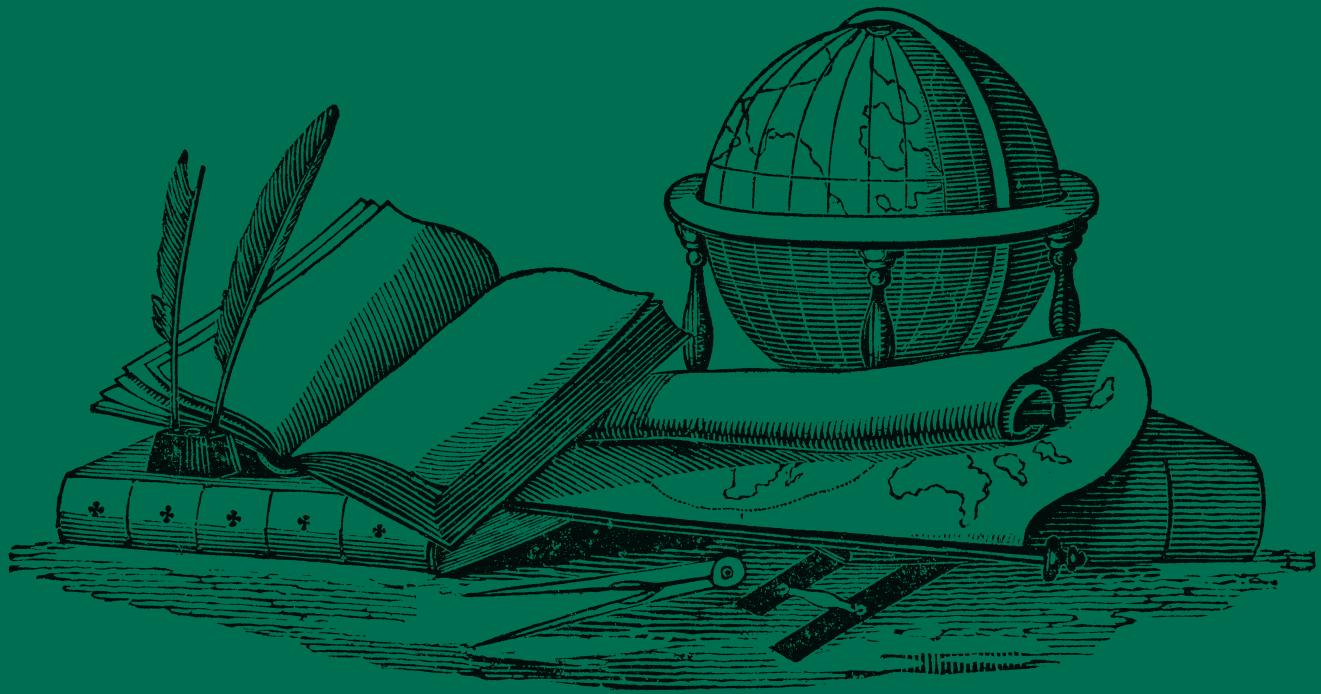


GLEANINGS:

*A Journal of First-Year
Student Writing*

2010-2011



 SIENACollege

Preface

All of the work included in this journal was written by students who were enrolled in Siena College's First-Year Seminar in 2010-2011. This required course prepares first-year students for the intellectual rigors of life in college and beyond by building critical thinking and communication skills as well as fostering creativity. Students are encouraged to reflect upon and discuss the vast amounts of reading and writing that they do both inside and outside the classroom, and Siena College wishes to showcase this intellectually engaging work. This journal was created to celebrate some of the best first-year student writing submitted during the past year.

All First-Year Seminar professors were asked to nominate the best written work from their sections. The publication's editorial committee was incredibly pleased by the volume and quality of the submissions, and it had to make some difficult decisions about which texts to include in this premier issue. The committee offers a diverse selection of texts so that, in addition to recognizing excellence in writing, *Gleanings: A Journal of First-Year Student Writing* is also a useful tool for future students and instructors.

This publication is loosely organized by genre and there is a brief introduction to each piece that describes the type of writing and the rhetorical strategies employed by the writers. While some minor editorial changes have been made, which is standard practice for this type of publication, they were kept to a minimum in order to preserve the authentic voices of the student authors and to underscore the guiding belief that such texts are considered works-in-progress.

Congratulations to the students whose work is represented here. The faculty and administration of Siena College are very proud of these writers, and hope that you, too, appreciate and enjoy the students' fine work.

Table of Contents

Personal Response Essays

Michael Abele '14 "Is There Truth in Community?"	1
Emma Ciborowski '14 "One Chance Only: How a Scientific Worldview Makes for a Meaningful Life"	3
Emily Hoffman '14 "Finding Peace: A Buddhist Interpretation of the World"	5
Nicholas Montalbano '14 "Society's Reliance on Technology: A Response to <i>Wall-E</i> "	8
Amanda Stasiewicz '14 "Found God. Now What?"	10
Jacob Troost '14 "Why I Agree With Albert Schweitzer"	13

Creative Texts

Eric Brenner '14 " <i>The Reluctant Fundamentalist</i> : The Final Chapter"	16
Keva Luke '14 "Cèlianne's Story"	18

Research Projects

Caitlin Baranowski '14 "The War on Drugs: The High Cost of Being Tough on Crime"	20
Nicholas Crupi '14 "Cell Phones in Class"	25
Samantha D'Amato '14 "The Hazards of Northport LILCO Station"	28
William Fitzgerald '14 "A Look Inside the Secret Society of North Korea"	32
Ryan Kennedy '14 "From the Manhattan Project to Hiroshima: Why the U.S. Did It Right"	39
Haani Virjee '14 "Islamophobia: What Caused this Psychological Mindset?"	43

In the essay “The Community of Truth,” Parker Palmer contrasts two styles of teaching and learning. The writer of this personal response essay passionately reflects upon his own learning experiences and brings his own ideas, though formulated in response to Palmer’s, to the forefront. This essay demonstrates a high level of understanding, integration, and development.

Is There Truth in Community?

Michael Abele

I want to be a person who doesn’t need to be told how to begin verbalizing his thoughts. I feel like there are far too many people in this world who have no idea how to speak their minds and let their opinions and beliefs be known. According to Parker Palmer’s “A Community of Truth,” the conflict between ideas is the only way for education and knowledge to progress. In order to discover “truth” — which he calls neither objective nor relative — humans must share their beliefs with one another, even if it causes friction.

Each and every one of us is responsible for speaking our minds and letting our own personal truths be known. However, in the Objectivist model of learning, this is not the case. Here, truth trickles down from pure knowledge to experts and finally to the rest of the common folk. This was high school for me; many of my teachers acted as if they were part of some nobility of knowledge, lecturing with self-righteous arrogance to their intellectual inferiors — the students. This model of learning seems feudal and elitist; do the uneducated really have nothing to contribute to society? The Objectivist model, to me, seemed like a theory proposed by a pretentious professor who saw uneducated people as nothing more than mindless proletariats.

Then again, asking someone who is part of one of the most angst-ridden groups of people in the world (teenagers) will probably warrant the same response to a rigid system of learning ninety percent of the time. It’s really all about perspective, which is exactly why the Community of Truth model of learning is much more successful than its Objectivist parallel. When everyone shares their personal beliefs and opinions, each respective relative truth boils together into a melting pot of wisdom — which sounds much more appealing than the cold decree of dictated thought present in the Objectivist model.

Thus, it is perfectly acceptable for every man and woman to speak his or her mind and vocalize his or her beliefs. In fact, it’s their responsibility to do so. In a system whose foundation is built upon shared paradigms, the only way to achieve intellectual success is by the active exchange of ideas and experience. While a professor may be much more learned and experienced than his or her students in a particular subject, any student may have the same volume of wisdom about the subject’s correlating “great things,” as Palmer puts it.

These great things are the most basic topics that mankind shows interest in - not merely subjects like Psychology, Literature and French, but things like Thought, Emotion, and Communication. Not coincidentally, I am currently enrolled in three of those subjects. My major at Siena is English. “What do you want to do with a degree in English?” people ask me (often pretentiously). I don’t want to do anything with my English degree — as of right now I hope to never have to rely on my diploma in the future whatsoever. By no means am I saying that I don’t plan on learning anything in college — that’s why I came here in the first place — but simply that I’m not in school so that in four years if I

have to go looking for a job, I have an impressive shiny badge proving that I have a degree in something-or-other. College is about learning, growth, and the sharing of ideas, not reserving a seat in an office.

While I hope that writing is one of my few strong points, I often worry that my words may come across as overly rebellious or anti-establishment. But I think that this is naturally the first phase people start in once they begin to develop their ability to vocalize their thoughts. As we grow in age and experience, the defiant flames of rebellion cool to warm embers of wisdom, heating the development of thought and truth without intensity or heat too offensive to stand. But the embers of elders die out, sometimes from a lack of fresh ideas, in which case it's up to the youth to start new fires in an unexplored neck of the woods.

As seen by this symbiotic relationship between the knowledge and experience of the young and the old, the ancient Roman writer Terence was right in his emphasis on the importance of "moderation of all things." This is a belief that I hold true and one that is very important to me. While I'd be willing to argue the importance of moderation with anyone who opposed it, the Community of Truth isn't just about intellectual conflicts and arguments. For the system to function, we need to listen to one another and to consider for just one moment that we may not be conscious of all there is to know about the world and life itself.

Work Cited

Palmer, Parker J. "The Community of Truth." *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1999. Print. Rpt. in *Foundations Sequence Reader 2010-2011*. New York: Siena College, 2010. 105-121. Print.

This assignment asked students to explore and articulate their own worldviews. The author refers to three writers discussed in class (formal documentation was not required) and shares personal experiences to describe her own secular scientific beliefs.

One Chance Only: How a Scientific Worldview Makes for a Meaningful Life

Emma Ciborowski

Worldviews vary widely today. There are hundreds of different religions, each with blurred divisions and an infinite number of interpretations. Besides these religious groups, there are those who do not identify with religion but rely simply on fact to determine their “beliefs.” While many believe that religion and a higher power are the only sources of meaning in life, I adamantly disagree. I would define my worldview as a strictly scientific one, and the fact that the life today is the only one I’ll ever get to experience adds more meaning to my life than a religious worldview could ever do for me.

Although it is hard for many to believe, I was raised in a Roman Catholic family. I went to church every Sunday, attended weekly religion classes, made all of my sacraments, and did everything necessary to be accepted as a member of my church. The truth is I did it all for my mother. Like most religious people, she wanted to pass on her traditions to her children, and I didn’t have the heart to say I didn’t want a part in them. Even as a child in this community, I started to question every aspect of the Catholic faith, starting with creation and afterlife. Brian Greene states that “from the time we can walk and talk, we want to know what things are and how they work — we begin life as little scientists. But most of us quickly lose our intrinsic scientific passion.” I did not lose this passion or that method of understanding the world. The Catholic dogmas never made rational sense to me, and honestly, came across as somewhat ridiculous. It baffles me that so many people can believe a story in which “God” just plucked a rib from lonely Adam and transformed it to a woman like some sort of magic trick, or that when we are buried six feet into the earth our souls will find their way to some place beyond the clouds to live in eternal happiness with all of “God’s faithful followers.” Along with my initial skepticism of these fairytale-like stories, I am a person who needs to see in order to believe. Sam Harris says that “it takes a certain kind of person to be ruled by ideas for which you have no evidence.” I am just not capable of being one of those people, and this led me to a scientific worldview.

As harsh as it may sound to anyone who believes in comforts such as heaven or reincarnation, because of my scientific worldview, I have come to accept the fact that when I die I will be burnt to ashes and that will be the end of me. Of course I hope to leave behind memories with the people whom I love, but I know the physical and mental being of me will be gone. While many would say that my life lacks meaning due to my beliefs, my finitude drives me to appreciate every day I live here on Earth. To me, happiness in this one life is all that really matters. Because I will not get a second chance to live life and I can’t go to some Penance and be forgiven for all wrongdoings, I try to live every day as a good person. I strive to be proud of myself for who I am and all that I do.

Some would ask how I could possibly have decent morals or have an idea of a “good” person if I have no religion – no book to follow after, no higher power to live for, no list of clear cut things that make me a “sinner.” Because I do not have a religion to guide me in this way, I define my own morals. Through common sense and being raised by a loving family, I have learned the difference between right and wrong and how to treat people with respect. It doesn’t take an ancient book that reads “thou shall not kill,” for me to understand that killing someone isn’t the correct way to deal with a situation. I think being morally guided by a concrete list of rules undermines human moral judgment. As Paul Kurtz puts it, “ethics was developed as a branch of human knowledge long before religionists proclaimed their moral systems based upon divine authority.” Because a scientific worldview obviously has no form of Penance, if I believe I have done something wrong or immoral, I will be disappointed in myself, apologize to whomever I may have hurt, and strive to be better. To me that’s who matters: the people who are physically here and a part of my life.

As I grew older I realized that on top of my strong disbelief in the stories and the necessity of obtaining my morals from a holy book, I also disagree with many Catholic opinions, such as those of gay marriage, abortion, and divorce. If God supposedly loves everyone – a concept I was taught from day one – then why does the Catholic Church shun members just for loving someone of the same sex? How come a young girl who makes a mistake and becomes pregnant is terrorized for admitting that she is not capable of bringing a baby into the world? And why are couples looked down upon by the Church for escaping a marriage that just isn’t working for them? Although I strongly oppose the Catholic viewpoint on all three, the only one which has personally affected me is that of divorce. My parents divorced and gossip ran wild in our church. Had my parents not gotten divorced, I would have grown up in a very hostile and possibly dangerous household. My parents were brutally judged for deciding to give up on marriage in order to make a better life for their children. When I realized the many aspects of Catholic policy, I decided that I didn’t want to belong to a community I found to be judgmental and non-accepting while claiming to be the exact opposite.

In the end, all that matters is the here and now. Catholicism with all of its myth and judgment did not supply for me any kind of enlightenment or motivation. I am motivated to make the best of the life I have because I don’t believe in a second chance or an eternal after-life. I try to look past the negative parts of the world around me and I aim to be happy. Every day I hope to live as a good person both for myself and for the people I love. I feel as though I appreciate my life more because I know it will be my only one. This present life on Earth, which is such a little thing to most religious people, is honestly all that I live for because to me, it is the only truth.

The following essay is a reflection on the religious worldviews in today's society. Students were asked to write a personal response about their own worldviews and how they influence their daily lives. This author employs sensory imagery to describe her attendance at a Buddhist gathering and compares Buddhist readings to her own faith.

Finding Peace: A Buddhist Interpretation of the World

Emily Hoffman

I walk into the room. Chairs are lined in rows and people are standing in small groups quietly talking. My body is tense. I feel nervous, uncomfortable, and out of place. Alien almost. I tentatively move through an aisle, slowly taking in my new and unfamiliar atmosphere, making sure not to make eye contact with anyone. The carpet is a dull tan color, and the walls white and bare with the exception of a few paintings of cherry trees and lotus flowers placed sparsely around the room. This is vastly different from the stained glass windows and gothic towers of my inherited Catholic institution. Inhaling deeply, I smell cherry incense and the scent of fresh cut spring flowers and fruit. Peering through the crowds of people I see vases of exotic flowers and bowls of fruit lining what looks to be a giant armoire. It sits there, its arms open to the world, and inside it contains a single scroll and the statue of a fat man clothed in a tunic and beads. A woman walks up to the armoire. She is dressed in simple white cloth pants and a tunic splashed with bright colors. She is barefoot. She rings the gong sitting beside the armoire, and everyone moves to take a seat. From my vantage point, I see the woman kneel before the giant piece of furniture. Her unruly brown hair frizzes madly about her as she bows before the statue. When she sits up again she begins to chant: "Nam-myoho-renge-kyo." It means nothing to me, but the chanting is loud and monotone, and it quickly fills the room with a rasping drone. She rings the gong again, and the people around me begin chanting with her. The rattling hum resembles the buzz of hundreds of hives of swarming bees. It fills my mind, my heart, and my body. I tremble. Glancing about I notice that everyone has his or her eyes closed. Still feeling out of place, I follow suit and close my eyes. I sit in silence and listen to the chanting. I do not join in, for the hymn is unfamiliar to me, and it seems wrong to recite something that holds no meaning for me and that I don't understand. I sit in silence for what feels like eternity, until it stops. The silence is consuming, and my breathing resonates a screaming sound in my own ears. My mind and body are still humming with the buzz, but the silence promotes an indescribably relaxing atmosphere. I feel like the world has stopped turning to sit in silence and just breathe with me, and I can't help but smile, for I feel at peace.

Although I was anxious at first, my attendance at a Soka Gakki International Buddhist gathering proved to be a life-altering experience. It jolted the foundations of my religious and cultural world beliefs. Due to ignorance, I once had no understanding of the religious aspect of Asian culture. Now, however, I believe that this enlightened community's religious teachings are both incredibly insightful and in tune with human existence today. I think of a worldview as a notion, a concept that incorporates the fundamental, cognitive outlook that individuals in a society hold of the cultures around them. It is how we choose to perceive the beliefs of the people living with and around us and how we choose to interpret and then express opinion of those beliefs. After my encounter with a Buddhist community, I was compelled to define my beliefs, which ultimately caused a shift in my personal religious values by forcing me to identify with a culture's convictions of which I was previously uninformed.

