

All of the work included in this journal was written by students who were enrolled in Siena's First Year Seminar in 2015 - 2016. This required course prepares students for the intellectual rigors of college life and beyond by building critical thinking and communication skills as well as by fostering creativity and advocacy. Throughout this two-semester seminar, students are encouraged to reflect upon and discuss the vast amounts of reading and writing that they do both inside and outside the classroom. Siena College is committed to showcasing the intellectual and engaging work being accomplished on its campus, so *Gleanings* was created as a means of celebrating some of the finest and most provocative first-year student writing completed each year.

\* \* \* \* \*

While editorial changes have been made to these works-in-progress, they were kept to a minimum in order to preserve the authentic voices of the student authors as well as the integrity of the assignments.

## *Gleanings:*

### *A Journal of First-Year Student Writing*

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For this essay, students drew connections among varied texts that contained protagonists who endured some form of incarceration. The writers were also expected to relate those texts to their own lives. This author finds common ground by demonstrating how each person attempts to exert a degree of control over their respective environments.

## **The Struggle to Have Control**

**By Melissa K. Breen**

(Prof. Rody-Wright - Incarceration)

The environments in which people live have a massive impact on their lives. For most, having control is an essential part of their lives. Unfortunately, inmates don't have much opportunity for that. They are forced to live in an intimidating and hostile environment that does not comply with most human needs. The narrator of "The Tour" writes about how inmates have to deal with adjusting to their environments, and the narrator of "Evan's Face" expresses how prisons can be scary places. By doing things like writing poetry, drawing pictures, or keeping a journal, inmates gain a small element of control within their environment. The main character from *Couldn't Keep it to Myself* is also a prisoner who exerts small elements of control over her environment. Prisoners, though, are not the only ones who struggle with this. Sarah, from the novel *Sarah's Key*, also struggles to adjust to her environment, just as I did when I first got to college. Even the simplest things can help people feel as if they have a little control over their surroundings and having some control makes new environments easier to handle.

The poem "The Tour" was written by an unknown prisoner, and it shows the intense struggle prisoners face when adjusting to their new environments. The narrator of this poem desperately tries to make sense of his surroundings. For example, he is unable to move outside his cell unless escorted by guards, and even within his cell, he is given immovable things, including a soap dish and toilet seat cover. All objects are secured out of fear that they could be used as weapons. This environment defeats the narrator. He hints at the thought of suicide when he starts thinking about what he has lost. His unhappiness is indicated when he says, "[D]own pops a folded stairway/like the one leading to /Grandma's musty old attic/opening mercifully/onto the dreamy blue/autumnal Indiana sky" (Hartnett 76). He wishes not to be seen as a threat all of the time, but the environment is a constant reminder of how he is perceived by those around him. He continues, "Offender out of cell offender/out of cell signaling free citizens/ to scurry for cover nearest door/protected zone hidden from Offender" (Hartnett 73). The author's new environment is harsh, and he struggles to adjust both physically and mentally. In the end, writing the poem allows him to understand and communicate his feelings, giving him a small sense of control, which helps him adjust to his new environment rather than simply die.

The main character, Sarah, from *Sarah's Key* has many parallels to the author of "The Tour." Sarah is incarcerated in a concentration camp with her parents during WWII because

they are Jewish. While the cause of Sarah's imprisonment differs from that of the author of "The Tour," their experiences share some similarities. For example, both are looked down upon and loathed by society. Due to Sarah's religion, she is treated as less than a second-class citizen. The poem's narrator is seen as a threat to society because of his criminal mistakes that led to his incarceration. Both the concentration camp and the prison represent the opposite of ideal living situations. While the environments differ in nature, they are both extremely unfavorable. Sarah expresses how inhumane the living conditions are, exclaiming that "anything was better than this hell, the stink, the heat, the dust, the people screaming, the people dying" (de Rosnay 46). The poem's narrator has to live in a small cell with no freedom. Sarah and the unknown author are also separated from their loved ones. Sarah's little brother had been left home and upon arriving at the camp, Sarah is taken from her parents. This loss of family contact makes the awful environment even harsher. The poem's narrator is imprisoned and is only able to see his family if they choose to come to a scheduled, supervised visit. Although Sarah is forced into the separation from her family due to no fault of her own and the poet makes choices that result in his separation, both ultimately suffer similar consequences and attempt to exert some small control over their environments. Sarah keeps the key to the cabinet that hid her brother in hopes that if she gets released from the concentration camp, she may be able to return and save him. The poet writes the poem to help make sense of his environment. While very small, these actions are a way for both people to have some control over their environments and in the end, help them begin to handle their situations.

Another prisoner struggling with his environment is the narrator of the poem, "Evan's Face." This narrator is in complete fear due to his surroundings and witnesses many brutal beatings of inmates by guards. His environment and, more specifically, the guards within that environment, defeat him. His fear isn't only about being beaten himself; it is watching the guards beat other prisoners that becomes overwhelming. He states, "[I]t's not death I fear/but pain the unspeakable/complicity of knowing/somewhere a guard/high-fives his buddies/after crushing/another face" (Hartnett 78). Guards who get enjoyment out of beating inmates surround the narrator, and he has no control over that. As a result, he becomes completely submissive. He doesn't say anything to the guards about how wrong it is to beat inmates, but rather he sits quietly, in disgust, and watches as the beatings continue. The beatings occur so frequently that the narrator becomes immune to seeing things like blood gushing from prisoners' heads. In an attempt to regain some humanity and, thereby, control of his environment, the author writes this poem. Writing about his experiences and what he observes helps him try to make some sense of the wrongdoings. This enables him to begin to deal with it instead of ignoring the behavior that is brought on by the environment.

The narrator of "Evan's Face" and the main character in *Couldn't Keep it to Myself* struggle with their environments. The narrator of the poem is locked up in a male prison, and the main character in the book is locked up in "York," a female prison. Both live in constant fear. The poem's narrator lives with the fear of being beaten to death by the prison guards, and the main character lives in fear of her fellow inmates. The other inmates steal and mentally, physically, and sexually abuse each other. As a result, both become submissive to their environments. In "Evan's Face," the narrator does not attempt to stop the guards from beating other inmates. In *Couldn't Keep it to Myself*, the main character allows the women around her to take things from her without fighting back, explaining that "many of the women at York ignore the boundaries of personal property. They don't think twice about stealing from you . . . Women like me don't hit back" (Lamb 237). She doesn't fight back because she doesn't want to get her amenities taken away. Her amenities, like the puppy program, are the only things she has to look forward to, so she doesn't do anything to jeopardize them. Both individuals attempt to exert a small amount of control over their environments. One writes poetry about what he witnesses. The other controls the few rewards within the prison by not fighting with other inmates, which allows her to have some enjoyment throughout the long days she endures.

Prisoners are not the only people who struggle because of their environments. When I first started my college classes, saying that I was overwhelmed is an understatement. Having been a straight-A student in high school, seeing a 62 on my first college exam was a major shock. After blaming the bad grade on nerves and not changing anything, I took a second exam. After getting a 65, I felt defeated. I didn't think I was smart enough to be in college classes and began to think that I was going nowhere in life. After many tear-filled phone calls with my dad, I realized my performance was something I could control. So when the next test came up, I began studying a week in advance, changed where I studied, and went to my professor's office hours. These three very simple changes made a significant difference. My grades improved, and while they still weren't the A's I wanted, I began to get used to the fact getting all A's just wasn't going to happen my first semester. I learned that a few bad grades don't mean I'm not smart enough for college and that I had more control over my grades than I realized. Learning this has made me a lot happier and less stressed out. It has also helped me adjust to my new environment.

Control is a simple, yet essential thing in one's life. Prisoners have to adjust to their environments once locked up. It's an extremely difficult adjustment to make, and many cannot do it. For the ones who can, they usually do it by exerting small amounts of control through simple ways. For many, it's through writing. It is a small escape for them, which helps them accept where they are and make the necessary adjustments. Prisoners are not the only ones who struggle to gain control, though. Any kind of change can make people feel overwhelmed

and like they've lost all control. Having some measure of control helps people adjust to the changes in their environments.

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Students in this section were asked to incorporate the class theme of narrative into their research projects. In this informative paper, the writer explains the practice of narrative medicine and explores the vital role storytelling plays in the healing process.

## **The Power of Stories**

**By Bridget E. Cadogan**

(Prof. Collins – Narrative: The Inside Story)

People have been sharing stories for thousands of years as a means of entertainment, communication, and tradition. In recent years, evidence has shown that stories even have the power to heal. As a result, narrative medicine and therapy are becoming increasingly more relevant in the medical field. Training in this area promotes empathy and better communication between doctors and their patients. Where drugs and other types of therapy have failed, treatment with an emphasis on storytelling has been proven to help patients with no other options. Narrative medicine, for example, helps people understand and cope with the effects of mental illness, cancer, dementia, and tragedy. Because it allows people to creatively express their emotions, connect with others, and make sense of hardships beyond their control, storytelling plays a crucial role in the healing process.

In recent years, the use of narrative in medical practice has become increasingly popular. According to Rita Charon, the Executive Director of the Narrative Medicine program at Columbia University, "The effective practice of medicine requires narrative competence, that is, the ability to acknowledge, absorb, interpret, and act on the stories and plights of others" (1897). In other words, narrative medicine is based on the principles of empathy and understanding. This greatly contradicts the detached medical treatment style of the past, which is why Charon believes that one of the most important aspects of narrative medicine is that it provides better communication between a patient and their doctor. As the patient tells their story, the doctor carefully listens and makes connections to their own memories, experiences, and the feelings associated with it. This helps the doctor understand the emotions that the patient is feeling and what the illness means to them. When the doctor fully grasps the patient's perspective, they can better diagnose the illness, comfort the patient, and attempt to help them understand why it is happening (1897-99). The narrative medicine approach provides better care for the patient because the doctor is able to help them understand their circumstances and give the patient individualized care that fits their unique lifestyle and desires. The concept of narrative medicine bridges the gap between patients and doctors by helping the doctor connect with their patient on a deeper level and understand the effects of a disease beyond just the numbers and tests on a patient's medical chart.

While medication is helpful in treating a disease, it is not enough to help the patient understand what it means to them in a larger sense and for their future. Patients are often confused, emotional, and filled with complicated questions when they are diagnosed with a serious disease, and this is where storytelling comes in. Lynn M. Harter, Professor of Health

Communication at Ohio University, explains that a doctor really has to imagine the life of the patient to fully understand how the illness affects them and what they can do to help the healing process. For instance, when a boy who has played soccer all his life is diagnosed with a form of osteosarcoma, he is no longer able to do what he loves because of the physical limitations the cancer places on him. It is then the job of doctors to not only help him heal physically but to provide him with the tools to find his "new normal," like playing less-physical sports (Harter). The boy's sudden cancer diagnosis drastically changes his life and prevents him from doing something that is a central part of who he is. The concept of narrative medicine encourages doctors to recognize that the patient is separate from the illness that they are battling. This gives patients the opportunity to work with doctors to rewrite their story and develop their future after they physically heal. Doctors can help patients better heal and cope with the effects of their illness by focusing on their story and helping them craft their new identity after the illness has drastically changed who they are. They help patients heal both physically and emotionally when the emphasis is placed on the patient's individual story and not just the disease they have. Doctor and patient connection is the key to the success of narrative medicine and ensures that the healing process is as easy as possible for the patient.

While a strong relationship between doctor and patient is crucial to the healing process, patients also have the ability to help other patients who are going through similar struggles and are able to find comfort in their stories. A recent study explores how storytelling has the potential to effectively replace the need for additional medicine to treat high blood pressure. The trial observed 300 African-American patients afflicted with hypertension who were taking the standard dose of medication to treat high blood pressure. Approximately half of the patients were shown videos of other people explaining their personal stories about living with high blood pressure. The other half watched videos that were nonspecific and more focused on the science behind the disease. The results indicate that the patients who watched the storytelling videos had more consistent and normal blood pressure levels over time. Some patients showed much improvement, proving that storytelling had the same effect on patients as other studies that tested the use of additional drugs to help patients get their high blood pressure under control (Chen). Dr. Houston, the main author of the high blood pressure study, explains why the storytelling videos had such a positive effect when he says, "The magic of stories lies in the relatedness they foster" (qtd. in Chen). This is because people identify with others experiencing similar struggles.

The sharing of stories allows people to connect with other patients and learn from what they have gone through to improve their own healing process. These stories also help people make sense of their illness and the success of other patients shows them that they can overcome whatever they are battling. Sometimes all a patient needs to calm their fears about their illness is to listen to the story of someone similar to them who got through it. This is



where online support groups like the Association of Cancer Online Resources and CaringBridge come into effect. These websites give patients and families the opportunity to share their stories and connect with other patients who have similar experiences (Harter). This is incredibly helpful and therapeutic because there is only so much medication and a doctor can do. When treatments fail or doctors cannot fully explain something to a patient so that they understand, they can turn to other patients and connect with them over shared experiences. Relationships between patients positively affect them, help them heal, and help them make sense of their hardships.

Patients can certainly benefit and gain new perspective by connecting with other patients, but they also have the ability to do this on their own by viewing their difficult situation from a different and more positive angle. This concept is particularly helpful in treating afflictions for which there is no cure or distinct treatment plan, like mental illnesses. Narrative therapy with an emotional approach aims to help patients with their symptoms of depression by having them focus on positive interpretations of their personal story. Professors Seo, Kang, Lee, and Chae describe a study conducted to explore the effectiveness of this unique type of therapy. Narrative therapy allows a person suffering from depression to re-author their life. This is done by focusing on positive interpretations of events which can sometimes mean creating alternative stories instead of focusing on the negative ones. The unique therapy approach allows patients to separate and define their identity outside of the problem they are facing, which in this case is depression. The results showed that the participating patient's hope increased and overall depression symptoms decreased. The authors believe that even better results could have been achieved if the patients received narrative therapy for a longer period of time (379-85).

Narrative therapy with an emotional approach encourages patients to creatively spin their story in a positive way and take control of their own life. People have the ability to write their story the way they want it to be and not necessarily the way it is. Jonathan Adler, Professor of Psychology at the Franklin W. Olin College of Engineering, explains the idea when he says, "It's like they told a new story and then lived their way into it" (qtd. in Zimmerman). Adler reveals that positive attitudes have the ability to transform a person's situation. Storytelling gives patients suffering from depression the creative ability to reinvent themselves, and this exciting opportunity motivates patients to change their lives and shows them that their mental illness does not define who they are or where they are going. People often better understand their struggles and begin to heal when they are able to express their emotions openly in a creative way, and stories give them the power to do that.

New storytelling-based therapies are also changing the lives of people who suffer from Alzheimer's disease. Those who are afflicted forget significant details of their lives,

making it difficult to communicate with others. Unfortunately, there is no drug that cures this debilitating disease, which makes the need for controversial experimental therapies like storytelling even more important. Swedish Professors Holm, Lepp, and Ringsberg outline a study examining the therapeutic role of storytelling for people with dementia. Six patients and their caregivers met for 1.5 hours every week for two months. Every meeting started with a nurse telling a story to the group. After, patients could discuss the story and its themes and messages. Each story was carefully selected so that patients could relate to and recognize the themes of stories as moments from earlier in their lives. Results showed that storytelling promotes associative conversations in patients with dementia. The telling and discussing of these stories triggered memories and associations from events in the lives of the patients (256-62). Even though most patients did not remember exact stories from their own lives, they connected with the themes mentioned in the story. This sparked the emotions associated with them and made patients more comfortable communicating with other people and even talking about aspects of daily life. Patients often do not even realize that they are making connections to their own lives because they cannot remember the specifics of their memories, but they are able to understand the themes and emotions behind them and can therefore hold a conversation again, improving patients' quality of life. Stories are an essential part of life, and their classic themes awaken something within everyone.

Another approach to helping Alzheimer's patients better communicate and connect with others is to have the patient be the storyteller instead of just the listener. A program called TimeSlips focuses on encouraging dementia patients to talk and express their emotions by showing them photos. The point is not to make the participants remember their own stories, but to make one up based on what they see in the photo (Silberner). The process makes patients excited to talk, express their ideas, and contribute to the creation of the story. The program is effective for Alzheimer's patients because it takes away the pressure for them to remember their own story and memories. It helps them build better connections with fellow patients, nurses, and even their own family members. This makes the creative process attractive to both patients and their family members. As journalist Joanne Silberner explains, loved ones of dementia patients often get frustrated by the lack of connection to their family member. However, storytelling gives patients and their families something to connect with and ultimately allows them to communicate with each other. They may not be able to talk about old memories and experiences, but the newly created story gives them the gift of communication that most patients do not have. Creative storytelling improves the patients' quality of life by making them feel more comfortable and connected to others. It also helps the family members of the patient understand and cope with the diagnosis because they are able to maintain a relationship

with their family member, even though it might be different from before. When a person connects to a story or tells their own, they can better communicate with other people and understand their own emotions.

Storytelling has proven to help people heal because it encourages the open expression of emotion and helps people understand factors beyond their control. When a patient is first diagnosed with a disease, for example, it can be difficult for family members to understand exactly what is going on and why it is happening to them. This is especially true for children. Journalist Rebekah Lowin highlights the story of Amelia Pounds, whose sister is dying of the rare Tay-Sach's disease. At only five years old, Amelia found her little sister's disease confusing. The Sing Me a Story Foundation allows children to express their emotions and story through song. Children can either write or draw their stories in a notebook. Then, they are taken to songwriters who write and record a song for them based on what they put in the notebook. The recording is then sent to the family and helps them understand what the child is thinking. The song helped Amelia find meaning and clarity behind all of the confusing emotions she was feeling. Amelia's story is just another example of the therapeutic nature of stories.

