knew and I found everyone from my first grade teacher to my own mother. There were no more cries, only the smell of their newly deceased bodies caught my senses. Not knowing what would happen next I set back for what was left of my home to try and figure out what would happen to me.

Not long after I left to return home I realized there was nothing to go back to. I turned around and ran back to those bodies. I found a spot right in the middle of them all and I sat down. I still haven't woken up, and I'm not so sure this is a nightmare anymore. It might just be my life.

# Kris Scully

---

## Hip-Hop, Take Two

---

Who are we to define what hip-hop is or any style of music for that matter? In my opinion, hip hop cannot be defined, but is the interpretation that one takes from it and how they use it. We cannot be limited by what is expected of us as Gloria Anzaldúa explains in *How to Tame a Wild tongue* and as Lupe Fiasco demonstrated in many of his lyrics. With that said, hip-hop can be looked at from many angles both of which are positive and negative. Most hip-hop lyrics come from true life situations or the struggle one might have been through. The hip-hop that we are most familiar with, I like to call part one. This hip-hop is almost a reckless organization of verse after verse. A point is made and is clear to the listener, but we don't get much from it other than the rapper has a lot of money, girls, and jewels. Hip hop part two, on the other hand consists of the elite few that come up with deep and well thought out verses. In my opinion, hip-hop part one is on a lower intellectual level. So in the world of hip-hop as we know it today, the way you say something is on a whole different level than what you actually say.

Once a rapper makes a name for him or herself and become established, the lyrics always seem to veer. A rapper can easily go from how hard they had it to how easy it is now since they have piles of disposable money that can be dished out at any time. What we have grown accustomed to are quick, snappy rhymes and metaphors. If you put that together with a toe tapping beat, the outcome will be hip hop part one. For example, in the freestyle at the end of *Georgia Bush* by Lil Wayne, he says "got money out the ass no homo, but I'm rich, bout to go get surgery and put some diamonds on my wrist". We as the audience get little from that, yet we go along with it and even rap along to the lyrics because of what we are accustomed to. Hip-hop part one, whether we like it or not, can sometimes influences others in a way that society wouldn't approve of. This form of hip-hop and its form of language attracts an audience because the rappers seem to hold power. They say money makes the world go around. In the rap game, your flow is your power and your power is your money. So the more money you have, the more assertive your language would be. The audience sees this and soaks up every bit of it. Hip-hop has had a lot of back and forth battling known as free styling to see who can rein as the champion. These battles consist of any kind of hurtful slander that can help to bring down your career. Sticks and stones may break your bones, but words can do more damage. The more flow and good punch lines, you have the better off you are like Lil Wayne's style. In *Georgia Bush*, he says "any rapper wan get at me, tell ya label contact me. Half four hundred for a feature, wanna battle, I'll beat ya". Free style can be about anything where language and power might not mean as much, but in a battling situation that's what it's all about. A free style can simply be

about the weather and sound good, but in a confrontational setting, language and power has to step in to claim dominance. The winner is usually the aggressor. Hip-hop can prove to be a big game of survival of the fittest.

Hip hop is a very powerful tool in this world and so is music as a whole. I've seen for myself what hip-hop influenced people to do. The speech and appearance of the listener change to match what a "real nigga" is suppose to be. Jeffery O.G. Ogbar states in his book *Hip-Hop Revolution*, "Since the early 1990's the thug handily dominated hip-hop, after a short period of black nationalist dominance. Thus rappers celebrate thug behavior as an expression of their authenticity. Out of this thug appeal the celebration of being a "real nigga" has been common." (Hip-Hop Revolution, pg 43). Early hip-hop like Public Enemy set the bar in the golden age with their rebellious government challenging flow. This era lasted from 1988-90 when more reckless hip-hop was released, thus starting hip-hop part one for my generation. I can only imagine if hip-hop was all about getting a good education and prospering in life through different means. How much less would the high school dropout rate be and would the crime rate go down? If that were reality, I could see nothing but good things happening. Hip-hop isn't about going to school and doing things the right way because a lot of people try it that way and fail simply because it's hard. The easy way out which happens to be the wrong way goes against the law, but can make quick money. Hip-hop part one is pretty much telling me that money is the first priority and that an education can come later, but artist that fall under hip-hop part two would argue the opposite way. I do believe that a more positive hip-hop will keep more kids out of jail and away from drugs or violence. If we can publicize hip-hop with education more often at a level where rappers showcase it, and show a progressing because of it, I believe that kids would have a brighter future.

Hip-hop part two is one small step for man and one Giant step for hip-hop itself as well as the listeners. This form of Hip-hop is going back to what hip-hop originally was. There was an unbalance between the two for years, but now through artist like Common and Lupe Fiasco, hip-hop part two is making a strong comeback. I believe that mainstream hip-hop is hip-hop part one, but Lupe Fiasco chose to go against that. In hip-hop, word choice is key to the success of the rapper. The word choice of rappers like Lil Wayne makes them who they are and gives them their power and authenticity, but one man stands outside of the box in his own world known only as unique. One of his hit songs called *Dumb it Down* explains it all. Lupe Fiasco's word choice is like none other that I've ever heard. He keeps some of the traditional aspects of hip-hop like rhyiming, but he stands out through his lyrics, beat of the song, and overall style. He speaks about how he came up in life just like most other rappers, but never went on to say "I got my mind on my money and my money on my mind".

Lupe Fiasco was accepted in hip-hop by a lot of listeners, yet some thought that he wasn't hip hop material at all. In mainstream hip-hop little thinking has to be done, but Lupe's Lyrics are so complex that it makes you think and learn as well. For example, Lupe says in *Dumb it Down*, "I'm Fearless, now hear this, I'm earless and I'm Peer-less, that means I'm eyeless which means I'm tearless which means my iris resides where my tears is which means I'm blinded". What I got from that is that he is more than focused on himself and what he has to do to move forward. His lyrics tell me that he receives a lot of negative restraint, but he pushes ahead nonetheless because his eyes are on the prize rather than being focused on if he is liked by everyone. Through this song, Lupe puts himself on his very own level and challenges others to be like him or to be what he's about, to stir up his world or to even surpass him as a rapper rapping positively in hip-hop part two. We can take what we want from it, but what he is trying to get across isn't printed word for word, but is put in a way that makes the listener have to decipher the meaning. In his case, it's always something positive. To make a long story short, his language and power isn't as in your face, but is definitely not undermined or shadowed by hip-hop part one. When I think of Lupe, I think of a distant force that no one really wants to tamper with. If I had to define hip-hop, my definition would be Lupe Fiasco simply because of the power he has through his lyrics.

The world of hip-hop isn't all about what you say, but also has a lot to do with image. You might be able to talk the talk, but if you can't walk the walk, then you won't be taken seriously as an artist. This goes the same for being able to walk the walk, but not being able to deliver. The first rapper that came to my mind that was able to meet these criteria was Eminem. As a white rapper he was already considered to be on a lower level, but he was able to relate to the struggle, he was able to communicate as what is considered a "real nigga". He carried himself like a rapper and rapper and delivered better than a lot of black rappers in his own style. Despite his disadvantage, Eminem was accepted because of the language and power of his lyrics and how legit they were. Eminem in my opinion is a rapper that raps about the best of both worlds. Sometimes he gets reckless and other times he puts some meaning behind his words. Hip-hop part one can prove to have a positive side. For example, it shows how hard work in this world can pay off as well as some key points it might make like providing for your family.