When addressing and analyzing my current personal beliefs, I am confident to say that at this point in my life, I simply have faith. I have faith in mankind, faith in life, and faith that there is something for all of us beyond this life. I believe that if you wait long enough, even the cruelest person will show you the sense of kindness that every person holds in his or her heart. I believe that each individual day is a gift; an adventure eager to begin as soon as we rise from the ones in our dreams. I believe that the adventure of life extends beyond the one our bodies experience. I find the concept of an afterlife comforting, and I do believe that we each possess a soul: a bit of immortal magic within each of us that will live on after our physical shells have decayed. Believing that the ones you love are never really gone is a comfort I carry with me every day. Sam Harris believes that “faith is an imposter” (13), while I cannot imagine living my life without faith. Harris continues to say that different sects of religions are “epistemological black holes [which]...are fast draining the light from our world” (8). How we choose to interpret and express our religious convictions is of our own free will. I cannot stop you from fasting, and you cannot stop me from praying. While there are some of us who may feed the homeless or bathe statues of our deities in milk, there are others who will choose to express belief in violence. However, no matter how dark and twisted a road our beliefs carry our minds and bodies down, we cannot ignore the unifying light that binds us together and creates comfort in all our souls: pure faith.

What secularists do not understand is that faith is light, an extraordinary beacon of hope in the lives of ordinary men. My beliefs do not coincide with the secularist opinion of those such as Sam Harris, and I see secular groups more as extreme political parties than as actual belief systems. These people believe in science and progress. They worship an academic subject that has been used to develop human civilization and its wielder, man himself. Secularists see man as his own supreme being, but man cannot play his own God. He may be able to extend life, but he cannot escape death. I believe that those such as Sam Harris, who exist without faith, live with constant fear in their hearts because they have nothing to hope for when faced with the concept of death itself. It’s a pessimistic lifestyle that says to me: I am alive today, but if not tomorrow, then that is the end for I do not know anything beyond what is my life today. My faith allows me to hope for tomorrow, so I hold tight to it.

Though I have faith, when further analyzing my beliefs, I find that I have never been able to define my faith within a particular sect of religion. Despite the fact that I was raised a Catholic, I find my heart and soul have never found a home in the Catholic Church and their teachings. I have never opened a Bible or the Torah, and I do not have the patience to learn Arabic so that I may interpret the Koran. However, in the last years of my adolescence I find myself connecting to concepts found in Buddhism. Buddhists believe that we all possess a “limitless potential” within ourselves, and that we all have the ability to expel the violence that exists inside of us and replace it with a sense of compassion and peace (Dalai Lama 305). Buddhism speaks to me as a religion that serves the people, instead of a system where the people are serving the religion. Its aim is to unlock and set free each individual’s ultimate source of joy and peace and then impart that happiness onto others. It is a positive belief system that inspires me to not only explore the faith that is part of my personal identity but to also apply it in finding my own unlimited source of happiness through a spiritual process of self discovery.

Coinciding with the first notion of infinite potential is “the Buddhist concept of the law of causality, [which asserts] that everything comes and happens due to cause and effect” (Dalai Lama 306). It’s a notion that captivates me because it gives human ability a spiritual significance. Buddhist principle states that there is no one supreme being, so this allows me to freely interpret the enigma of “God” because “there’s no central cause or creator, a belief that is very powerful in Christianity, Islam, Judaism, and many other important world traditions” (Dalai Lama 307). There is no supreme being we must devoutly worship, we are our own creators, and how we choose to live our existence will determine the nature of our lives in the spiritual world. The important thing, though, is that we have the ability to choose. This ultimate control of my own existence gives me independence in how I decide to incorporate religion into my life.

However, Buddhism also makes me conscious of how I interact in the physical world on a daily basis. It is a religion that promotes not only peace within the heart but also peace between people. Buddhism attempts “to fight violence outside” by asking people to identify and replace the anger in their own hearts with thoughts and feelings of peace through conscious thought (Hanh 311). I want to live with a constant sense of peace within myself and then impart that sense of peace on others. My faith combined with Buddhist concepts serves as my moral compass in daily life. By “studying morality” in my own life, I’ve been made more aware of how I affect the people with whom I interact (Tworkov 317). Seeing the joy that blooms others’ faces when you’ve sacrificed your needs to make them happy is incredibly gratifying, and I hope they then want to make other people feel the joy I’ve given them. When I’m feeling selfish, my faith reminds me to be patient, and the Buddhist principles I’ve instilled within myself remind me of the importance of kindness in today’s selfish and violent world. In those moments I stop and breathe. I close my eyes and recall the peace I felt in the aftermath of my first exposure to Buddhism. Then I open my eyes and continue to be a catalyst against violence and anger.

I have faith. I am not a Catholic, Jew, Hindu, or Muslim. I do not believe in a supreme being or that science is the cure-all to society and human aggression. I am a religiously faithful individual who has identified her beliefs with Buddhist concept. My faith will always be a present and constant source of strength, even when I am uncertain of the direction it is going to take me. At this point in my life, my faith is identified with Buddhism. For me it’s a new movement, a tidal wave of unknown possibilities that I’m riding in my own ship of uncertainty. Buddhism has given my faith and my soul positive encouragement, so instead of abandoning ship, I will cling tightly to my mast of faith. For though I am unsure where this wave will take me, I know it will safely wash me ashore.

Works Cited

- Dalai Lama, The. “A Message from the Dalai Lama.” *The Life of Meaning*. Eds. Bob Abernethy and William Bole. New York: Seven Stories Press, 2007. 305-307. Print.
- Hanh, Thich Nhat. “Being Mindful and Engaged.” *The Life of Meaning*. Eds. Bob Abernethy and William Bole. New York: Seven Stories Press, 2007. 309-313. Print.
- Tworkov, Helen. “The Smaller Sufferings.” *The Life of Meaning*. Eds. Bob Abernethy and William Bole. New York: Seven Stories Press, 2007. 315-320. Print.

In this response essay, the writer effectively summarizes a film, connects it to other texts analyzed and discussed in class, and offers genuine introspection about its major themes and how they relate to his own life.

Society's Reliance on Technology: A Response to *Wall-E*

Nicholas Montalbano

On Thursday, November 4th, I attended a viewing of the Disney movie, *Wall-E*, in the library. I was struck by how impressive the movie was and how it captured real issues in today's society and turned them into a light-hearted children's movie. The film primarily confronts the issue of over-dependence on technology and materialism, but it also addresses over-consumption and our mistreatment of the world we live in.

The movie centers around a small robot named Wall-E, whose job is to collect trash and stack it in huge piles that tower over buildings. The world appears desolate and uninhabited by humans for many years. Wall-E and a cricket are the only characters on Earth until a new high-tech robot comes searching for signs of life. After finding a plant that Wall-E had discovered, the robot takes the plant, is retrieved by a ship that Wall-E sneaks onto, and is taken to a larger ship that appears to be where all humans are now living. People's lives here are run completely by machines that create a virtual reality and provide them with every service needed for life and for what these people perceive is needed for happiness. It is then revealed that people live here because Earth became uninhabitable due to centuries of pollution that made the air toxic and unable to sustain life. When the plant appears on the ship, the protocol is to return to Earth and resume life there, but the head machine attempts to get rid of the plant and nix all hopes of returning to Earth. From then on, people and robot workers begin to break the control that the machines have over them and attempt to initiate the process of returning home. After a great struggle, they are successful, the ship returns home, and everyone looks forward to starting a real life on Earth.

I believe this movie is mostly designed as a cautionary story of the effects of our dependence on technology, although the director most likely doesn't actually believe we will become completely dependent as in the movie. There are obvious immediate effects of the technological takeover, such as the fact that the people on the ship are all extremely overweight, which grabbed my attention. However, when I began to realize that they derive all of their satisfaction from technological pleasures and entertainment that the robots provide, I began to see the entire scope of the issue and began making connections to our own society. In the film, human interaction is removed from these people's lives, and they are stripped of their identities. They have nothing to define themselves as individuals, nothing that allows them to say, "I am good at this" or "I am a part of this" or "I am special because...". Being able to say these things is what truly gives people a sense of self-worth and identity. Individuals in our society increasingly value material possessions over these identity-shaping ideals and are using their "stuff" to give themselves satisfaction or happiness.

Essentially this is what is done to the people in *Wall-E*, although in the movie it is done against their will. These people may appear happy at first, but their underlying discontent breaks free when they are released from their machine-world and begin interacting with each other the way humans were born to do. This is seen when two of the citizens who have had interactions with Wall-E hope that he will make it safely back on the ship. Then they touch hands, and you can see that they have been, without knowing it, craving this touch their whole lives. Although it is something as

simple as a touch of a hand, it gives them instantaneous joy, arguably more joy than any of these machines have ever given them in their lives. There is also a scene at the end of the movie when all of the people on the ship work together to get the plant where it needs to go so that they can get back home. This shows that these people, within minutes of being free from the machines, realize that they are unhappy with their lives dominated by technology and want to travel to a place where they can have a normal, human existence.

This movie draws significant comparisons to the works of Sigmund Freud, in particular, his *Civilization and its Discontents*. In this piece, Freud analyzes what people recognize value in and what determines how happy they are in general. *Wall-E* is essentially doing the same thing by portraying a world completely dominated by technology and shows how this affects the people's level of happiness. As I mentioned earlier, the people in the film believe that they are happy, but once they are free of technology's grip, they realize what they have been lacking in their lives and begin to appreciate what's around them. Freud discusses what makes a person happy and the path one takes to become happy, and he argues: "There is, indeed, another and better path: that of becoming a member of the human community" (Freud 36). In *Wall-E*, the people aboard the ship become part of the human community for the first time when they work together to return home and permanently break the control technology has over them.

Also, Garrett Hardin's piece "The Tragedy of Commons" could be used to explain how the society in *Wall-E* produces such a barren wasteland on Earth. According to Hardin, the "Tragedy of Commons" is essentially our tendency as humans to take all that we can for ourselves and disregard the well-being of our environment and those around us as a whole. Hardin focuses his attention on American greed and gluttony, citing the over-consumption of food as a primary example (Hardin). This issue of over-consumption is very closely related to our dependence on technology and materialism. As technology produces better things for us to buy, we become more materialistic, and we buy more things and consume way more than we should. In *Wall-E*, over-consumption leads to high levels of pollution that make Earth uninhabitable for hundreds of years. The society in the film also exhausts its land resources and turns to shipping garbage off to space because they produce more than their world is capable of containing. Our own world appears to be heading in the same direction, and unless we are able to change the way we look at technology and material items, we will face the same problems the society in *Wall-E* faced.

Our society has become too dependent on technology, and the ease by which we are able to obtain things and sustain our lives has made us lose sight of what's truly important and magnificent in our world. There are so many things in this world that we take for granted that make it so special. In *Wall-E*, the captain of the ship is amazed when he sorts through all of the pictures of Earth and the things we created in our society and take for granted. Wall-E also questions what has value and what doesn't. In the beginning of the movie, Wall-E finds a small box with a diamond ring in it. It is not the ring that Wall-E finds interesting, however, but the box itself. Wall-E discards the ring and keeps the box because he finds the mechanism through which the box opens and closes more interesting than the shiny rock inside. It is these simple things like plants, boxes, or even pizza, that we must begin to appreciate more and not take for granted. Instead we are caught in a process of providing ourselves with short-term happiness through the purchase and consumption of things. As we consume more, we are only straying further away from the important determinants of happiness, like friendship, love, and accomplishment. Wall-E does a fantastic job capturing this concept and examining the effect technology has had on developing a materialistic society.

Works Cited

Freud, Sigmund. "Excerpt from *Civilization and its Discontents*." *Civilization and its Discontents*. 1830. Rpt. In *Foundations Sequence Reader 2010-2011*. Siena College, 2010. 35-49. Print.

Hardin, Garrett. "The Tragedy of Commons." 1968. *Science*. Dec. 13, 1968. The Garret Hardin Society. 13 Mar 2005. Web. 20 Sept 2011.

This paper is in response to the question: “What is your worldview?”, and the students had to figure out what combination of experiences and beliefs went into forming their own unique understanding of the world. This paper shows extensive self-reflection. The author recognizes that people do not fall neatly into descriptive pigeonholes and that they can have a lot in common with groups that they might not have heard of.

Found God. Now What?

Amanda Stasiewicz

Despite my Roman Catholic upbringing, I have only recently come to understand that I believe in God. I have always believed in some governing force that created the universe, a presence we can sense, but not hear, see, or touch. But one distinction vital to me is the concept of the terms of the existence of God. Abrahamic faiths hold that humans are created in the likeness of God. I have been urged by my pastor several times to “see the God in my neighbor” (Father Papa), and this has been one of the points in my faith that has kept me skeptical of God. It is essential for the clarity of my point to distinguish and emphasize that, in fact, a piece of God does not reside in the being He creates. He may be *with* them, be present in their thoughts and actions, be there for guidance and strength in a time of need, but humans do not possess a piece of God within themselves, or else they would hold divinity while only God is divine. What each body *does* hold, each and every biotic, sentient, or rational being, is a soul. This isn’t attached to a mind or even a consciousness or ability to understand morality; it is attached to life. A soul is the basic unit upon which we equalize all things from plants to human beings, and determine that they all have a right to respect, a right to life. A respect for the soul, for this thing vital to life, is essentially what constructs my worldview.

I hold with Buddhists and many other general religious perspectives that a respect for life is imperative to the sustainability of our personal and global health. My view that spirituality is of ultimate concern may seem to clash with this worldly paradigm. While the world is ultimately spiritual and the goal is spiritual purity and enlightenment, the material world is still of concern. We grow spiritually in a material world, not necessarily material as in consumptive, but material as we interact with physical and tangible objects. The environment in which we live directly impacts our spiritual development, and therefore a concern for nature and our impacts on the material world is directly linked to our spiritual capacity. Strength of soul and spirit directly influence our decision-making and actions. Others would refer to this concept as morality and define it with laws or precepts or commandments. I hold that it can be found imprinted in consciousness and understanding, elements of the soul, and these can be strengthened in two ways, focus and experience.

A form of focus I frequently utilize is prayer, which applies to numerous other religious communities, such as Judaism and Islam, and relates to others still in that it utilizes meditation practices. When a Buddhist meditates, she is in self-reflection with the ultimate purpose of obliterating hindrances such as desires for worldly things and suffering. Her ultimate goal is to eventually achieve Enlightenment. When I pray, I self-reflect before my self and God with moral codes in mind from my religious upbringing and learned societal teachings, but in many ways it is meditation. It is a practice of sifting through my thoughts and running them through a filter to separate the good from the bad. I first focus on the good and reflect on how I can increase its pertinence in my life. Second, I reflect on sin, falterings in

morality, and ignorance and look to my personal God and experiences for guidance on how to react. Many would prescribe merely religious moral codes of conduct to determine right from wrong and good from evil. These conditions are filled with exceptions and limitations. A fundamental respect for life would resolve the need for these deliberate moral codes. Each boils down to respect for life. “Thou shall not kill,” is the most obvious example in Christianity, Judaism, and Islam of a respect for life. “Thou shall not covet thy neighbor’s [fill in the blank: wife, child, occupation, possessions]” (Group 1 Presentation). All can be fundamentally defined as responsibility to respect life. By practicing these laws one is respecting one’s neighbor and the other people involved. One is also instructed that to covet material things is to lose focus on that which is truly important to life, which exemplifies the importance of the spirit.

Much like a Buddhist, I am on a quest for Enlightenment, to experience increased spiritual (not to be confused with religious) strength (Smith and Novak). Enlightenment and understanding arise from experience and knowledge. This cannot be complete knowledge, for much like “The Elephant in the Dark” (Albanese 1) where a given observer’s interpretation of what he experienced depended on what part of the elephant he interacted with, the knowledge one acquires during her life depends on her experiences and the knowledge she gains. Due to the time restraints of life and the limitations of being human, it is impossible for one to know all, or experience all, and therefore it is impossible to achieve a state of total enlightenment in one’s lifetime (which conflicts with Buddhist thought). Complete and unlimited knowledge is an attribute of the divine, but humans are gifted with a sense of curiosity and a drive to acquire knowledge, and these basic needs are indicative of the value of experience. Scriptures and sacred sources of knowledge are useful in governance and ethical debate, but the most important aspect of life is experience. Experience is not found in books, but in the world, action, and reflection. Like the Buddha (Group 4 Presentation), one can achieve spirituality without assistance from a book or revelation. Experiencing life and general questioning are essential to one’s personal development and spiritual journey.

When I define spiritual I am describing things pertaining to a spirit or a soul, to a life force or will power. A plant *wills* to live by reproduction through seeds, by growing to out-compete other plants. Through a theory of evolution or adaptation, gradual interaction and experience between the plant species and its environment, the plant has grown in strength and condition because it, more specifically its species, grew in experience. Some plants have defensive poisons they secrete to keep away harmful animals, or will fold in their leaves in reaction to various physical stimuli. All these attributes show that the plant structure contains life, a soul, and through expansion of this argument to all other life it is determined that all of nature has a right to life and a right to respect.