Stories clearly have the power to do far more than just entertain. When they are applied to medical practice, they promote empathy, understanding, and a better connection between a doctor and their patient, which leads to overall better care for the patient. The reality is that sometimes medication is not enough to help a patient fully heal. Narrative medicine practices make sure patients understand the meaning and emotional toll of their illness. Medication and science lacks in this area, but stories thrive. They have the ability to help people express their emotions through a creative outlet, better communicate with the people around them, and understand the true effect of an unfortunate and uncontrollable circumstance. Narrative therapy is revolutionizing the medical field by changing the way doctors are trained and patients are treated. While quantitative research to support this practice is still lacking, the number of stories from patients that it helped continues to grow. Storytelling has the ability to heal even in situations where medicine cannot, and its recent inclusion in modern day medical practice is a step in the right direction.

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Short response papers invite students to use class readings to create and support an argument. This writer reveals her opinion about hook-up culture, dismisses some of the false assumptions made about it, and lobbies for change.

## **Is Hook-Up Culture Harmful?** **By Christy Ciota**

(Prof. Pojmann – Masculinity, Femininity, and Sexuality)

Hook-up culture is the phenomenon on college campuses where students have sex with one another with no emotional attachments. The ongoing debate recorded by journalists, such as Kate Taylor, is whether or not this culture is harmful to students. While Taylor focuses mostly on female students, Ryan Sager turns the focus on how young men are harmed by this culture. However, I argue that hook-up culture itself is not detrimental to students and that arguments against it often reveal a larger problem in society.

In Taylor's article, a wide variety of female students from the University of Pennsylvania shared their reasons for preferring hook-ups to long-term relationships. Many of these students agreed that a romantic relationship would just take too much time and energy away from their academic and extracurricular commitments. Through hook-ups, these women were able to have the sexual relationships they desired without the time commitment necessary for a romantic relationship. As one student put it when told she should make time for a relationship, "But there are so many other things going on in my life that I find so important that I just, like, can't make time, and I don't want to make time" (qtd. in Taylor 2). This student, like many of her fellow classmates, found that the hook-up culture simply worked better for her. With jobs, classes, clubs, and sports, there just is not much time for romance. As Taylor explains, "These women said they saw building their resumés, not finding boyfriends (never mind husbands), as their main job at Penn" (3). Though many women used to see college as no more than a way to find a husband, changes in society have opened so many opportunities for women that a relationship is no longer a priority. In today's competitive job market, excelling in classes and building a resumé takes precedence over finding love.

This does not mean all students immediately become sex-addicts when they arrive on a college campus. Though many students do follow the crowd and participate in hook-up culture, a large portion of students do not. Taylor acknowledges in her article, "At colleges nationally, by senior year, 4 in 10 students are either virgins or have had intercourse with only one person, according to the Online Social Life Survey" (8). If around forty percent of college graduates have not participated in hook-up culture, it may not be as much of an epidemic as people assume. Taylor's interviews revealed that there are still many women who would much rather have an emotional attachment to someone than a purely physical attachment. As one student stated, "Nothing is stopping me from rebelling. I just don't rebel" (qtd. in Taylor 8). This does not mean that one option is right and the other is wrong. As explained before, many of these women simply could not find the time to engage in a romantic relationship, which

should not be considered a bad thing. What seems to be constantly overlooked in many of these studies, and what Taylor's article reveals, is that all of these students are individuals. They each have different goals, values, and experiences. While many of them found the hook-up culture of their campus to be perfect for them, others did not. This does not make one more boring or virtuous than the other, but simply different. Though I disagree that hook-up culture is a bad thing altogether, I acknowledge that it could be both uncomfortable and even dangerous for certain people.

The dark side to the hook-up culture is the assumption that everyone is involved in it. Rape culture on college campuses is a major issue, and many people view hook-up culture as a major perpetrator of it. As a student told Taylor, "Guys assume that the default answer is always yes" (7). However, I would argue this is not an issue isolated within hook-up culture, but an issue within our culture itself. Many classes are offered to teach young women self-defense against male assaulters, but no similar classes exist to teach young men not to assault women. As Sager states while describing parents' sexual advice to their children, "While they might have extensive talks with their daughters - about respecting themselves, about birth control, about not being taken advantage of - advice to boys, aside from warnings about STDs, can be a little . . . simplified" (1). The focus always seems to be on teaching women to avoid rape instead of teaching men not to rape. If these issues begin with parental guidance as early as puberty, then hook-up culture cannot be used as a scapegoat for a much larger societal problem.

Hook-up culture itself is not an inherently harmful phenomenon. For many young men and women, it is an easy alternative to the time-consuming commitments of a relationship. The quick sexual encounters leave more room in their schedules for their schoolwork and extracurricular activities. It does not work for everyone, however, and many students still prefer more traditional romantic relationships. So, while it is true that hook-up culture has its flaws, the misconceptions about it being due to a lack of education pose a greater problem. What is needed is a change in the way parents talk to their children about sex in general, and action must be taken long before these students go to college.

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For their heritage unit essays, students were asked to use readings studied in class to support an original argument. This writer draws from genocide narratives and asserts that ignorance and fear of difference have “monstrous” effects.

## **Genocide: A Monster on the Playground**

**By Ashley S. DaBiere**

(Prof. Collins – Narrative: The Inside Story)

Throughout the course of world history, oppressive dictators and brutal murders of mass numbers of people have often caused us to question the motives and seemingly nonexistent morals of humans. Children have been victims of gas chambers, men have been horrifically destroyed by the blade of a machete, and women have been hunted down by terrorist groups solely for expressing liberal, unorthodox beliefs. Families have been torn apart without a second thought from victimizers, and entire populations of people have disappeared because their heritage did not match that of their country’s leaders. Some may ask how it is even possible for such heinous happenings to occur in such a nonchalant manner – those that are as composed and regulated as daily chores. The answer lies within the concept of fear and the idea that when fear is combined with intolerance, it has the capacity to engulf the majority of a population. The result is a dark, deep abyss of hatred and savagery that has enough manpower to completely annihilate those who are weaker and who have less power. In a way, it seems as though the ideology behind genocide is similar to a group of bullies on a playground picking on the single outsider who is different - that is, a monster of a bully who has gone much further than just foolish teasing.

To understand the momentum behind such brutal murders, it is logical to study first-hand accounts of witnesses who experienced the terror of the most gruesome genocides in history. An excerpt from the true story *We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed with Our Families*, by Philip Gourevitch, accurately portrays the fear and hatred that fuel a massacre. Gourevitch, an outsider from the western world, travels to a town in eastern Rwanda a year after the genocide to survey the carnage. His graphic account of the decomposing bodies he finds in a church where the Tutsis had attempted to take refuge is wholly petrifying. After stepping foot inside the doorway of a room, Gourevitch observes, “At least fifty mostly decomposed cadavers covered the floor, wadded in clothing, their belongings strewn about and smashed. Macheted skulls had rolled here and there” (15). The merciless and barbaric killing of these refugees was justified by a pure and utter hatred that stems from a complete lack of tolerance for those who were different from the majority. The killers did not take the time to consider the fact that these fifty human beings - men, women, and children - had families and lives that were similar to their own. Instead, they believed their Hutu ethnicity made them superior to all Tutsis; it is the mob mentality power behind this identity that gave the Hutus the ability to control who would live and who would die.

Such mass violence can be the result of a group of people desperately trying to preserve and purify their own heritage when they are struck with the irrational fear that anyone who is different will endanger this outcome. This aberrant fear reroutes the human mind to believe that the complete extinction of all those who are even slightly unique is necessary, and the planning behind the killing begins to stem from that fear. Gourevitch argues that mass violence “must be organized; it does not occur aimlessly” (17). He adds:

Even mobs and riots have a design, and great and sustained destruction requires great ambition. It must be conceived as the means toward achieving a new order, and although the idea behind that new order may be criminal and objectively very stupid, it must also be compellingly simple and at the same time absolute. The ideology of genocide is all of those things, and in Rwanda it went by the bald name of Hutu Power (17).

Behind genocide, there must be a strong acting force, such as fear, that motivates human beings to turn on their own neighbors. The desired outcome propels the aggressors and overpowers an innate reaction to pursue basic morals. In the case of Rwanda, Hutus were able to convince themselves that all Tutsis were “bad people.” They believed that if they did not kill the Tutsis, the Tutsis most definitely would have killed them. This fear caused Hutu Power to fiercely want to create a new order free from all Tutsis, one that allowed the Hutu tribe to dominate. Unfortunately, there was enough momentum and desire caused by such a fear to perpetrate the elimination of nearly all of the Tutsi bloodline.

The Rwandan Genocide resembles the mass murder of the Jews in Nazi Germany as yet another group of minorities that was unjustly targeted out of fear and ignorance. The graphic novel *Maus* by Art Spiegelman offers a first-hand encounter of this genocide by portraying the various stages of the Holocaust. Consequently, readers are able to understand the events that led up to the barbaric behavior displayed by a large population of people and the tragedies that came as a result. In general, genocide does not begin overnight but instead gradually builds until there is an explosion of hatred and discrimination from the majority faction, resulting in a cold-blooded massacre. Spiegelman demonstrates this concept through his father Vladek’s survival story. Vladek remembers the first example he saw of Jews being punished for attempting to outsmart the food rationing laws imposed on them by the Germans. In this instance, four men with whom Vladek often bartered were hanged on the street and left there for a week to show Jews the terror that could be inflicted upon them if they disobeyed the discriminatory laws that were being enforced. Similar to the Rwandan genocide, this example demonstrates how a lack of tolerance based on heritage can have a drastic impact on social standards. In *Maus* it becomes evident that a small problem with tolerance can snowball into genocide. This is demonstrated in the story quite vividly as the severity of the heinous acts escalates. First, Vladek and his family are forced from their house into a small apartment in the



ghetto. Later, all of his immediate family members are killed, and in the end, he is sent to Auschwitz. When this lack of empathy for Jews by a huge portion of the population was combined with the unjustifiable fear that they were bad luck for Germany's success economically and politically, entire Jewish families were savagely obliterated.

Being able to justify the mass murder of men, women, and children simply because they are not part of the majority is difficult to imagine; however, it is important to understand how such adversities occur in order to prevent them in the future. Just as education to prevent bullying is taught in elementary schools, it is important to incorporate such lessons into the adult world. Learning to accept and support people of different ethnicities, sexual orientations, races, and heritages is necessary to promote peace in the world, and understanding those who are different from us will decrease the possibility of our minds conjuring up ridiculous fears. After all, the world is our playground, and all it takes is a majority of people to support those who are different for a favorable change to occur. It is when narrow-mindedness kicks into overdrive that a monster is formed.

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After attending Rev. Dr. William Barber's lecture on campus and reflecting upon "Letter from Birmingham City Jail," the writer of this short response essay recognizes the important role that language can play in the pursuit of social justice.

## **A Call to Take Action**

**By Erica S. Frost**

(Prof. Liptak – Crossing Borders in Literature and Film)

Today many people are suffering from poverty, discrimination, and a lack of education. The unfair treatment of African-Americans and the unjust attacks made by police officers regularly make the national news, and people all over the United States are dying because they cannot support themselves and are not assisted by the government. These facts became more apparent to me on March 30th when I went to the Martin Luther King, Jr. and Coretta Scott King lecture series on race and nonviolent social change at Siena College to listen to Rev. Dr. William J. Barber, II. In particular, I was inspired by his lecture to take action against social injustice through the use of language.

Rev. Barber started off his lecture with a prayer and then moved on to explain instances of injustices, such as when unarmed African-American males were attacked by police and how a fifteen year old boy was sentenced to nine years in prison for stealing sneakers. Right from the beginning of Dr. Barber's speech, I was shocked by these facts. Though I knew that racial discrimination happens today, I did not realize just how much. Rev. Barber then referenced times in history when social movements began and were challenged. What inspired me was his statement that "language is either a tool of oppression or liberation" (Barber).

I had never really thought about language being so important and necessary for equality and justice. During the lecture, I learned that proper language in the United States' Constitution is fundamental for citizens' equality in the eyes of the law. Past civil rights activists such as J.W. Hood and Samuel Ashley even wanted to improve the Constitution and make it so everyone enjoyed the rewards of their own labor. Perhaps this simple change in language could have eliminated slavery sooner and made people more equal to each other. The emphasis on language inspired me to take action against social injustices by improving my own language and making others aware of the harmful effect that degrading language can have. Dr. Barber explained how harmful language can be to a moral movement with the use of "mean and coated words" (Barber), and he said how this was part of the South's strategy to spread fear in those who were against segregation. Rev. Barber also mentioned that "silence is betrayal" in the sight of injustice (Barber). Moral language is, therefore, needed to counteract the prejudiced language being spread. From that moment in the lecture, I vowed to try to use my language as a tool of liberation and speak out against those who are discriminatory.

Dr. Barber's use of different language strategies in his lecture and his focus on the power of language to bring about social justice is also exemplified in the "Letter from

Birmingham City Jail” by Dr. Martin Luther King. In this document, Dr. King talks about the need for social reform and uses pathos and logos as strategies to persuade others to join his movement. This is similar to what Dr. Barber did during his lecture, as noted above. King used pathos to appeal to the audience’s emotions by sharing painful stories about lynchings, drownings, and even police officers who “curse, kick, brutalize, and even kill your black brothers” (King 3). This emotion-filled language makes the audience relate to his experiences and feel empathetic towards his cause. Rev. Barber used a similar technique in his lecture when he shared more recent stories about innocent black people getting beaten by white police officers for no reason. Just as in King’s letter, Barber appealed to the audience members’ sense of morality during his lecture and made them understand the need for social justice.

Martin Luther King, Jr. also used logos in his letter to give his argument for reform more credibility and logic. He stated that “there has been more unsolved bombings of Negro homes and churches in Birmingham than in any other city in this nation” (King 2). This fact supports his claim that there is a major problem with racism in the city and that something needs to be done to stop the injustice. Dr. Barber also used logos to present facts about the need for moral reform against racism and poverty. He claimed that “over 30,000 people died a year, since 2013, because of lack of Medicare expansion” (Barber). This high death rate convinced the audience that there is a real and urgent problem that needs to be addressed. These powerful tools of language perfectly demonstrate how rhetoric can be used to inspire people and thereby bring about social reform.

Rev. Dr. William J. Barber, II’s lecture was important to hear because it addressed major social issues that everyone needs to be aware of, such as racism, poverty, and a lack of education. Because of his powerful lecture, I am inspired to use language to help bring about justice. As shown by both Barber and King, effective rhetoric is crucial for a major and desperately-needed moral reformation to occur. Everyone needs to band together and use their voices to help eradicate prejudice and social injustices so that everyone can be treated equally and fairly.

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In FYS - Sports, students chose their own topics for their research papers and used a wide variety of sources when developing their original theses. In this provocative paper, the author argues that even a positive stereotype can contribute to racism and, therefore, should not be tolerated. He also proves that racial stereotypes regarding athletic ability have no scientific grounding. Notably, his writer makes excellent use of the strategies and templates presented in FYS's writing handbook, *They Say / I Say*.

## **Racism Reincarnated: All Black Men Can Jump**

**By Matthew J. Garlo**

(Prof. Britt Haas - Sports)

As America strives to reach new levels of ethics and morality in the modern era, certain looming stereotypes continue to prove counterproductive to eliminating prejudice. Within the sports world, one of these widespread stereotypes is that blacks and other minorities are naturally and genetically superior to whites. Whether this particular logic may seem complimentary to blacks or not, any stereotype that singles out a specific group of people also oppresses them. If such stereotypes continue, the only result will be the introduction of even more stereotypes, which limits the way people are viewed and treated. At the same time, racism has undertaken a new form in the modern era, and when blacks are forced to live in inner cities, they are told that sports like basketball can be their best way out. Society's strategic class formation is responsible for a boom in dominant minority athletes and despite widespread beliefs to the contrary, genetics are unable to predetermine athletic success.

One must acknowledge that there is no such thing as a positive stereotype. Regardless of whether the conversation is about how blacks are naturally better or worse at basketball, singling them out in comparison to other races is an injustice. The simple eradication of stereotypes like this is important because small steps can add up to major progress in race relations. Although this issue may not be as blatantly obvious as are issues involving racist acts of violence or using slurs, it is nevertheless important and could not be more apparent once someone grasps the concept of it. Too many people think of African-Americans as purebred athletes, those who can sprint the fastest and jump the highest. This viewpoint is one that society cannot afford to continue spreading to younger generations. As particular Asian children are expected to be math geniuses or certain Caucasian children are pushed to become musically inclined, pseudo-scientific racism rears its ugly head in a way that is no different when people stereotype black athletes.

The biggest problem with this pseudo-scientific racism, though, is that most people do not realize that science has actually proven most such theories entirely false. Somewhere along the road of international athletic competition came the idea that athletes who had ancestors in the slave trade were generated with speed and higher testosterone levels than the general population. For many who do not understand the diversity of genetics within any race in particular, this explanation seems simple enough. As W. Carson Byrd and Matthew W. Hughey explain, "There is no gene or allele for 'speed,' and no direct link between testosterone

and speed (while sprinters may have high testosterone, not all high-testosterone people can sprint).”<sup>1</sup> Genetics may affect a body in a way that eventually influences the person towards participating in a particular sport or activity that they have a chance to excel in, but even then they are only given a chance with their inherited long legs and consequent long strides. Training in order to improve the talents and assets with which one is born is the only thing that determines success in the end.

With the help of modern science, more and more parents who have dreams of sports stardom for their children are trying out a relatively new DNA test that attempts to predict where a child might be inclined to succeed in the athletic world in their future. One specific gene within the human body, ACTN<sub>3</sub>, has been recognized as having certain direct correlations with someone’s athletic ability. Out of roughly 20,000 in the body, this gene is only one out of 200 that have been studied alongside their relations with athletic potential and ability.<sup>2</sup> The science behind the issue is gradually improving, but even the creators of the DNA test, Atlas Sports Genetics, have acknowledged the likely inaccuracy of the test. A related study on the ACTN<sub>3</sub> gene from 2003 in Australia included one particular athlete who set out to prove his genetic makeup wrong. An Olympic long jumper had been a part of the experiment, and his results did not show a single sign of the R variant gene in his body - the gene that is related to power and speed in sports that most long jumpers and sprinters possess. Yet, this Olympian excels in the long jump event. As Dr. Stephen M. Roth, director of the Functional Genomics Laboratory at the University of Maryland’s School of Public Health explained, “The idea that it will be one or two genes that are contributing to the Michael Phelps or the Usain Bolts of the world I think is shortsighted because it’s much more complex than that.”<sup>3</sup> As long as athletes, like the long jumper from Spain, continue to prove their genes wrong, the creation of DNA tests like these only further proves that people should not believe athletic ability is based on genetics.