Hip-hop part two is still hip-hop in the same way that all variations of Spanish are still Spanish. Language in regard to power doesn't stop at the English language, but can be very powerful in other languages such as Spanish. In *How to Tame a Wild Tongue*, Gloria Anzaldúa says, "Wild tongues can't be tamed, they can only be cut out"(The Writer's presence, pg 325). She was speaking about how her language is a part of her. This reminds me of the saying, you can take the girl out of the country, but you can't take the country out of the girl. Anzaldúa speaks of the different variations of Spanish that she knows and explains how some undermine each other. She states,

“Chicanas feel uncomfortable talking in Spanish to Latinas, afraid of their censure”. She previously states “It is illegitimate, a bastard Language”. (Gloria Anzaldúa, 329). This clearly shows how Chicana Spanish was viewed as below standards or not up to par. The Spanish that is taught in school is proper Spanish, but this doesn’t eliminate the importance and value of Mexican Spanish or Chicano Spanish. Different variations of Spanish is meaningful to different people just as the different forms of hip-hop is meaningful to different people. Anzaldúa can relate directly to Lupe Fiasco since they were both being preached at negativity. They both wouldn’t change for the world and accepted who they were. Lupe accepted his style while Anzaldúa accepted her “wild tongue” which is her language.

Hip-hop is a way of life for many rappers and they are willing to swear by it. It’s almost as if you commit to it then you can’t go back. This can go hand in hand with joining a gang and not being able to get out because of commitment. Once you say you’re “down” and you claim to be bad, then your image is pretty much set in stone. Once you go against that and it gets out, your audience, which are the people, will only see fraud. The best advice I can give is to make sure that your language and your power behind it can be backed up by your actions.

Overall, hip-hop whether it be part one or part two, both have a meaning to me. Part two would be more influential, because part one is a heck of a reach to just make it big. Part two gives the audience a more realistic view on life and it’s simply just more my style. Again, language and power within music can be an ideal weapon to influence the people in a positive direction. Hip-hop came a long way through history, but at the end of the day, hip-hop is still defined in your own belief and maybe someday down we may come across hip-hop part three.

### **Works Cited**

Anzaldúa, Gloria, *How to Tame a Wild Tongue, The writers Presence*  
Boston New York. 2006

Lil Wayne. “Georgia Bush”  
Storrs Uconn CO-OP, 2008

Lupe Fiasco. “Dumb it Down”  
Storrs Uconn CO-OP, 2008

Ogbar, Jeffrey. *Hip-Hop Revolution: The Culture and Politics of Rap*  
University Press of Kansas. 2007



# Richard Smith

---

## Pushed

---

I gnawed on my lips,  
Rocking back and forth,  
Looking down the rocky cliff  
Watching the waves crash  
Against the sharp jagged edges of the rock  
My vision blurred by tears

No longer will I have to  
Cower in dark holes hiding from them.  
Bleeding through rips in my shirt  
Shards digging into my flesh  
Because they thought it be fun  
To shatter bottles with my bones  
Laughing as each one exploded against my body  
Me straining my vocal chords as the glass  
Pierced the surface, breaking skin  
“We don’t want your kind around here”  
They kept repeating  
Me hoping someone would come and help me

No longer would I have to sneak into my own home  
Worrying about whether my father  
Is passed out on the couch smelling like death  
Or up yelling at the TV screen slurring his words  
Wondering whether he was going to break my arm again

If he was going to take me out to football games  
Hoping that would turn me into the man that he wanted me to be  
But when he catches my eyes wandering  
I’d ignite the fuse unleashing his rage  
He would scream “God didn’t make you that way!”

Then storm off without me  
I'd end up stranded somewhere with no money  
And I'd have to walk home  
Getting home not knowing what he was thinking scared me the most  
The silence was deafening  
I'd rather him be angry with me, yelling at me, striking me  
Then I at least I would know what he was feeling

I wouldn't have to be subjected to the glares  
I received from my mother  
Her sitting back idly watching as all this happened  
To me never once telling me she loved me  
Or even just accepting me, tolerating me  
Never feeling her warm embrace  
Always treated like I didn't belong  
Like I was a stranger.  
I was her son  
When would she start acting like I was?

I wouldn't miss him, most of all  
The one thing I thought was good in my life  
My one friend, at least when no one was looking  
If we had just went further away  
No one would have ever caught us  
But I couldn't control myself  
If only I would have heard the foot steps  
I could've hid but I didn't

When they caught us he shoved me to the floor  
Ran over to them panting "He was trying to force himself on me"  
Blaming everything on me, the looks he threw at me  
Were like daggers being thrust into me continuously  
The words they screamed out at me finally breaking my will  
"The only thing left for a sinner like you is death and hell"  
I couldn't handle this anymore, I raced through the door

And didn't look back but I could still sense the look of utter revulsion  
That was painfully evident on his face as I pushed past him and the rest of them

All I ever wanted was to be accepted  
Left alone, I didn't need any friends  
Just to be left alone in piece  
To be free, to be myself  
Relief envelopes me as I glide down to my escape  
Body dismembered on the rocks  
Waves washing away all the evidence  
No one would miss me, no one would remember me  
All except the sea that held what remained of me  
As the tide came in, it didn't matter  
I smiled, I was finally free

# Carolina Suarez

---

## Society and its Blindness

---

Readers, viewers and people just themselves have always been influenced by the perspectives of authors, TV directors, etc. Society leads and helps others make decisions for ourselves, and that is how we lose one of the most important privileges that is granted to us since the day we are born, our freedom. Many have argued and this is an on going issue; if us human beings are born malicious, or if that is how society makes us. Living a life in which one is the owner of his own decisions, morals, principles and rules does not only provide a sense of maturity, but it also helps us develop our own personality. Letting others make choices for us, or teach us through their beliefs will only lead us to become followers, and indeed the age of imagination and creation will be over. Can't Americans live through their own perspectives? Should we blame ourselves for being so vulnerable to others' ideas, or should we blame the many factors that decide for us? So how do these people/ factors get through us?

We are born into a corrupt world, in which we will be corrupted as we grow up. From the moment we are born, we are brought into this world without any question or doubt. We, as recent born creatures accept everything our parents have to give and say to us. We have no choice, because we don't reason just yet; but that is only human nature. As we grow up, our minds grow with us. Our baby minds start exploring different ideas, experiences and adventures. We no longer are considered unreasonable; instead we now have a mind of our own. It is through our explorations and experiences that we start to find out what life is all about. Unfortunately, in our paths we bump into certain factors that will force us to reason through their views and knowledge. For example: People who play video games are influenced by certain graphics and rules; while a 65 year old man, bases his knowledge through a newspaper argument. This is only one example of the many others we face everyday. As we start developing as human beings, our unanswered questions will be responded through our education. Not specially talking about the education in which we all must go to school to learn, but the education that life itself brings upon us. Society can change us in many ways, from showing us their point of view to imposing on us certain rules in order to be happy from their perspective. This is how we have been treated for thousands of years. We live through an image that to others might exist, but its our right to challenge it and be able to grow with our own answers. Why live off what others have to say? Many probably have fear of going against the rules. Well in my point of view, rules are only there to prevent us from knowing the truth within ourselves. In order for us to

grow not only physical and intellectual but with a strong personality and character, we must find out who we are as beings; and how can that happen is we just follow others instead of challenging them?