Critics of my worldview will point out that my perspective is flawed. If I hold that the fundamental responsibility of a rational organism, that is humans of stable mental health and of maturity, is to respect life, then it must be against my worldview to hunt, to consume anything, to burn wood for a fire, or to even kill bacteria with antibiotics. I merely wish to compel that a respect for nature and all things living is fundamental to daily interactions between humans, their environment, and other humans. There are certain acts necessary for the sustenance of life and that are instinctual. It is instinctual to hunt and kill for food. My question for the critics is couldn’t “thou shall not kill” (Group 1 Presentation) be interpreted as God willing the human race not to butcher and consume meat? Based on what you respect and what you perceive as the impacted community sphere, this Commandment can be interpreted in different ways. The most frequent holding is that it is a law against murder, which shows the Abrahamic emphasis on human life as being determined by God as dominant over all other life. This was not always the case. Ancient Europeans revered the forest. They had traditions concerning the sacredness of certain groves, lore regarding tree-spirits, and made sacrifices and offerings to the trees (Heinberg). This respectful use of the land, and basic respect for life, made for a sustainable lifestyle and a connectedness to the land. Paganism was stomped out of European culture by Christianity and other faiths, and as this occurred nature became an entity to be tamed rather than revered. Wasteful and disrespectful use began, all stemming from disrespect for life.

“Spiritual” is often made synonymous with “religion”, and it has become more common for individuals to identify themselves as “spiritual, but not religious.” For a while I defined myself as such, disliking the structure and conformity of religion and its association with history, other people interpreting things “the right way” for me, and reading about experiences rather than experiencing these experiences myself. However, I’ve come to the conclusion that as long as I maintain my concept of God, I am practicing religion because I am concerned with Him and foster a relationship with Him. But I am being spiritual by being alive, by experiencing things and being conscious through reflection, by trying to better myself as a person in this way, and by trying to grow in knowledge, faith, and experience. What is central to my worldview and makes it applicable to paradigms ranging from Islam to Buddhism to Christianity, and appeals to the responsibility of all human beings, is a fundamental respect for the utility of life.

Works Cited

- Albanese, Catherine. “The Elephant in the Dark.” 1981. Reprinted in *Foundations Sequence Reader, 2010-2011*. Loudonville, NY: Siena College, 2010. Print.
- Group, 1. “Christianity.” Siena College. Loudonville, NY. 24 February 2011. Presentation.
- Group, 4. “Buddhism.” Siena College. Loudonville, NY. 01 March 2011. Presentation.
- Heinberg, Richard. “Chapter 2: The Historic Interval of Cheap, Abundant Energy.” *The Party’s Over: Oil, War and the Fate of the Industrial Societies*. Gabriola, BC: New Society, 2003. Print.
- Papa, Charlie. St. Louis de Montfort Parish. Sound Beach, NY. Homily.
- Smith, Houston and Philip Novak. *Buddhism: A Concise Introduction*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers Inc., 2003. Print.

This is another essay that is in response to the question: "What is your worldview?". The author shows clear self-reflection and demonstrates how experience directly affects how people understand the world.

Why I Agree With Albert Schweitzer

Jacob Troost

The great polymath Albert Schweitzer once said, "The only progress that knowledge allows is in enabling us to describe more and more in detail the world we see and its evolution. What matters in a worldview is to grasp the meaning and purpose of everything, and that we cannot do" (96). Describing my own worldview with accuracy is something I consider a daunting task; I believe my worldview has been shaped by many more people than I could hope to record and is an ever-changing entity. With that said, I believe I have a worldview that is very unique and open. Because I have been influenced by many different ideas and traditions, I believe in tolerance toward other ideas as well as open-mindedness. Although I am not very religious, I still have great appreciation for religion and what it has to offer both the society and individual.

I believe the best place to begin my analysis of my worldview is religion; as it is often the foundation of many other factors that make up one's worldview. My view of the divine is often skeptical because of my lack of religious education when I was growing up. I believe this is very important to my worldview. This is because now that I am in college and taking religion courses and meeting a diverse group of people, I have been influenced by what I have learned as well as things that have happened to me to change my religious views. For instance, I used to be rooted in the idea that there is no god, due to all of the horrible things that the world has faced in history, such as natural disaster, war, terrorism, disease, and genocide. What I learned from coming to college is that everything I have now, and everyone I know, will change at some point. Just since coming to Siena my life has already changed more than it did all throughout growing up. Because there is so much instability in my life, the idea that god is one constant I can depend on to not change is very comforting to me, even if I cannot call myself religious at this point in my life. This idea of god and stability, however, is one of the more important ideas when looking at my worldview as a whole.

Much of my religious worldview is similar to the Buddhist idea of Karma and the Hindu idea of Dharma. Karma is defined by Paul Gwynne in his book *World Religions in Practice* as the concept that good and bad actions carry corresponding consequences not only in this life but in future lives as well (391). I believe that every decision I make has a consequence, no matter if that consequence is good or bad. My idea of Karma is very simple and very similar to what many sports coaches tell their athletes, "You get out what you put in". This means that whatever decisions I make will come back to me. One simple and slightly humorous example of this is when I tip people who perform services for me. Because I work part-time delivering pizza, I always tip people as much as is possibly appropriate, so that in turn I will receive higher tips. My good Karma from tipping high will allow me to perform better, and in turn earn my own high tips. I also believe in the Hindu idea of Dharma, or duty. This means I have a duty as a student, family member, friend, and human being. These individual duties I have allow me to prioritize what is most important to me, that one must fulfill their duties before beginning other endeavors. These current ideas I use in my everyday life make it very hard to define an idea of metaphysics; although I use ideas found in religious worldviews I am not affiliated with any religion exclusively. Despite all of the answers humans have provided for their existence, I cannot call any one answer,

or one religious group, completely identifiable with me. Although these are ideas I have in common with other cultures, I cannot call myself a Buddhist or Hindu.

The way I view ethics and humanity, and how the individual is involved with these, is very rooted in my education in economics. Winston Churchill once wrote, “The inherent vice of capitalism is the unequal sharing of blessings; the inherent virtue of socialism is the equal sharing of miseries” (qtd. in “Business: Capitalism: Is It Working...? Of Course, but...”). Because I am an economics major, I believe in the ideas of capitalism and free markets. When I had originally begun my education in economics in high school, my dream job would have been to get my degree, work with a firm to help cut costs of production, and play the free market to my economic advantage. When I began my post-secondary education I realized that there are extreme social, economic, and environmental costs when applying this idea of cost slashing and reckless expansion. This is a major contributor to horrible labor conditions for workers for American corporations overseas in developing nations, the decline of small business, as well as the main cause of corporate pollution. I believe the role of government is necessary because of the tendency for people to ignore the externalities they impose on the rest of society. Although this idea of ethics and humanity seems entirely economic, I also apply it to other parts of society. For example, a free-market, no rules application to every human desire would result in crime and further costs imposed on society. The role of government is necessary because it holds people accountable for their actions, as well as prevents them from transgressing against someone else. This brings me to my stance on humanity.

I believe that humans are free to make their own decisions but are not limited to being essentially good or essentially evil. I believe there are two kinds of people: people who seek only to better the lives of themselves, and people who seek to better themselves as well as others. A great example of this is the story of Scott Neeson in the anthology *The Life of Meaning*. The story tells of a man who quits his job as a high ranking Hollywood executive and moves to Cambodia, where he opens a school for children who cannot afford education (389). Neeson is an example of someone who seeks to improve the life of others besides himself. Trying to only better one’s life by acquiring material goods, money, or other desires is one of the causes of suffering and evil in society. However, this is not the only cause of suffering, as there are types of suffering that have no aim or lesson to teach, such as the suffering of children as discussed by Ivan and Alyosha in *The Grand Inquisitor*, a section from the book *The Brothers Karamazov* by Fyodor Dostoevsky (176). During their discussion, the two brothers discuss the idea of god as a flawed being and that he cannot be all powerful, loving, and willing to change the outcome of an event. This is a major contribution for the reason why I am so unsure when it comes to the metaphysical world, as the author seemed to have come to a question that humans cannot possibly answer with certainty. Because people suffer, god cannot be all powerful, all loving, and be willing to intervene in one’s life.

Returning to the quote by Albert Schweitzer, I believe that education is the key to success within our world. Knowledge increases one’s ability to solve problems and be more tolerant and open to new ideas and people. I also hold education as an essential tool for developing and analyzing one’s own worldview, as it has become more of an influencing factor on my worldview than I could have imagined. While I stand with Schweitzer that it is impossible to truly know your own worldview completely, I believe as we learn more and more about the wants and needs of ourselves as well as each other, it becomes easier, if only somewhat, to act with the interests of many people other than yourself in mind.

Works Cited

- “Business: Capitalism: Is It Working...? Of Course, but...” *Time Magazine*. 21 Apr. 1980. Web. 3 Apr. 2011.
- Dostoevsky, Fyodor. *The Brothers Karamazov*. Trans. Andrew R. McAndrew. Bantam Classics. New York. 1970. Print.
- Gwyne, Paul. *World Religions in Practice*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2009. Print.
- Neeson, Scott. “No Return”. *The Life of Meaning*. Eds. Bob Abernethy and William Bole. New York: Seven Stories Press, 2007: 389-392. Print.
- Schweitzer, Albert. *Out of My Life and Thought*. 1st ed. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998: Print.

Mohsin Hamid's novel *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* ends on a note of ambiguity. This assignment asked students to creatively write the final chapter of the novel. This author writes in the same tone, style and syntax of the narrator but provides his own resolution to the story.

The Reluctant Fundamentalist: The Final Chapter

Eric Brenner

Before you move any closer, please allow me to tell you a few more things that you may find intriguing. What else could I possibly have to say? Well let me start by saying that Americans have developed a false identify with regard to the image of a terrorist. Let me provide for you an example of what I mean. Timothy McVeigh detonated an explosive-filled truck in Oklahoma City. This American was responsible for the biggest terrorist attack on American soil prior to September 11, 2001. I can promise you that this psychopath didn't sport a traditional terrorist beard like me. Now, you ask why I know such a fact about American history. My education at Princeton surely taught me much more than what was required at Underwood Sampson and Company.

You seem quite anxious. I hope that you will remove your hand from the inside of your jacket. I feel a bit nervous right now. How would you like it if I had a rocket launcher on my shoulder right now? We have both become very nervous at this point. Why can't we just understand one another? Perhaps your hand is grasping a Glock 9mm pistol or simply a business card holder as I previously suggested. That luminous piece of eloquently shaped metal may prove to be the end of me. Of course a Princeton graduate always has a backup plan, so I shall inform you that I have nothing to fear. All of these unknowns are making it quite awkward right now. Yes, I do see the sweat dripping like a waterfall down your forehead. As both of our nerves continue to grow, we may make decisions we will later regret. Now that you have calmed down, may I continue explaining the problem with the world today?

Unfortunately most people kill and commit wrongdoing without knowing much about those whom they regrettably hurt. Furthermore, as we stand before this gate you have only known me for a few brief hours. Yes, you are correct, it seems like it has been much longer. We have been conversing back and forth all day. You have learned much about me. Let me remind you that the puzzle is not quite complete. Are you familiar with the saying that if you look like a duck, walk like a duck and you talk like a duck, then you must be a duck? Well, regardless, let me say you certainly do look like an assassin. Whether you plan to kill me or not, I must continue conversing with you so you always remember me. As you watch me die, you will look into my eyes and remember all that I have said. I love your smirk. We are finally making progress towards both of our goals. Oh, you think this is funny, your laughter is a bit too much for me. Take it easy slayer, you are on my territory. You are no longer in the land of opportunity.

I assume that my tone is only catalyzing your hatred towards me. This could all be a misunderstanding. Let us take a moment to observe this beautiful hotel that stands before us. I knew you would ask if I have ever been here before. Of course, I have frequented this hotel many of times. Perhaps it is indeed ironic that I brought you to a place that I knew so much about. I have memorized all of the alleyways surrounding the hotel. You are currently in the cultural capital of Pakistan. The only place that I feel is more beautiful than Lahore is the beach in Greece that I once visited with Erica. The beach was nirvana. Just past the gate you will see the hotel. The girls from the National College of Arts frequent the restaurant inside. I often stare intensely at them, the same way in which you are currently watching me. The

restaurant features delicious food. Would you like to dine, as I am sure you have become hungry from our walk? You are right, it is getting late. We should conduct the business that sent you here. What do you mean we have to run to the hotel? This is a safe neighborhood, there is nothing to fear. The waiter lurking in the darkness, however, poses no threat to you. He poses a threat to me? Perhaps I shall turn around and take a look to see what he is doing. The waiter is indeed reaching into his jacket. Now would be a good time for us to make our way into the hotel. I did not foresee something of this caliber occurring tonight.

This is a beautiful hotel room. Would you not say the same? The décor and lighting are superb. From my first association with the waiter, I knew that he was not a straightedge civilian. I saw the signs but thought nothing of them. I myself felt feelings of happiness after the attacks on September 11, 2001. Who am I to judge the character of a man after feeling such thoughts? Please tell me you are not associated with him. You are the one who is supposed to take my life away, symbolizing America's complete destruction of me. Now I have a fellow Pakistani trying to destroy me. Pakistan is my home, not my enemy. I hardly know this man who has just reached into to his jacket for a weapon. I am sorry I will step away from the window. I have just become so anxious after this change of events. I thought that you traveled over the Atlantic to murder me in cold blood. The ocean is the barrier between our cultures. I heard that the Americans had their eye on me as a potential threat to the United States. If you do not mind me asking, why are you so worried about protecting me?

I should have known that you traveled across the world for more than just a simple lunch at a café. From the time I met you, I knew that you had come for me. Unfortunately I was mistaken while judging you. I thought for sure that my death would be your only ticket home. Should we call the authorities or just hide in fear and hope that he walks off eventually? You are a government official? I should have known that you were affiliated with the American government. The professionalism and maturity in your voice allow me to assume that you have been subject to much training. As we ran into the historic and ritzy hotel, I noticed that you were using your own body as a protective shield for me. I respect and admire this courageous behavior. I still wonder why I have become a target by my own people.

I will ask you again, Jack Bauer, why have I become a target by my own people? A plot was developed to hire a native Pakistani hit man to assassinate me. Such a plan must have been funded by a wealthy businessman. Are you implying that Underwood Sampson and Company is responsible for this? Jim would never let this happen to me. Yes, I am aware that I abandoned the company. This whole time I thought I had a firm grasp on the world, but everything is slowly slipping away. We must not allow this hit man to strike fear upon us. As he stands at the gate of the hotel staring at the window of this room I feel as if we must take immediate action. Together we will confront him and seek to discover the reasoning behind this.

I commend you for handing me your pistol during this ordeal. How will you protect yourself? Well that knife will definitely have to do, I had no idea you were carrying that as well. There he is, waiting for us at the gate. We should approach him together, Americans love having power in numbers. Why is the waiter putting a cigarette into his mouth during this tense moment? You are absolutely correct. He is trying to provide a distraction and is slowly towards us, avoiding any and all eye contact. Now that we are face to face with the true assassin, we shall ask what his motive is. What is he doing, reaching into his jacket in such a sly and distinct motion? Jack I do not know what just happened. My finger slipped on the trigger. My nerves got the best of me. Nerves are a destructive catalyst. What have I done? I just murdered a man about whom I knew very little. Of course this was justified, you are correct by calling this a victory. We must now remove the weapon from his jacket, before a vagrant walks from the ally and causes more harm. You must be mistaken, what do you mean there is no gun inside his jacket? A deeply scratched metallic steel lighter lay across his chest. We now stare into the eyes of a man who was murdered as the result of a tragedy, similar to all of the lives lost on September 11, 2001.

Edwidge Danticat's short story collection *Krik? Krak!* describes the hardship of life under Haiti's dictatorship. "Children of the Sea" is a story about a young revolutionary who must escape Haiti on a rickety boat to avoid punishment. At sea, he observes a fellow escapee, Cèlianne, a young pregnant woman. This assignment asked students to creatively write the backstory of a minor character from one of Danticat's stories, and this writer uses vivid and evocative imagery to tell the story of Cèlianne's troubled past.

Cèlianne's Story

Keva Luke

Like if life was not already hard enough for me. The cruel advantages that my land had burdened on me shook me that night. In fermenting pain they tore apart my dignity and my hope for a better day. The sweltering heat, the sweat and the musty clay that lay beneath us left a nauseas aroma that I can still remember to this day. But to what honor do I owe my land? It has raped me and broken the promise of protection that it was supposed to give me. They say that we are a strong people, that we conquered a lot more than what they thought we could. Apparently, only bits of that inheritance traveled down my bloodline. I am weak, debilitated and frustrated. Captured in this barrier of self-pity, I became more and more self-conscious. It was not in my heart to follow this journey; but what position was I in to say no? So onto that boat I had to go, to somewhere, reliving my ancestors' voyage through the triangle that led us here in the first place.

The days could not have told the age of my beauty. My once deep ebony skin flattered the world around me. Milk and honey was the essence of a bath fill of rich tales and perfumes. I was the admiration of the village. Such a smooth, tender, young woman like me was the pleasant beast of the men's eyes. The forbidden fruit I was called, more like a guava, solid posture on the outside and seedy and powerful on the inside with tart flesh. Always ripe but never picked off the tree because I had a firm grip on what I was about in life. Yes, there was not much to do, but hopefully this land of mine was going to fulfill the things it said accordingly. Lacquered in coconut oil, hair braided with the finest beads and body accented with the scent of hibiscus, I was ready to rule the world.