Analyst, journalist, and author of *The New York Times* best-seller *The Sports Gene*, David Epstein has built his career around studying athletes and their abilities. Although his book tackles the arguments from both sides of the sports genetics argument, in the end, Epstein finds the evidence that denies the existence of athlete genes to be more persuasive. In an interview with Reihan Salam, he explained, “The athletes that come from the coast of West Africa who dominate sprint events could not be more physiologically distinct from those in East Africa, other than the fact that they both have the dark skin that protects from equatorial sunlight.”<sup>4</sup> What he is saying is that body type and characteristics cannot be assumed based on skin color, and this is the misconception many Americans have. West Africans tend to sprint more due to the landscape of their homeland, as East Africans train much more for distance running due to the difficulty and elevation of the highlands in places such as Kenya. This explains why Kenyans are often marathon winners and not sprinters -

because of their conditioning in regards to their surroundings. With that being said, it becomes apparent why saying "blacks" are naturally good athletes can be problematic, for there can be no definitive characteristic of "blacks" when ancestry varies immensely within the "black" community.

In *Drive*, by Larry Bird and Bob Ryan, the story of a player who spent a lot of time proving himself was relayed. Bird, a white farm boy from the outskirts of Indiana, was constantly reminded of the Magic Johnsons and Michael Jordans who would embarrass him on the court if he ever made it to the National Basketball Association. When speaking about the discouragement he experienced, Bird said, "It was always: He's from a small town. He can't run. He can't jump. He can't play against bigger guys. He's a step slow."<sup>5</sup> The small-town boy eventually ended up playing alongside his friends and fellow legends, earning more than his fair share of victories against the NBA greats. In an era when the NBA came to be dominated by black men, Larry Bird won three championships and was a 12-time all-star as a main catalyst for the success of the Boston Celtics. Although athletically outmatched at times, Bird was clearly a carrier of the competitor gene - something that proves success depends on hard work and devotion. Success in sports is simply not determined by race-based DNA.

Viewing African-Americans as a people who were meant to be athletes creates many moral and ethical problems. The notion that athletics represents the easier path to success for them puts stress on black youth, who are being pushed past their limit in order to excel at a sport rather than in the classroom. Oftentimes, children may be raised hearing that the game can get them places where education will not. It seems that many people believe that with athletic talent comes a lack of intelligence or competence, but this is far from true. In the article "Brains, Brawn, and Pigskin Balls: Racism and Athletic Manifestation in Society," C. Keith Harrison explained how this sole focus on athletics can alter the thoughts of vulnerable youth. He stated, "It also accounts for their tendency to put all motivational 'eggs' into just a few sport 'baskets.' Because they have not had the chance to see pay-offs connected with education, they conclude that running and jumping offer the best chances for fame and fortune."<sup>6</sup> Black children come to believe that sports are their only option, and the larger white society tends to reinforce that belief.

When black athletes were finally able to integrate into professional and collegiate sports in the Jim Crow era, a basketball player named Charlie Scott became one of the first to discover the racist treatment of black athletes during his time at the University of North Carolina. Media outlets that flocked around the situation put Scott's name in the headlines, but not in a way that was respectful toward the achievement he had reached. His status as a barrier-breaker and a leader was never mentioned, and according to the article "Our Colored Boy," Scott was referred to as a "bespectacled New York City negro."<sup>7</sup> Scott was solely acknowledged as a new black player, as the community as well as the country disregarded the

fact that he made history by becoming the first black athlete *on scholarship* throughout the area. His intellectual ability was ignored. Basketball alone never defined Scott, and although he was never recognized for it, he was a medical school student. Stereotyping blacks as perfect athletes takes away from their self-image and the potential to become anything else, such as a doctor in Scott's case. This is one of the many ways people are subconsciously racist at times.

It has been scientifically proven that genetics and race are not the success factors when it comes to athletics. Anyone who believes blacks in general are naturally better athletes is not only unfairly singling them out, but is entirely wrong. Racism does not take the same form as it did in the 1960s but rather in ways like these that most people are brainwashed with. In the land of supposed equal opportunity, oftentimes blacks and other minorities are not seen to have equal potential as whites when it comes to anything other than athletics. The subconscious racist ideas that are being spread from generation to generation are an embarrassing blemish on society which proves race relations are not where they should be in this modern era. Many people have already fallen victim to believing in this subconscious discrimination that blacks are better than whites at sports and that sports are the only thing blacks are good at. Americans need to halt the use of such stereotypes in order to stop the problems that they cause before it is too late. Eliminating stereotypes that often go unnoticed can move humanity closer to ridding society of prejudice once and for all.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Carson W. Byrd and Matthew W. Hughey, "Born That Way? Scientific Racism is Creeping Back Into Our Thinking. Here's what to Watch Out For," *Washington Post*, September 28, 2015, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2015/09/28/born-that-way-scientific-racism-is-creeping-back-into-our-thinking-heres-what-to-watch-out-for/>.

<sup>2</sup> Byrd and Hughey, "Born That Way?".

<sup>3</sup> Juliet Macur, "Born to Run? Little Ones Get Test for Sports Gene." *The New York Times*, November 29, 2008. <http://www.nytimes.com/>.

<sup>4</sup> Reihan Salam, "The VICE Podcast- How Genes Affect Athletic Performance," VICE Media, podcast, February 12, 2014, <http://www.vice.com/read/vice-podcast-choose-your-sport-based-on-genes>.

<sup>5</sup> Larry Bird and Bob Ryan, *Drive: The Story of My Life* (New York: Doubleday, 1989), 53.

<sup>6</sup> Keith C. Harrison, "Brains, Brawn, and Pigskin Balls: Racism and Athletic Manifestation In Society," *Counterpoints* 107 (2000): 103-21. JSTOR.

<sup>7</sup> Gregory J. Kaliss, "'Our Colored Boy' and 'Fine Black Athletes': Charlie Scott at the University of North Carolina, 1965-1970," *Men's College Athletics and the Politics of Racial Equality: Five Pioneer Stories of Black Manliness, White Citizenship, and American Democracy* (2012): 109-37. JSTOR.

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The writer of this short informal response uses striking language and sensory details when summarizing the outside-of-class event that she chose to attend. In addition to taking a strong stance in regard to the college's traditions, the student makes meaningful connections to a recorded lecture and a literary text that were read and discussed by the class.

## **Francis's Sister** **By Maria R. Gigliello**

(Prof. Liptak – Crossing Borders in Literature and Film)

On Friday, October 2<sup>nd</sup>, I attended the Transitus mass on campus at Saint Mary of the Angels Chapel. This tradition occurs every year at Siena College during Francis Week to commemorate the life and death of such an important figure to the school, St. Francis of Assisi. I knew I wanted to write about this event due to its eminence during the week's festivities. However, it wasn't until I listened to Sister Margaret Carney's speech and read Virginia Woolf's "Shakespeare's Sister" that the mass particularly resonated with me. Sister Carney makes it rather clear in her talk that Clare was just as important as Francis in promoting the Franciscan lifestyle when it first originated, so I dare ask why at Siena College do we dedicate a whole week to St. Francis, but not to St. Clare. Her contributions to the Franciscan Order make her a rather valuable figure to not only the Franciscans, but to our Siena community, and I believe that we should celebrate her in the same way we celebrate Francis.

As I sat in the dimly lit St. Mary of the Angels chapel waiting for the evening's events to begin, I noticed a sense of calm and reflection rolling off all of the people gathered for this significant celebration. The mass started with no large procession or grand opening song like it usually does, but rather an opening narration from a passage of a text describing the beginning of Francis's demise. Between each passage, delicate music from a pianist and vocalist further reiterated the readings through song. Parts of his life were also symbolized through the congregation receiving a special blessing and bread being passed out for us all to consume. For me, the highlight of the mass was when we all lit small candles and proceeded to the grotto to conclude the mass. Light trailed through the campus as we embarked on our own journey, just as Francis had. While this mass and the entirety of Francis Week surely captures the traditions and heritage of the Franciscans, I couldn't help but notice the absence of recognition of someone arguably just as important, Clare.

Roughly five years ago, Siena College invited noted speaker Sister Margaret Carney to speak to students about the significance of Clare to the Franciscans. In the video of her speech, Sister Carney makes it plainly clear that Clare can be described as a foundress within the Franciscan Order. She lived among Francis and his followers, decided her fellow sisters would live an independent and simple life like Francis, and even preached the teachings of Francis and his lifestyle to Pope Innocent. Sister Carney goes as far as to use the term "first

Franciscan woman” when describing Clare. Clearly Clare holds massive amounts of power in the Franciscan order and is revered by many, yet she is still not held to the same level of legacy that Francis is at Siena. This woman willingly gave up a life of comfort just as Francis did, spread the word of God just as Francis did, and encouraged others to do the same just as Francis did, yet we at Siena don’t dedicate an entire week just to her.

Maybe Clare is still attached to the “Shakespeare’s Sister” stigma that Virginia Woolf raises in an essay I believe to be relevant to this issue. Is Clare’s legacy limited just because she is a woman? Has her gender prohibited her from receiving the praise and recognition she deserves on the Siena campus? In their own time, Clare and Francis could have most definitely represented Woolf’s version of Shakespeare and his theoretical sister, Judith. Francis, a well-recognized citizen of Assisi held so much power in promoting his beliefs due to the fact that he was male. Unfortunately, Clare’s womanhood hindered her cause. Women were neither valued nor acknowledged in medieval Italy which automatically prevented Clare from receiving the initial deep appreciation she deserved. However, as the 21<sup>st</sup> century is underway, I think most of us can agree that these views and ideas about women are now jaded and extraneous. While I don’t mean to imply that Siena College is misogynistic or sexist in any way, I’m genuinely curious as to why, if they are truly seen as equals in their contributions to the Franciscan Order, we don’t uphold Clare in the same way we do Francis.

While I thoroughly enjoyed my overall experience at the Transitus mass, my curiosity got the best of me and left a slightly sour taste in my mouth. I truly appreciate and admire the Franciscan Order and its philosophies, and I truly love this school. However, the lack of equitable recognition of Clare needs to be thoroughly reexamined. Whether it be the Virgin Mary, Mother Theresa, Mary Magdalene, or St. Katharine Drexel, women are a prominent part of influencing the history of religion and its traditions. As a Siena community, I think it’s about time we give Clare the same recognition for her dedication and influence on the Franciscans and acknowledge her as Francis’s true equal.



The purpose of this reflection paper was to provide an overview and analysis of Reverend Barber's presentation for the Martin Luther King Jr. Lecture Series. Adhering to a specific organizational structure, the student writer connects particular points raised in the lecture to major justice and human rights-related domains regarding equity and equality. She also references specific course texts and provides personal reflections about Dr. Barber's presentation.

## **Reflections on Reverend Barber's Lecture** **By Leanne Isabelle**

(Prof. Strock-Lynskey – Exploring Culture, Diversity, and Human Rights)

### ***Section I: Overview of Event***

The presentation given by Reverend Barber for the Martin Luther King, Jr. lecture series was unlike any other event I've ever attended. The atmosphere was extremely uplifting, and the audience immediately recognized this prior to Reverend Barber's lecture as we were told to stand up and sing along. It reminded me of a Southern church choir, and it was extremely exciting to be a part of. The sense of community that was referred to throughout the lecture was immediately recognized before Reverend Barber said a word. When the night came to an end, we came together as agents for change. Many Siena students joined Reverend Barber on stage, embracing the idea of abolishing discrimination and promoting love within communities as brothers and sisters. We continued to sing, clap, and dance a little in our places, which was extremely powerful and brought everyone together.

One theme Reverend Barber discussed throughout the duration of the event was that with reconstruction of the integrity of a society, comes the deconstruction of what was built. For instance, Reverend Barber discusses the "First Reconstruction" of our government from 1865 to the early 1900s, which revolved around the issues controlling the South and slavery. Thanks to the abolition movement, slaves were freed. The vast majority of whites in the South found the act of freeing slaves "a danger to the liberty of people" (Barber). This idea was a contributing factor to the immoral deconstruction of society. The concept of immoral deconstruction led to violent crimes towards blacks through attacks, which impacted the relationships between whites and blacks on a newer, more violent level of hate and social distancing (Bogardus). Relationships between blacks and whites were viewed as "illegitimate," laws were exploited in favor of discrimination towards African Americans, and debates were raised on the issue involving unequal education opportunities for the African American community. Reverend Barber claimed that with the construction of moral integrity to do the right thing in society, comes the destruction of this integrity. He also argued how this injustice towards the minority is an endless cycle, and that "moral descent is a necessity for this nation" in order to end it (Barber).

An additional theme Reverend Barber addressed during this lecture was that with the benefit of the majority, comes the suffering of minority groups. Reverend Barber discussed how when the racial majority is accepted in society, the racial minority is rejected from society. He also related this to minority religious groups being rejected when the majority is widely accepted. He referred to America as "the melting pot that never melted" due to the acts of rejection and exploitation of the groups of people that are not found within the majority (Barber). While referring to racial minority rejection from society, he used an example specifically relating to African Americans in the South, saying the "minority suffers from the 'Southern Strategy (building immoral deconstruction).' If we want change, we need to understand the history"

(Barber). Reverend Barber claimed that minority groups, regardless of race, sex, religion, or anything that is not within the societal majority, often face rejection, discrimination, and exploitation.

### **Section II: Analysis of Presentation**

Reverend Barber's lecture related to the domains of equality and equity of social justice. One domain of equality Reverend Barber addressed is the "equality of rights" domain, which advocates for the abolishment of all forms of discrimination, despite the diverse aspects one may exhibit. (The United Nations, 2011, p. 15). Reverend Barber stated during his lecture, "Outlawing discrimination is a moral movement," which depicts how the right to be free of oppression is not truly enforced within our societies (Barber). Reverend Barber also discussed how the Jim Crow Laws were a major issue African Americans in the South faced, which was one of the main ways discrimination was exercised and why society felt it was acceptable to be oppressors to the minority. Reverend Barber also discussed the domains of inequality throughout his lecture. One domain of injustice Reverend Barber addressed is the "inequality in the distribution of opportunities for civic and political participation" domain (Barber). This domain discusses how power lies in the hands of democracy, although power in society is not always distributed equally (The United Nations, 2011, p. 19). Reverend Barber described how race has always been a sensitive subject in politics, but oftentimes, the conservatives play the "race card" correctly and are kept in office. These acts of oppression that keep conservatives in office continue to give the African Americans no opportunities to participate in the general society because they are given zero power. In addition, since the minority groups had little to no power within society, oftentimes they were not able to vote for representatives in the government. Reverend Barber depicted this as a major injustice because the minority groups are unable to sufficiently represent themselves and they have little to no power in society.

Reverend Barber referred to the concept of civil disobedience and claimed this was a significant method in order to accomplish strides toward equality. The religious leaders declare in the *Public Statement by 8 Alabama Clergymen*: "We commend the community as a whole and the local news media and law enforcement officials in particular, on the calmer manner in which these demonstrations have been handled. We urge the public to continue to show restraint should the demonstrations continue, and the law enforcement officials to remain calm and continue to protect our city from violence" (paragraph 6). The clergymen disapproved of civil disobedience because it was a threat to the normality of society. Reverend Barber advocated for a moral agenda and argued that in order to achieve it, we must civilly challenge the abnormalities found in society.

The theme of the minority suffering while the majority benefits as well as the theme of moral construction conveyed in Reverend Barber's lecture are interrelated with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s *Letter from a Birmingham Jail*. For instance, Dr. King stated, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly" (1963, para. 2). This quotation describes the message conveyed in Reverend Barber's lecture, expressing a "ripple effect" that the actions of justice which threaten the majority, benefits the minority, just as actions of injustice threatens the minority, but benefits the majority. Another declaration made by Dr. King in this letter that relates to the message of moral construction

conveyed by Reverend Barber was, "Nonviolent direct action seeks to create such a crisis and establish such creative tension that a community that has constantly refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue" (1963, paragraph 7). Reverend Barber's message is that moral integrity is built through peacefully making changes, challenging the societal norms, and confronting the issues in a civil manner.

### **Section III: Personal Reflections**

The aspect of Reverend Barber's talk that stuck out to me was that it was more of a rally to promote his ideas and create a sense of community than a lecture. When most people hear the word "lecture," they believe it's going to be informative but not as exhilarating and passionate as Reverend Barber's event. I also found it extremely interesting that he went through so much history while presenting. I now understand why it was necessary to do this in order to present his message clearly and effectively. Reverend Barber's presentation makes me want to look more into the challenges the oppressed face, as well as encourages me to be an agent for change to reduce and eliminate discrimination in all of its forms.

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Using research and personal narrative to support his thesis, this writer passionately argues that the media is responsible for the perpetuation of Islamophobia.

## **The Media's False Portrayal of Islam Must End**

**By Ahmed H. Jabir**

(Prof. Collins – Narrative: The Inside Story)

Islamophobia, defined as the fear of and prejudice against Islam and Muslims, has taken root in my life as well as the lives of many Muslims around the world. It has been spreading rapidly ever since the September 11th attacks and still remains as a backlash of recent terrorist attacks in Paris, San Bernardino, and Brussels. Currently in the United States, presidential candidate Donald Trump is instilling fear of and prejudice against Islam and Muslims by using his authority and access to media outlets to his advantage. With a large audience, Trump employs anti-Islamic rhetoric to perpetuate his claim that Muslims are a threat to America's security. Since the majority of the people living in the United States are connected to the media in one form or another, it holds great power in the formation of public opinion. In fact, the major cause of hate and prejudice towards the peaceful religion of Islam is its negative portrayal in the media.