The current American generation lives through the eyes of others. Indeed the American society has lost its' traditions and has based its' decisions and views on books, the media, and our economical system. Authors write from their own experience. They base their criticisms on what they believe to be right, and make us see the positive and negative sides under their perspectives. This is what we are taught since we open up our first book. We are told fairy tales such as "Beauty and the Beast" in which at our young age it makes it seem that we should love someone back because of our gratefulness towards them. For example; Beauty goes back to see her sick father, and after a dirty trick by her sisters is played on her; she realizes that going back to the beast would be the right thing to do. She mentions; "Am I not very wicked, to act so unkindly to Beast, that has studied so much, to please me in everything? He is kind and good and that is sufficient (Beaumont,8)" To many that is what love is all about, finding a person who is good and sufficient for ones' self. Unfortunately, imposing this on a five year old kid who watches this fairy tale twice to three times a week, creates the image of what love is all about. Through "Beauty and the Beast", this young being will now grow up to become either like Beauty or the complete opposite; if desired to find the real meaning of love, beyond a simple text. Portraying the vague meaning of loving someone in return for their kindness, is not only the wrong thing to do but it leads to others understandings that weather its right or wrong it should be done, because we are told that it's the right thing to do. In fact if people do stuff for us, being grateful towards them has nothing to do with having feelings involve. This is about ones own choice. If I was to ask someone for a favor, its that persons' choice to either do it or not. A favor is not an inquisition, it's a request; one of which that person should not expect anything back from. A lesson learned, it's a lesson not forgotten. But what if it wasn't the right lesson to learn?

As I read "The astronomer" the second character criticizes the astronomer for his bad decision of starrng into the sky. Seeing it from a different perspective I realized how wrong I had learned the fables real purposes. My ignorance of judgment went beyond my real knowledge when I decided to take the same stand as the second character in "The Astronomer" did; "If you really mean to say that you were looking so hard at the sky that you didn't even see where your feet were carrying you along the ground, it appears to me that you deserve all you've got (Aesop's' Fables,171)" . As I took a stand on this fable, not only did I criticize the Astronomers actions, but I went against what I believed too. As soon as I was done reading that statement I found the Astronomer guilty for falling into that dry well. Looking back at it, I finally see that my reaction was due to the second persons' perspective. This only leads me to see that us, as readers are not brave enough to come up with our

own conclusions. We are like sponges, because we decide to absorb every source of information and most of the time instead of getting a conclusion out of it we stick to a second persons' point of view. By analyzing the fables I figure that I should have my own outcome on the moral that the story is trying to get through, instead of focusing so much on how the author tries to emphasize a certain lesson on me. Why bother with someone else's point of view, when I can have my own?

Authors get to us by trying to enforce a certain relationship with us. Which in most cases, can reflect on a past experience and therefore in order for pain to be avoided we will follow anything they say to do. Authors write in such a good and convincing way that they will always find a way to relate to the reader somehow. They will picture this setting in our minds and use that towards their advantage. The Rhetoric terminology of imagery is fundamental in this case. By portraying a picture in our heads of what the author is emphasizing on, immediately grabs On the other hand, authors know that people base their lives on what they write. We, as readers are used to feeling that connection between author and reader and therefore we always end up looking for that relationship. Authors think of an audience while writing. Therefore they will target that audience when they write. It might seem like a general statement, but it's true. Their work will be read by many people. So by putting themselves on our position, they find the meaning of why we read their text. Authors know how our lives can be affected. Just like us, they are human beings with a soul and feelings. In fact, our feelings are one of the most important fundamental parts of our lives. When our feelings are affected by outside forces, we rely on anything we can in order to find consolation. This is the perfect connection. Authors know that words are used as a form of manipulation over others. They try to write like they don't directly speak to us, but still establish a connection so that we have the guilt of analyzing those words however we please. Words are the simplest form of an icon. They are concepts in our brains, and not only authors know of this, but also the media and other sources.

Part of the media now is the Internet, which is a major source of communication. The media gives society a certain standard to live by. Websites such as YouTube emphasize on music videos, leading young kids to dress like Rock stars/ Rappers. For example, most Hollywood stars drive brand new cars every year. This restrains our youth from learning the real value of money and it also sets high standards for those who wish to purchase a new vehicle. For females on the other hand, a new purse or outfit determines the fashion of the season. Designers live off our ignorance. Their job is to make their imagination work, which will transform into millions of dollars once people accept the imposition of their art. It's like our nation has become a bunch of followers, all living by certain standards of an ignorant society. Commercials are a big part of the media. In those five minutes of

commercials, the viewers are shown new products which might become a necessity to have. But wait, they weren't a necessity until they came to the market and us viewers were influenced by.

Ever since I was little I have been taught to challenge everything I was told. I have learned that there is always a reason behind every argument. It is because of the "Visual Power" we are given, as "On Reading a Video Text (Scholes, 619)" mentions that the privilege of making our own decisions is taken away from us. So how does it all begin? For example; books such as "How the Rich get thin" by Jana Klauer or "Poor father, Rich father" by Robert Kiyosaki teach society how the stars stay in shape and how to become rich through their method. Also, the commercial of Budweiser emphasized a lot more than just selling the beer. "It is, of course, on the playing field that talent triumphs most easily over racial or social barriers...Yale graduates and high school dropouts who speak little or no English are judged equally by how well they hit, run, throw, and react to game situations"(Scholes,621) This propaganda brought up racial issues, but at the same time Scholes covers it by stating that if there is talent in a person, then their background or other barriers all stay to the side and he/she becomes automatically equal as everyone else. The author concludes that he reserves the right to impose his conclusion on all of us being equal to one another. Indeed, we are; but unfortunately society has and will always have discrimination between one another.

Our nation has created this myth that we should imitate others and follow what they do and say in order for us to be happy. This could not be done as human nature, because as mentioned before as we grow up society makes us who we are. It will be only through imitation that we will be accepted into a social group or we will be able to reach the level of superficiality. This means letting the influence of outside forces make decisions for us, which is what most of the time they do without us even noticing it. What we must know before even thinking of opening up a book, is that authors know exactly what to say, when to say it and specially how to say it to make you part of their world. They make the reader take a stand on their side of the issue, and will do this until the text is over and they are completely positive that they have changed the readers' views. Is sad and vague how we cannot have a sense of our own, leading us to reflect back on a quote mentioned by Albert Einstein; "Imagination is better than knowledge" – yes its true, even though we all want knowledge, we all want to know more than the person standing next to us but unfortunately we are leaving behind the major reason for being a human being- our imagination. To many is probably worthless, but we must not forget that since little we dreamt, imagine and accomplished. Now that we are put in a different level of our lives we should be able to say what we think and not live off someone else's thoughts. Everyone is different. Each of us has its own point of view and nor I or yourself has the right to take that freedom away from me. Wouldn't that be going against the first amendment? In reality, it would

be. We are handing them our right to make a decision for us, and to my view that is giving up our freedom to express ourselves. Our word is the most powerful tool any human being can have, so why give it up? We should always fight for what we believe in, or else the purpose of us standing on this earth is pointless.

**Works cited**

De Beaumont, Jeanne-Marie "Beauty and the Beast", University of Connecticut-Storrs, Mansfield.

Aesop. "The Astronomer" *Aesop's Fables*. Page 17, New York: Barnes & Nobles.????

Robert Scholes. *On Reading a Video Text*. *Protocols of Reading*. Page 619,621. 1989



# Brandon Sumpter

---

## Influence of Grand Theft Auto

---

Grand Theft Auto IV is an action-adventure game developed by Rockstar North. The game is set in a redesigned Liberty City, a fictional city based on New York City. In the game you are a Serbian war veteran who comes to the United States in search of the “American Dream,” only to find that your cousin lied about the wealth that was waiting for you. In order to make money and reach 100% at the game completion you must complete multiple missions which range from killing multiple people and robbing banks to stealing cars and selling drugs. I personally think Grand Theft Auto was created for entertainment purposes but with the realistic and detailed style the game has, it feels like you are in the game. I think the game influences the people who play it. The people who I think are most influenced by Grand Theft Auto are young people and people without that many morals. I think morals are like guidelines for how you hold yourself to act during certain situations. If you don’t have a lot of guidelines you tend to have more options to go to and are able to find a back door to the situations you’re in so you don’t have to face that many consequences if any.