But only the thieves of the night would ever dare pick the fruit off the tree. Tormented by the beady eyes of the dark, by the loud noises of the fiends, I realized that I could not escape this cruelty that was upon me. Here my façade indicates that I was firm and solid but I guess I was too succulent to rot and it was my time to be picked and devoured. The cursed men attacked, scraped and hung on dearly to my body. I could feel my seedy and fleshy interior deteriorate and melt. My stomach was overwhelmed with frustrating agony whereas my womb was turned upside down. Pinned down inside the clay hut, the heat rose to the ceiling leaving condensation of sweat dripping back into my mouth as I lay there crying. No longer was my skin smooth and no longer did I smell like hibiscus. Clay was deepened into the smooth crests of my elbows and knees. The last thing I remembered from the hut was a hibiscus leaf that fell from my pocket. It was the last innocent thing that I remembered that night when my innocence and hope were stolen by those savages. Picked from my niche, I soon became nothing more than the branch that the guava rested on.

I have placed my seat here after those horrific events. I hear them making fun of me being big, rough and swollen. All my beauty is gone and my attempts to have the scent of a goddess are no longer a priority. I sit there in my own pile

of fluids. I have no more hope. The only seed I bear is the one in my rotting womb. It was there for a while and God knows what evils it has seen and has conjured for me on the day. It is the only thing that is close to me here. I sang to him stories but not aloud: usually in humming or in my inside voice so that they do not see the little bit of strength that I have left. I thought it was a boy because all the torment that it has gone through to get here that it might as well end up being a resilient young man. From his makers, he probably will take on their strength that was used to subdue me. A girl, I felt, cannot hold on to this strength that those savages had. Look at me, I am weak. Hopefully this one of mine does not inherit any of these feeble attributes.

Like everything in the world, things changed. My lack of oxygen in this world, my lack of nourishment and my lack of freedom suffocated the little one. The grotesqueness that arose from my side of the boat had many stomachs churning. They characterized me and my child as a cinder block that weighed down the boat. I quietly took this on internally as Swiss refrained from showing me her beauty. But with all my might I could not deny that we were empty vessels taking up a space of that ship. And so we made our way where we bargained with our freedom. If we could have only accessed gills it would have made the transition much easier.

I knew that we would never see the day of freedom. My own country took it away from me twice: it took away my personal freedom and the freedom of my daughter. It was like my dream was becoming real for the first time in forever. As we sunk to the depths of the piercing ocean, it is as if we both became one with it. All my troubles and fears sank away with the fish. My life history seemed novel: I started anew and with a new conscious. Down there, Swiss and I were one entity. There she began to unravel her secret and open up to me more. I cannot let her see the tears shed from my eyes because I imagine her seeing me as a strong woman. Even though she was procreated from the evil spawn of men, a little bit of me still shines within her. I learned to love and cherish her every day in these dark depths.

It is not unusual that we see more and more bodies dropping in uninvited to our dinners. Once we got an old gypsy. She came down tattered and bruised with a scar that ran down the side of her wrinkled face. Her gown was shredded to pieces, perhaps an act that was taken advantage of by the sharks. She easily sunk down and an array of her stories was not untold anymore. We learned about her history and how she got onto one of those boats. She realized that the life of a gypsy was not for her anymore and instead searched for freedom elsewhere. So onto the boat she climbed but when suspicions arose of sudden thievery, she was condemned and flipped overboard. Not too long after, a girl stricken with cholera joined us. Naomi was her name and she looked deadly like she had seen a ghost. Her flesh looked familiar and at that moment I realized that she was one of the girls who were on the boat with me and Swiss. So she joined in on our seafood delicacy at the bottom of the icy reef.

Sometimes I just wonder about life up top. I wonder how much more infantile souls I would see hovering above our heads. My taste of freedom here is a little bit antiquated than what it would have been in that new land. Or how would I even know what it was? I dream of Swiss and me getting off the boat and facing that big statue with the lady with the spiky hat. The smell of that fresh breeze of liberty and the sight of my fellow brothers and sister exiting the boat into a new world only brightens my smile. But I know for many that this does not come through. They end up in my situation at the bottom of the sea. The cruelty and hell that they face in Haiti and on the boat is too much pressure which leads to their excommunication from the world of light. In the end, they end up here amongst the dead and the martyrs.

This massive burial site is home to many brave Haitian who have tried to escape prosecution. It is not unusual that I meet other women like me who are cast away to this underworld. I only pray that the raids and masculine superiority in Haiti would come to an end. I am tired of seeing “children of the sea” fall to their shallowly death where a false façade of freedom is given.

This is a strong argumentative research paper that includes thorough and extensive research. In addition, this writer does a particularly good job of anticipating and addressing counter-arguments.

The War on Drugs: The High Cost of Being Tough on Crime

Caitlin Baranowski

In 1971, President Nixon launched an anti-drug crusade known as the “War on Drugs.” The War on Drugs refers to the American policy which aims to create a completely drug-free society. Unfortunately, however, for the last forty years, the United States has waged the war with negligible success. In addition to wasting trillions of taxpayers’ dollars, the War on Drugs has not decreased the availability or popularity of illegal substances; it has merely increased government spending as well as the number of incarcerated individuals in America. Clearly, the nation’s prohibitionist policies based on the criminalization and eradication of drugs have not worked.

Although only 4.5% of the world’s population, America has 25% of the world’s prisoners.¹ Today, the United States incarcerates more people than any other nation in the world.² The high number of American prisoners is a direct result of the War on Drugs. Since its development, the number of imprisoned Americans has skyrocketed. Back in 1980, the United States’ prison population was 500,000. Today, it is nearly 2,500,000.³ Of these 2,500,000 incarcerated individuals, 57% are serving sentences for nonviolent drug-related crimes.⁴ Though most pose no threat to society, these 1,425,000 offenders are taken from their homes and communities and thrown in jail. Due to millions of drug offenders, federal and state prisons in the United States are filled over capacity. Faced with prison overcrowding due to these nonviolent drug offenders, serious and violent offenders are often released early on parole. In fact, America’s prisons are so overcrowded that the average convict serves only one-third of his or her sentence.⁵

The federal and state governments use prison as a deterrent to discourage future crime. By sending millions of petty drug dealers to prison, the War on Drugs effort aims to demonstrate that “crime does not pay.” Though crime may not pay, it certainly does cost. With 2,500,000 people in the system, this cost adds up. In 2010, the annual federal budget for the War on Drugs was \$15 billion, or \$500 per second.⁶ This number seems massive, yet it represents a mere

¹ Drug Policy Alliance, “Drug Policy Alliance Annual Report 2010,” Drug Policy Alliance, <http://www.drugpolicy.org/library/2010annualreport.cfm> (accessed February 5, 2011).

² Lillian Segura, “America Behind Bars: Why Attempts at Prison Reform Keep Failing,” *AlterNet*, March 5, 2008, <http://www.alternet.org/rights/78648/?page=1> (accessed February 5, 2011).

³ William J. Sabol, Heather Couture, and Paige M. Harrison, *Prisoners in 2006* (Washington, DC: US Department of Justice, 2007), <http://bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov/content/pub/ascii/p06.txt> (accessed February 5, 2011).

⁴ Anthony Giddens, *Essentials of Sociology*, 3rd ed. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2011), 167.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ DrugSense, Drug War Clock, Map Inc., <http://www.drugsense.org/cms/wodclock> (accessed March 10, 2011 11:43 P.M.).

fraction of the money spent each year on the War on Drugs. This estimate excludes the cost of incarceration which, at \$25,895 per person, is an enormous cost to exclude from an annual budget.⁷ In addition, the federal budget estimate also neglects the cost of U.S. military eradication efforts in foreign nations. Furthermore, the estimate disregards the funds spent by state governments, which is at least another \$50 billion.⁸ Everything included, the United States spends well over \$65 billion on the War on Drugs in one year.

While the government spends billions of dollars on the War on Drugs each year, the American education system struggles to make ends meet. Approximately 75% of the funds used to imprison victims of the War on Drugs come from the state level.⁹ The money is drawn from a large general fund which is divided between the state's public needs, such as healthcare institutions, education systems, and correctional facilities. Unfortunately, these funds are not split equally; across the nation, more money is allotted to corrections than to education. Since 1987, states have increased their corrections funding 127% while higher education funding rose just 21%.¹⁰ Overall, state and local governments have spent almost four times more on corrections, demonstrating that imprisonment has taken priority over education in many areas.¹¹ The unequal distribution of funding is noticeable in many states, including New York and California, where prison spending actually exceeds state university funding.¹² In these states, the number of blacks and Latinos going to prison is greater than the number of blacks and Latinos who graduate from state universities.¹³ The lack of educational funding is troublesome because a basic education is the foundation for future success. Without the opportunities that an education can provide, people may be forced to turn to deviant means of achievement, such as drug-dealing. Eventually, many of these uneducated people end up in the prison system.

The War on Drugs also highlights racial inequalities in the American criminal justice system. According to sociologist David Musto, "The development of U.S. drug policy has been marked by periodic moral panics against people of color, and racial minorities in the United States are greatly overrepresented among those arrested and imprisoned for drug offenses."¹⁴ Statistics prove that the War on Drugs targets minorities. For example, black and Hispanic youth are arrested, prosecuted, and incarcerated more for drug crimes than white youth.¹⁵ One would assume that blacks and Hispanics must be more involved with criminal drug activity than whites; however, this is not the case. White youth actually sell and use drugs at the same rate as minority youth.¹⁶ Since whites represent a larger portion of

⁷ U.S. Courts, "Costs of Imprisonment Far Exceed Supervision Costs," U.S. Courts, http://www.uscourts.gov/News/NewsView/09-05-12/Costs_of_Imprisonment_Far_Exceed_Supervision_Costs.aspx (accessed February 28, 2011).

⁸ Lillian Segura, "America Behind Bars: Why Attempts at Prison Reform Keep Failing," *Alternet*, March 5, 2008, <http://www.alternet.org/rights/78648/?page=1> (accessed February 5, 2011).

⁹ Drug Policy Alliance, "Education vs. Incarceration," Drug Policy Alliance, 2011, <http://www.drugpolicy.org/communities/race/educationvs/> (accessed February 5, 2011).

¹⁰ Pew Center on the States, *One in 100: Behind Bars in America 2008*, (Washington, DC: The Pew Charitable Trusts, February 2008), 4.

¹¹ Kristen A. Hughes, "Justice Expenditure and Employment in the United States, 2003," (Washington, DC: US Dept. of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, May 2004), NCJ212260, 1.

¹² Drug Policy Alliance, "Education vs. Incarceration," Drug Policy Alliance, 2011, <http://www.drugpolicy.org/communities/race/educationvs/> (accessed February 5, 2011).

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ David F. Musto, *The American Disease: Origins of Narcotic Control* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), 20.

¹⁵ Marc Mauer and Tracy Huling, "Young Black Americans and the Criminal Justice System: Five Years Later," *The Sentencing Project*, October 1995.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

the population, there should theoretically be more imprisoned whites. In reality, minorities constitute the majority of the prison population. Blacks represent 74% of all Americans sentenced to prison for drug offenses while Hispanics constitute 16%.¹⁷ Together, these minority groups constitute 90% of those imprisoned for drugs. Blacks have a higher rate of incarceration than any other racial group. Studies estimate that 1 in 31 American adults are under some form of correctional control, like prison, jail, or parole. But, when looking specifically at African Americans, the rate of adults under correctional control rises to 1 in 11, and this rate is even higher in inner city neighborhoods.¹⁸ The disproportionate number of incarcerated minorities demonstrates the disparities in the criminal justice system, forcing many minorities to wonder if the War on Drugs focuses on “justice or just us.”¹⁹ Because they tend to be uneducated, convicts are often unprepared to lead productive lives. They have difficulty finding jobs and assistance once released. Adjusting back to life on the outside is particularly difficult for those from high-crime, inner city neighborhoods where education and support are minimal. Lacking the means to achieve legally, many former prisoners are forced to return to crime. Within three years of their release, 67% of convicts are rearrested and 52% are re-incarcerated.²⁰ The astounding percent of people who return to prison calls the effectiveness of America’s prison system into question. A “corrections” system with a recidivism rate this high is obviously not an effective way to correct behavior.

The War on Drugs should not revolve around imprisonment because prison does not solve crime; it merely perpetuates it. The excessive use of incarceration has enormous cost implications. For example, locking up nonviolent drug offenders leaves millions of children to grow up without parents. Growing up with absent parents puts many of these innocent children at risk for deviant behaviors, like emotional withdrawal, inattention, low self-esteem and truancy. Among other difficulties, 29% of children of incarcerated parents have trouble in school and 27% have behavioral problems.²¹ For some children of incarcerated parents, these problems eventually cause them to drop out of school and turn to drugs. Therefore, children of incarcerated parents risk intergenerational imprisonment and they continue the prison cycle.

The government should reanalyze its War on Drugs strategy of incarceration because prison is not an effective deterrent. Increased prison rates do not necessarily decrease crime rates. At this point, America is receiving diminishing, if any, public safety returns. Studies suggest that there is no definite correlation between the number of prisoners and the crime rate. For instance, states with the highest incarceration rates only achieve about a 2 to 4% reduction in crime; the states that increased prisoners the least had the largest reductions in crime.²² In 2007, California Senator Don Perata said, “We are jammed up in this situation [prison over-crowding] right now because we have fallen in love with one of the most undocumented beliefs, that somehow you get safer if you put more people in jail.”²³

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Pew Center on the States, *One in 31: The Long Reach of American Corrections*, (Washington, DC: The Pew Charitable Trusts, March 2009), 1.

¹⁹ Drug Policy Alliance, “Education vs. Incarceration,” Drug Policy Alliance, 2011, <http://www.drugpolicy.org/communities/race/educationvsi/> (accessed February 5, 2011).

²⁰ Marc Mauer and Tracy Huling, “Young Black Americans and the Criminal Justice System: Five Years Later,” The Sentencing Project, October 1995.

²¹ Charlene Wear Simmons, “Children of Incarcerated Parents,” *CRB Note 7*, no. 2 (2000): 4. <http://www.library.ca.gov/crb/00/notes/V7N2.pdf> (accessed February 5, 2011).

²² Fox Butterfield, “Effect of Prison Building on Crime Is Weighed,” *New York Times*, September 28, 2000, sec. A.

²³ Lillian Segura, “America Behind Bars: Why Attempts at Prison Reform Keep Failing,” *Alternet*, March 5, 2008, <http://www.alternet.org/rights/78648/?page=1> (accessed February 5, 2011).

Although the War on Drugs is a massive expenditure, there is no evidence that it has significantly decreased the supply and demand of illegal drugs in the United States. The War on Drugs functions on the idea that making drugs illegal will discourage usage. It is ineffective because criminalization does not get rid of the demand. When the sale of drugs is illegal, users simply turn to the black market, causing criminal activity. The black market is not as concealed as one may think. Dealers are found everywhere, from corporate offices to high schools. Due to criminalization, many drugs are easier for minors to obtain than alcohol since alcohol sellers are required to ask for identification, whereas drug dealers are not. Many illegal substances have remained available to the public despite the government's efforts. The use of drugs, particularly marijuana, is rampant in the United States. Each year Americans smoke over 5,000,000 pounds of marijuana and 1 out of 3 Americans have smoked it during their lifetime.²⁴ When the government prosecutes simple marijuana possession violators, resources that could be used to prosecute violent criminals are taken away. Police protection from drugs is taking away the time, money, and manpower which could be used for protection from dangerous criminals. For instance, the total number of marijuana arrests in 2006 exceeded the number of arrests for all violent crimes.²⁵ The billions of dollars squandered on the War of Drugs could be invested elsewhere in order to significantly increase public safety in America.

Recently, as the nation has delved deeper into debt, the United States has begun to undergo a change in both public support and government drug policy. Marijuana has become a major topic of debate as more Americans begin to favor its legalization; 46% of Americans now support the complete legalization of marijuana and 70% favor legalization for medicinal use only.²⁶ The American public's growing support for legalization has led many states to reevaluate marijuana laws. Although marijuana still remains illegal at the federal level, numerous states have already legalized the drug. In the past, the federal government has overridden state laws that contradict federal laws, like the national ban on marijuana. Under President Obama, however, the federal government has lessened its anti-marijuana enforcement because his administration agrees that the War on Drugs is a failure. In May 2009, Gil Kerlikowske, the Director of the Office of National Drug Control, announced that Obama's administration would not use the phrase "War on Drugs" because the term is counter-productive.²⁷ According to Kerlikowske, the President agrees that though the drug-related prison population has increased, there has been no corresponding decrease in drug usage. This recent modification in presidential policy signifies an imminent change in the drug stances of politicians. There is a shift away from the "lock them up and throw away the key" philosophy; slowly – yet surely – people are becoming smart instead of "tough on crime." If support continues, the majority of Americans will soon witness relaxed marijuana laws. Such changes in national and state policy may eventually transform into something more significant, something that will change the War on Drugs policy of the United States altogether.