Ever since I came to the United States, Islamophobia has been a presence in my life. I emigrated from Iraq to the U.S. approximately eight years ago, seeking safety from the raging war. As I started to assimilate into American culture, I began to comprehend the meaning of some of the hateful remarks made by my peers during my time in middle school. For instance, during the second month of school, I was told that Osama Bin Laden was my father and I was responsible for 9/11. At the time, I decided not to speak up, wondering what difference it could possibly make. So I laughed along, letting the ignorant stay ignorant.

Until this year, I did not feel responsible for shedding light upon my religion to exterminate the ignorance about it. But after the recent attacks in Paris, San Bernardino, and Brussels, prejudice against Muslims jumped to a whole new extreme. The day after the Paris attacks, I sat down and watched videos of people's reactions and their attribution of blame. To say the least, I was shocked. Most proposals consisted of annihilating all Muslims in the United States while very few defended Islam and its followers. Since then, I have made it my mission to spread awareness about Islamophobia.

The catalyst causing the rapid spread of Islamophobia is mass media manipulation. Michael Sells, a professor of Islamic history and literature at the Divinity School of the University of Chicago, sums up how media manipulation is a factor in spreading Islamophobia. According to Sells:

Images of Taliban students sitting above the written text of the Quran, or of Osama Bin Laden surrounded by Arabic scripts and Islamic symbols are shown repeatedly by the media, intercepted with pictures of the planes flying into the

World Trade Center followed by the human suffering of the victims. Once the image association is made, all the pontifications about how all Muslims are not Taliban are deemed ineffective. (qtd. in Buehler)

In essence, the media does not explicitly state the links between the images of the Islamic symbols and the human victims suffering caused by the 9/11 attacks. Instead, the media lets viewers make the association between Islam and suffering on their own, causing the fear of and prejudice against Islam to take hold.

In addition to biased image placement, the media makes broad generalizations that group the entire Muslim population together with religious extremist groups. An example of such an extremist group is ISIS, Islamic State of Iraq and Syria. Robert Bartholomew, an American-born medical sociologist, writer, journalist and human rights advocate, puts the representation of Islam based on ISIS into perspective. According to Bartholomew, the public fear is not proportional to the potential threat. He states that "of the approximately 1.68 billion Muslims who constitute 23.3% of the global population . . . there are about 31,000 jihadist extremist militants in ISIS" (Bartholomew 5). These statistics indicate that the number of jihadist extremists is very low relative to the total Muslim population worldwide. Thus, the claim that the majority of Muslims are a threat to American security is disproved. Despite these statistics, my peers still treated me as if I were a part of the 31,000 jihadist extremists. Why would they have this idea when the facts say otherwise? Media influence.

Because of the media's immediate and vast reach, stereotypes about, fear of, and prejudice towards Muslims skyrocketed after the event of September 11th. Many Americans were exposed to negative representations of Muslims following the attacks, which contributed greatly to the development of negative stereotyping of Muslims. According to Bowman, a movie critic and editor, these stereotypes developed from "media manufactured images of Arabs and Muslims [including] mad religious imams or mullahs, cartoon bombs in Muslim turbans, airplane hijackings, skyscraper terrorism, and suicide bombers" (el-Aswad 44). The broadcast of such images by the media causes people to make links between Muslims and terrorists, which is why my peers labeled me as a terrorist even though I never threatened them. A recent example of media influence aiding in false representation of Islam is seen in the 2012 film *Innocence of Muslim*. As a form of anti-Muslim propaganda, the film falsely portrays the prophet Muhammad in a derogatory way (el-Aswad 44). After watching such films, it is no wonder why people have a negative outlook on Islam and Muslims. They associate followers of the religion with the distorted representations that they witness, and their resulting opinions are inaccurate. This instance reveals how the media's false representations of Islam catalyze the growth of Islamophobia.

In addition to visual media outlets such as movies, websites also developed shortly after the September 11th attacks, aiding in the growth of hate and prejudice towards Islam

and Muslims. According to el-Aswad, some examples of websites include "Campus Watch: Monitoring Middle East Studies on Campus," "Islamist Watch," "Jihad Watch," "Stop the Islamisation of America," "Stop Islamisation of Europe (SIOE)," and "Atlas Shrugs" (45). The function of such websites is to degrade Muslims to the point where they are no longer seen as humans. When the point of dehumanization is reached, it becomes easier to resent Muslims, which, in turn, fuels the spread of Islamophobia. Elaborating on ideas by Poole, el-Aswad reports that "the representation of the violent Muslim does not only serve Western propaganda, but also generates good profits [for the media source]" (46). In essence, the media benefits from generating anti-Muslim propaganda because news and headlines that portray Muslims as radical extremists sell more than "dull" news about Muslims who represent the majority of the Muslim population. The media's primary motive is generating profit, which conflicts with its primary function: informing the people.

Social media websites are another example of how Islamophobia can spread via the Internet. The ability to post comments on social networking sites gives people the power to say things they would never say in real life, which stirs hate towards Islam. According to Chao, online commenting allows users to assert opinions and make accusations that they would not necessarily express in person (63). In essence, social media acts as a protective shield for people to cower behind. For example, I encountered a friend in high school who never made any racist comments towards me yet bashed Islam and Muslims on social media. Thus, cyberspace gives people the power to hide behind their digital devices and not deal with the consequences of their actions, thereby abusing the convenience of anonymity (Chao 63). By not having to be held accountable for their words, online commentators are bound to form and spread opinions they would not have otherwise formed if it was not for the ensured anonymity of cyberspace.

Following the September 11th attacks, the controversial issue of the Ground Zero Mosque (also known as the Park 51 issue) was extensively covered in a negative light by the media. The problem was that the Ground Zero Mosque was a worship site for Muslims that was built a couple of blocks from the 9/11 memorial site, which angered many people who blamed Muslims for the 9/11 attacks. According to Ogan, Willnat, Pennington, and Bashir, the Park 51 issue was overly publicized by the media in an anti-Islamic manner (33). In essence, biased media coverage of the mosque issue played off of people's outrage after 9/11 and dominated the news with opposition to the building of the mosque. Consequently, the general public developed a negative opinion regarding the mosque and its supporters. In addition to negative news coverage of the Ground Zero Mosque controversy, some social media sites enhanced the spread of Islamophobia by supporting the critics of the center. Facebook groups that targeted the issue included "Stop the Ground Zero Mosque" and "1,000,000 Against the Mosque at Ground Zero" (Ogan, Willnat, Pennington, and Bashir 33). The creation of such



Facebook groups made it easy for public followers to fall prey to the skewed news coverage of the media. As people fall victim to the media's biased coverage, they become more susceptible to aiding the spread of Islamophobia.

More recently, the Paris attacks helped bring back negative stereotypes of Muslims as terrorists through extensive media attention. According to Robert Bartholomew, the Paris attacks created a climate of Islamophobia that aided in rehashing the negative stereotypes of Muslims (5). After the Ground Zero Mosque incident, no major events occurred that spiked Islamophobia for five years until the Paris attacks in 2015. Thus, the attacks in Paris acted as the shovel that dug up the grave of the stereotypes. In addition, Bartholomew stated, "[Events such as the Paris attacks] constitute moral panics: exaggerated societal responses to a real or perceived threat that is promoted by elements of the media and agents of social control" (5). In essence, due to the media's constant sensationalized coverage of the event, the general population's reaction quickly rose out of proportion. Islamophobia rose with it.

After the recent Paris attacks, the San Bernardino massacre and the Brussels attacks took the spotlight in media coverage. According to a *New York Times* article covering the San Bernardino massacre, following media reports of the "Muslim sounding" name of one of the terrorists responsible for the massacre, the most common search in relation to Muslims on Google was "kill Muslims" (Soltaz and Stephens-Davidowitz). In essence, the Internet was being used as an Islamophobic tool to inform people about how to get rid of Muslims. As more terrorist events with a Muslim as the primary suspect occur, the Islamophobic threat rises. In the case of the Brussels attacks, ISIS claimed responsibility for the catastrophic event (Drozdiak, Steinhauser, and Verbergt). Since the media portrays the entire religion of Islam based on the actions of extremists (in this case, ISIS claiming responsibility for a terrorist attack on innocent people), the phobia of Islam grows larger. The ability to search for anything on the Internet exposes the general public to the biased news, videos, and images that are posted about radical Muslims, and this leads to a snowball effect that perpetuates the fear and hatred of a whole religion as the result of the actions by a minority.

Similarly, presidential candidate Donald Trump is currently contributing to the spread of Islamophobia with the help of the media. During one of his political debates, Trump stated:

It is obvious to anybody the hatred [among Muslims] is beyond comprehension . . . where this hatred comes from and why, we will have to determine. Until we are able to determine and understand this problem and the dangerous threat it poses, our country cannot be the victims of horrendous attacks by people that believe only in jihad, and have no sense of reason or respect for human life.  
(qtd. in Epstein and Nicholas)

In summary, Trump is initiating a ban on Muslim immigration to the United States in order to protect it from the hatred and violence he thinks all Muslims harbor. Trump is a celebrity figure

with almost unlimited access to the media through Facebook, Twitter, televised debates, and public appearances. Using his prominent position as a presidential candidate, Trump easily accumulated a broad following. He deliberately plays on people's fears to get more votes. By portraying Muslims as enemies of the United States, Trump elicits a fear of Islam among Americans. For example, during one of his debates, Trump stated, "It's going to get worse, folks . . . . We are going to have more World Trade Centers" (qtd. in Epstein and Nicholas). By referencing 9/11, which is known as one of the most tragic days in America, Trump taps into the American people's fears by suggesting that such an event could occur again. In essence, Trump abuses his influential position and accessibility to media to instigate and maintain Islamophobic sentiments.

The media's primary role of informing the people is abused in the case of the inaccurate representation of Islam. Extensive and exaggerated media coverage of events such as 9/11, the San Bernardino massacre, and the attacks in Paris and Brussels create moral panic and fear of the peaceful religion of Islam instead of channeling feelings toward the specific terrorists responsible for the events. The controversial issue of the Ground Zero Mosque helped the hate and fear of Muslims following 9/11 to resurface. In each of these events, the media played a crucial role in forming public opinion. While the media fully realizes this, its primary motive instead shifts to making more profits instead of informing the public in an unbiased way. This abuse of power is a root cause of the widespread Islamophobia we see today.

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For this assignment, students wrote a 3-4 page essay exploring an idea related to gender as discussed in the Heritage Unit. This author uses a historical document and a current analysis of popular culture to explain how gender oppression has changed and to argue how it has become more insidious in the twenty-first century.

## **The More Power She Beholds, the Smaller She Becomes: The Plight of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Woman**

**By Emily Kruger**

(Prof. Britt Haas - Women: Their Voices, Their Values, Their Visions)

Patriarchal culture thrives on the objectification of women in America. Although significant gains have been achieved since the age of Mary Wollstonecraft, there is still cause to argue that women remain objectified by their male counterparts. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, women gained the right to vote and today many hold office. Some have even run for president. But with newfound power, comes additional, stricter, and complicated forms of oppression. Due to the fact that women are legally on a level playing field with men, subconscious measures have been taken to enforce the ancient gender hierarchy. At the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, women were more powerful than ever, but that power held a gruesome consequence. While women were climbing the corporate ladder and expanding their horizons, clothing sizes were plummeting, and the ideal body image was becoming thinner and thinner. It was as if an artist began to erase women's body size with each obstacle they overcame and ultimately was not satisfied until size zero was achieved. Ergo, women were encouraged and expected to occupy zero space in society. This systematic marginalization cumulatively has turned the majority's focus from gender equality to appearance.

With women's constant subjectivity to a size zero culture, an obsession with weight loss and body scrutiny exploded in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Covers of fashion magazines became adorned with stick thin models, and body-transformation shows dominated prime-time television slots, causing women to subconsciously become infatuated with being thin. Susan Douglas, in *The Rise of Enlightened Sexism*, points out, "Indeed, the pressure to be very thin has gotten worse since 2000. The percentage who think they're overweight has reportedly tripled just since 1995. And according to another study, the number one wish of girls between the ages of eleven and seventeen is to lose weight" (Douglas 217). Here, Douglas highlights the premise that women's utmost concern was with becoming smaller and, thus, occupying less space. Accompanying this obsession came bouts of eating disorders and mental illness; women were making themselves sick in order to conform to this notion of thin-spiration. When confronted about the issue, fashion magazines spun what was considered a negative influence into an advantageous one: "To be slim and fit is healthier than to be seriously overweight and 'out of shape,'" said a *Vogue* editor in response to complaints about ultra-thin models (Douglas 221). Despite the medical evidence to the contrary, it was now claimed healthy to be a size zero; it was now considered healthy to diminish women's presence.

With women beginning to trickle into male-dominated fields and challenging the gender hierarchy, stricter and more elusive forms of oppression in the workplace emerged. Obsession with appearance and weight-loss redefined success for women since in this culture a woman could simply not have it all if that did not include having the ideal body type. To put it more plainly, despite their level of education or IQ, if a woman occupied more space than allowed by a size zero, she was considered "unfortunate" because of the size of her body instead of being praised and admired for her mind. Susan Douglas found that "in a 2006 survey, girls said they felt that they had to be skinny to be successful" (Douglas 217). Given a woman's definition of success in regards to the width of space between her thighs instead of how much she was earning and how her work was contributing to society, men are again enabled to surpass women in the workplace. As patriarchal culture demands, women remain at a lower socioeconomic level than men, and with women doing better than ever before, patriarchal society brilliantly subjected them to the aspiration to take up less space, literally, by inspiring them to be smaller. And to make matters worse, women now not only are marginalized due to this false notion of success, but according to Susan Douglas, they embrace it wholeheartedly.

In the midst of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, women take for granted the sacrifices made by those before them. At the time of Elizabeth Cady Stanton, women were denied the right to suffrage, but she, as a crusader for feminism, fought for gender equality. In her speech, "The Declaration of Sentiments," she embodied the feminist movement of the nineteenth century by saying, "It is demonstrably the right and duty of women, equally with men, to promote every righteous cause by every righteous means" (Stanton 2). Stanton implored women to engage in important aspects of society alongside men in order to bring about complete equality, which continued to be the focus of the movement through the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. So how is it that 168 years after her speech, women are consumed not with curing cancer or the health of the world economy, but with the way they look? With this new bout of body obsession amongst the millennial generation, women are wasting time worrying about the size of their waists. As they are encouraged to be obsessed with weight and calorie counting, women have less time and, literally, less units of energy to think about much else. Douglas concludes, "Now that girls and women were taking up more space collectively in the workplace, in schools, on our media screens, we were urged to take up less space individually: hence the size zero" (Douglas 218). While Elizabeth Cady Stanton and her comrades reached the peak of success and urged women to fill societal positions alongside men, patriarchal culture has since constricted them back into submission with the Victoria's Secret Fashion Show and images of this season's best and worst beach bodies.

Although women have brought about drastic change in the past 100 years, they are still objectified in ways that are far more complex than those that Elizabeth Cady Stanton experienced. Currently, women are oppressed by subconscious and subliminal messaging in

advertisements, television, and movies. Women are encouraged to occupy less space, to fit their bodies into size zero clothing, and therefore subconsciously pave the road for men to continue to surpass them on the socioeconomic scale. As women's bodies continue to be erased by this sexist sketch artist, their influence in society is erased with them.

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This writer stakes a clear claim, fully develops his points, offers credible research, and refutes a naysayer in this cohesive and passionately-argued essay.

## **Fracturing Our Home** **By Christopher J. LeChevet**

(Prof. Liptak – Crossing Borders in Literature and Film)

The world is in constant need of energy. From heating homes to fueling vehicles to powering the technology we use every day, there are very few things in our daily lives that don't require some sort of energy usage. With all that power consumption, a sustainable and practical fuel source is required. The current booming energy source is natural gas, found in large pockets underground and obtained through a process called hydraulic fracturing, or "fracking" for short. The practice is rough around the edges and is a highly controversial topic due to its many economic benefits and many more environmental detriments. Although fracking provides a relatively cheap energy source that may be considered cleaner than currently used fuels, the negative impacts on groundwater, seismic activity, and the lives of people around these drill sites greatly outweigh the potential benefits.

In order to understand the effects of fracking on the world, one must first gain basic knowledge of the practice itself. At the start, a well is constructed at the desired site. The first part of the process is the injection of pressurized "fracking fluid" into the well to penetrate and fracture the earth. The components of fracking fluid used to accomplish this include water, sand, a plethora of chemicals hazardous to humans, and other biotic components of the natural world. Then propping agents - substances that help to keep the cracks open for extended periods of time while resisting the natural forces wanting to drive the fractures shut - are sent into the well. Finally, the fracking fluid is brought back to the surface while the proppants remain in order to be able to extract the natural gas. The fluid that returns is not the same as what it was initially. The fluid, now called wastewater or flowback water, contains not only the original chemicals but also dissolved solids such as radioactive materials and metals. This water must then proceed through detoxification treatment and be properly disposed of (Maur).

In a process as complex as this, things are bound to go wrong somewhere along the line. The amount of harmful chemicals present and the manner in which they are handled and forcefully injected into the ground simply does not sound like it could be a good thing in any way. Although there are indeed some benefits, many community members living near fracking sites have found some serious issues seemingly related to the practice. The most prevalent of these issues is groundwater contamination and, therefore, contamination of drinking water in residents' wells. As seen in Josh Fox's documentary *Gasland*, the drinking water directly from the tap of some homes located near fracking sites was able to be lit on fire as it poured out. Testing indicated unsafe levels of methane gas dissolved in the water. Although there are a

few different ways it could have gotten there, the fact that it began happening only after the fracking sites were put in place is suspicious. The film also showed farm animals and domestic pets losing fur due to chemical exposure caused by drinking the contaminated water when there was not enough clean water available. Another concerning aspect raised in the documentary was that when the gas companies were contacted, they would not admit to contaminating water. However, they still provided those households with some sort of clean drinking water source that could be consistently refilled (*Gasland*). This implies that the companies could, in fact, be harming aquifers, yet because they want to continue operating, they don't want this to be public information.