I think the people who are influenced the most are the young people who play the game or have seen somebody play the game. The game is not good for a young child who is exposed to it. In today’s world young people are influenced a lot by the things they watch and hear. Young people tend to remember a lot, especially what they like, and if they come into a situation where they can repeat something off Grand Theft they might do that. For example, lots of little kids love to reenact wrestling moves that they see on tv so what makes you think that they wouldn’t reenact what’s on a game. If you can’t tell that wrestling is fake then it would probably be hard for you to separate a game from real life. Another reason for young people being so easily influenced by Grand Theft Auto can be that they don’t have the same amount of life experience as an older person and they can’t realize what they are doing is wrong.

I think morals affect the way people act and so if they don’t have that many morals they’re probably more vulnerable to being influenced by Grand Theft Auto. I think the kids don’t really care what they do because they have more options to go through, which I think gives them a better chance to find a back door to the situations they are in. Some probably just go with the flow and whatever happens happens. They don’t have a lot of morals so they probably don’t care how they make other people feel as long as they’re satisfied. For example in the middle of ending B of Margaret Atwood’s “Happy Endings” it explains how John travels to Mary’s house twice a week for food and sex. After he eats he takes off his clothes so they can have sex and Mary has to take off her clothes and acts like she wants to have sex. It states, “she wants John to think she does because if

they do it often enough surely he'll get used to her, he'll come to depend on her and they will get married, but John goes out the door with hardly so much as a good-night and three days later he turns up at six o'clock and they do the whole thing over again" (Atwood 303). John who probably doesn't have a lot of morals is treating Mary like crap; he uses her for sex and food, then leaves to go about his business not caring how she feels. He does even think about what he's doing to her. When he could just break up with her he keeps it going and has her thinking that one day he will commit. On the other hand someone with more morals like Beauty thinks about others before him/herself. Beauty tries to the Beast happy by reconsidering what she said to his marriage proposal. It states, "It is true, I do not have the tenderness of affection for him, but I find I have the highest gratitude, esteem, and friendship; I will not make him miserable, were I to be so ungrateful I should never forgive myself" (de Beaumont 8). Some people like Beauty do things to make others feel better even if they didn't plan on doing that in the first place. Beauty and Mary probably went by the moral treat others the way you want to be treated unlike John.

Another reason for someone being influenced by Grand Theft Auto can be the society/neighborhood they live in. I think the society someone lives in can affect what they believe in and/or do. I think the neighborhood/society you grow up in does have to do with your morals and some do tend to change depending on the neighborhood you live in. Not saying that two people from two different neighborhoods can't have the same morals it just they probably got the morals differently. Some people have to get a lot of their morals from their parents because those are the only people around that are trying to point them into the right direction. People in neighborhoods with a lot of crime and are forced into bad situations will probably have a harder time avoiding being influenced by Grand Theft Auto and have no choice to do what is done in the game. Not saying that that's the only conclusion because some people know how to take a negative and turn it into a positive, it all depends on how much effort you put in to get out of the situation. For example in the beginning of "Beauty and the Beast" right after Beauty and her family went poor she took that negative and tries to turn it into a positive. It states, "Were I to cry ever so much, that would not make things better, I must try to make myself happy without a fortune" (de Beaumont 1). I don't think the society/neighborhood someone lives in has the biggest affect on their morals and/or what they believe in because another part of it is effort. Like what Beauty did she didn't let her situation keep her head down she worked and found something she could do to keep her family moving.

The "American Dream" is achieving your dreams, whatever they may be; by working hard with a job/career you enjoy making a good amount of money with a house, a car, 2.5 kids, and a dog. The moral code Grand Theft Auto is sending out is that if you want something like the "American Dream" its okay to steal cars, rob banks, kill people, and sell drugs and other things of that nature. Doing all those thing in the game can get you the "American Dream" because you will make the

people who you are doing the job for happy then they will return the favor by not only paying you but referring you to their friends where you can make even more money to buy these things you need to achieve the “American Dream.” It seems like its sending out the message that it’s okay to do those things as long as you are trying to achieve something and/or as long as you don’t get caught who cares what you do. In the game when they cops see you do that stuff you get a wanted level then they chase you until they catch you and/or shoot you down. Then a few seconds later you get released from jail or from the hospital, depending on whether you die or not. Only the smartest and the fastest lose the cops. To someone growing up in a bad neighborhood with a lot of crime, whether they do or do not have morals, this is not a good game for him/her to have because if they are doing this in a game and then they go outside and see it, it provokes them to want to try it. And if someone young who doesn’t know any better they’ll try it because if they caught all that will happen is that they will go to jail for a few seconds. I’m not saying that people who live in better neighborhoods are not influenced it’s just easier for them to separate a game from reality, so I think.

People with a lot of morals I think are more understanding than people with a little. And they are so determined to get out of their situation without breaking any of their morals they are able to put aside their problems and do whatever they have to do to help not only themselves but the others around them. I think people with a lot of morals are not as likely influenced as one with not as much because they tend not only to care how others feel about a situation but how they might feel after a situation. They like to make sure that all parties in the situation are satisfied. Like towards the ending of Jeanne-Marie’s “Beauty in the Beast.” It states, “Beauty could not help reflecting on herself, for the uneasiness she was likely to cause poor Beast, whom she sincerely loved, and really longed to see again” (de Beaumont 8). Beauty after breaking her promise with the Beast felt ashamed for the pain she has caused him. The moral(s) in this story was to never judge a book by its cover and/or beauty is only skin deep. Beauty, one who grew in a good environment then moved to a bad one when her family became poor still managed to stay kind. And on top of her family being poor she was peyorative by her older sisters.

I think people with more morals are not as influenced by games like Grand Theft Auto because they tend to carry themselves differently than people without as many morals. In “Beauty and the Beast” Beauty had more morals than her sisters, as you can tell and they carried themselves differently than she did. It states, “They gave themselves ridiculous airs, and would not visit other merchants’ daughters, nor keep company with any but persons of quality. They went out every day to parties of pleasure, balls, plays, concerts, and so forth” (de Beaumont 1). This is an example of not only two people not caring for anyone’s satisfaction but their own but two people not thinking about the consequences of their actions, like going poor because all they did was pamper themselves. I

think people with more morals are more caring, understanding, and grateful. Like Beauty towards the ending she finally saw that what the Beast had inside was more important. It states,

“Am I not very wicked," said she, "to act so unkindly to Beast, that has studied so much, to please me in everything? Is it his fault if he is so ugly, and has so little sense? He is kind and good, and that is sufficient. Why did I refuse to marry him? I should be happier with the monster than my sisters are with their husbands; it is neither wit, nor a fine person, in a husband, that makes a woman happy, but virtue, sweetness of temper, and complaisance, and Beast has all these valuable qualifications” (de Beaumont 8).

Beauty had felt wrong for what she did and she understood that she should be happy and not jeopardize what she has with the Beast. I think this goes the same for people with morals. They are not affected by things like Grand Theft Auto because they don't need to steal cars or sell drugs or even kill people to make themselves feel and/or look better.

In Conclusion, even though I think Grand Theft Auto was created for entertainment purposes its realistic and detailed style makes it feel like you are in the game which is hard for some people to separate from real life. The people who I think are most influenced by Grand Theft Auto are young people and people without that many morals. I think morals are like guidelines for how you hold yourself to act during certain situations and if you don't have a lot of guidelines you tend to have more options to go to, to find a back door to the situations you're in so you don't have to face that many consequences if any.