The American drug policy over the last forty years has failed at achieving its original goal: the eradication of drugs. The War on Drugs has had only a negative impact on society as it incarcerates record numbers of minorities and wastes billions of dollars each year. By allocating money to corrections rather than education, the United States has irresponsibly perpetuated the cycle of imprisonment and inadvertently promoted, rather than discouraged, drugs. The

²⁴ U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency, "Drug Trafficking in the United States," *Almanac of Policy Issues*, May 2004, http://www.policyalmanac.org/crime/archive/drug_trafficking.html (accessed February 8, 2011).

²⁵ NORML, "Marijuana Arrests For Year 2006 – 829,625 Tops Record High...Nearly 6 Percent Increase Over 2005," *The National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws*, October, 9, 2007, http://norml.org/index.cfm?Group_ID=7370 (accessed February 28, 2011).

²⁶ Lydia Saad, "U.S. Support for Legalizing Marijuana Reaches New High," *Gallup*, October 19, 2009, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/123728/u.s.-support-legalizing-marijuana-reaches-new-high.aspx> (accessed February 5, 2011).

²⁷ Gary Fields, "White House Czar Calls for End to 'War on Drugs'," *The Wall Street Journal*, Dow Jones & Company, Inc., May 14, 2010, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB124225891527617397.html> (accessed February 28, 2011).

United States must end the current drug policy which releases violent criminals back into society while incarcerating harmless drug offenders, taking them away from their jobs, families, and communities. The United States must revise national and state spending to focus less on corrections, and more on the factors that help to reduce criminal drug activity, such as education and drug treatment programs. The recent change in political positions on drugs, as well as public opinion, suggests that drug policy may change in the next few years. Hopefully, the end of the War on Drugs will come soon as people begin to get smart, rather than tough, on crime.

Bibliography

- Butterfield, Fox. "Effect of Prison Building on Crime Is Weighed." *New York Times*, September 28, 2000, Sec. A.
- Drug Policy Alliance. "Drug Policy Alliance Annual Report 2010." Drug Policy Alliance. <http://www.drugpolicy.org/library/2010annualreport.cfm> (accessed February 5, 2011).
- Drug Policy Alliance. "Education vs. Incarceration." Drug Policy Alliance. 2011. <http://www.drugpolicy.org/communities/race/educationvsi/> (accessed February 5, 2011).
- Drug Sense. Drug War Clock. Map Inc. <http://www.drugsense.org/cms/wodclock> (accessed March 10, 2011 11:43 P.M.).
- Fields, Gary. "White House Czar Calls for End to 'War on Drugs'." *The Wall Street Journal*. Dow Jones & Company, Inc. May 14, 2010. <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB124225891527617397.html> (accessed February 28, 2011).
- Giddens, Anthony. *Essentials of Sociology*. 3rd ed. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2011.
- Hughes, Kristen A. "Justice Expenditure and Employment in the United States, 2003." Washington, DC: US Dept. of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, May 2004.
- Mauer, Marc, and Tracy Huling. "Young Black Americans and the Criminal Justice System: Five Years Later." The Sentencing Project. October 1995.
- Musto, David F. *The American Disease; Origins of Narcotic Control*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973.
- NORML. "Marijuana Arrests For Year 2006 – 829,625 Tops Record High...Nearly 6 Percent Increase Over 2005." The National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws. October, 9, 2007. http://norml.org/index.cfm?Group_ID=7370 (accessed February 28, 2011).
- Pew Center on the States. *One in 100: Behind Bars in America 2008*. Washington, DC: The Pew Charitable Trusts, February 2008.
- Pew Center on the States. *One in 31: The Long Reach of American Corrections*. Washington, DC: The Pew Charitable Trusts, March 2009.
- Saad, Lydia. "U.S. Support for Legalizing Marijuana Reaches New High." Gallup. October 19, 2009. <http://www.gallup.com/poll/123728/u.s.-support-legalizing-marijuana-reaches-new-high.aspx> (accessed February 5, 2011).
- Sabol, William J., Heather Couture, and Paige M. Harrison. *Prisoners in 2006*. Washington, DC: US Department of Justice- Bureau of Justice Statistics Bulletin (No. NCJ 219416). December 2007. <http://bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov/content/pub/ascii/p06.txt> (accessed February 5, 2011).
- Segura, Lillian. "America Behind Bars: Why Attempts at Prison Reform Keep Failing." *Alternet*. March 5, 2008. <http://www.alternet.org/rights/78648/?page=1> (accessed February 5, 2011).
- Simmons, Charlene Wear. "Children of Incarcerated Parents." *CRB Notes* 7, no. 2 (2000): 1-11.
- U.S. Courts. "Costs of Imprisonment Far Exceed Supervision Costs." U.S. Courts. http://www.uscourts.gov/News/NewsView/09-05-12/Costs_of_Imprisonment_Far_Exceed_Supervision_Costs.aspx (accessed February 28, 2011).
- U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency. "Drug Trafficking in the United States." *Almanac of Policy Issues*. May 2004. http://www.policyalmanac.org/crime/archive/drug_trafficking.html (accessed February 28, 2011).

Blending first-person narrative with relevant research, this writer offers a persuasive and passionate argument for cell phones to be used for educational purposes within the classroom.

(Please note that Siena College policy forbids the use of cell phones in class for any purpose—academic or otherwise—without the permission of the instructor.)

Cell Phones in Class

Nicholas Crupi

The question whether students should be allowed to use their cell phones in class or not has been debated since cell phones came out. Many teachers find the use of cell phones in class to be distracting and rude. As a result, cell phones are not allowed in most classrooms. Unfortunately, many students use their phones in class anyway, making the problem a never-ending battle between students and teachers. Allowing the use of cell phones in class might be the answer. The capabilities that they hold are growing, making them more and more like miniature computers. Many of these capabilities can be used for educational purposes, such as the ability to take notes, mark due dates, make calculations and record lectures. Because cell phone technology is growing every year and because of the educational value cell phones possess, students should be allowed to use cell phones as a productive tool in class.

I would like to begin with one of my experiences regarding a teacher's reaction after she saw me use my cell phone on a field trip. Just a couple months ago, I went to The Fresh Market (an organic supermarket) with some students from my college. The purpose of the trip was to learn why purchasing food from local farms is much more healthy and safe than purchasing food from large corporations that mass-produce their food. I was required to write a short paper on the field trip, so I decided to take notes on my cell phone while our tour guide was speaking. I was the only one taking notes. My teacher saw me typing away on my phone and told me to put it away because she believed I was being rude to the tour guide. I showed her that I was taking notes, and she apologized and let me continue. The situation really annoyed me because everyone was laughing. I found it quite ironic that I was paying close attention to the speaker, and I was called out for being rude. The teacher was actually the distracting one because she stopped the tour guide from talking by confronting me about using my cell phone. People need to understand that cell phones can do a lot more than just sharing with your friend what you did last night.

When cell phones first came out, most schools immediately reacted by banning and prohibiting them. Now some schools are tinkering with their policies because they have realized that trying to prevent students from using their phones is a lot easier said than done. Other schools are beginning to respect cell phones for the great capabilities that they hold. In 2009, administrators of the Derry Township school district in Pennsylvania decided to ease the school's cell phone restrictions at the teacher's discretion so that students could use their phones as an educational tool in class. District spokesman Dan Tredinnick said, "Students should have the same technology inside the school as they do outside" (Dobeneck). This is a great point because it is to our benefit to take advantage of the latest technology available. On the other hand, many schools are not changing their strict policies that go as far as requiring students to bring written permission from their parents saying that their son or daughter can use their phone.

The main argument teachers have against cell phones is that they are distracting and disruptive. If you think about it, stopping a lesson plan to point out that someone is using his or her cell phone is more distracting and time consuming than not doing anything at all. Bill Husfelt is the Superintendent of the Bay County District Schools in Florida where cell phones are not allowed. "It's just a conflict taking them up and having to deal with them," Husfelt said. "It's too disruptive" (Armario). It seems that the cell phone battle between teachers and students is never-ending, and too much class time is wasted because of it. The only solution I see to this problem is to just allow them. Obviously this is a change that would take some time adjusting to, but technology is at our feet, and there is no reason we should be stepping on it.

Current cell phones such as the iPhone and BlackBerry have the ability to use Microsoft Office applications such as Word, PowerPoint, and Excel. Seeing where technology stands today, using our cell phone to create a PowerPoint may seem a little over our heads, but typing notes or reviewing a paper is not much harder than sending a text. Every day the capabilities of a cell phone are expanding and becoming more educational. Almost all cell phones available today come with calendar, voice recording, calculator, and notepad features, which are great examples of responsible ways that students can use their cell phones in class.

In 2008, Liz Kolb wrote a book called *Toys to Tools* that offers ways to connect student cell phones to education. Kolb, a former high school teacher, middle school teacher, and high school technology coordinator, is currently an assistant professor at Madonna University in Michigan. She finds cell phones to be a great learning tool inside and outside the classroom and explains how the calendar feature on cell phones is a convenient way for students to stay organized and mark assignments. Furthermore, she says that taking advantage of cell phone features, such as the calendar, will help students learn to use their cell phone as a lifelong organization tool (Kolb 173).

The high-end cell phones today carry additional capabilities such as an Internet browser and thousands of applications. The ability to browse the Internet and access search engines makes the cell phone a great research tool. The Internet offers a dictionary, a thesaurus, and an encyclopedia all in one; therefore, it is foolish to bring a big heavy dictionary to class when you can get any word defined instantly on your cell phone. Teachers should be encouraging their students to use their cell phones instead of chastising them for it.

Marc Prensky is a designer in the field of education and learning, and he believes cell phones are the answer to education. He reports how some of the cell phones available today are just as powerful as a mid-1990's PC (1). In college, many teachers allow their students to use their laptops in class to take notes or start a paper that was assigned, but once a cell phone is brought out, it is as if someone pulled out a bomb. It just does not make sense. Recently people from the University of New Hampshire conducted a survey of 1,043 students. About half of the students said they felt guilty while using their phone in class, and 65 percent said they sent at least one text message per class (UNH Survey). Surveys regarding high school students revealed similar numbers. From this we can conclude that most kids in high school or college who have a cell phone are using it regardless of the fact that they are not allowed. If students were entitled to use their cell phones, their actions in class would not really change because the majority of them have been using their cell phones all along. If anything were to happen, the effects would be positive due to the productive cell phone capabilities and the fact that less class time would be wasted because teachers will no longer have to enforce a ban. It is not fair for students to feel guilty for using their phones behind their teacher's back. If a student wants to look up the definition to a word on his or her phone, they should be welcome to do so. Most students in college are above age eighteen and are considered adults. It is essential for teachers to have a close relationship with their students and to trust them because it will encourage their students to be more respectful and participate more. When a teacher prevents a student from using his or her phone in class it is as if they are saying, "I do not trust that you will use that device responsibly." This does not help to create a close teacher-student relationship.

In the 2011 State of the Union Address, President Obama said he wanted to win the future and improve our education. Permitting cell phones may help President Obama achieve this goal. Prensky claims that America does not fully appreciate the potential of cell phones. He explains that cell phones are not only used for talking to other people; they are miniature computers that are always in our pockets. Being a miniature computer, cell phones are handy devices that can be used to learn. Japan and China are known for their great education systems, and the students in these countries use their cell phones to learn English, math, health, spelling, and to access live lectures (Prensky 2). Thankfully, the American government is starting to see that cell phones can be used productively in class. Recently in Japan, a twenty-one-year-old girl typed her entire 142-page novel on her cell phone, and the book became a bestseller. She published the book in a mobile format, and it has sold more than 420,000 mobile copies where subscribers download the text and read it on their cell phone. She said she has been writing books on her cell phone since she was in middle school. Although some people find it hard to read the little text on their cell phone screen, it is believed that mobile novels will become more popular in the future. Some schools even have begun to use digital textbooks, and it is possible that mobile versions could be made so that students can have access to their textbooks at any time (Kolb 192-193).

Today we live in a time where technology is taking over. Almost all of us have a cell phone, and it is becoming a bigger part of our everyday lives. The capabilities that they hold are growing and becoming more educational. Thankfully, America is beginning to see the educational value cell phones hold.

Works Cited

- Armario, Christine. "Teachers Begin Using Cell Phones for Class Lessons." *PhysOrg*. 27 Nov. 2009. Web. 8 Mar. 2011.
- Dobeneck, Monica. "Area Schools Reconsider Cell Phone Policies." *Patriot-News* [Mechanicsburg]. PennLive.com. 8 Nov. 2010. Web. 20 Mar. 2011.
- Kolb, Liz. *Toys to Tools: Connecting Student Cell Phones to Education*. Eugene, OR: International Society for Technology in Education, 2008. Print.
- Martin, Chuck. "In-Class Texting Behaviors Among College Students." *University of New Hampshire*. 2011. Web. 21 Mar. 2011.
- Microsoft. "Use Office Web Apps on Your Cell Phone - Office Web Apps - Microsoft Office." *Office - Microsoft Office*. Web. 16 Mar. 2011.
- Prensky, Marc. "What Can You Learn from a Cell Phone? Almost Anything!" *Innovate Online*. 2007. Web. 15 Feb. 2011.
- "Using Cell Phones to Support Teaching and Learning." *U.S. Department of Education*. Web. 08 Mar. 2011.

This research project required the writer to explore a topic that is prevalent, current, and controversial within her own community. Blending information from relevant sources with personal experience, the student provides an overview of the issue, demonstrates how she is a stakeholder, and offers a recommendation. Other guidelines for the assignment included using first person point-of-view and incorporating visuals, which were purposely omitted for this publication.

The Hazards of Northport LILCO Station

Samantha D'Amato

For years, the LILCO power plant located in Northport, New York has been a monumental structure defining the town, as seen in Figure 1. With four 600 foot smoke stacks, the plant can be seen from Connecticut and most places across the Long Island Sound. In recent years, the plant has been under scrutiny because of its heavy carbon dioxide pollution: “The Northport power plant emits around 5.2 million metric tons of carbon dioxide into the air annually” (“Citizens Energy Plan”). With the world making strides to go green, the controversy surrounding the plant has increased with each passing year. Steps need to be taken by LIPA, The Long Island Power Association, and by National Grid, the company that distributes the power and the plant itself, to improve the pollution problem. Outlets like solar and wind energy are available for power stations like Northport’s. As a resident of Northport, I firmly believe that the plant needs to convert to a more modern and efficient power source for the benefit of the community and the environment.

My mother, Mary Kiely, grew up in a town called Elwood, which is next to the Northport village. She has never lived anywhere else besides Long Island while my father, Stephen D’Amato, was born in Queens. When he was fourteen years old, my grandparents moved my father and his brother out to Eatons Neck, a small community that is part of Northport. This was a considerable change for a Queens boy. Eatons Neck is a small peninsula that sticks out behind Northport on the North Shore of the Island, and there is only one road leading in and out of the community, which adds an additional fifteen to twenty minutes to your travel time anywhere. My father and my mother ended up meeting at Sears, where they were both employed— my father working at the tire center and my mother stationed as a cashier. They were married several years later, and their first home was my father’s childhood home in Eatons Neck. In my life, I have only moved once and that was from one house in Eatons Neck to another three blocks away. Eatons Neck is truly where my roots are. The question in my mind now is: *If my parents had known the dangers of the LILCO power plant, would they have started their lives there?*

Long Island began its intense growth after the end of World War II with thousands migrating to the suburbs to start families. The power plants scattered around Long Island have been a driving force for the increasing population and presently “supply electric and gas services to 2.8 million people in Suffolk, Nassau, Rockaway and Queens County areas” (“Citizens Energy Plan”). Tom Herrmann, an employee of National Grid, states that even “more plants are needed in Long Island for the ever increasing demand for electricity” (Herrmann) in spite of LILCO’s growth, which is documented in its history. Ellis Philips, the owner of E.L. Phillips and Company and the founder of LILCO [Long Island Lighting Company] started off with two degrees in electrical and mechanical engineering, and in 1904, he began his own engineering and consulting firm. Over the years, Philips began to notice many small electric light companies in need of updated operational efficiency, so he met up with an old business acquaintance, George Olmsted, and

together they began to purchase small electric companies on Long Island and slowly developed them into a great empire, LILCO, which was started in 1910. The new company was made up of four small utilities in Suffolk County - Amityville Electric Light Company, Islip Light Company, Northport Electric Lighting Company and Sayville Electric Company ("Long Island Lighting Company").

As Long Island grew in size, the company grew in profits and started to make improvements to the system for delivering and generating power. LILCO stepped up and built new stations and new lines for more electric power because of high demands. For example, "Between the years 1915 and 1919, the company grew by gaining numerous other plants on Long Island [and in] 1952, the company bought 60 acres in Hicksville to build a new central headquarters, followed by a purchase in 1965 for another facility in Shoreham" ("Long Island Lighting Company"). Years later, LILCO drew up plans to buy land in Northport for what would become the largest power station in the country at the time. Because of LILCO's noticeable growth, groups like The Sustainable Energy Alliance of Long Island emerged and stated the various plants were unsafe for the communities and for the environment. The groups gained support, and the Shoreham facility was closed because it was deemed hazardous. The Alliance later drew up a bill to create LIPA, The Long Island Power Authority, to ensure that there were environmental guidelines for the plants to follow. The bill was signed and LILCO was born but was later taken over by National Grid in 2006. Today the Northport plant remains active and is surrounded by an ever-growing and active community.