A major issue with fracking as a whole is the fact that it continues to operate regardless of what harm it may be causing. This is because the practice is virtually unregulated at the federal level. Any attempt thus far to correct this has failed, mainly due to the 2005 Environmental Policy Act, which through a series of loopholes allows the industry to avoid most environmental regulations already in place. Because of the inaction of the federal government to fix this issue, regulation of fracking is left to the individual states. States that have taken action must decide to impose complete bans, which would be bad for the state's economy, or attempt to regulate via reporting of chemicals and disposal techniques. There are, however, a series of hoops to jump through and preexisting regulations to contend with, the most difficult of which being the Dormant Commerce Clause. According to the Supreme Court, wastewater and other fracking byproducts are seen as articles of commerce, allowing the waste to fall under this regulation. As to how the Dormant Commerce Clause affects the natural gas industry, "This doctrine suggests that if a state permits fracking and the disposal of wastewater within its own borders, the Constitution would prohibit placing any discriminatory burdens or restrictions on out of state actors who wish to operate within that state" (Maur). In short, if a state should try to place any restriction on water disposal from fracking within its borders, it would be considered unconstitutional because of the fact that it would be discriminating against that form of waste as compared to standard landfill-style waste.

If fracking is such a dangerous activity that refuses regulation at every turn, why should it be allowed to continue? Fracking does, in fact, have its benefits. For example, such an abundant resource is able to reduce the market price of fuel and energy. Fracking, itself, was able to create around 600,000 jobs in the United States in 2010 and contributed \$76 billion dollars to the GDP that same year. Natural gas also contributes close to twenty-five percent of the nation's energy, and this is projected to double within twenty years (Mehany). It also increases employment, contributes to the growth of infrastructure, and generates revenue as well as taxes. Outside of the economic value, natural gas is also a relatively abundant source of energy, and supposedly its supply can meet the demand. Its abundance also allows it to cost much less than other conventional forms of energy. Technically, it can also be seen as a

“cleaner” energy than other fossil fuels; however, that is simply in terms of carbon output and does not account for other contaminants (Sovacool).

Where there are benefits, there must also be costs, and fracking is no different. Despite its many economic benefits and potential steps in the right direction in terms of carbon emissions, this practice has many incredible harmful effects on the natural world. For starters, the amount of water required to complete these operations is insane, using three to six million gallons of water per well plus the added chemicals which effectively prevent the water being used for any purpose other than fracking (Mehany). Also, even though fracking can provide reasons to extend infrastructure, the number of truckloads containing water and other resources needed for the drill sites exceeds 100 per day and has a detrimental effect on roads simply due to the amount of oversized traffic they endure (Sovacool). The effect on the atmosphere is arguably greater than that of other fuel sources as well because of the amount of escaping gas. About four percent of gas released goes directly into the atmosphere, and the gases produced have been shown to double the parts per billion on ground level ozone. This can and will cause negative health effects on any biotic factors in the surrounding areas (Mehany). Another major impact that is just beginning to be researched in depth is the seismic problems created by the fractures. The disposal of wastewater into wells specifically for this purpose is proven to be a cause of seismic activity. Close to 7.9 million people are now in danger of being affected by these so-called induced earthquakes with magnitudes up to 5.6. Man-made earthquakes are even more difficult to predict than natural earthquakes and, therefore, can pose more of a threat to both citizens and infrastructure. To put these seismic events in perspective, there are areas in Oklahoma near injection wells that have a higher earthquake risk than anywhere else in the country. This means that these induced earthquakes have placed equal if not greater danger on the people in Oklahoma as the people who live on natural fault lines in California, all due to fracking (Egan).

Despite all the issues described, there are still proponents of fracking who simply refuse to accept the science and negative effects fracking has on people and the environment. For example, in his article “Factual Causation: The Missing Link in Hydraulic Fracture - Groundwater Contamination Litigation,” Jeffrey King argues that nothing is truly wrong with the fracking industry because certain allegations are not able to be proven either way, saying “A theory, while plausible, is not evidence of causation if it has no factual support” (King). Note that a theory, by definition, has been tested extensively and results are able to be replicated. He cites a court case, *Lipsky v. Range Resources*, in which the Lipsky household’s well water was contaminated with gas shortly after a fracking operation had occurred nearby. Since the plaintiff could not geologically prove that it was, in fact, caused by Range Resources, and despite the fact that Range Resources could not prove that it was not their doing, it was decided that fracking did not cause the contamination. Soon afterward, the Lipskys filed suit in



their state court with claims that rather than the fractures directly reaching their aquifer, misconduct in the disposal of the wastewater had caused the contamination. Due to a technicality in the timing of their suit, the case was dismissed before any progress could be made. King also stated that accusers have no understanding of the fracking process, geology, or water resources. Supposedly in a video to show that their water could be set on fire as shown in *Gasland*, the Lipskys had simply attached their hose to a gas source and lit that instead (King). In general, King seeks to vilify the plaintiffs in cases against the natural gas industry.

Although some of King's arguments may seem plausible, they can be disproven along with many other proponents' arguments against the negative effects, such as greenhouse emission and other environmental hazards. First and foremost in regard to King, *Gasland* showed many examples of both well water and stream water contaminated with natural gas and other chemicals associated with fracking. It is also relatively easy to find information regarding the fracking process, and, therefore, it is difficult to believe that accusers in court would not have at least familiarized themselves with the practice. Despite this, there are other ways that water may become contaminated. For example, natural oil and gas seeps may rise to the surface and come into contact with aquifers connected to drinking water wells (Holloway). It is, however, easy to put two and two together when it comes to the timing of these events.

In regard to alternative reasoning for water to be contaminated, it is too convenient for the companies doing the fracking to say that all of these contamination events were caused by natural geologic processes, each of which occurred directly after a fracking job. It makes it even harder to say that fracking had nothing to do with the contamination when the companies provided replacement water sources to affected households when the victims signed a nondisclosure agreement (*Gasland*). It seems illogical that companies would use their resources to provide a continually stocked clean water supply to households claiming to be affected by fracking operations if they were not the cause of the contamination. Overall, much of the information and statistics provided by proponents are manipulated to sound better than they are.

The process of hydraulic fracturing to obtain natural gas to power our lives is currently the accepted method of energy production. Although many see fracking as a positive practice due to its ability to create hundreds of thousands of jobs and provide support for growth in our economy, the negative impacts outweigh these benefits. Fracking inadvertently leaks extremely harmful chemicals into the atmosphere while injecting even more dangerous chemicals into the ground. These chemicals, which compose a portion of the fracking fluid used to extract gas, include a range of carcinogens and toxins that cause health problems in humans and other animals. When leaked or improperly disposed of, wastes produced during

the fracking process can contaminate groundwater and aquifers. Despite natural gas collectors' best efforts to undermine evidence against them, it is plain to see the harm done by hydraulic fracturing.

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This assignment required the students to find several scholarly articles about a specific topic related to nature and to stake their own position in regard to their readings. This author adeptly uses articles from a journal and newspaper to substantiate his argument about the benefits of "green guilt."

## **The Importance of Fear**

**By Michael K. LeRoy**

(Prof. Barranca - Media and Society)

Throughout the academic world, there is a major focus on information, the way it is shared, and the validity of such information. Politics today focuses heavily on the environment and what we can do to preserve it. As such, it comes as no surprise that popular tactics like fear-mongering, where information is intentionally worded in a fear-inducing fashion, as well as information skew, where information is slightly reworded to present an agenda, are prevalent in our modern media. We must realize that our environment is very fragile, and its preservation is vital to our survival as well as to all of the other living things we are tasked with supporting. Denying the facts surrounding the destruction of our world is a futile act and simply delays the inevitable. This is why the "green guilt" that the media creates to stir up fear and support for its agenda is, for better or worse, an incredibly important tool in the long run. Strategically, whether one agrees or disagrees with the media's agenda, the cause it uses this guilt to support is a noble one; therefore, we need green guilt to provide an effective means of fixing future environmental issues.

Green guilt is essentially a barrage of negative information related to the human effect on the environment. It inherently requires a copious amount of nagging about the topic, so it took quite a while for the guilt to form among the general population. In the early 1990s, it had become apparent that an overload of green information had been distributed. It was around this time that Theodore Roszak published an article in the *The New York Times* titled "Green Guilt and Ecological Overload." In the article, Roszak casts a mostly negative shadow on this growing trend. He states that he is concerned "not simply for the fate of the Earth, but for the fate of this movement" (535). The point of Roszak's article is that there are too many cooks in the eco-friendly kitchen. The muddled image and constant barrage of information is turning the public away from real issues. While this may be slightly true, I have to disagree with Roszak. We may be currently overstating the situation the Earth is in, but remaining ostriches about the issues of the future is only going to leave more weight on the next generation. This guilt, which has led many teens to make eco-friendly choices in their daily lives, such as choosing reusable water bottles and recyclable products, will make a positive huge impact on the future as the results add up. It is easy to understand how people could be fatigued with the amount of eco-advertising we're subjected to, but it ultimately has a positive effect we can't ignore.

However, skepticism and rejection of the tactics of green organizations has been rising since the beginning of the 21st century. As true environmental groups work to spread helpful

information to the masses, their work is tainted by greedy organizations feeding on the fear of ecological disaster. I spoke about how this fear will become an important part of leading to a healthier world down the road, but many believe the fear can also be used for evil, which, of course, leads to skepticism. This topic is touched on in Rosa Reis's article, "Factors Affecting Skepticism toward Green Advertising." Reis discusses the increasing pollution of the green world beginning in the early 1980s and explains that the environmental focus changed rapidly from "helping the environment" to "helping the environment by purchasing product X instead of product Y" (147). This change in perspective is very opaque to a critical audience, but as the public began to catch on, the real issues plaguing the environment were pushed by the wayside because of product promotion. Reis goes on to state that "while 97% of . . . individuals surveyed had a concern for the environment, very few admitted to translating thoughts into actions on the issue"(147). This is a serious problem. Rather than these industries simply hurting the environment with their products, their shallow green advertising has been undercutting positive change in our society. I believe, however, that regardless of the financial intent, the fact that these companies are contributing to this green guilt is actually very beneficial to helping our environment. They are clearly focused on making money, that's a given, but the real question that I think truly looms over our modern society is: does the money matter? Also, can we accept that some companies will cash in on the green movement if it helps improve our environment?

Our society has become more and more conditioned to have an "us against them" mentality towards the rich and big corporations. Thanks to this, it is very difficult for many consumers to believe these organizations can look past the economy to ecology. It's a given, of course, that a business would want to make money, but I feel too much emphasis is placed on the motives for green guilt and too little on the ends. In reality, it doesn't matter if they're going through with their green advertising plans for money or power because it all leads to the same end: a focus on nature and an incentive (guilt) to make positive changes. Consider that when Coca-Cola stepped away from FIFA due to horrid human rights violations, no one suspected foul play. Everyone seemed to side with Coca-Cola, and some even chose to support it thanks to this strategy. Why is this any different from supporting the environment? I think the best answer comes from Roszak when he states, "It is simply that there are so many of them [businesses and corporations] and each comes at us crying 'Me first! Me first!'" (536). Consumers know that there are simply too many companies and organizations jumping on the eco-friendly bandwagon.

In conclusion, I feel that our nation is experiencing two separate cases of green guilt. On one hand, we have the lower socio-economic class that is experiencing a green guilt centered on the environment yet can only do so much with their funds. They hate to be lectured about the environment since many already know what is going on in regard to related

issues, such pollution and overpopulation. This class is experiencing a growing guilt thanks to the copious amounts of green advertisements from corporations, yet they lack the disposable income to purchase green products. On the other hand, corporations and the upper socio-economic class experience a green guilt of a different kind: making money. Of course the goal is to increase profits and wealth, and who can really blame them? They, however, have the most control over environmental issues. Thus, the corporations that can do so project a different kind of green guilt onto consumers - one that gets their products purchased. However, this also pushes consumers to make small environmentally-friendly changes. This system, over the course of many years, will prove to be incredibly useful and will only grow stronger as new generations mature into guilt-ridden, environmentally-friendly adults.

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For this Heritage Unit essay, students incorporated sports-centered class readings into an original, thesis-driven analysis. This author argues against one of the class texts, and in so doing, effectively overcomes the naysayer to validate his position and to convince the reader.

## **Bye, Bye Miss American Pride** **By Stefano G. Mainella**

(Prof. Haas - Sports)

Within the last century, professional sporting venues in the United States of America have incorporated many unique traditions into their events. Playing the national anthem before every game, holding moments of silence for lost ones, and placing badges of the flag on all uniforms are attempts to encourage patriotism. During football games, Air Force fighter jets fly through the sky above the stadium as hundreds of thousands of people cheer for them. After observing all of these signs, one may ask why these rituals play such a big role in sports today. Tricia Jenkins, an assistant professor of film, television, and digital media at Texas Christian University claimed in her op-ed piece from *The Washington Post* that because of such rituals, "sports feel less like pastimes than pep rallies for our military or a particular war" (Jenkins 1). On the contrary, our National Anthem and moments of silence are not merely battle cries for war. They are aimed at instilling a sense of unity. Sporting events are the best way to instill this sense of unity due to their large audiences. These acts of nationalism in sports teach everyone to have pride in their great nation and to show respect towards one another at all times.

Some will agree with Tricia Jenkins's claims that military rituals are purposeful only during wartime sporting events. However, nationalism in sports has positive effects not only during times of strife, but thereafter. Sports may not end all wars, but they can aid or hasten the end of a war. The Ancient Greek Olympics had positive effects in stopping war. Greece was divided into multiple city-states. Each city-state had its own athletes, and these athletes would compete against those from all of the other city-states in Greece. The city-states did not get along very well, resulting in wars that are still studied and analyzed today. However, in "Olympic Sport and Its Lesson for Peace," Heather L. Reid states that "the Olympic sanctuary was a special place in which diverse peoples, who might otherwise be strangers or even enemies, came together for a common purpose" (Reid 4). Religion was an essential part of Ancient Greek culture. All athletes competed to honor the gods, and the Greeks realized that this religious ritual was more important than the conflict between city-states. Wars between city-states were halted and truces were made during the Olympics. The reason why wars were temporarily stopped was so that the athletes could compete in a peaceful environment. The ability to compete peacefully allowed the Greek people to respect one another regardless of their city-state differences. Portraying symbols of nationalistic pride during sporting events yields positive lingering outcomes for nations that employ them because it brings together people who might otherwise be at odds.

In order to be a strong country, its citizens should have love and respect for their nation, and therefore a high degree of nationalism is a worthy goal. It promotes harmony and causes people to think about what they would do, not just for themselves, but also for the common good of their country. Having visible symbols and communal songs to promote national unity is an especially important display at sporting events. Fans who frequent sports games are there for the thrill of watching the action and have put aside their thoughts about work and stress. Therefore, they should be more receptive to displays that serve to unify the crowd of Americans surrounding them in the stands. All spectators remaining quiet during the playing of the national anthem is a sign of respect towards our nation because it shows that people are, in unison, willing to give their undivided attention to their nation's song. The national anthem also serves as a reminder that we are one unified nation regardless of what part of the country we are from or which team we support. The national anthem is played before every high school basketball game, for example, and silence is expected, regardless if it is a home or an away game, because it gives people a sense of community.

Today, certain people strive to find negativity in every little aspect of life. Sports are forms of entertainment made for people to enjoy. If people are really bothered by the subtle additions to sporting events to remind them of where they live and to realize how fortunate they are to live in such a free nation, then they show little respect for their country. Refusing to stand for the national anthem is an act of disrespect towards our country. One may disagree with a stance that the government has taken on a particular issue, but the fact that they are permitted to outwardly and to freely show disapproval of it is, in and of itself, a reason to love and respect the laws of United States and to feel a sense of nationalistic pride towards it. Toni Smith of Manhattanville College turned her back on the flag during the national anthem in the 2002-2003 basketball season. A player of white, African-American, Jewish, and Native-American heritage, she was protesting the coming U.S. war in Iraq and the government's mistreatment of minorities (Jenkins 2). It does not make sense for Toni Smith to disrespect a song that signifies her identity as an American just because she does not agree with a political action taken by the President. The national anthem is not a song to honor or dishonor the current president of the United States. The anthem tells the history, traditions, and culture of what makes up our national identity. By uniting our identities as Americans in song, the anthem unifies us as a whole. Toni Smith disrespected this unity and therefore disrespected what it means to be an American. During the Beijing Summer Olympics in 2008, Usain Bolt paused his live interview because the U.S. National Anthem was being played. Bolt is a Jamaican, but he still showed respect for another nation. Unlike Toni Smith, Usain Bolt knows the true purpose of a national anthem.

Nationalism is not strong unless it is instilled into every citizen. Sports have always attracted large crowds, and it is undoubtedly the biggest form of entertainment in the United

States. Most football stadiums can hold at least fifty thousand spectators. Aside from these spectators cheering on their teams live, millions of other people across the country watch the game on television. By including acts of nationalism in these events, a large portion of the population is able to acquire this pride all at once. Therefore, sports heavily contribute to the country's nationalism.

Nationalistic influence in sports is not negative for our country. Instead, it strengthens our identity, and it teaches us to show respect to and for our fellow citizens. Patriotic symbols can be a part of sporting events without being connected to a war cause. The Ancient Olympics shows that sports have the exact opposite impact on nations. The singing of the national anthem can be one of the most important features of sporting events because it shows that regardless of what the score is at the end of the game, or who we are rooting for, we are still all proud Americans. Maybe one day soon most people will choose to see the positivity in things, rather than to always look for something to challenge and to turn into a negative argument. Americans come from different religious and ethnic backgrounds, but when fans are sitting in the stands, everyone is, for those brief hours, American spectators just wanting to have a good time. And so if everyone has to watch Army paratroopers drop onto the field carrying American flags and revel in national pride before the game starts, it is a win-win for everyone watching.

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The writer of this research essay provides an overview of how technology has impacted the distribution, promotion, and sharing of music and argues that this has resulted in more accessible, enjoyable, and diverse experiences for both musicians and music fans alike.