### Works Cited

Atwood, Margaret. "Happy Endings." *Writing Through Literature Anthology*. Storrs: UConn Co-op, 2008. 302-305.

de Beaumont, Jeanne-Marie. "Beauty and the Beast." *Writing Through Literature Anthology*. Storrs: UConn Co-op, 2008. ?.

Houser, Dan. Grand Theft Auto IV. 2008.

# Joel Terón

---

## Hope for Same-Sex Marriage

---

Same-sex marriage is viewed as a controversial; yet it has been an issue for many years. Same-sex unions can be traced back into history from places like Egypt, China, Greece, Rome, and Japan. Currently, marriage for same-sex marriage couples is available in six different countries. In 2001 The Netherlands was the first country to allow same-sex marriage. What is it about same-sex marriage (also referred to as “gay marriage”) that makes it so controversial? In society gay marriage is viewed as more than demeaning; it is viewed as uncivilized. Gay marriage should be made legal throughout our nation because it is a civil rights issue, promotes commitment to gay couples, and supports the desire for the gay community to contribute to society without being criticized.

Gay marriage is by far one of the most controversial issues in society. The gay community has been victimized and made a perfect example of civil rights injustice. In an essay titled “Gay Marriage: The Argument and the Motives” by Scott Bidstrup he says, “When gay people say that this is a civil rights issue, we are referring to matters of civil justice, which often can be quite serious - and can have life-damaging, even life-threatening consequences” (8). Civil justice refers to being treated equally as any heterosexual marriage and being granted the same rights. He goes further to talk about the rights that are taken away from gay couples when one of their partners is hospitalized. Gay couples are stripped of their rights and have no say in what happens to their partner in an emergency. Situations like these have excluded gay couples and unions from similar rights granted to heterosexual couples. Rights as simple as to what happens to one’s partner in an emergency have been taken away from gay couples. Is this right? Gay marriage should not be excluded from rights that determine the well being of one’s spouse. The sexual orientation in a marriage should not determine the rights granted to that couple.

Gay couples do not get all the benefits and recognition as ordinary heterosexual couples. These are simple rights like being included in our nation’s census and being acknowledged as a legal married couple in their state. One might ask, what is so important about being included in our nation’s census? The point of not being included is not what makes controversial. It is the fact that gay couples will not and cannot be included in the 2010 census of the USA as a legally married couple. In an article in [The Mercury News](#) by Mike Swift he said, “The U.S. Census Bureau, reacting to the federal Defense of Marriage Act and other mandates, plans to edit the 2010 census responses of same-sex couples who marry legally in California, Massachusetts or any other state. They will be reported as “unmarried partners,” rather than married spouses, in census tabulations – a policy that will likely draw the ire of gay rights groups” (1). Just because gay couples choose to take their

relationship to the next level; they get penalized by not being included in the 20120 census and are referred to as “unmarried partners” when in reality they are married. This is not right and the rights of gay couples are not being granted to them.

One could argue that if similar rights were granted to gay couples they would be receiving “special treatment.” How is asking for the same benefits as an ordinary legal marriage “special treatment?” One would notice that the rights given to gay couples are not the same as those given to legally married heterosexual couples. Wouldn't they be considered as getting “special treatment?” This is a civil rights issue because many gay couples are being neglected of their rights. It is a serious civil rights issue because many decisions made in an emergency are made by one's partner. Imagine a situation where one's spouse is found helpless in a hospital with a coma. One would want to be responsible for what happens to their spouse. If a gay couple does not have that assurance that their partner could defend then in his/her time of need, society is guiding them to civil rights injustice, which will eventually lead to life-threatening tragedies like a serious illness or possibly death.

Keeping gay marriage banned not only demonstrates civil rights injustice, but is also promotes commitment for gay couples. Among any couple, no matter what the sexual orientation may be, commitment is the hardest thing to achieve in a relationship. Homosexual couples are known to be very promiscuous and directly lead to sex. Gay relationships are viewed by society by merely sex. No dinner and a movie, just a hook up that is only going to lead to sex. This cycle continues from partner to partner making it seem impossible for an actual relationship to develop. This stereotype has been given to gay couples because it is not only hard to commit to each other, but that gay couples do not have any real documentation that keeps them committed and faithful towards each other.. One would argue that a relationship does not need a marriage license to stay committed but it makes that relationship stronger and really demonstrates the love among both partners. A simple piece of documentation that declares a gay couple legal spouses of each other is valued just like a heterosexual couple would value it or maybe even more because a gay couple has to work harder to obtain it. Gay marriage should be made legal throughout our nation to promote commitment for gay couples. If there is commitment in a relationship both partners would reduce the stereotype that homosexuals are promiscuous and decrease the spread of sexually transmitted diseases among the gay community. If gay marriage was made legal the stereotype would not only change but our nation would save lives. Promoting commitment would help develop strong bonds and long lasting relationships among gay couples.

If gay marriage was authorized throughout our nation, the strong commitment developed among gay couples would give them the opportunity to give back and contribute to society without being criticized. Gay people and gay couples have been viewed as people targeted for eternal damnation; yet they are so willing to help out in their own community. A gay couple in one's

community is viewed as the last resort to ask for help from. In reality, a lot of community leaders and people with high prestigious roles and careers in society are gay. If it was known that they were in fact gay, the opinions people have of them would change, so they tend to keep themselves closed in. The gay community is very united and willing to unite with society in general if only they were given the opportunity to do so without being criticized. In an essay by Scott Bidstrup, "Gay Marriage: The Argument and the Motives," he says:

The values that such gay couples exhibit in their daily lives are often indistinguishable from those in their straight neighbors. They're loyal to their mates, are monogamous, devoted partners. They value and participate in family life, are committed to making their neighborhoods and communities safer and better places to live, and honor and abide by the law. Many make valuable contributions to their communities, serving on school boards, volunteering in community charities, and trying to be good citizens. In doing so, they take full advantage of their relationship to make not only their own lives better, but those of their neighbors as well. (2)

Bidstrup brings up the point that so many gay couples want to do well in their community and are doing good in their community but do not get any credit or recognition for it. Gay couples choose to voluntarily help out in their community but are criticized when they do so. Gay people serve on school boards, committees in their neighborhoods, and in political parties but cannot admit to being gay because there is a possibility they will be removed from their position. Society denies gay couples the right to legally marry as if they were a threat to society.

What is it about gay relationships that make it illegal? Many would try to argue that it is unlawful and goes against everything most religions stand for. But there has to be separation of church and state and freedom of religion according to the first amendment of the US Constitution. Plus, there is no real need to include the argument focused on religion because going against the Constitution and denying gay couples the right they respectively deserve as US citizens is a sufficient argument all by itself. So what is it really that makes our government prohibit gay couples to become legally married? The fear our nation has? But what are they afraid of? The fact that gay couples want to decrease the spread of sexually transmitted diseases and AIDS/HIV? Or the fact that gay couples want to contribute to their community and society without being criticized? Since when are those two issues worth being afraid of? If anything, gay couples seek to make our nation a better place to live for all types of people just like it was meant to be.

Many would argue that same-sex marriage degrades the notion of an ideal marriage. What is defined as an "ideal marriage?" Is it a union between a man and a woman? Oxford's English dictionary defines marriage as "the condition of being a husband or wife; the relation between persons married to each other; matrimony." So has our society set requirements to be considered

married? I thought all one needed was to love one another and want to be faithful to their spouse and spend the rest of their life together. It is funny because Oxford's Dictionary includes over six definitions and only refers to same-sex marriage once. "The term is now sometimes used with reference to long-term relationships between partners of the same-sex." Now gay couples "use" the term; it is not given or offered to them. This definition makes it seem like gay couples have demanded equality. Well, guess what, they have. Is that so bad; is that not what they should already have as US citizens?