As a competitive runner and an active person in general, I am always outside. My father, Stephen, owns his own landscaping business, which requires him to be outdoors almost every day, and both of my younger sisters play numerous sports on outdoor fields. Not only is my family consistently outside, but our home is also located close to the beach which is where, as Figure 2 shows, LILCO is located as well. The town of Northport itself is entwined closely around the stacks, and many of the sports fields surround the plant. The community is habitually interacting with the environment just like my own family, but with my recent research, the environment, and thus the community, could be in harm's way.

There are multiple environmental issues related to the power plant including air, water, noise and visual-pollution. While the Northport Power Station supplies millions with power, it also supplies the air with a massive amount of carbon dioxide, causing severe health and environmental issues. Carbon dioxide is the primary greenhouse gas that is responsible for global warming and climate changes around the world. Unfortunately, the Northport LILCO station burns mostly oil and fossil fuels for its energy source. Figure 3 shows how pollution can negatively affect the sea. According to the graph, the past thirty years show a dramatic increase in sea levels due to pollution by greenhouse gases, but sea levels are not the only environmental aspect being affected. "Carbon dioxide emissions have been predicted to affect . . . the severity and abundance of storms, droughts and acid rain" as well ("Citizens Energy Plan"). Acid rain has become a huge problem for the eastern coast: "The rain is caused by pollutants emitting nitric and sulfuric acids into the air" (Treshow and Anderson), and the effects are found to ruin forest and aquatic ecosystems, which also is devastating to the individuals who make a living on the water.

Not only is the pollution affecting the water cycles, it is also taking a toll on the air. Long Island, combined with New York City was ranked the third worst area for smog and for "not working to attain federal health based ozone standards," and the Northport LILCO station was rated among the worst polluting facilities in not only this region but the entire eastern coast ("Citizens Energy Plan"). My home is located a little ways behind the town of Northport, which is surrounded by water on three sides. The rising sea levels linked with the air and water pollution put my home and community at risk in the future years. My house is about 60 feet above sea level, which is not high when the "sea level is rising a 3.3 millimeters a year" (Murray). The plant itself is located about 6 miles down the road from my home and can be seen clearly from the beach I live on. I never imagined that the plant was potentially doing my family and me harm when, as a child, I would admire the size of the four structures rising high into the sky.

But this plant's gaseous emissions are taking a critical toll on individuals' health. Depending on the wind currents, emissions from plants like Northport's can travel great distances and severely impact public health in different areas:

Power plant emissions are known to cut short the lives of 30,000 people annually on Long Island, most of those deaths being elderly individuals and children. In 1999, the Northport LILCO station and Port Jefferson's power plant were found to have caused five hospital admissions for lung problems, 93 ER visits, 1,300 asthma attacks, over 100 cases of acute bronchitis and unfortunately 12 premature deaths on Long Island alone. ("Citizens Energy Plan")

The multiple negative health impacts like those associated with Long Island power plants are traumatic for communities, but as Figure 4 reveals, Long Island is not the only area affected. In the United States, 60 to 100 million people are killed because of some exposure to air pollution. Even though the amount of pollutants emitted is falling within state and federal guidelines, thousands of Americans are suffering from cardiopulmonary diseases, asthma, cancer and respiratory problems. With more than three dozen family members living in Northport alone, this information is disturbing. I have always said that I wanted to move back to my childhood neighborhood with my own family, but my mind has been dramatically altered after learning these statistics. It is alarming to know that every time I go outside on a beautiful day, I could be breathing in soot emissions and potentially increasing my chance of cancer. This needs to change immediately with the help of alternative outlets for energy.

Solar energy is by far one of the best alternatives for Northport's LILCO station for countless beneficial reasons. With today's advanced technology, there are multiple alternatives for plants like LILCO. Instead of carbon dioxide emissions and burning fossil fuels, solar energy is clean and just as effective. However, "The amount of energy produced by the sun is the smallest percentage [used in power plants as energy] at 0.01%, [whereas] natural gas is used 21.6% of the time and coal 48.5%" ("Solar Power Statistics"). Solar energy is renewable, unlike fossil fuels and coal, which are being depleted daily. It cannot harm the environment or the health of individuals because it is clean and does not emit any greenhouse gases or soot like power plants are capable of doing. Figure 5 shows what a typical solar panel looks like. Amazingly, "[O]ne kW of power generated from solar panels prevents: 150lbs of coal from being mined, 300 lbs of CO₂ from being emitted and 105 gallons of water from being consumed" ("Solar Power Statistics"). Solar panels can have a lifespan between thirty and fifty years and are highly reliable.

Like all new technologies, there are some negative aspects to this relatively new energy source. Solar power is generally five times as expensive as coal and natural gases because of the young technology, but with rising oil prices, sun energy is looking better and better. Another potential problem is that solar energy is not always available during the day and certainly not at night, so there would be no energy source during periods of darkness. Even though solar power has negative aspects, it is still considered the energy of the future and should be introduced to communities and businesses looking for a cleaner, safer and more effective energy source. I see my own family slowly converting to solar energy by putting the solar panels on our roof to help heat our pool and using walkway lights that are able to light up after absorbing energy from the sun. Little advances like these are slowly changing the world for the better. These little steps, which add up over time, can make the most impact. For power plants, these little steps also include changing some of their technologies to prepare for solar energy.

Plants like Northport LILCO station have to overcome a few technological aspects to convert to a solar energy based plant. First off, large areas of land, such as deserts, will have to be covered with solar panels and thermal power stations. This means clearing the land and setting up the solar structures, which will take a lot of manpower and planning for the layout. Following this, batteries will have to be replaced in the present power plants because they are inefficient and costly and alternative energy storages will have to be developed. In addition, "the AC lines that are being used now to transport energy will have to be replaced across the continent by direct current lines which are smaller" ("Solar Power Statistics"). These are very big hurdles in some cases, but I believe the natural energy source in the sky will

eventually be used as the main source of energy in the future when the world begins to take larger steps in protecting its health and the environment.

Living very close to the Northport LILCO plant, I was able to reach out to a neighbor who works for National Grid. Tom Herrmann explained to me that he believes “the Northport LILCO station will never be replaced because it is the largest plant in the North Eastern United States.” He also told me about some of the advancements that the plant has made in recent years, including a switch from oil to natural gas, which is cleaner when burned. When I asked him about converting to solar power or at least trying to increase the use of it, Tom expressed that he could never see the plant completely converting: “There is not enough space to put solar panels that would equal the amount of electricity that the plant now provides.” He did, however, explain that there has been some talk about “re-powering” the plant to make it a cleaner and more productive. This means introducing newer technologies including the changing out many older power lines (Herrmann). This was exciting and, in a way, relieving to hear. With small steps seemingly being taken, I can feel better about my loved ones and my future.

In the years to come, I would truly like to see the Northport LILCO stacks convert to a more cleaner and efficient way of power, whether it is more solar power or a whole new re-powering of the plant. Northport alone is a beautiful and flourishing community that needs to be kept safe, clean and livable. The plant also needs to make changes to better the world. There are too many negative things linked to pollution such as the health and environmental effects, which were previously discussed. Even small steps can make a difference, and we need to come together as a community to develop plans or ideas for the plant, and others like it around the world. There are always positive outlets for situations, and people need to take more of an interest in situations like LILCO’s. As long as the plant is not affecting them personally and immediately, many people do not notice the bigger picture, like the future of their communities and the planet.

The LILCO stacks located in Northport, New York, are the largest not only on Long Island, but also on the Northeastern coast. With such defining structure and size, the plant has always drawn a great deal of attention. The plant is causing harm to the environment and community and is an issue that needs to be vigorously addressed. As a resident of Northport community, I believe that the LILCO plant has to make major conversions to a safer and cleaner energy source. I do believe this is possible for the future. I want myself, my family and my community to be safe every time we breathe in the air and enjoy the beach, and I do not want the detrimental aspects of the plant to hinder my future or anyone else’s.

Works Cited

- “Citizens Energy Plan for Long Island.” *The Sustainable Energy Alliance of Long Island*. Oct. 2002. Web. 27 Feb. 2011.
- Herrmann, Tom. “The Long Island LILCO Station.” E-mail interview. 25 Mar. 2011.
- “LONG ISLAND LIGHTING COMPANY— Company History.” *Find Funding with Banks, Investors, and Other Funding Sources*. Funding Universe, 30 Jan. 2011. Web. 8 Mar 2011.
- Murray, Molly. “Rising Sea Levels Threaten Delaware Coast.” *The Daily Times*. *The Daily Times / Salisbury News*, 20 Mar. 2011. Web. 02 Apr. 2011.
- “Solar Power Statistics.” *Solar Power — A Clean, Renewable Source of Energy for the Home*. SolarPowerIsTheFuture.com, 2001. Web. 29 Mar. 2011.
- Treshow, Michael, and Franklin K. Anderson. “Air Pollutant Interactions and Forest Decline and Acid Rain.” *Plant Stress from Air Pollution*. Chichester, England: Wiley, 1989. 143-62. Print.

This paper is a good example of an expository research paper, for the writer gathered information from disparate sources and presents it to the reader in a well-organized fashion. Rather than using the data to make a strong argument, the author uses his research to present an introduction to, and an overview of, the topic.

A Look Inside the Secret Society of North Korea

William Fitzgerald

Abstract

North Korea is one of the most enigmatic and militaristic nations in the world today. In recent years its society, government, and economy have become more and more unstable under the rule of Kim Jong Il. This paper analyzes several aspects of the country including: its history, its government, its present and past leaders, its military, its nuclear affairs, its economy, its strict internal security and control, its education system, its media, its women, its capital, Pyongyang, and its possible future connotations. It does so in an attempt to discover more about the nation as a whole, as well as the inner workings of its society.

Introduction and Brief History

North Korea, also known as the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (D.P.R.K.), is a relatively small, mountainous peninsula nation that is connected to China on the northern side and South Korea on the southern side. It is currently one of the most secretive and militaristic societies in the world, but it has not always been like this. It has a rich history that is filled with tradition, pride, and hardship. The Choson Dynasty, Korea's last royal and longest Confucian ruling dynasty, existed from the late 1300s to the late 1800s. This was a great period of prosperity for Korea, and it marked the peak of its classical culture (Worden, 2008, p. 16). The collapse of this five-century long dynasty in the late 1800s was due to the fact that it could not keep up with the ever-changing and technologically advanced world that was shaping around it because of its traditional Confucian beliefs. As a result, there was a push to bring western ideas to Korea during this time because they wanted to be part of this movement of rapidly developing nations (Worden, 2008, p. 26).

However, this effort was halted as Japan colonized Korea during both World War I and World War II, from 1910-1945. This colonization left a bitter taste in the mouths of Koreans everywhere as they had always viewed Japan as inferior. Needless to say, it crushed the dignity of the nation. Many Korean nationalists and communists began to rebel against Japanese forces. They wanted their own country and a fresh start (Worden, 2008, p. 30). At the end of World War II, the United States and the Soviet Union decided that the thirty-eighth parallel would be the dividing line for which side would be guided by what country. The north would be under the power of the Soviet Union, while the south would be under the United States. This fueled the anger in the minds of Koreans (Worden, 2008, p. 38). That same year, the Soviets presented Kim Il Sung as the leader of North Korea and he remained as such for many years to come (Worden, 2008, p. 40). From 1950-1953, North and South Korea fought viciously over sole ownership of the peninsula in what is known as the Korean War. This war did nothing but create destruction and devastation.

The border remained at the thirty-eighth parallel. By the 1970s, the North Korean economy and industry was back on track and booming because of the intense reform programs that Kim Il Sung put into place (Worden, 2008, p. 46). After the Cold war, in the late 1990s and early 2000s, North Korean relations with South Korea, the United States, and the rest of the world were improving dramatically. New leader, Kim Jong Il, and President William Clinton, met several times to discuss the possession of nuclear missiles. During the first and second Bush administrations, however, relations weakened and North Korea began to build up its nuclear weapon program again. (Worden, p. 58) Today, North Korea functions as one of the world's most secretive and militaristic societies through strict leadership, harsh government policy, and a Juche ideology.

Government and Current and Past Leaders

The fundamental ideology of North Korea and its government is called Juche. The Juche ideology contains the idea of self-reliance in which North Korea believes it does not have to reach out to other nations for help, trade, or anything of that nature. This ideology is embedded into all forms of the socialist republic²⁸¹ political spectrum in North Korea, including: the legislative, executive, and judicial branch (Worden, 2008, p. 203). According to H.S. Park (2001), the Juche ideology developed from the fact that North Korea saw South Korea as helpless because it had relations with other countries. North Koreans believed that they did not need to resort to that level of disgrace and that they were powerful enough to thrive on their own (p. 505). H.S. Park (2001) also believes that the Juche ideology was the reason that North Korea was able to hold onto its socialist government through the collapse of the Soviet Union and through the global movement to get rid of socialism in the 1980s. Since North Korea did not have to interact with the rest of the world, and it was independent, it was essentially safe (p. 505). The basis for North Korean government today came from the ideas of the Japanese during the years of colonization. These are both the characteristics of a compelling leader and the idea of militarism (H.S. Park, 2001, p. 504).

The first leader that ruled North Korea was Kim Il Sung. Kim was born in 1912 and was an officer in the Soviet army as well as an anti-Japanese guerilla fighter in Manchuria early in his life. In 1945, the Soviet Union presented him as leader of North Korea where he held the position until his unexpected death in 1994. He was also the founder of the Korean Workers' Party (KWP), which has dominated over other smaller parties in the North Korean government since that time. The party, to this day, controls almost all aspects of life in North Korea (Worden, 2008, p. 184). Kim Il Sung was an extremely influential ruler who enforced the Juche ideology tremendously and engrained it into the makeup of people all over the country. His massive amount of contribution to the nation has earned him the title of "eternal president" in the eyes of North Koreans (Worden, 2008, p. 185). The country will certainly never forget him, and it will continue to mourn his death and praise his accomplishments for as long as the nation survives.

Kim Il Song had many family members that have played certain roles in the North Korean government. The majority of these people have held significant positions in the Korean Workers' Party. The current leader of North Korea is Kim Jong Il, son of Kim Il Sung. Kim Jong Il, unlike his father, has taken a much more militarily aggressive approach to the government and society and has lowered the power of the Korean Workers' Party somewhat. He made the National Defense Commission the most powerful government institution in North Korea today. When his father was ruling, the Political Bureau of the Korean Workers' Party Central Committee made most of the decisions in the government (Worden, 2008, p. 186). Many believe that Kim Jong Il has adopted a military first ideology, also known as a "songun" ideology, because he wants to shine as a powerful leader, while in reality, he follows in the footsteps of his father. In *North Korea: A Country Study*, this idea is illustrated when the author says, "The privileging of the military undeniably is related to Kim Jong Il's moves to consolidate both power and legitimacy in the shadow of his father's military credentials and uncontested rule" (Worden, 2008, p. 186).

Military

North Korea has one of the most powerful combat forces in the entire world. Through the reign of Kim Il Song and Kim Jong Il, it has constructed a military that is the fourth largest of any nation, behind only the United States, China, and India. North Korea's armed forces contain 1.2 million personnel on active duty and 7.7 million in paramilitary and reserve forces (Worden, 2008, p. 245). This is an astounding statistic based on how small the North Korean population is in comparison to the three other countries listed. It illustrates that North Korea has the highest percentage of military personnel per capita in the whole world. Kim Jong Il has absolute power over this enormous military and he has the final say in all major decisions. As stated earlier, Kim Jong Il follows a "songun," or military first, ideology and that is a main reason why the military is at the strength it is today.

There are several different national defense organizations, but the most significant are the Korean Workers' Party Central Military Commission and the National Defense Commission. The KWP Central Military Commission offers political guidance when it comes to certain policies. On the other hand, the National Defense Commission is the most powerful military leadership body in the country because it carries out administrative and combat decisions. Kim Jong Il is the head of both of these organizations (Worden, 2008, p. 239).

The armed forces of North Korea, also known as the Korean Peoples' Army (KPA), are split up into five basic divisions, which include: the army, navy, air force, special operations forces, and reserve forces. The army is the largest division of North Korea's military, and the world's third largest, with one million members. It covers ground combat and about seventy percent is actively deployed from the city of Pyongyang to within roughly eighty kilometers of the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). The DMZ according to *North Korea: A Country Study*, is:

The 4,000-meter-wide buffer zone that runs east and west across the waist of the Korean Peninsula for 238 kilometers over land and three kilometers over the sea, dividing it into North Korea and South Korea. The DMZ was created by the armistice in 1953 (Worden, 2008, p. 308).

The navy, headed by Admiral Kim Yun-sim, is not nearly as developed as the army, and it basically acts as a coastal defense force with only 60,000 personnel (Worden, 2008, p. 253). The air force, commanded by Colonel General O Kum-chol, consists of 110,000 members. Its primary purpose is to provide air defense and its secondary purpose is to help other divisions of the North Korean armed forces with transportation, supplies, and logistical support (Worden, 2008, p. 252). The special operations forces in North Korea are the world's largest and range anywhere from 87,000 to 120,000 personnel. The jobs of these forces are undercover, unconventional, and they have the highest military funding priority (Worden, 2008, p. 249). The largest part of the Korean Peoples' Army is the reserve forces with around 7.7 million people, or about one-third of the population. Everyone is required to at least join the reserve forces at one point in their life, and many start by becoming a part of the Red Youth Guard between the ages of fourteen and seventeen (Worden, 2008, p. 256).