## **The New Era of Music**

**By Laurena Mathew**

(Prof. Barranca - Media and Society)

Technology has greatly changed the music industry by making music readily accessible for everyone. Nowadays, people can listen to music on their phones, through streaming services such as *Pandora* and *Spotify*, and on websites like *YouTube*. We no longer have to buy vinyl records or CDs to listen to music whenever and wherever we want. Furthermore, technology makes music distribution and advertising much more efficient and convenient. The music industry relies on different types of electronic media to promote and disburse its music. Notably, music listeners help generate the majority of the industry's revenues. Record labels need to embrace technology in order to expand and prosper because technology increases the connection between music and the audience.

The record industry might not be happy that new technology provides music lovers with an easier and cheaper way to listen to music. This topic is explored in the article "Digital Media Reviews" by Jon Haupt. *Spotify* was founded by Daniel Ek and Martin Lorentzon in 2006 and recently became popular in the United States after being successful in Europe. It is a legal streaming service and an alternative to music piracy. It allows people to listen to their choice of music at any time in any place as long as there is a network connection. Similar to *iTunes*, *Spotify* is an application that an individual can download or install on his or her computer, laptop, phone, and other devices. Haupt explains that "the listener has the ability to change tracks, jump to a different place in the track, view other tracks in an album, shuffle or repeat tracks, etc . . ." (133). In other words, the listener can choose any track at any time and create playlists with songs that he or she likes. The most significant thing about *Spotify* is the playlist function, which allows users to listen to their favorite tracks, learn about new music, and create or share mixes. Also, users can follow other playlists that are published and subscribe to professional or celebrity playlists. *Spotify* pays royalties to artists based on the number of "listens" their music receives. Furthermore, *Spotify* offers its users both free and subscription-based options. With a subscription, the user has unlimited streaming and does not have to worry about advertisements, which makes it different from streaming audio services that have internet radio like *Pandora*. Even though record labels are not generating enough revenue from streaming services, many artists are still gaining popularity, and this is contributing to the success of the music industry.

Correspondingly, Patrik Wikstrom illustrates in his book, *The Music Industry*, that the development of digital technologies has increased the connection between music and the audience. Many artists communicate with their audiences via digital media, and the audience's

actions generate the majority of the firm's revenues. Additionally, the music industry uses digital media as the promoter, distributor, and user of its products. For example, by purchasing a song, music merchandise, concert tickets, or some other kind of music-related product, the industry is able to expand and prosper, so both the approval and action of the audience plays a crucial role in music industry dynamics. Also, Wikstrom reveals how music firms want consumers to appreciate the quality of the music and the demand for it to go up by distributing the music for free. Wikstrom states, "Cloud-based music distribution not only promotes sales of music via other channels, [but] it is also able to satisfy the music demand of a considerable part of the audience" (133). The Cloud has helped the distribution of music by providing people with the option of uploading content, which contributes to the overall exposure of the artists and adds to their media presence. As a result of the availability of digital music services, sales and revenue have been increasing. Furthermore, *iTunes* heavily dominates the market since it is the first service during the rise of technology to allow consumers to "download single songs, unbundled from the album, without being required to sign up for a monthly subscription" (Wikstrom 147). In addition, streaming and downloading services such as *Rhapsody* and *Spotify* are becoming more popular worldwide as a result of the increasing availability of music. As listeners support their favorite artists or bands and unearth new ones through these services, the music industry continues to expand.

Many would argue that these free services are costing the music industry revenue, and they would be right. Sudip Bhattacharjee et al. argue in their article, "The Effect of Digital Sharing Technologies in Music Markets: A Survival Analysis of Albums on Ranking Charts," that the music industry as a whole, and the recording industry in particular, is negatively impacted by these technological advances. Music shipments for the recording business have sharply declined since 2000 as a result of "P2P [peer-to-peer] technologies . . . undermining market efficiencies in the music industry with users obtaining music freely in lieu of legally purchasing the music" (Bhattacharjee et al. 1359). It is true that online sharing has a negative effect on albums with a lower debut rank because they are not able to appear on the charts, which is very important to many artists and their record labels. Additionally, music listeners are not buying albums as much as they used to since they can illegally download music for free. However, the Recording Industry Association of America successfully shut down file-sharing networks like *Napster* so that consumers would no longer have unlimited free access to music. Although record labels may lose some revenue due to file-sharing networks, artists are still able to get more exposure, which helps them become more known. Also, minor labels can take advantage of these networks to popularize their albums and reach out to prospective customers. Essentially, technology enables artists to generate revenue directly from recordings, through merchandise, and through ticket purchases, and this leads to sponsorships as major brands seek out artists to enhance the value of their own products.

In the article "How has the Internet and Social Media Changed the Music Industry," Laura Harrison explains that twenty years ago, people relied on CDs and the radio to listen to music, but the introduction of the digital mp3 made it much easier for everyone to enjoy music. As more advancement in technology occurred, consumers used programs like *Napster* and *LimeWire* to download music for free. Furthermore, social networking sites like *MySpace* allowed people to follow or connect with different musicians and discover new artists or bands. *YouTube* provides consumers with music videos, and streaming services like *Pandora* and *Spotify* permit listeners to listen to music anywhere there is an internet connection. According to Harrison, "[Musicians and singers] are able to produce their own track, upload it to the internet and promote it accordingly. This not only helps listeners discover them but also producers, helping them to get signed and make it big time." In other words, not only has technology changed the way we listen to music, but also how music is produced. Musicians can record their own songs and upload them on social media, which can potentially put them on the road to success. Therefore, the power is in the hands of both the artist and the listener because they are contributing to the growth of the music industry, and the main cause of that is the advancement of technology.

Another point is the one Mark Prigg illustrates in the video clip, "Apple Launch Music Streaming Service and New Radio Station." *Apple Music*, which launched last year, has distinct features from other services like *Spotify* and *Tidal* and offers a 24/7 radio station called "Beats One." The new music application is available globally and "on iOS that consists of three main features: music service, global radio station and social network for artists to share with fans." Users have to pick from either a monthly plan or family plan in order to have access to the different features of *Apple Music*, and both plans come with a three-month free trial. The main goal of *Apple Music* is to change the way people listen to music and make it accessible for everyone, including those who have a Windows Phone or Android. Additionally, new artists and albums are added to the app every week, along with top charts and playlists by genre and activity. As stated by Prigg, "This adds a social element to the music service. It connects fans with artists, and artists will use it to release and tease new music, share details about upcoming tracks, gigs and more." Through *Apple Music*, artists and fans are able to have a stronger connection each other, and the listeners control what they listen to. Additionally, several artists, including Taylor Swift, Dr. Dre, Elton John, and Pharrell Williams have already started using the new streaming service to distribute their albums and present shows on "Beats One." Thus, *Apple Music* is a great example of how digital technology enhances the association between artists and listeners and helps artists reach out to their audience.

Of course, technology will affect the way people acquire their music. The article "Music in the Digital Age," reveals that the evolution of technology has influenced the way people listen to and relate to music. According to the article, "[L]egal subscription services such as

*Pandora* and *Spotify* make it possible for music listeners to experience sounds and genres they hardly would have encountered in the 20th-century music economy.” These streaming services allow people to discover music they have never heard before, and therefore, they have a more diversified experience. Furthermore, music is an important aspect of our lives because it affects each and every one of us in some way, and the value of it will never be diminished, from both a business and cultural perspective. Although record labels may lose revenue from online services, the music industry is still able to raise revenue through other sectors like live performances and music licensing. In addition, “Social media strengthens the relationship within a group of fans as well as between the artist and their fans” as “Music in the Digital Age” tells us. This means that social media improves the relationship and connection between listeners and artists by enabling artists to interact with their fans. Artists can meet and chat with their fans and create a close-knit fan base, which gives them the opportunity to expand their own careers without any help from record labels. Moreover, listeners heavily rely on social media and streaming sites rather than radio stations to learn about new music. For example, Justin Bieber was discovered through *YouTube* and is now one of the most famous pop artists. Similarly, another pop artist, Carly Rae Jepsen, became an international sensation after her song “Call Me Maybe” was tweeted by Justin Bieber. Technology makes it easier for listeners to access music and to build stronger relationships with their favorite artists.

Overall, technology—especially streaming services such as *Spotify* and *Pandora*—enhances the music industry by making music readily accessible. Before these technological advancements, consumers listened to music on CDs, on vinyl records, or by downloading their favorite albums. The rise in technology has left the recording business with no other choice but to adjust to the changes and welcome electronic media since they help promote, distribute, and consume music as well as prevent piracy. Most importantly, the digital revolution stimulates a deeper connection between the audience and artists by providing easier ways to stay in touch.

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For FYS-Sports sections, students wrote a 6-8 page research paper on a topic of their choice. They were required to use a wide variety of sources in order to develop their own original thesis. In this paper, the author's adept use of statistics help to prove her argument that sexism is keeping qualified women from pursuing career opportunities in the sports industry.

## **A Woman's Role in Sports Should Not Have to Stop at Carpool Duty**

**By Katelyn R. McMahon**

(Prof. Haas - Sports)

The best careers are ones that allow individuals to pursue their passions. Those who love working with children and aiding in their development can become teachers; those who enjoy the arts can become actors, musicians, or artists; and those who enjoy helping people can become social workers. However, those who love sports cannot always pursue a career in the sports industry. Women have been constantly denied the opportunity to pursue their passion for sports in their careers. The sports industry has, and continues to, systematically discriminate against women, regardless of their qualifications, resulting in biased hiring practices and qualified women not getting the jobs they deserve.

No one loves statistics more than sports fans, and the statistics do not lie when it comes to women's career opportunities in the sports industry. While 47.3% of law school graduates are women, less than 4% of the attorneys currently certified by the National Football League Players Association who represent the athletes in lawsuits are women.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, the paltry percentage of female lawyers in football is the best percentage within the big three sports: only 1.5% and 1.6% of the attorneys certified by the Players Associations of Major League Baseball and the National Basketball Association, respectively, are women. These statistics cannot be justified by the usual, "women never played the game" sound bite because athlete lawsuits have very little to do with knowledge of the game, but rather knowledge of the law, and women have proven that they do, indeed, have that based on the law school graduation rates. Barbara Barker, a journalist for *Newsday* published an article, "Female Sports Agents Slowly Breaking Barriers," where she condemned the idea that women are not getting sports agent or attorney jobs because they have not played the sport before by saying, "When you look around at sports agents, half of them haven't worn a jockstrap in their entire life."<sup>2</sup> Clearly then, it is not sport specific experience that female attorneys are lacking that accounts for their vast under-representation. The leagues have continuously proven that playing experience is not a factor by hiring so many athletically inexperienced male attorneys. The statistics clearly show that female candidates are being systematically discriminated

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<sup>1</sup> Barbara Barker, "Female Sports Agents Slowly Breaking Barriers," *Newsday*, August 10, 2013, <http://www.newsday.com/sports/female-sports-agents-breaking-down-barriers-but-acceptance-is-slow-1.5866768>.

<sup>2</sup> Barker, "Female Sports Agents Slowly Breaking Barriers."

against when it comes to sports attorney positions as women have been constantly underrepresented despite the fact that almost half of all qualified attorneys are women.

The statistics continue to show women are not being hired by the same standards as men when it comes to sports media positions as well. When it comes to media as a whole, women have not been able to completely break down the barriers and obtain equal opportunities to men, but they have made significant progress. Women currently account for just over 36% of all newsroom positions.<sup>3</sup> But again, these numbers do not transfer into sports media, where women have been unable to gain significant ground in securing sportscasting positions. Currently, women account for less than 10% of all sports media positions.<sup>4</sup> One female sportscaster, Jessie Garcia, who has successfully paved her way in the male-dominated field, reflects on her career in her autobiography *My Life With the Green & Gold*. Garcia was able to combine her passion for sports and journalism to build an impressive career as a sports reporter for the Green Bay Packers, hosting the coaches' show, covering three Super Bowls, and creating her own style of reporting. Through it all, however, she still remembers the hurdles she had to jump over as a female reporter in such a male-dominated profession. She recalls that the single worst moment in her whole career was when she was doing pregame interviews for a Brewers game, which meant that she had to cover the visiting team, the Cleveland Indians, in the visiting locker room. She walked in to catcalls followed by immediate questioning and belittling. Just like that, as if her whole decorated career had meant nothing, one of the players proclaimed, "You just want to see our junk."<sup>5</sup> Encounters similar to this happen all the time to female sports reporters, and time and time again nothing is done about them. Seemingly, the only solution to the problem has been to not hire women sportscasters, inadvertently fortifying sexism in the industry. Instead of discriminating against women in order to protect them from arrogant male athletes, the athletes should be held to a higher standard and penalized for harassing other professionals.

The gender inequality between men and women in sports-related professions continues from the sidelines onto the fields, where women are constantly denied coaching positions compared to their male counterparts. Opportunities for collegiate female student-athletes have been steadily increasing since the passing of Title IX, with participation in collegiate sports higher than ever for women. This, however, has not transferred into the coaching sector of sports, where fewer women than ever are coaching women's college sports teams. This means that women are actually losing their positions as coaches to men, who have not played the women's game. This is not necessarily a negative thing for female athletics as a whole as the

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<sup>3</sup> "The Status of Women in the U.S. Media," Women's Media Center, last modified 2014, [https://wmc.3cdn.net/2e85f9517dc2bf164e\\_htm62xgan.pdf](https://wmc.3cdn.net/2e85f9517dc2bf164e_htm62xgan.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> "The Status of Women in the U.S. Media."

<sup>5</sup> Jessie Garcia, *My Life with the Green & Gold: Tales from 20 Years of Sportscasting* (Madison: Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 2013), 193.

writer of "Few Females Coaching Women's Sports May Mean Fewer Role Models" suggests in an article published in the *Community College Week* journal: "Male coaches bring tested, aggressive playing styles from the men's game that can work wonders with accelerating women's skills."<sup>6</sup> However, even though male coaches may be enhancing the competitiveness of female athletics, women are, overall, suffering as the players are left with few available role models and fewer job opportunities to coach the sport they are experts in and have a passion for. The barriers that women face in coaching collegiate sports have also been attributed to discrimination, lack of support, and prevalent stereotypes.<sup>7</sup> Each of these barriers are amplified incredibly when it comes to black females, who continue to be widely underrepresented in coaching positions within sports, most notably where black females actually dominate the player population, such as in women's basketball. In Division I women's basketball, 50.1% of all student athletes are black females, however, only 10.7% of women's Division I basketball coaches are black females.<sup>8</sup> This presents a clear case of the systematic discrimination against black women as "student-athletes represent one of the most viable pools of potential coaches,"<sup>9</sup> as a recent study published by *Sports Management Review* attests. However, the majority of black women's basketball student-athletes are not securing coaching positions at a reasonable rate as would logically be expected. Black female basketball players have proven their expertise in their sport yet continue to be denied rewards, resources, and opportunities that they deserve based on their qualifications. Thus, they fall victim to the discrimination in the process of hiring collegiate basketball coaches.

The rising number of female collegiate athletes not only increases the viable pool of female coaches, but it also increases the number of women qualified to compete at the professional level. For male athletes, making it to the professional level in any sport is an incredible accomplishment as only between 7 and 9% of collegiate baseball and men's ice hockey players go on to play in major professional leagues, and an average of less than 2% of all other collegiate athletes go on to play in major professional leagues.<sup>10</sup> However, those lucky enough to continue on to a professional league are able to sustain a comfortable if not exuberant lifestyle from their salaries while pursuing their passion for sports. Female athletes, however, continue on to professional leagues at roughly the same rates, making it just as much of an accomplishment, yet they are left with unsustainable salaries because professional female leagues are not as lucrative and, therefore, are unable to pay equivalent salaries to

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<sup>6</sup> "Few Females Coaching Women's Sports May Mean Fewer Role Models," *Community College Week* (2008): 20, *Academic OneFile*.

<sup>7</sup> John F. Borland and Jennifer E. Bruening, "Navigating Barriers: A Qualitative Examination of the Under-Representation of Black Females as Head Coaches in Collegiate Basketball," *Sport Management Review* 13 (2010): 407-420, *ScienceDirect*.

<sup>8</sup> Borland, "Navigating Barriers."

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>10</sup> "Estimated Probability of Competing in Professional Athletics," NCAA, last modified April 25, 2016, <http://www.ncaa.org/about/resources/research/estimated-probability-competing-professional-athletics>.

those in professional male leagues. This raises the issue then that female athletes who can compete at the same level as men should be eligible to compete on professional men's teams so that they are able to earn a more substantial standard of living. This would open up women to numerous additional and feasible work opportunities to pursue their love for sports because, as it is, being a professional female athlete is not necessarily a realistic career opportunity. Brittney Griner may be the best example of this as she was the top pick in the Women's National Basketball Association draft yet was signed for \$50,000<sup>11</sup> (the WNBA maximum salary is \$105,000).<sup>12</sup> Meanwhile, the Dallas Mavericks have expressed interest in drafting her to play in the NBA, where the minimum salary is over half a million dollars. Although Griner would likely be considered an average player in the NBA as compared to being a star of the WNBA, she would make over ten times her rookie year salary, and then she would not have to play overseas in the offseason, where she is currently playing for the Chinese Women's Basketball Association for \$600,000 per year.<sup>13</sup> This, however, is a logistical nightmare as female athletes would face numerous social hurdles to enter into an all-male league. A Florida International University Student Media writer Mercy Guillot questions, "How will showers work? Changing in the locker room? The notion of a physical barrier for women in a male locker room would be ironic."<sup>14</sup> Although these are definitely valid concerns and would take time to resolve, the more pressing issue is the social stigmas that follow female athletes. Sadly, until social attitudes regarding female athletes change, women will only share a court or field with male athletes on the sidelines as cheerleaders.

Moving off the field and into athletic department administrative positions, women, yet again, face unequal opportunities. While the number of women working in collegiate athletics is at an all-time high, Meg G. Hancock and Mary A. Hums have shown that "women working in senior and executive-level administrative positions is declining."<sup>15</sup> This is a bad sign for women hoping to advance to upper-level positions in athletic departments because there are far fewer who are now in the pipeline to progress into such positions. As women are removed from upper-level positions and continue to fill entry-level jobs, they face hostile, antagonistic, and discriminatory work environments due to their lack of power.<sup>16</sup> The regression in hiring

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<sup>11</sup> "Brittney Griner Makes 12 Times More Playing in China than in the United States," The Post Game, last modified April 21, 2014, <http://www.thepostgame.com/blog/dish/201404/brittney-griner-made-12-times-more-playing-china-us>.