Gay marriage is also viewed as degrading due to the fact that they cannot procreate. Many marriages have been considered successful without children. If the case was that they wanted children, what is so wrong about adopting? Why is it that there has to be specific requirements to be considered a legally married couple? Is that what our nation stands for, that things can only be done a certain way under certain conditions? If anything gay couples seek the same advantages in marriage as heterosexual couples. To love each other, be faithful to each other, and together form a monogamous relationship.

Currently there are only six different countries that can declare a gay couple as legally married; with the US being one of those six. In the US, only two states can declare a gay couple as legally married; Massachusetts and California. In the upcoming election everything gay couples have fought for might be lost. Depending on the results of the 2008 presidential election, the gay community will know if they will be able to continue becoming legally married and have that decision possibly spread throughout our nation. The gay community has fought so much for so little. This has not been an issue overlooked or ignored, it has been an issue possibly not agreed with but not ignored. When one looks at all the dedication the gay community has put in to make themselves equal to everyone else it is a shame to say that only two states fully accept their relationship and marriage. We need to keep in mind that California has just recently passed the law that allows gay couples to marry each other. Why is our nation afraid of same-sex marriage? Just like hope has been given to political leaders, urban communities, and the men and women who defend our country, there is hope for same-sex marriage.

#### **Works Cited**

Bidstrup, Scott. "Gay Marriage: The Arguments and the Motives." Veritas [El Ratio- Truth and Reason](http://www.bidstrup.com/marriage.htm). September, 1996. Bidstrup.com. July 21, 2008.  
<<http://www.bidstrup.com/marriage.htm>>.

Dolan, Maura. "California Supreme Court overturns gay marriage ban." [Las Angeles Times](http://www.latimes.com/news/local/la-me-gaymarriage16-2008may16,0,6182317.story). May 16, 2008. Las Angeles Times. July 21, 2008.  
<<http://www.latimes.com/news/local/la-me-gaymarriage16-2008may16,0,6182317.story>>.



- “Marriage, 1.a” The Oxford English Dictionary. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 1989. OED Online.  
Oxford University Press. July 23, 2008. <<http://dictionary.oed.com>>.
- Swift, Mark. “U.S. Census Bureau won’t count same-sex marriages.” San Jose Mercury News.  
July 12, 2008. The Mercury News. July 21, 2008.  
<[http://www.mercurynews.com/ci\\_9860727?source=most\\_emailed](http://www.mercurynews.com/ci_9860727?source=most_emailed)>.
- Vanasco, Jennifer. “Dutch treats- gay marriage in Netherlands.” The Advocate. May 8, 2001.  
Liberation Publications, Inc. July 22, 2008.  
<[http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m1589/is\\_2001\\_May\\_8/ai\\_74440124](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1589/is_2001_May_8/ai_74440124)>.
- Wilford, John Noble. “A Mystery, Locked in Timeless Embrace.” New York Times.  
December 20, 2005. The New York Times. July 22, 2008.  
<<http://www.nytimes.com/2005/12/20/science/20egyp.html> >

# Talicha Vaval

---

## Tiger Cubs

---

During story time, the children sat around the teacher in a position called criss-cross-applesauce. I was the kid who folded my legs under myself and sat on top of them; while everyone quietly listened to the story, I softly chatted away in a language no one else knew. I was told many times to be quiet, but I just couldn't be still; I wanted to take the opportunity to express myself, though no one was listening. The teacher went on with the story:

“The dog went to the store,” Those words played in my head over and over again, and I memorized them. I was finally learning to speak English, I thought to myself. Suddenly I was more than the mute with a foreign tongue; I was the gregarious preschooler, who was going to break down language barriers with my first-learned English words. For a young Haitian-American girl, who spoke nothing but Creole, this was an opportunity for me to show the other children that I could speak like them. Though the words sounded awkward to my own ears, I eagerly repeated them in a heavy Haitian Creole accent:

“I go to store. Store I go. You go store?” I watched in shame as the girl, whom I was speaking with, giggled at me with her friends.

My language had always been what defined me. My Haitian Creole is my history, and because of that, it is who I am. Haitian Creole is a language born on the little island of Haiti. This language is a concoction of French and African, which also reflects the race of the people. This language is strictly original to the people of the island of Haiti. Our original Creole is a language that has survived many years of French assimilation. Yet, I have spent many years trying to forget it, not realizing how much it defined me. It defined me as a Haitian-American, as a person who can balance the two worlds equally.

Despite this, the want to be more American was something that was strong in me since the age of three, when I return to America. From that moment, I had been fighting a battle, to become a true American.

“What are you?” My friend asks me. I smile because the answer was so obvious.

“I'm Black,” I answered.

“No, your Haitian-American,” She corrected.

That's when I remembered a Haitian proverb my mother used to say, “Pitittig se tig.” A tiger's cub will always be a tiger. That was how Haitians defined identity, as innate. It was like saying you are what you are. I can become more American, but I will forever, innately be Haitian. I am offspring of the Haitians before me and my children will be Haitian, there is nothing in the world

that can change that. Similarly, you can be a young and harmless tiger's cub, but you will always be a tiger.

My desire to assimilate, to live up the American Dream and honor the country I was born in; caused my Creole to suffer tremendously. I've gotten to the point where I've almost forgotten my first language, and with that, who I really am. So instead of Americanizing, why not add our own cultures into America's own melting pot? After all America's population is a reflection of the world, there are people from every part of the world living in one country. Americans come from every part of the earth. The meaning of an American should forever be evolving with its people. Why not hold on to both our cultures? We are not just Americans we are also something else. After all, we are all the tiger cub who will always be a tiger.

# Michael White Jr.

---

## America's Weakness: The High School Education

---

Many students graduate from the comfort of their high schools to only go off to college finding the work there too difficult. As a result, students drop out and forget about their initial goals of graduating from their particular colleges and becoming the successful people they sought out to be. High schools across the United States are not providing enough time, energy, and resources to adequately prepare their students to academically achieve beyond the high school level. It is no surprise that college work would be significantly “harder” than high school work, but the problem of students not being able to understand even the most basic material college courses cover is indeed a shock; a shame. High schools in the United States need to be financially supported more by the government so that they can be able to supply the sources that students in our country need to be successful college students, and become brighter, more intelligent American citizens.

One might believe a high school education is sufficient and that if a student drops out because he or she feels if continuing on the road to a college degree is more stressful than beneficial, then it is not a big deal. But quite contrary, it is actually very important considering that we live in a country that, ideally, values education. A great education in the United States is the ultimate implement American people use to enable them to contribute to the country's economy, be competitive contestants in the tough world of global commerce and international affairs, and it makes them able to support the well-being of the state, other citizens, and their posterity. The lack of support given to our high schools by the government is one of the greatest domestic problems that our country overlooks; feeling as though inadequate funding to the high schools that teach our future lawyers, doctors, and even President of the United States, is less important than funding billions of dollars to an unnecessary war. Our country's reluctance towards providing money to every needed aspect of our high schools greatly reflects in the performance of our youth. Bob Hebert, an op-Ed columnist for the New York Times, states in his article entitled “Clueless in America”,

Ignorance in the United States is not just bliss, it's widespread. A recent survey of teenagers by the education advocacy group Common Core found that a quarter could not identify Adolf Hitler, a third did not know that the Bill of Rights guaranteed freedom of speech and religion, and fewer than half knew that the Civil War took place between 1850 and 1900.

He reveals the lack of knowledge our so-called “educated youth” possess that in previous years, would have been essential information for a high school student to have known. Though some people may view these historic events as trivial and that students not knowing them is minor, it evidently reveals the lack of knowledge and preparation of our high school students in a smaller

scope. Their lack of knowledge and preparation is only a weakness. It weakens their capability of driving this great country to success domestically and internationally; a success that only properly educated people can obtain.