Nuclear Affairs

When the majority of people in the United States and other outside countries think of North Korea today, one of the first ideas postulated is that it has strong nuclear weapon capabilities and poses as a threat to the welfare of the world. Nuclear related activities have been occurring in North Korea since 1955, when representatives of the country were first introduced to peaceful ways to use nuclear energy at a conference in Eastern Europe. The real development of many nuclear reactors, reprocessing facilities, nuclear fuel plants, research facilities, and uranium mines came during the 1970s and 1980s (Worden, 2008, p. 261). In 1992, North and South Korea ended up signing a treaty in which they both agreed not to have any more nuclear related activities take place (Worden, 2008, p. 261). These activities were

originally thought to have ceased with the signing of this treaty, until 1998 when U.S. satellites unexpectedly found what looked to be nuclear facilities that were being built. The U.S. demanded to know more about this and people were worried that North Korea's program was back in business. That same year, on August 31, North Korea tested a missile that it launched over Japan. North Korea claimed it to be a satellite that did not make it into orbit, but everyone else knew what it was. This was confirmation to the rest of the world that North Korea was working on some sort of nuclear weapons program (K.A. Park, 2001, p. 537). The author of *North Korea: A Country Study* says that, "On February 10, 2005, North Korea announced that it was one of the world's nuclear-armed states by issuing a Ministry of Foreign Affairs statement declaring possession of nuclear weapons" (Worden, 2008, p. 262). Since this date, it has conducted several nuclear tests for the world to see. The feeling of people all over the globe at this time, and even to this day, is described well when Cumings (2004) states, "None will sleep well with nukes in the hands of the most belligerent and paranoid regime on earth" (p. 43). People were and are genuinely afraid that such a secretive, militaristic society possesses such devastating and powerful weapons.

Struggle

In recent years, North Korea has been on a steep decline as far as quality of life is concerned. Oh and Hassig (2003) state that, "Since 1995, the death rate from hunger and disease has surged, with estimates ranging from several hundred thousand to 3 million malnutrition-related deaths" (p. 45). This is a tremendous percentage of the relatively small North Korean population of twenty-four million that is dying because of these reasons. Another statistic from Jung and Dalton (2006) is that:

According to a 2002 report by two United Nations (U.N.) agencies, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Food Program (WFP), North Korea has one of the highest rates of acute malnutrition in the world with 42% percent of children found to be chronically malnourished (p. 742).

This is a staggering number, and it illustrates just how much they have suffered in recent times. Outsiders often scrutinize these deaths and cases of malnutrition and think that they are completely related to a failing socialist system, when this is not entirely the case. They can be connected with two factors. For one, the weather in North Korea has not been particularly favorable for the past two decades. According to H.S. Park (2001), in 1996 there were floods and torrential downpours that caused as much as forty percent of the arable land to be destroyed. Also, erosion has played a big role in destroying farmland recently (p. 510). Another factor relating to these deaths is the fact that traditional trading with China has decreased because China does not approve of the recent political choices that North Korea has made (H.S. Park, 2001, p. 510). Despite what people may think, the government has actually reached out and asked for help from scientists or experts from other countries to find out how it can have a productive agriculture system with the poor weather they receive (H.S. Park, 2001, p. 511).

Economic Hardships

The North Korean economy is currently one of the poorest and corrupted in all of Northeast Asia. Since the end of World War II, they have been struggling on their own and even though not a lot of information is released as to the specifics of their economy (i.e. gross domestic product, growth rates, industrial production, etc.), the rest of the world knows the reality is harsh. From 1945 to the late 1990s, there were several long-term plans that were put into effect in order to help the North Korean financial system. While some of these helped spur economic growth to a certain extent and usher in an industrial revolution, the core of the economy was never fully stable (Worden, 2008, p. 135). The late 1990s to the present day has been a disastrous time for North Korea. With Kim Jong Il in power, the coun-

try seems to be falling apart piece by piece. It has abandoned the Soviet-style centrally planned economy that it held since the 1940s and has attempted at implementing major economic reforms in the hope that they would help even the slightest bit (Worden, 2008, p. 135).

Internal Security/Control

North Korea has possibly one of the most controlled societies in the world. Everything from where to live, travel, employment, clothing, food, family life, education, and the media is scrutinized under the watchful eye of the government. Its system of totalitarian control has been in place since the end of World War II, and it is even more strict than the countries that have seen communism in the past, including Germany, the Soviet Union, and other Eastern European countries. This system classifies civilians under three main categories, which the government views as an effective way of monitoring peoples' actions. These groups are: the core class, the wavering class, and the hostile class. The core class consists of people whom the government sees as not being a problem and those who make a substantial contribution to the welfare of the nation as a whole. It also includes the Korean Workers' Party members and those with an anti-Japanese lineage. This is made up of about ten to fifteen percent of the population. The wavering class contains those who are in the middle of the spectrum. This is mainly the average workers and peasants and it accounts for about forty to fifty percent of the population. Finally, the hostile class includes descendants of pro-Japanese collaborators, landowners, relatives of defectors, and prisoners and those whom the government perhaps keeps more of a watchful eye on. These make up about forty percent of the population (Worden, 2008, p. 272).

Even though this system has been in place since the 1940s, Cumings (2004), believes that not until the 1990s was unhappiness with the overall control of life present in the minds of people living there. He states during his visit in the 1980s that:

The alien and unknown quality of North Korea is so deeply ingrained both as a fact and a metaphor, that South Koreans seem always to be surprised, even shocked, that North Koreans are 'normal' or 'regular' people who go about their daily lives much as any other person might (p. 152).

People during this time just accepted the type of country they lived in, and they were devoted to their leader and beliefs. The country has changed since then, and under the reign of Kim Jong Il, the level of strictness has increased tremendously.

Education

The North Koreans take great pride in their free education system. According to *North Korea: A Country Study* (2008), "When the communists came to power in 1946, illiteracy was widespread, and fewer than 20 percent of all Koreans had gone beyond elementary school. Now 99 percent of the population is literate" (Worden, p. 120). This number is astounding when one looks at where they started. Many believe a good amount of this number is attributed to the fact that they dropped the complex Chinese characters in their writing and switched to the simpler choson 'gul.¹ However, this has in fact hurt them in a number of ways because it hinders trade and interaction from other East Asian countries like China, South Korea, and Japan who use the Chinese characters (Worden, 2008, p. 120).

¹ Choson 'gul is the native Korean script that was developed in the mid-fifteenth century. In South Korea it is known as hangul.

Beginning in 1967, a free nine-year compulsory education system was established, and it was the first one in East Asia that was that extensive. In the mid-1970s, an eleven-year compulsory system was put into place. That eleven-year system includes two years of kindergarten, four years of primary school, and five years of middle school. From a young age, they teach their children the values of respect, a love for their leader, and how to work together as one in a communist way (Worden, 2008, p. 121). Those who examine the educational system may be critical of the fact that there is a lack of higher education. There is only one university in the entire country, Kim Il Sung University, and it contains only three thousand graduates per year out of a student body that consists over twelve thousand. This means that only .01 percent of the population is considered the educational elite (Worden, 2008, p. 123).

The Media

The author of *North Korea: A Country Study* says that, “Article 67 of the 1998 constitution states that North Korean citizens are guaranteed freedom of speech, press, assembly, demonstration, and association” (Worden, 2008, p. 215). This may be true because it is written, but it is certainly not the reality. The government of North Korea controls every aspect of the media in the country and only allows certain aspects if they support the objectives of the government and the Korean Workers’ Party. Oh and Hassig (2003) make this point when they write, “Television, radio, school books, posters, movies, and theater all glorify the ruling Kim family and reinforce the principles of *juche*” (p. 45). Everywhere you look there is propaganda promoting the authorities. Any media that is not domestic and under government control is strictly forbidden, and the punishment if you are caught can be severe. Not many people have the Internet, television, or radio, and those that do are only allowed to tune in to certain channels or connect to certain websites. In recent years, more foreign journalists have been let into the country than in the past, but they must follow government orders if they are allowed in (Worden, 2008, p. 217).

Women

The role of women in North Korean society can be broken down into four different time periods according to Jung and Dalton (2006, p. 749). The first stage was from 1945-1957 and this was when the government passed several laws that created equal opportunity for men and women. The second stage occurred during the years of 1958-1982, when the majority of women in the country were put to work in the factories because the industrial revolution was happening and everyone’s help was needed. The third stage took place from 1983-1995 when the greater part of the population of women went back to their traditional roles as housekeepers because the economy was somewhat stable. The fourth stage began in 1996, continues to this day, and is characterized by the great famine and the current deteriorating economy (Jung & Dalton, 2006, p. 750).

Even though women have gained equal rights on paper, the reality of the situation is quite different from what is written in present day North Korea. Women are still subject to their traditional gender roles in the home as caregivers to the men and children. For those that do work, there is an underlying prejudice that seems to be apparent. For instance, on average they are paid significantly less than males when they work the same type of job. They are also not given certain job positions that males receive (Jung & Dalton, 2006, p. 756).

Pyongyang

The capital and showcase city of North Korea is Pyongyang. Every year, an amazing amount of government funding is poured into this city for Kim Jong Il to show the rest of the world that North Korea is doing just fine on its own. It

is a reality of Kim Il Sung's "dream city" and there are bright lights everywhere along with modern technology that is seen nowhere else in the country. On every street corner there are propaganda and statues glorifying the ruling Kim family. Kim (2007) describes the scene well when he writes, "In this light, city dwellers become anonymous supporting actors whose roles are reduced to serving as backdrop and background chorus in a silent mise-en-scène, to showcase their self-aggrandizing rulers" (p. 25). When outsiders are let into North Korea, they are usually just allowed to travel to Pyongyang because the government does not want them to see what the overall situation is really like in the country (even though the majority is already aware). The government also places tight restrictions on those who live there, which include the elite, and there is a population limit (Worden, 2008, p. 92). When Cumings (2004) visited the city in the 1980s, he says, "I was amazed when I first visited it by the crisp energy of the city traffic, by its cleanliness, and by the absence of human-drawn and ox-drawn carts" (p.143). This is exactly the picture that the government wants visitors to see and believe. The city's value of form is essentially greater than that of its function.

Future of North Korea and Conclusion

It is hard to predict what lies ahead in the coming years for an unstable country such as North Korea. It is one of the most secretive societies in the entire world, and its current totalitarian ruler, Kim Jong Il, portrays unpredictable characteristics. Its possession of weapons of mass destruction is also a major threat to nations all over the globe. This paper covered a wide variety of certain aspects in North Korean society to assist the audience in understanding the country as a whole. The people of North Korea have a mutual pride and a strong conviction about their culture, but the balance of the world views them in a hostile light. Based on the information presented, there is one strong conclusion that can be drawn about the future of this nation. North Koreans must open up their doors eventually and change some of their behaviors because the system that they have in place now is creating a society that is on the brink of destruction. Hopefully, when they do, it will not be too late.

References

- Cumings, B. (2004). *North Korea: Another Country*. New York: The New Press.
- Jung, K. & Dalton, B. (2006). Rhetoric versus Reality for the Women of North Korea: Mothers of the Revolution. *Asian Survey*, 46(5), 741-760. <http://www.jstor.org>.
- Kim, S.Y. (2007). Springtime for Kim Il-sung in Pyongyang: City On Stage, City As Stage. *The Drama Review*, 51(2), 24-40. <http://muse.jhu.edu>.
- Oh, K. & Hassig, R.C. (2003). North Korea: The Hardest Nut. *Foreign Policy*, 139, 44-47. <http://www.jstor.org>.
- Park, H.S. (2001). North Korean Perceptions of Self and Others: Implications for Policy Choices. *Pacific Affairs*, 73(4), 503-516. <http://www.jstor.org>.
- Park, K.A. (2001). North Korea's Defensive Power and U.S.-North Korea Relations. *Pacific Affairs*, 75(3), 535-553. <http://www.jstor.org>.
- Worden, R. (Ed.). (2008). *North Korea: A Country Study*. Washington, D.C.: Federal Research Division, Library of Congress.

President Truman's decision to develop and detonate the atomic bomb remains a controversial issue in American history. This author asserts that this decision was, indeed, the right one. His researched argument relies on a variety of sources, including books, articles, and a personal interview.

Notice the careful explanation of quotes and the smart refutation of opposition.

From the Manhattan Project to Hiroshima: Why the U.S. Did it Right

By Ryan Kennedy

On July 16, 1945, at a remote location in New Mexico, a select group of people watched from afar as the first nuclear weapon in history was detonated. The early morning sky glowed orange as an immense ball of fire engulfed the test site. Then a mushroom cloud rose into the air, forming an image that will forever be associated with the devastation caused by nuclear weapons. Less than a month later, the power of the atom was unleashed upon the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The terrible effect of the atomic bombs on the people of these cities has caused many to question whether or not the United States' development and use of these weapons was justified. It is easy to look back on the actions of the U.S. and declare that they were immoral and that the atomic bombs should never have been used; however, the actions of the U.S. should be judged not on afterthoughts but on the conditions under which the events took place. The events of World War II fully justified both the development and subsequent use of the atomic bomb by the United States.

In 1938, German physicists uncovered the process of nuclear fission, which is central to the inner workings of atomic weapons (Maddox 25). The next year, Albert Einstein, who had fled from Germany to the United States, sent a letter to President Roosevelt warning that an extremely powerful atomic weapon could be developed in the imminent future. Einstein noted that German activities indicate that they were working towards acquiring atomic power and he recommended that the U.S. government collaborate with scientists in the U.S. working with nuclear fission in order to expedite their progress (Rossenfeld). Military historian Richard B. Frank explained that scientists in the U.S. were "profoundly alarmed by the progress toward an atomic bomb in Nazi Germany..." According to an August 1945 Time magazine article, British and Norwegian forces confirmed that the Germans were making significant progress toward acquiring atomic power in 1942 when they discovered a heavy-water plant in Norway where research was being conducted. By this time the Manhattan Project had begun, but this discovery caused research to be sped up in fear of the Nazis developing an atomic weapon first.

The Germans certainly had the scientific capability to develop an atomic weapon. The United States and its allies could not be sure of German progress on the atomic bomb; however, they could not risk being put at a massive disadvantage had the Germans developed a bomb first. The U.S. inflicted terrible damage on Japan when it used the atomic bombs. A world in which Hitler possessed the world's only atomic weapons would be a terrible place. This scenario would undeniably have been far worse than the actual course of events. Surely President Roosevelt had to seriously consider warnings from a physicist as knowledgeable as Einstein, and creating a project to develop atomic power was a reasonable response. If the U.S. had not developed atomic weapons first, another nation would have. The world was

better off with atomic power in the hands of the Americans. For these reasons, the development of atomic weapons by the United States was surely a proper response to the circumstances at the time.

The use of the atomic bomb against Japan has caused far more controversy. The bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were undoubtedly terrible events; however, Truman made the right decision when he ordered the use of the atomic bomb against Japan. The atomic bomb was the best way to put an end to a terribly destructive war as soon as possible and with minimal American casualties. As the American island hopping campaign progressed in the Pacific, the Japanese demonstrated increasing determination and suicidal tendencies. The island of Iwo Jima was targeted by U.S. forces in September of 1944. The eight square mile pot of land was heavily bombarded prior to a land invasion in February of 1945, but the Japanese had constructed an extensive system of tunnels that protected them. The Battle of Iwo Jima resulted in over 24,000 American casualties, including almost 7,000 dead (Frank 60-61). The U.S. declared victory in March of 1945, but it was not until 1949 that the last remaining Japanese soldiers on the island were captured. The determination of the Japanese soldiers fighting on this tiny island over 600 miles from their homeland resulted in a long a bloody battle. On April 1, 1945, the Americans invaded the island of Okinawa, which was far closer to mainland Japan. The Japanese had again constructed intricate defensive positions that caused significant difficulties for the Americans. Frank compared attacks against the Japanese defensive positions to the deadly and ineffective charges against entrenched enemies during World War I (70). Over 12,000 American soldiers were killed and over 36,000 wounded during the Battle of Okinawa (Frank 71).

Battles in the Pacific theatre on islands such as Iwo Jima and Okinawa suggested that fighting on the home islands of Japan would result in incredibly high losses for the United States. Given these ominous indications of what was to come, it was quite reasonable for the U.S. to resort to using the atomic weapons it had worked very hard to acquire. The atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki successfully convinced the Japanese to surrender, saving countless American casualties and shortening the war. There have been many casualty estimates referenced by researchers on both sides of this argument. Those who support the actions of the U.S. often claim that Truman thought that as many as half a million to a million casualties could be spared, while the opposing side claims he knew that an invasion would cost tens of thousands of casualties. Historian Robert J. Maddox, author of *Weapons for Victory*, responded to those who cite such specific casualty estimates as follows:

This is writing history backward. That Truman and those of his advisors who participated in the decision to use the bombs later would defend themselves against criticism by exaggerating (if such they did) the cost of invasion tells us nothing about their thinking at the time. Even if Truman had been informed of the planner's estimates — he was not — the notion that he would have considered the sacrifice of forty thousand (or twenty thousand or ten thousand) American lives acceptable had it not been for the opportunity to awe the Soviets is droll. (3)

As Maddox indicates, Truman and others may have exaggerated casualty estimates of an invasion after the use of the bomb; however, this is irrelevant to the question of whether or not the bombings were justified. He then goes on to point out that even the low estimates would likely have been deemed unacceptable. Maddox later explained that the military planners' estimates in the tens of thousands were based on inaccurate information. Several authors who attacked Truman have cited an estimate of sixty-three thousand casualties that was made by Truman's chief of staff. This estimate was made prior to a massive build-up of Japanese defenders on the targeted landing sites (3-4). But even if this had been an accurate number, Truman and the U.S. military leadership surely could not consider this an acceptable loss.