<sup>12</sup> Maurice Garland, "Top WNBA Salaries Vs NBA Salaries: Who Gets Paid More?" Black Enterprise, last modified December 28, 2012, <http://www.blackenterprise.com/lifestyle/wnba-player-salaries-vs-nba-salaries/>.

<sup>13</sup> "Brittney Griner Makes 12 Times More Playing in China than in the United States," The Post Game, last modified April 21, 2014, <http://www.thepostgame.com/blog/dish/201404/brittney-griner-made-12-times-more-playing-china-us>.

<sup>14</sup> Mercy Guillot, "Breaking the Gender Barrier in Sports, an Impossible Feat," Florida International University Student Media, last modified April 17, 2013, <http://fiusm.com/2013/04/17/women-in-sports-an-unbreakable-barrier/>.

<sup>15</sup> Meg G. Hancock and Mary A. Hums, "A 'Leaky Pipeline': Factors Affecting the Career Development of Senior-level Female Administrators in NCAA Division I Athletic Departments," *Sport Management Review*, ScienceDirect.

<sup>16</sup> Jennifer R. Spoor, and Russell Hoye, "Perceived Support and Women's Intentions to Stay at a Sport Organization," *British Journal of Management* 25, no. 3 (2014): 407-424, Business Source Premier.



practices for collegiate athletic departments will have a lasting effect on the ability of women to advance in their careers. As research done by the *British Journal of Management* found, “[H]igh status groups tend to resist advances by lower status groups and may actually increase negativity toward lower status groups in response to perceived status threats, suggesting that sexism and gender-based discrimination will still be present.”<sup>17</sup> This tendency will not only make it harder than before for women to overcome the barriers and be hired for upper-level positions, but it will also increase the hostility towards them as the controlling population of men in such positions will fear being replaced by the currently subordinate population of women in the department. This will, again, result in the most qualified people not necessarily getting the jobs they deserve.

Overall, each and every inch of progress that women have made in sports-related professions has been contested. Women have had to overcome an incredible number of barriers in all areas of sports professions, and even once they do overcome said barriers, they are not seen as equals. The sexism that exists in the sports industry is not only detrimental to the progress of women, but also to the progress of the industry itself. By ignoring qualified women, sports industries have greatly reduced their potential as they could be operating at a much higher level if they were run by the most qualified applicants. Women have been unable to pursue their passion for sports in their careers, but this cannot be the case for any longer. Sports industries need to recognize the benefits of hiring qualified women, and eventually it will become second nature to hire the most qualified person for the job, rather than just the most qualified male.

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<sup>17</sup> Spoor and Hoye “Perceived Support.”

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[https://wmc.3cdn.net/2e85f9517dc2bf164e\\_htm62xgan.pdf](https://wmc.3cdn.net/2e85f9517dc2bf164e_htm62xgan.pdf).

In this historical analysis, the author traces the varied ways in which a particular female body type has been culturally enforced for over one hundred years and successfully argues that the “psychological corset” still reigns today in such forms as diets, exercise, cosmetic surgery, and spandex.

## **A History of Shapewear**

**By Olivia K. Nop**

(Prof. Pojmann – Masculinity, Femininity, and Sexuality)

American women have gone to extreme lengths to attain various beauty ideals, one of which is being thin-waisted and curvy. Throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, women wore corsets and similar shapewear products to alter their figure. Even as corsets became less fashionable, some women continued to find other ways, such as dieting, to help their bodies reach a thin-waisted beauty ideal. In fact, many women suffer from eating disorders in their attempt to embody this ideal. One woman described her struggle, stating, “At times it has forced me to starve myself, to run extra miles, to abuse my body . . . I used to stand in front of the refrigerator . . . opening and closing the door, taking out a piece of food then putting it back in; taking it out, putting it in my mouth, and then spitting it into the garbage.”<sup>1</sup> One of the reasons certain women feel they must reach a thin-waisted body type is because the modern fashion industry and the media have effectively presented them with this ideal figure. I argue that this is due to the industry having a lot to gain financially by convincing women that they need to alter their bodies to match a certain ideal. For this reason, media-shaped culture has created a psychological corset in the interest of monetary benefit. Due to this heightened pressure on the female body to conform, men and women also enforce a certain body type as they fall prey to the idea that women must be thin-waisted and curvy, by any means possible, to be socially accepted.

The expectations associated with gender roles help to shape the parts men and women can play in a society. These roles determine what is and is not acceptable in all regards. This includes what is allowed in terms of clothing, which the media and fashion industry then use to their advantage. Bonnie Smith argues that gender impacts what people wear and extends this idea further: “Gender has marked the way men and women dress and behave, determined the spaces in which they conduct their lives, and awarded the power that they wield in the family and wider world.”<sup>2</sup> Women's role has primarily been the submissive one in that they are expected to follow what men decide. This submissive position in terms of clothing is evident through corsets, which physically kept women in their assigned, subordinate role. Not only have gender roles dictated what is allowed for women in terms of clothing, but they have also defined what is acceptable for women's bodies. This lower status of women was enforced in the past, Smith attests, through their bodies having “long been the subject of political control, debate, and activism . . . . Legal systems around the world have regulated the sexual disposition of a woman's body, mandating the age at which a female could have sex and marry and regulating her fertility in myriad ways.”<sup>3</sup> Although the American legal system does not control women's bodies in this way currently, the cultural basis for those laws has not entirely been abandoned. For this reason, the idea that women's bodies are things to be regulated and altered persists through the media, fashion industries, and men and women's thinking. This idea applies to many different types and forms of ideal beauty; hence, there are many ways to conform to various perceptions of cultural expectations of beauty. However, I will primarily be focusing on the thin-waist ideal, as it has traditionally been viewed as feminine and demonstrates delicacy in society, in addition to a curvy-hips-and-full-bust ideal, which has customarily been considered

maternal. I chose these particular beauty ideals because they have lasted throughout the evolution of the corset. While current beauty ideals do tend to focus on an overall thinner ideal, the thin-waisted and curvy woman is still a prevalent body type expectation for women today.

Attempting to attain this thin-waisted and curvy ideal through the use of different types of clothing to alter a woman's physical appearance has existed for centuries. As the needs and desires of women and culture have changed, shapewear has also evolved. Up until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, corsets were a primary source of molding the female body. However, as corsets fell out of style, girdles eventually replaced them. Girdles were then replaced by physical activity and dieting. These trends were then supplemented with articles of clothing, such as Spanx, and more recently, waist trainers. Even as the preferable methods of shaping a woman's body changed, the media's attention and advertisement of these products to promote an ideal figure remained constant. In addition, men and women continue to buy into this notion, which then results in an industry's sustained profit.

The primary reason for wearing a corset or any other type of shapewear has always been to shape a person's body, primarily a woman's body, to fit a specifically thin-waisted and curvy ideal. Since the early 1900s, the need for women to wear such restricting garments, like the corset, was perpetuated by women, men, corset companies, and even faulty medical evidence. During that time period, Havelock Ellis was one of many men who claimed and believed that women needed corsets because "the evolution from 'horizontal to verticality' was more difficult for females than for males . . . . When she imitated man by standing erect [this] induced such profound physiological displacements . . . that the corset is morphologically essential."<sup>4</sup> This idea that women needed corsets and similar devices to fix something inherently wrong with their bodies was seized by corset companies as a selling point. Corset companies, on the basis of "anatomical requirements," explained that women needed fitted corsets to prevent the medical condition "ptosis," which, as historian Jill Fields tells us, is "a loss in muscles of the power to contract."<sup>5</sup> Fields goes on to note the side effects of this affliction: "Constipation, debility, headaches, backaches, sallow complexion, appendicitis, [and] general weakness are some of the ailments associated with this condition."<sup>6</sup> The idea that women's bodies were incredibly flawed became so prevalent that it was believed that only a properly fitted corset would be able to stop ptosis and its ailments. Despite a lack of information detailing how a corset solved this condition, people believed this argument. Therefore, it was necessary to have someone properly fit this garment on a particular woman's body, which allowed corset companies to make even more money from their products. In addition to medical conditions, it was also believed that corsets were essential to not only women's health, but also to the health of America. An article written in 1921 iterates the evils of "corsetlessness," stating, "Reasons given [for these evils] included dissipation of muscular strength, injury to internal organs, corruption of standards of beauty, damage to moral fiber, contamination of race pride and purity, and destruction of American sovereignty."<sup>7</sup> Although the ideal female body type and the methods for achieving this figure have evolved, today's culture continues to subject women to the concept of an ideal figure, while the beauty industry continues to profit by helping women achieve it. Continual pressure on women to conform in this way stems from the traditional gender roles women have been expected to fill.

As beauty standards changed to being even thinner yet also possessing very distinctive curves, corset sellers honed in on figure faults, or aspects of a woman's body that did not meet this image. The women who fitted and sold these products emphasized how corsets, and then girdles, were able to fix

these natural imperfections of women's bodies. This, of course, led to an increase in the distinguishing of apparent problems. Fields asserts, "Marketing corsets on their ability to solve 'figure faults' meant that the identification of faults assumed greater importance as a persuasive means of guiding women into corsets which resolved their defects."<sup>8</sup> In this way, the idea that female bodies are inherently flawed led to pointing out the flaws and then fixing them. This was how corset and girdle companies were able to sell their products and make a profit, which is why they continued to focus on such faults.

As time went on, corsets went out of favor and new, modern fashion trends developed with more current methods used to achieve the thin-waisted beauty standard. The idea of using unnatural sources to help contort a person's body to current ideals continued.<sup>9</sup> Even after corsets were no longer regularly worn, the impact lingered. Denis Bruna argues that "The corset was replaced by an invisible, psychological corset."<sup>10</sup> According to Bruna, this psychological corset still morphed women's bodies, but in a less concrete way in that "sports, diet, and cosmetic surgery henceforth sculpted the body, replacing the corset."<sup>11</sup> In addition to diet and exercise, one current way to match this ideal is to use Spanx and waist trainers. The idea that women must use unnatural methods to alter their bodies is still used by shapewear companies as a marketing technique. In this way, the idea behind the corset, physically working to change your physique to match beauty standards, is still present. While actual corsets have not been worn for many years, the message behind them persists as a way to sell more modern shapewear products.

As the idea that women needed to alter their bodies to fit cultural trends persisted and women often pressured others and themselves to fit those trends, fashion styles also changed to help women accomplish this. Today, Spanx, similar to corsets, are used to sculpt a woman's body, but in a slightly less restricting and less noticeable way. This current fashion trend is successful because of the concept that women still must alter their bodies to fit fashion. The founder and owner of Spanx, Sara Blakely, often says, "your clothes are the art and Spanx is the canvas, and if you don't have the right canvas, it can affect the painting."<sup>12</sup> Blakely's attitude exemplifies the idea that women must conform to society's expectations and demonstrates how women impose this on other women.

While shapewear, like Spanx, may be an option for achieving a more ideal body type, many women instead turn to another avenue: dieting. Dieting is a newer version to enforce the purpose the corset once had. As Bruna points out, "women still feel the need to discipline their bodies by various means, and the practices employed to achieve this end continue to be transformed and renewed."<sup>13</sup> This more modern way of restricting one's body can be healthily done and may be beneficial to a person's overall well-being. However, due to the heightened pressure from society, dieting often turns to the extreme and may become an eating disorder instead. According to psychologists: "Women are theorized to internalize the thin ideal portrayed in the media through repeated exposure to such depictions, leading to increased body dissatisfaction and often, ultimately, to eating pathology, as the more dissatisfied a woman is with her body, the more likely she will engage in drastic means to lose weight."<sup>14</sup> Controlling their bodies at such an intense level demonstrates how far some women feel they must go to conform to society's unrealistic expectations. This exposure to slim figure ideals becomes not only psychologically unhealthy in that women believe their natural bodies are not good enough and must be unnaturally shaped, but also physically unhealthy to such a level that it can put a woman's life at risk. Dieting, when taken to an extreme, can easily become an eating disorder. One woman described her struggles with an

eating disorder, saying, "I've struggled with an eating disorder since I was a child. This struggle has been mostly a private one, a war nobody knew was raging inside me. I tried to fight it alone for a long time. And I nearly died."<sup>15</sup> This woman's experience implicates the serious impact of society's beauty ideals, for she spent most of her life, and even risked her life, in an attempt to satisfy these expectations.

Even if a woman does not like the idea of wearing something to change her natural body type, she often feels pressure to conform. As Judith Newman, a reporter for *The New York Times*, explains, "[M]any women find themselves caught in the middle; constricted, if you will, by the demands of partygoing [*sic*], when everyone looks just a little more soignée than you do. It's the reason we rely on our shapewear."<sup>16</sup> This pressure to follow body expectations may not only come from other women, but from companies like Spanx. In an effort to sell their products, these companies are willing to bombard women with the idea that they should change their physical appearance. One woman said, "I have been relentlessly followed online by advertisements for shapewear. The emails have poured in, and every sales site I frequent . . . has touted their wonders."<sup>17</sup> In this way, women are perpetually pressured from many sides that they must match societal expectations, even if they were previously happy with their natural physique.

The importance of following along with culture's idea of female beauty is also encouraged by male attention. If a woman constricts her body or reveals through her attire that she conforms to the thin-waisted and curvy ideal, men regularly reward her by giving her attention. In a survey about male preference, it was found that, "Unsurprisingly, all the men questioned had one thing in common — their fondness for clothing that accentuates the female shape, lines which complement the contours of a woman's frame, revealing to the eye a truly feminine form."<sup>18</sup> In this way, men frequently reinforce the idea that women must alter their bodies to attain this ideal. While receiving positive attention does not necessarily mean a woman will dress in this way, it does promote the idea that to be viewed as attractive a woman must conform to male ideas of beauty, which are influenced by shapewear companies and the media.

The media plays a significant role in presenting women with a look that they should seek to embody. Media has an especially large impact due to people viewing images multiple times a day and making them almost impossible to avoid. For this reason, an ideal figure for women is easily presented to the public and almost naturally becomes an expectation to be followed. In this way, "[O]ne strong message communicated by the print media over the last 40 years regarding female beauty . . . emphasized an extremely thin figure," and as psychologists note, "Women have been increasingly exposed to models' bodies and as these bodies have become progressively thinner,"<sup>19</sup> the ideal has been maintained. The thin-waisted figure has become the expected norm due to the media's emphasis. As this ideal woman is consistently shown to the general public throughout a single day, it becomes increasingly ingrained in both women's and men's minds that women should follow this beauty standard to fit into society and to be desirable. If any person, male or female, is consistently shown that a woman can be beautiful only if she matches a particular image, it becomes difficult to think otherwise. Therefore, the media heightens the pressure on women to conform; otherwise, women risk not being viewed as appealing or attractive according to society's standards.

The media affects women's attitudes about their physical selves not only through advertisements but also through celebrities. As famous women display themselves while encouraging body-altering

behavior, their publicity entails countless women seeing them and therefore encouraging them to follow in their footsteps in order to attain cultural beauty standards. Khloé Kardashian, for example, encourages the female body ideal as she is a proponent of waist trainers. Waist trainers, a modern version of the corset due to their synching up a person's midsection, serve to "train" someone's waist into the desired, ergo thin and curvy, shape. Khloé Kardashian has posed and posted multiple times exhibiting this type of body adjustment, saying "Im [*sic*] obsessed with the gym, but a little extra help never hurt nobody." She went on to say that waist trainers "keep ... my waist snatched and posture perfect."<sup>20</sup> In this way, Khloé Kardashian promotes women to conform to cultural expectations and also has aided in the success of this product. However, despite her saying that waist training has never hurt anyone, in the article dedicated to her wearing this piece of clothing, there are multiple links embedded, warning of its risks. These warnings include, "NEWS: Experts warn why you might not want to jump onto the waist training bandwagon just yet" and "Please note, though: Before *you* commit to waist training, you should do your research and read these experts' warnings about its potentially harmful effects."<sup>21</sup> Despite risks of harming internal organs, celebrities like Khloé Kardashian still support waist training and other forms of manipulating one's body. This widespread support for controlling a woman's body shape, despite its being dangerous, clearly shows the emphasis and importance that is often placed on following societal expectations regarding women's body type rather than their health and well-being. Putting standards of beauty over one's own personal health shows how strongly the media and fashion industry encourages the idea that it is necessary to follow the thin and curvy ideal. By pushing this definition of beauty on women, companies creating these garments promote an environment in which they can be very successful.

Current fashion trends also uphold the idea that women need to conform to beauty ideals to be attractive. This occurs through clothing being designed and made to emphasize the ideal female shape. This trend persists even if a woman needs to artificially make her body match these ideals. One woman described her experience with Spanx when she remarked, "I bought this expensive dress and I didn't think I could fit into it, but now I can [because of wearing Spanx]."<sup>22</sup> Current fashion stresses the need for woman to subdue their bodies in this way by creating clothing that must be worn with body-altering attire in order for it to actually be wearable. Clothing is designed in this manner due to most men preferring this type of clothing on women, which is how men have aided in emphasizing this ideal. As noted above, men were asked about their preferences regarding women's clothing, and it was found that, "'Fitted' was a word generously used — with pencil skirts, tight jeans and body hugging dresses all favourites [*sic*]. Men like to see that there is a body under there."<sup>23</sup> Men often disapprove of looser clothing and fashion trends have tended to align with what gains male approval. Thus, clothing trends remain more fitted for the ideal body type, ignoring those women who do not naturally fit this mold. This has enhanced the notion that women must conform to cultural ideals and shape their bodies because it may be the only way some women can fit in the clothes designed for them. This aids shapewear companies because without clothes being made to emphasize a thin-waisted and curvy body, there would be considerably less demand for their products.