If it is indeed success that American people wish for, it is the intervention of the government, local, state, and federal, we need most. High school students, especially the ones that attend public schools in urban areas, have been subjected to crumbling, broken-down facilities and outdated textbooks, and have been taught by inexperienced teachers for too long. These issues, and many others, make it very difficult to fully educate a student the way in which he or she should be educated. Because the government ignores the needs of our high schools, the products of inadequately educated students remain. The No Child Left Behind Act, one of the most significant proposals of bettering the education of the youth in the United States mandated under the Bush administration, addresses the needed reforms that supposedly have been taken into action already. Yet, I find no evidence in such actions apparent, at least in my urban community where a number of schools continue to crumble on their foundations.

I can not place the blame on the city, state, and federal governments solely because of their lack of funding that causes our high schools to be insufficient providers of education. But also for the reason that they fail to make a standard of what the high school student should learn in preparation for success at the college level. Due to the No Child Left Behind Act, tests are given quite frequently now to high school students that only evaluate the minimum amount of education the government considers high school students should have, instead of giving them work that they will witness in college and evaluating their performance at the college level. In essence, that is what really matters most being that college, ideally, would be the next step in their lives after graduating from high school. Bill Gates, Microsoft mogul and one of the most renowned multi-billionaire philanthropist in the world, addresses this issue as well in his speech to the National Education Summit.

By obsolete, I mean that our high schools, even when they're working exactly as designed, cannot teach our kids what they need to know today... Our high schools were designed fifty years ago to meet the needs of another age. Until we design them to meet the needs of the 21st century, we will keep limiting, even ruining, the lives of millions of Americans every year. Today, only one-third of our students graduate from high school ready for college, work, and citizenship...

Gates explains explicitly the flaws of our high school system and its needed reforms. He believes that by not advancing the intellect of high school students and preparing them for the rigorous work that they will soon face in college, they will eventually drop out, or never even make it to college. This is what he fears, as so do I.

Our college education system is envied by many countries around the world and desired by people abroad. This is evident in the number of international students who apply to American colleges each year hoping to gain the rewards an American college degree can offer. As for the high school education system in the United States, it ranks at the bottom of the list in comparison to those of other countries, especially in the areas of math and science. Bob Hebert quotes Allan Golston, the president of the United States Program, in his article “Clueless in America”. Mr. Golston states, “in math and science, for example, our fourth graders are among the top students globally. By roughly eighth grade, they’re in the middle of the pack. And by the 12th grade, U.S. students are scoring generally near the bottom of all industrialized countries.” I found this lack of academic performance from our high school students to be ridiculous and problematic. Why is the United States, supposedly one of the most “powerful and wealthiest” nations in the world, not able to provide its future leaders with a decent education, or at least an education that isn’t ranked to be “near the bottom of all industrialized countries”?

Times have passed and yet, high schools are still approaching education with tactics used in the stone ages. What is needed now in today’s high schools are updated technical centers where students can gain knowledge and experience in technology, as the world advances into an era where computers control everyday life and technical innovations and discoveries occur continuously. What is needed now is a more diverse high school curriculum and funded classes that promote international awareness and relationships, as the work forces of our economy become more international and diversity becomes critical to making a profit. What is needed now are up-to-date and broader textbooks that advocate an intellectual mind, not tainted by false or biased history. What is needed now is a curriculum that prepares high school students enough for them to be able to complete basic college work with confidence and a sense of ease. What is needed now are renovated high schools that educate as well as they look; high schools that would make students feel comfortable and make them want to devote their days learning all that they can. What is needed now are new teachers who are willing to dedicate long hours and weeks for the well-being of a student while still finding their teaching careers pleasurable and lucrative. What is needed now is the support from our governments, city, state, and federal. These are what we need, and we need them now!

High schools have long suffered from the neglect of the government. While the need for changes for our high schools grows, the amount of educated youth decreases, causing our country to weaken; weaken in the sense of preparation. The lack of education for high school students does not prepare them for the work they will face in their futures. It does not prepare the youth of today to be able to live comfortably because in today’s society, a high school diploma alone, does not take one very far most of the time. It most certainly does not prepare the youth to be the next generation of leaders. So as of now, what does a high school have to offer? It can be a great establishment for

young teenagers to build friendships and a good place for creating a foundation of education for every student that walks through its doors. What it is not, but most definitely should be, is an establishment that prepares youth for the “real world”. The real world is much larger than a classroom. It expands much further than the width of an auditorium. It is much more hectic than the hallways flooding with students after the bell rings. The real world consists of many challenges that as of now, many high school students are not ready to confront. The real world does not hold its occupants’ hand and guide them to their next class because they are lost. It does not extend its due date because a person forgot to do his or her work, nor does it show special treatment to its senior occupants who feel as though the world revolves around them. The real world waits for no one. So in order to not fall further behind, the government must take its move in providing what high schools need to better educate their students. Only then, will the high school student hear the beautiful ring of the bell that would conclude a day’s hard work towards success.

#### **Works Cited**

“Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation Newsroom”. 26 February 2005.

Bill and Melinda Foundation. Accessed 22 July 2008. <<http://www.gatesfoundstion.org/MediaCenter/Speeches/Co-ChairSpeeches/BillSpeeches/BGSpeechNGA-050226.htm>>

“The New York Times”. Published: 22 April 2008.

The New York Times Company. Accessed 22 July 2008.  
<[http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/22/opinion/22herbert.html?\\_r=1&oref=slogin](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/22/opinion/22herbert.html?_r=1&oref=slogin)>

# Melony Wint

---

## The War in Iraq

---

Since 9/11, President George W. Bush has declared a War on Terrorism by going after terrorist groups that pose a threat to America and the World. However, Bush's first step towards fighting terrorism was declaring war on Iraq. Bush held Iraq responsible for the September 11 attacks when Osama bin Laden, the leader of the terrorist group Al-Qaeda claimed responsibility. The war with Iraq was unnecessary because Iraq had no clear ties to Al-Qaeda. The Bush Administration targeted Iraq as the enemy forgetting about Al-Qaeda. The United States has forced the American people into war without thinking of the consequences. The United States government has continuously lied to the American people, on the reasons for invading Iraq and causing war, and as Americans we deserve to know the truth.

The Bush Administration has lied to the American people about the connection between Osama Bin Laden and Iraq. The government led the people to believe Osama Bin Laden was in Afghanistan, but declared war on Iraq who have no ties to Al-Qaeda. Osama was the main person the U.S. was looking for to hold responsible for the 9/11 attacks, yet the number of troops in Iraq are greater than those in Afghanistan. According to the article, "Afghanistan Now Most Dangerous for U.S. Troops", "there are only 26,000 U.S. troops in Afghanistan compared over 160,000 in Iraq" (Karl, and Martinez 1). The facts do not add up. Instead of finding Bin Laden who is a clear threat the U.S. is invading Iraq. With the intention of going to war unclear it becomes clear that Iraq did not pose as a threat to America. Americans feel as though they have been lied to and now we must face the effects of war.

Americans must also wonder if Iraq was the real and only threat to America? Today in the world there are other countries that pose a greater threat such as North Korea, and Russia. North Korea, on several occasions has tested nuclear weapons and made a public threat to the World. One would think the U.S. would want to investigate North Korea who has shown videotape evidence of the test. There is no doubt that North Korea has nuclear weapons but one can speculate of Iraq having WMD's. Russia, another superpower, has the world's largest supply of weapons of mass destruction. One would propose the actions and comments of Russia and North Korea would be of main concern as seeing the power they hold. Iraq compared to Russia and North Korea Iraq poses no threat. With Iraq posing no clear threat to the U.S. war was still an option.