The determination of the Japanese to defend their empire and later their home islands is demonstrated not only by casualty statistics but also by their notoriously effective and devastating suicide attacks. The most infamous of these

tactics was the use of kamikazes. Many U.S. ships were destroyed or damaged when the Japanese kamikaze pilots deliberately flew their planes into them. The Japanese even developed special rocket propelled planes that housed explosives in the nose for the specific purpose of carrying out suicide missions (Frank 179). The Japanese military clearly demonstrated that they would rather die fighting than surrender. This situation called for an extreme action to be taken that would convince the Japanese to surrender. The atomic bombings were that action. They saved many American lives, and potentially the lives of a massive number of Japanese soldiers who would have fought to the death and refused to surrender under other circumstances. The use of the bombs prevented American soldiers from being forced to such tactics on mainland Japan, undoubtedly saving many American lives and shortening the war.

Many historians have questioned these reasons for the use of the atomic bomb against Japan. Barton J. Bernstein is one such historian. Among the information Bernstein has used to argue against the use of the atomic bombs are the post-World War II writings of several military officials and also the aforementioned inaccurate casualty estimates. According to Bernstein, “Truman’s often feisty and sometimes rather defensive comments about his 1945 use of the atomic bombs should make historians wonder about his responses to the postwar writings by most of his wartime five-star generals and admirals...” (561) Bernstein was indicating that it was odd that Truman often made defensive comments about his actions, yet there is no record of his responses to the writings of his generals who later condemned the use of the bomb. There are several explanations for this behavior. Perhaps Truman simply grew tired of defending himself from these attacks, or he respected the arguments of these men and did not wish to create conflict. Regardless, these writings Bernstein references were postwar (as Bernstein himself emphasized), which means that they should have limited use in arguing against the decisions Truman made during the war. It is clearly much easier to argue for one side or another after a decision has already been made. Bernstein mentioned the comment made by one general that a conventional bombing campaign could have won the war as easily as the atomic bomb. Using such an argument against Truman’s decision would seem to indicate that it is acceptable to kill large numbers of people with conventional weapons, but not with nuclear weapons. Atomic weapons are terribly destructive, but one must remember that conventional bombings can also be devastating. Earlier in the war Tokyo had been targeted with incendiary bombs that devastated the city and surely caused many people to burn to death. In fact, the reason Tokyo was not a target for the atomic bomb was that it was already so thoroughly destroyed. Another comment referenced by Bernstein indicates that a blockade would have been effective at defeating the Japanese (561). Such tactics would involve starving the Japanese people of necessary resources until they surrendered. Based on the behavior of Japanese soldiers and military leaders, the Japanese leadership would likely have allowed its people to suffer for a significant period of time in such a situation. World War II was an extremely devastating war in which massive number of both civilians and soldiers were killed. This was the reality of total warfare. Many historians that believe the use of the atomic bomb was wrong, such as history professor Dr. Wendy Pojmann, claim the usage of the bomb was wrong for moral reasons. In an interview, Dr. Pojmann stated “...the U.S. has historically held itself up as a moral state and let go of its standards by unleashing such a terrible weapon on the world.” Picking and choosing which forms of mass killing can be considered moral behavior is not the way to judge the past. Of course it is always best if the devastation that war causes has some positive effect, and the use of the atomic bombs certainly did. Truman should not be harshly criticized for his actions since he was the first be faced with the decision of whether or not to use the atomic bomb, and his choice to do so was backed by logical justifications.

When the Manhattan Project began, the United States entered unknown territory. The project successfully resulted in the creation of the first atomic bomb, and the decision of how to use it rested on the shoulders of President Truman. Both the creation and the use of the atomic bomb by the United States were justified by the circumstances under which they occurred. Surely the world will be a better place if nuclear weapons are never again used in warfare, but this does not mean that Truman’s decision should be harshly criticized. He should be judged based on what he knew and the events that were occurring in the world around him not based on afterthoughts.

Works Cited

- Bernstein, Barton J. "Truman and the A-Bomb: Targeting Noncombatants, Using the Bomb, and His Defending the Decision." *The Journal of Military History* 62.3 (1998): 547-570. JSTOR. Web. 16 Feb. 2011.
- "Birth of an Era." *Time*. Time Inc., 13 Aug. 1945. Web. 17 Feb. 2011.
- Frank, Richard B. *Downfall: The End of the Imperial Japanese Empire*. New York: Penguin Books, 2001. Print.
- Maddox, Robert James. *Weapons for Victory: The Hiroshima Decision Fifty Years Later*. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1995. Print.
- Pojmann, Wendy. *Personal interview*. 14 Feb. 2011.
- Rossenfeld, Carrie, ed. *Atomic Archive*. National Science Digital Library, 2011. Web. 20 Mar. 2011.

This writer explores two specific reasons for “Islamophobia” and relies on a plethora of sources to effectively advance his argument in this well-organized, cohesive research essay.

Islamophobia: What Caused This Psychological Mindset?

Haani Virjee

Introduction

The attacks of September 11, 2001 resulted in the destruction of the World Trade Center, the loss of countless innocent lives, and a war that has affected countries all over the world. What many overlook is that the attacks also gave the opportunity for the reputation of Islam and Muslims in America, and all over the globe, to be tarnished and destroyed. The aftermath of the attacks of September 11, 2001 includes a rise in what some sociologists call “Islamophobia,” which has been defined by some as “the fear or prejudiced viewpoint towards Islam, Muslims and matters pertaining to them.”¹ Numerous cases of Islamophobia have been seen after the attacks of September 11, 2001, including the stereotyping of Muslims at airports and the prejudicial behavior against men and women wearing religious attire. A recent example is in the controversy over the building of the mosque at ground zero. Arguably, this psychological mindset existed even before 2001, but the rise of this issue in the last ten years can be attributed to two major causes: the portrayal of Islam and Muslims in the media and the religious illiteracy of most Americans.

The General Effect of Media

It can be argued that with the lifestyle most Americans live today, the phrase “time is money” holds true for many. The advances in technology, including the creation of smart phones, wireless internet, and various other gadgets, have answered the demands for convenience and efficiency. These advancements, while being praised for allowing more accessibility to news and media, can at the same time be condemned for it due to the effects on public perception on topics such as Islam. The coverage and references of Islam and Muslims in the media post-September 11, 2001 has increased, as well as the amount of hate crimes.² Through the use of powerful images, words, and a lack of context and background, the media has successfully tarnished the image of Islam. When most Americans watch news stories about Islam, they see images of bearded men carrying guns, bombs exploding in the streets of the Middle East, and headlines such as “radical Islam” or “Islamic militants.” Sheikh et al’s research on the Islamic image conducted even before September 11, 2001 showed that the articles on Islam “were mostly centered on crisis, conflicts and wars. Coverage of Islam was for the most part, international not domestic, and a clear majority of stories did not distinguish between the various branches of Islam.”³

¹ Gema Martin-Munoz, “Unconscious Islamophobia,” *Human Architecture* 8, no. 2 (2010): 21.

² Divya Sharma, “Why Do They Hate U.S.? Exploring the Role of Media in Cultural Communication,” *Journal of the Institute of Justice and International Studies* no. 8 (2008): 246.

³ K. Sheikh, V. Price and H. Oshagan, “Press Treatment of Islam: What Kind of Picture do the Media Paint?,” *Gazette* 56, (1995): 139-54, quoted in Dina Ibrahim, “The Framing of Islam on Network News Following the September 11th Attacks,” *The International Communication Gazette* 72, no. 1 (2010): 113.

Some experts believe that it is not just how and what the media presents, but who presents the information. Divya Sharma notes that “though Islam has been part of American society for over two hundred years, its analysis is built around violent acts by terrorism experts.”⁴ In other words, whether intentionally or not, many news channels have been picking experts who already have a negative view of Islam to provide analysis on the religion to the public, which has a profound effect on perception, whether the public knows it or not. Khalema and Wanna-Jones “found that media representations are frequently taken as facts, and since 9/11 attacks these representations have influenced public perception of Muslims in general.”⁵ This idea is directly supported by a survey conducted by Cornell University in 2004, which showed among other things “that people who paid more attention to television news were more likely to fear terrorist attacks and support limiting the rights of Muslim-Americans.”⁶ When citizens of a country are ready to limit the rights of their fellow citizens based on their religious status, one knows that a serious issue exists.

Islamic Terminology: The Misuse of Words

The media has taken Islamic terminology and has gone beyond merely using words out of context. Instead, it has completely distorted the meaning of various words, giving a translation that is not even close to the original. As it turns out, this inaccuracy of translation also contributes significantly to Islamophobia. One such word that is inaccurately translated is the word “Jihad.” Dina Ibrahim notes “one of the ongoing problems with western coverage of Islam is that Jihad is always translated as holy war.” He goes on to say that “Jihad is not a holy war. It is a struggle to overcome the forces of evil.” Finally, he stresses that “the concept of Jihad has been abused by Bin Laden and his followers, as well as network news.”⁷ The literal meaning of Jihad is indeed “struggle”; however, this term is used in many different contexts in Islam. The word Jihad can be used in a military context, but not in the way that the media portrays it—as a term being used to wage war against all other religions. In truth, it can only be used in a military context if one is oppressed and needs to resort to militant means to overcome oppression, or if one needs to resort to militant needs to defend land. The type of Jihad that is actually stressed more in Islam is the internal Jihad, or the struggle within oneself to resist temptation to commit sin. Arguably, this type of struggle is much more difficult to overcome. Finally, an example of Jihad that people are not even aware they are familiar with is the Jihad of Martin Luther King Jr. to fight for civil rights.

Another term that has been incorrectly used is the term “madrasa,” which has been defined in the media as an Islamic school where young Muslim men go to learn how to perform terrorist attacks on nations such as the U.S. In fact, in an ABC News report Bob Woodruff described madrasas in Islamabad by saying, “This is where the recruits begin their education, a collection of religious schools known as madrasas along Pakistan’s border with Afghanistan.” He later states, “[T]hey study the Koran and they learn about jihad, or holy war.”⁸ This interpretation of a madrasa is false. A madrasa is an Islamic school. It is not a place where young adults learn about holy war, but instead madrasas are where children learn morality, good behavior, and acts of worship consistent with the teachings of Islam. In the U.S. for

⁴ Sharma, “Why Do They Hate U.S.?,” 250.

⁵ N.E. Khalema and J. Jones-Wannas, “Under the prism of suspicion: Minority voices in Canada post-September 11,” *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 23, (2003): 25-39, quoted in Divya Sharma, “Why Do They Hate U.S.? Exploring the Role of Media in Cultural Communication,” *Journal of the Institute of Justice and International Studies* no. 8 (2008): 252.

⁶ Sharma, “Why Do They Hate U.S.?,” 251.

⁷ Dina Ibrahim, “The Framing of Islam on Network News Following the September 11th Attacks,” *The International Communication Gazette* 72, no. 1 (2010): 119.

⁸ Ibid.

example, madrasas can be equivocated to Sunday school for many Christians. As a result of the media, many madrasas that now exist are incorrectly interpreted as types of terrorist recruitment centers.

Media Portrayal of Women in Islam

The portrayal of Muslim women has also contributed significantly to Islamophobia. “One common perception about Islam through the media remains that women are treated as second-rate citizens.”⁹ This perception arises when many news channels show images of women wearing the burqa and discuss political systems, such as that of Saudi Arabia, where women are treated as second-class citizens. When Americans view this coverage, they not only condemn such a system, but they view Islam as something completely foreign to the ideals of American society. What needs to be understood is that the Arab culture in Saudi Arabia predominates social and political atmospheres. The problem is that when there is a conflict with Islamic principles, the inequalities and social injustices are made to look like they are part of the religion. Furthermore, since the two holiest sites of Islam are found in Saudi Arabia, and the Saudi government claims to rule under Islamic law, it is not surprising that the outside world associates everything the country does with Islam. However, Divya Sharma stresses that it is “important to note that a majority of Muslim population in the U.S. is not the same as the Muslim population in Sudan, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, or elsewhere. Religion is largely interpreted within the larger socio-cultural context.”¹⁰ Culture and religion must be distinguished as well as apparent oppression versus actual oppression. In more democratic political systems, Muslim women wear their scarves and observe the “hijab” by their own choice.

Religious Illiteracy

The lack of knowledge about a particular topic or item combined with the lack of interest in learning about it, creates opinions formed from passive information, particularly those obtained from the news media. There is a direct relationship between the negative portrayal of and lack of knowledge about Islam in the media and Islamophobia. Religious illiteracy has been a pressing issue in America for quite a long time, and it has not necessarily been addressed. Stephen Prothero notes that in a 1945 Gallup poll, Americans were asked “to name the founder of any religion other than Christianity. Only a third were able to do so.” He goes on to say that “in a more recent study the overwhelming majority of Americans freely admit that they are not at all familiar with the basic teachings of Islam, Buddhism, or Hinduism.”¹¹ Considering the amount of ethnic and religious diversity in America, this fact is as ironic as problematic. Religious diversity is allowed by the Constitution. Citizens can practice their religion of choice, and the U.S. cannot declare a national religion.

In an ABC News poll conducted in 2004, Americans were asked questions that displayed their opinions about Islam. The poll noted which Americans felt they understood the religion and which Americans felt they did not understand or were unfamiliar with it. The results show that “[a]mong Americans who feel they do understand the religion, 59 percent call it peaceful and 46 percent think it teaches respect for the beliefs of others.” On the other hand, those who are unfamiliar with the religion are “19 points less likely to call it peaceful, and half as apt to say it respects other beliefs.” Lastly, when asked if their opinions were favorable of Islam, those “who feel they have a good understanding

⁹ Sharma, “Why Do They Hate U.S.?”, 248.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Stephen Prothero, *Religious Literacy: What Every American Needs To Know-and Doesn't* (New York: Harper, 2007), 33.

of Islam are 15 points more apt to view it favorably.”¹² This data reiterates the fact that many Americans either do not have the time or are not interested in actively seeking out information from credible sources, yet at the same time are still forming opinions. What needs to be understood is that religion informs the decisions one makes, guides the way one lives life, and ultimately shapes how one views the world. If American citizens are not religiously literate enough to understand each other, how is the country going to be unified? In addition, it might be difficult for the nation to build solid relationships with certain nations abroad, in which a national religion is declared.

Conclusion

The exponential increase in attention that Islam has received in the aftermath of the attacks of September 11, 2001 has caused a demand for the religion to explain every single action of those individuals who claim to be associated with it. With the media constantly displaying violent images associated with Islam, as well as with the mistranslation of words, the skepticism, prejudice, fear, or notion of Islamophobia that people have has become increasingly harder to remove. The portrayal of Muslim women has also caused Islam to appear as something alien and foreign. However, the substantial effect the media is having is largely due to most Americans forming opinions without actively seeking knowledge about Islam. The actions of a few individuals should not be able to define what a religion stands for. True Islam, and for that matter, most religions, stand for peace, justice, and humanity. Only one who is religiously literate will be able to recognize this important fact.

Bibliography

- Ibrahim, Dina. “The Framing of Islam on Network News Following the September 11th Attacks.” *The International Communication Gazette* 72, no. 1 (2010): 111-125.
- Khalema, N.E. and J. Jones-Wannas. “Under the prism of suspicion: Minority voices in Canada post-September 11.” *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 23 (2003): 25-39, quoted in Divya Sharma. “Why Do They Hate U.S.? Exploring the Role of Media in Cultural Communication.” *Journal of the Institute of Justice and International Studies*, no. 8 (2008): 246-262.
- Martin-Munoz, Gema. “Unconscious Islamophobia,” *Human Architecture* 8, no. 2 (2010): 21-28.
- Morris, David. Unease Over Islam Poll: Critical Views of Muslim Faith Growing Among Americans. http://abcnews.go.com/sections/us/World/sept11_islampoll_030911.html. (accessed February 6, 2011).
- Prothero, Stephen. *Religious Literacy: What Every American Needs To Know—and Doesn’t*. New York: Harper, 2007.
- Sharma, Divya. “Why Do They Hate U.S.? Exploring the Role of Media in Cultural Communication.” *Journal of the Institute of Justice and International Studies* no. 8 (2008): 246-262.
- Sheikh, K., V. Price and H. Oshagan. “Press Treatment of Islam: What Kind of Picture do the Media Paint?” *Gazette* 56 (1995): 139-54, quoted in Dina Ibrahim. “The Framing of Islam on Network News Following the September 11th Attacks.” *The International Communication Gazette* 72, no. 1 (2010): 111-125.

¹² David Morris, Unease Over Islam Poll: Critical Views of Muslim Faith Growing Among Americans, http://abcnews.go.com/sections/us/World/sept11_islampoll_030911.html. (accessed February 6, 2011).

SIENACollege

515 Loudon Road • Loudonville, N.Y. 12211
www.siena.edu