U.S. Forces, along with supporting countries, invaded Iraq without United Nations approval, in March of 2003 with the intent of disarming Iraq's weapons of mass destruction (WMD), that consists of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons. Destroying these weapons was Bush's first



priority of the war. Bush felt the weapons of mass destruction were a threat to the security of the world. With the events of 9/11 in the minds of many Americans, most supported the war believing Iraq was the major threat. President Bush used the emotions of 9/11 to push for the disarming of Iraq. The fact of the matter is, no weapons of mass destruction have been found in Iraq. In Bill Nichols article, "U.N. Iraq had no WMD after 1994," he quotes Hans Blix, head of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission in charge of disarming Iraq, stating, "no evidence was found to suggest Iraq possessed chemical or biological weapons. U.N. Officials believe the weapons were destroyed by U.N. inspectors or Iraqi officials in the years after the 1991 Gulf War" (1). This report confirmed that Iraq did not have WMD's at the time when Bush made his accusations. The Bush Administration was clearly wrong about the WMD's. Even the United Nations, who promotes and protects peace, did not support the war in Iraq. As Americans we need to know the truth on why Bush insisted that WMD's were present in Iraq and determined to prove so. The truth is America had no purpose being in Iraq. Bush used WMD's as a way to get people aboard with war. Bills Nichols also quotes Blix saying, "the Bush administration tended to say that anything that was unaccounted for existed, whether it was sarin or mustard gas or anthrax" (1). The Bush Administration was determined to invade Iraq for the reason that attracted the most attention. If not WMD's then the threat of anthrax or some chemical threat would be thrown into play. The U.S. led a war without the approval of the U.N. and the U.S. did not go in the name of peace. The Bush Administration was wrong in claiming Iraq had WMD's, but the War on Terrorism continues with the American people left in the dark.

The War on Terrorism continued but under a new mission after, no WMD's were found. The new purpose of war was finding Saddam Hussein and bringing his rule to an end. The Bush administration viewed Saddam as a dictator and a tyrant for the way he treated his people. Changing the mission left Americans skeptical of Bush's real intentions in Iraq once again feeling lost. The manhunt for Saddam Hussein was in effect and Bush led the American people to believe that finding Saddam would solve the threat of terrorism when finding WMD's was supposedly solve the threat. Fred Kaplan in the article "Five Years Gone" states, "if we are going to fight a war essentially by ourselves, as we have done here in Iraq, our vital interests must clearly be at stake" (4). Kaplan also agrees that a war must be fought with one intention and it must be clear to the citizens and the enemy. However, when Saddam was captured and hung to death, U.S. soldiers were still in Iraq? For what reason the soldiers completed their mission, Saddam was brought to justice, and the Iraqi people are free from their dictator. In reality, Bush never really had one main reason on invading Iraq; the purpose of war kept changing. The reasons changed as people became more concerned about the war. The killing of Saddam was not justified because the war with Iraq is based on a lie; the U.S had no purpose being there. The U.S. felt their decision was justified because they were helping

the World achieve “peace and security”. How does killing promote peace? The U.S. continues to change the focus of the war by not having one main priority. One might say the goals in war are always changing but it is hard to believe there was ever a goal when the first reason was a lie. Despite, Saddam Hussein being murdered, and the people of Iraq “free” the war on terror continues with a different goal. Once again leaving Americans wondering if war was the best option.

President Bush now at this point has a new focus. Bush believes the war will be victorious when Iraq is liberated. But what does the Bush administration mean in “liberating Iraq”? One would think after Saddam was captured, Iraq would be freed from their dictator. In the article “What Does Bush Mean by Victory in Iraq” Fred Kaplan states, “Gen. Petraeus has said many times that there is no strictly military victory to be had in Iraq” (3). Even the Commanding General in Iraq has said victory cannot be obtained, so why are the troops still fighting? If victory is not an option, how will the mission in Iraq be a success? Kaplan further goes on to state, “fighting in Iraq is there is no single enemy” (3). Victory is impossible because in Iraq, U.S. soldiers are now fighting against the militias who have formed against the U.S and are fighting back. One in support of Bush would say people must support the troops, no matter the task at hand. But how can one fully support the troops if no one knows the true intention of the war and what will be accomplished? The American people put their trust in the government, but we are continuously lied to and led into situations that have greater effects. The changing of purposes of the war force Americans to deal with the life changing effects of war.

The several purposes of the war in Iraq force the American public to believe the accusations made by the government were ever true. Americans must wonder if Iraq ever posed a threat to the “peace and security” of America. When Bush first announced the War on Terrorism many Americans supported of the war due to their feelings about 9/11. However in a recent CBS poll, “29 percent of Americans say the results of the war were worth it; 64 percent say they were not” (Poll: Most Americans 1). The support of the war has shifted, as many Americans do not believe the war was fought with the right intentions. The poll shows more than half of Americans do not support the invasion. The Bush Administration viewed Iraq as an “imminent threat” however the threat was not laid out for the American people. As Americans we must continue to ask the questions that fail to be answered. The American people, now realizing the effects of the war, feel misled because there was no purpose in being in Iraq, and now the dead U.S. soldiers have to pay the price of this unjust war.

Clearly, the war in Iraq should have been prevented; there was no main focus. The Bush Administration proposed no clear direct path they proposed for Iraq. According to “Casualties in Iraq” about 4,124 soldiers have died and 30,409 wounded while 1,254,538 Iraqis have died (Griffs 1). How many more soldiers and Iraqis must die before the U.S. realizes their mistake. The U.S. has

betrayed its people by lying and involving themselves in an unjust war for reasons unknown. The government including the Bush Administration continues to disregard the best interest of its people. I propose the U.S. makes a step towards reconciling with the Iraqi people and move towards rebuilding and starting over. Yes, Al-Qaeda attacked the U.S. and should be dealt with, but attacking another country based on an assumption is immoral. The U.S. is a superpower and it should set an example for the rest of the world to follow if they truly want to maintain “peace and security in the World.” The U.S. has now truly threatened the security of the world, as now new terrorist emerge out of hatred for the U.S.

#### **Works Cited**

- “Poll: Most Americans Say War Not Worth It.” CBS.com. 18 Mar. 2008. CBS. 21 Mar. 2008. <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2008/03/18/iraq/main3946663.shtml>
- Griffis, Margaret. “Casualties in Iraq.” Antiwar.com. 7 July 2008. Antiwar. 28 Mar. 2008. <<http://antiwar.com/casualties/>>.
- Hitchens, Christopher. “How Did I Get Iraq Wrong? I Didn’t.” Slate.com. 17 Mar. 2008. Slate. 21 Mar. 2008. <<http://www.slate.com/id/2186740>>.
- Kaplan, Fred. “Five Years Gone.” Slate.com. 18 Mar. 2008. Slate. 21 Mar. 2008. <<http://www.slate.com/id/2186850>>.
- Kaplan, Fred. “What Does Bush Mean by Victory in Iraq?” Slate.com. 25 Mar. 2008. <<http://www.slate.com/id/2187386>>.
- Karl, Jonathan, and Luis Martinez. “Afghanistan Now Most Dangerous for U.S. Troops.” Abcnews.go.com. 30 Nov. 2007. Abc. 28 Mar. 2008. <<http://abcnews.go.com/International/story?id=3937323&page=1>>.
- Nichols, Bill. “U.N.; Iraq had no WMD after 1994.” USA Today.com. 3 Mar. 2004. USA Today. 21 Mar. 2008. <[http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/iraq/2004-03-02-un-wmd\\_x.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/iraq/2004-03-02-un-wmd_x.htm)>.