While actual corsets are not worn today, waist trainers come very close. The idea behind them continues and influences the very way society views women. The notion that women's bodies are inherently flawed and in need of correction has become such a prevalent idea that an entire industry has

been built around it. Both fashion and the items deemed necessary for women to actually wear fashionable clothing speak to how strong this idea is. In fact, this current fashion trend is successful because of the concept that women must alter their bodies to fit fashion, rather than designing clothes to fit women's actual bodies. While wearing or participating in shaping techniques is not necessarily a bad thing, fashion industries and the media should not actively work to make women feel that their bodies are unacceptable in pursuit of their own monetary gains. These industries are not the only ones to perpetuate this; individual men and women regularly reinforce this beauty ideal as well. Every day, people continue to focus on the women who do conform to this ideal and pressure those who do not. The reason why regular men and women perpetuate this is due to it being an ingrained aspect of their culture. Maintaining the idea that women must alter their bodies over the course of many years has resulted in corsets becoming psychological ones.

#### Notes

1. Zosia Mamet, "Zosia Mamet Opens Up About Her Personal Eating Disorder Struggles in Glamour's September Issue," *Glamour*, August 12, 2014, <http://www.glamour.com/story/zosia-mamet-opens-up-about-her-eating-disorder>.
2. Bonnie G. Smith, *Women's Studies: The Basics* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 85.
3. *Ibid.*, 119.
4. Jill Fields, "'Fighting the Corsetless Evil': Shaping Corsets and Culture, 1900-1930," *Journal of Social History* 33, no. 2 (1999): 358. JSTOR.
5. *Ibid.*, 370.
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Ibid.*, 363.
8. *Ibid.*, 373.
9. Denis Bruna, ed., *Fashioning the Body: An Intimate History of the Silhouette*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), 229.
10. *Ibid.*, 238.
11. *Ibid.*
12. Judith Newman, "Spanx for the Holidays," *The New York Times*, January 2, 2016 <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/03/style/spanx-for-the-holidays.html?ref=topics>.
13. "Bruna, *Fashioning the Body*, 240.
14. M. F. Sypeck, J. J. Gray, and A. H. Ahrens, "No Longer Just A Pretty Face: Fashion Magazines' Depictions of Ideal Female Beauty From 1959 to 1999," *International Journal of Eating Disorders*, 36, no. 3 (2004): 342, doi: 10.1002/eat.20039.
15. Zosia Mamet, "Zosia Mamet Opens Up About Her Personal Eating Disorder Struggles."
16. Newman, "Spanx for the Holidays."
17. *Ibid.*
18. Zurain Imam, "What Men Want Women to Wear," *The Express Tribune*, August 22, 2012, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/423410/whats-on-a-mans-mind/>.
19. Sypeck, Gray and Ahrens, "No Longer Just A Pretty Face," 346.
20. Rebecca Macatee, "Khloé Kardashian Wears a Waist Trainer 5 Times: See the Pics!," *E! Online*, September 25, 2015, <http://www.eonline.com/news/700090/khloe-kardashian-wears-a-waist-trainer-again-5-times-she-s-tightened-up-her-tummy-see-the-pics>.



21. Ibid.
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23. Imam, "What Men Want Women to Wear."

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In this critical-thinking essay written for the Natural World Unit, the writer examines a current and specific issue from an environmental injustice perspective and makes direct connections to diversity and course readings. The assignment called for a specific organizational format as well as for the inclusion of personal experiences. These parameters helped the students learn how to write for a “real-world” audience and see the value in effectively collecting and using different types of evidence.

## **Kodak’s Impact on Environmental Justice** **By Christohper J. Offermann**

(Prof. Strock-Lynskey – Exploring Culture, Diversity, and Human Rights)

Currently there is a high level of disrespect towards the earth. This contempt has a strong relationship with diversity as it relates to Earth’s inhabitants and humans’ unethical environmental routines. Eastman Kodak Imaging Industry, located in Rochester, New York, was inevitably forced to overcome many issues regarding toxic waste and its spiraling effects on economic, social, and ecological injustice. In addition to presenting personal stories and resources pertaining to environmental justice, I will propose both retroactive and proactive strategies that will help mitigate Kodak’s crimes against environmental justice.

According to the Environment New York Research and Policy Center (ENYRPC), toxic waste refers to any environmentally hazardous chemical such as arsenic, benzene, dioxin, silver, and carbon (2014, para. 1). As established by the United States’ Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), many of these toxins have been utilized by numerous industries that rely on these chemicals for their productions. Industrial toxic waste began in the early 1900s during the rapid growth of power plants and coal-powered factories. The primary source of power during this era was coal, which contains carbon. Carbon can be found in a sundry of toxic chemicals. Another key chemical released by many factories during this industrial period was dioxin. Film companies heavily relied on dioxin, utilizing it to produce a variety of products. Carbon and dioxin are airborne, which means that even the most involuntary action of inhalation can contribute to a long list of health problems (Niman, 2003, p. 1).

Unfortunately, this was an unrecognized issue until the mid-to-late twentieth century when an increasing amount of people working around toxic waste exhibited health problems (US EPA). Commonly, businesses working with these poisonous materials did not acknowledge the fact that the chemicals and their waste were actually extremely harmful to the environment and people’s health. Other chemicals, such as silver, polychlorinated biphenyl (PCBs), and other poisonous liquids and solids, have been dumped into the waters of America, causing health problems through the consumption of contaminated fish (P. Offermann, Personal Communication, December 5, 2015). The ENYRPC also concluded that toxic chemicals are connected to cancer (ENYRCP, 2012, para. 15). Not only can airborne chemicals cause health problems, but they, along with solidified chemicals, can be crucial contributors. This verifies the fact that not only does toxic waste affect the environment, but it also contributes to health problems for people.

Toxic waste still poses a threat for many communities within America. A majority of this waste is located in the Great Lakes which serve as the main freshwater source for America (ENYRPC, 2012, para. 8). One of the many lakes affected by toxic waste is Lake Ontario. This is caused by the “contamination of the raw water supply, treatment inadequacies, or contamination of the distribution system” (The Great Lakes Commission, 2003, para. 3). After many years of experiments, the serious pollution problems

regarding the lake have been revealed (The Great Lakes Commission, 2003, para. 4). This contamination of the lake has produced a repulsive odor and a taste that has resulted in New York State becoming known as one of the leading polluters in the country. The ENYRPC found New York State to have dumped over 5 million pounds of the toxic waste. This puts New York State as the fifteenth worst polluter in America (2012, para. 1-2).

A key source for New York's Lake Ontario is the Genesee River, which is one of the many rivers throughout the state that has experienced toxic pollution. The New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) and the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) are responsible for protecting the people of New York. Personally, I have encountered a lot of toxic waste over the past summer working at a local beach. Oftentimes, the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) would have to close the swimming area because it was too hazardous for the community. Consequently, toxic waste is not an issue of American antiquity, nor is it an issue that has recently risen in the age of environmentalism. Toxic waste is still an important societal problem that affects many people - especially communities based in the Northeast region of the United States.

One community that has been affected by the toxic waste in Lake Ontario is my home town of Rochester, located in the western region of New York State. The Eastman Kodak Company is situated there within a seven-mile-span of factories (Anonymous, personal communication, December 5, 2015). George Eastman first opened Kodak Imaging Industry in 1891. Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, as the movie and film industry rose in American culture, toxic chemicals used in the making of film helped Kodak become the top employer in the 1950s and 1960s, with over 60,000 employees working for the company at that time (Qiao, 2014, para. 1). However, as I learned from my grandfather, throughout the next few decades, the harmful agents used to make film caused concern, and people started to question Kodak. More and more workers experienced ailments and had to retire early (P. Offermann, Personal Communication, December 5, 2015). This is when Kodak's long trail of environmental injustice began.

To fully grasp the impact of these actions, I believe it is important to first address the question: What is environmental justice? Robert Bullard, a professor from Clark Atlanta University and renowned environmental justice activist, defines environmental justice as the "fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin or income, with respect to the development, implementation and enforcement of environmental laws regulations and policies" (Bullard, Mohai, Saha, & Wright, 2007, para. 8). In 1970, the EPA became a key player in what was an environmental war (US EPA). It was not until about twenty years later, however, that the EPA focused on Kodak's environmental mismanagement. For many years, Kodak did not try to make significant improvements to alleviate these problems. From 1987-2000, the United States Public Interest Research Group found that "Rochester ranked #1 in the U.S. for overall carcinogenic chemicals" (Niman, 2003, para. 6). It also concluded that Kodak contributed 90 percent of the 64 million pounds chemicals found in the air (Niman, 2003, para. 6) Then in 2000, Kodak was found to be the top polluter, releasing "more toxic emissions . . . than all of the major 144 polluters combined" (Niman, 2003, para. 5). By 2003, Kodak had managed to cut this number in half (Niman, 2003, para. 10). However in 2012, it dumped over 12,000 pounds of toxic waste into the Genesee River (ENYRPC, 2012, para. 19). It is my view that Kodak's history has shown its blatant disregard for environmental justice over time.

I further learned through my research that when people in the Rochester community began to know about these injustices, the possibility of economic repercussions finally began to awaken Kodak's concern for the environment. Consequently, a Superfund Program was set up in 1980 which forced these corporate polluters to clean up their mess rather than expect governmental agencies to have to do so (US EPA). In addition to this, when the EPA and the DEC inspected the business, they noted several "federal and state misdemeanors," which led to a \$7 million fine against Kodak in the 1990s (Orr, 2013, para. 8).

Despite "hundreds of millions of dollars in spending, and about \$65 million more to come, large swaths of Kodak Park remain contaminated" (Orr, 2007, para. 1). I also learned that fear of further economic consequences led to the decision of Antonio Perez, the CEO of Eastman Kodak, to declare bankruptcy in January 2012. (De La Merced, 2012, Para. 1). While there are additional instances that underscore the significance of this environmental neglect, it is the position of some workers that there was a strong connection between these "misdemeanors" and the declaration of bankruptcy. According to a Kodak worker, the company has not disclosed their reports on these matters to the public, and workers have been hindered from publicly sharing their views on this matter (Anonymous, personal communication, December 5, 2015). However, I assert that the toxic waste that was proven to be released by Kodak's facilities has led to the bankruptcy of Kodak.

Surprisingly, there are many select groups of people who are unequally treated by the economic effects of Kodak's acts of environmental injustice. In particular, one population that has been treated in unfair ways within the past decade is the elderly - those around the age of 65. Even though Kodak has not admitted to the link between its use of chemicals and workers' health problems, many personal accounts have sparked clear concern and apprehension for Kodak-working family members stricken with environmentally-related diseases. For example, a good friend of mine was willing to share her experiences with Kodak's employees, and she talked about how her family is affected today. During a personal interview that I conducted with her, she stated that her "father-in-law and uncle were diagnosed with very rare forms of cancer" and their health resulted in a downward turn (K. Brown, Personal Communication, December 5, 2015). My grandfather also worked for Kodak for many years. He, too, was diagnosed with cancer, and he was only in hospice for two weeks before he passed in 2011.

While I understand that it is very difficult to verify how these two specific cases were connected to Kodak's toxic chemicals and waste, it previously has been shown through numerous studies that dioxin, one of the main chemicals used in the production of film, airborne carcinogens, and water toxicants are "suspected endocrine, gastrointestinal, liver, cardiovascular, kidney, respiratory, and reproductive toxicants as well as neurotoxins" (Niman, 2003, para. 5). I assertively conclude that Kodak's actions choked this population's health and exponentially worsened the case of environmental injustice.

According to Wenz (2007), an environmental justice scholar, anthropocentric environmentalism considers the effects of pollution and how industries "are destroying natural resources and processes upon which human flourishing depends" (p. 58). This arm of environmentalism not only looks at how people become victims of toxic pollution in terms of health, but it also examines the broader livelihood of human identity. I believe that not only was this population of workers in Rochester deprived of their health, but their formerly-guaranteed financial benefits were also taken away. Through my studies on this issue, I learned that in 2009-2010 there was a significant increase in the number of people living in poverty in Rochester. It was around the same time that Kodak implemented a 2009 program within the

company that “reduced costs” (Qiao, 2014, para. 3). When budget cuts become a problem, people abruptly get laid off. The company’s employees had substantial incomes; they were provided with great benefits amid Kodak’s flourishing era. By the end of 2011, however, only “5,100 people from Rochester” were employed (Qiao, 2014, para. 7). Kodak’s bankruptcy in 2012 was an escape from the financial burdens that it was responsible for. Following its bankruptcy, Kodak requested “approval to offload retiree health benefit . . . to shed the \$1.2 billion worker benefit” (Filips, 2012, para. 1). This action placed many difficulties upon these older Americans and Kodak workers because health insurance was, and still is, so vital to their stability. Those workers who were not eligible for Medicare or government-sponsored health insurance were challenged to reenter the workforce to receive health benefits. For many families, stress was magnified, and their entire livelihood was impaired. It is my view that this unintended targeting of specific populations has exacerbated the inequities resulting from Kodak’s toxic policies and procedures.

Older people were not the only ones experiencing the horrifying effects of Kodak’s practices; children, too, were impacted. There have been many health risks linked between Kodak’s dumping and children’s health. ENYRPC found that composites of toxicity can “cause cancer as well as affect the way children grow, learn, and behave” (2012, para. 3). While children under the age of sixteen did not work in the factory, it was found that there were twenty-one schools located within a distance of three miles from Kodak’s facilities (Niman, 2003, para. 8). At one point, there was a mother who tried looking into the effects of children being exposed to airborne chemicals. When she and other parents found that the airborne chemicals were carcinogenic, they sued Kodak for \$75 million. These lawsuits also contributed towards the economic downfall of the company and, in turn, the city of Rochester, and the community continues to be indirectly affected by toxic waste in terms of poverty. In 2014, there was about a third of the population living in poverty in Rochester (Sharp, 2014, para. 5). To make matters worse, there were over 50% of children suffering from poverty (Sharp, 2014, para.7). It is my view that these economic injustices have not only hurt the anthropocentric environmentalism of the older population but that these injustices also have seized the livelihood of one of the most vulnerable populations within the broader society - the children.

There is a need for an approach to economic justice that takes into account the value of the environment as well as the sacredness of humanity. Even though the aforementioned definition of environmental justice excludes age, I believe inequality based on the age of Americans certainly contributes to both environmental and economic injustices. Both the elderly and children are affected by human abuse of the Earth, and it is clear that these members of society were and continue to be particularly vulnerable to the actions of Kodak. Through my personal interviews, I have learned that the acquisition of health insurance is a problem for many former Kodak workers. For example, the employee who was deprived of his health benefits suffered deep financial stress and hardship. If it were not for Kodak’s crimes against the environment, there would not have been the violations against his health or his family’s financial stability. What is even more horrendous is the way in which unknowing children were affected in terms of their health and their families’ economic situations. Therefore, when it comes to the treatment of the environment, the impact of Kodak’s disregard and impertinence has far-reaching ramifications.

Though environmental injustice pertains to the inequality of humanity, this treatment can be connected to the way we, as humans, treat the environment and the world around us. The beloved St.

Francis has been one of the few advocates in history who saw the *connection* between humanity and nature. He had a fondness so great that even when nature incapacitated him, his love grew. It was in his renowned "Canticle of the Creatures" where he translated the inferiorities and iniquities of nature into light and optimism. He found beauty in the most abused things in nature: earth, water, and even death. He says "death shall do them no harm" (St. Francis, 1225, p. 13). I have observed that humans treat nature in a manner that nullifies this glorious hymn of praise. Since nature and humanity are bonded, when one becomes impaired, so does the other. Corporate members of Kodak eventually understood the degree of environmental harm they created; however, this realization came too late since "seven miles of factories" puts a maintenance price so high, that Kodak's future would be nonexistent (Anonymous, Personal Communication, December 5, 2015). As such, people frequently minimize how the immoral actions against the environment can have a direct impact on the marginalized people who live in it. Given this, I would assert that the first step toward administering environmental justice is to recognize the truth that lies within the unity of humans and nature.

Due to the mechanical order and the result of humans finding the hidden secrets of nature, the "female earth and virgin earth spirit were subdued by the machine" (Merchant, 1993, p. 270). This ideology has not disappeared. Rather, I believe it has converted to violence, as the Western culture continues to "rape" Mother Earth. When Kodak used the harmful chemicals to produce film, it bruised the hostess of our home and damaged the earth with its toxic elements. I believe that this violence can be alleviated with the proper interpretation of the "hidden secrets," such as through scientific inventions, medicinal cures, mathematical proofs, and philosophical explanations. I also believe that to remedy this problem, Kodak must incorporate the organic perspective into its mindset (p. 269-71) and through this approach, uncover ways to protect the environment and the human jewels within. It is this acceptance of our Mother's essence that can be dwindled down to the appreciation of older people, children, people of color, and then eventually the entire human species.

Environmental justice may be difficult to achieve; however, the First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit held in 1991 outlined seventeen different principles that would foster the expansion of environmental justice. Environmental justice "affirms the sacredness of Mother Earth, ecological unity and the interdependence of all species" (Environmental Justice Leadership Forum). Humans are part of a world that is greater than them, and they should have a respect for those with whom they share it. This first fundamental environmental principle pays a level of respect towards Mother Nature, and it clarifies the interdependence between members of the human race. It is my view that Kodak must take a step backwards and look at the people it hurt, but in addition to this, Kodak must look for novel opportunities to prevent further damage to the environment itself. It is this concept of holism which Carolyn Merchant describes as being based on the assumption that nature is active and alive (Merchant, 1993, p. 269). The final principle outlined at the summit in 1991 says that humanity must "make personal and consumer choices to consume as little of Mother Earth's resources and to produce as little waste as possible" (Environmental Justice Leadership Forum). In addition to watching out for the communities it hurt, Kodak must find an opportunity to appropriately dispose of its waste. I have supported this business all my life; however, Kodak must use its expertise to establish environmentally sound plans and to commit itself to this principle of protection. It is my view that by

combining these two principles, plus the other fifteen, Kodak and other businesses will start to head down the road towards environmental justice.

Considering all of the crimes that it has committed, I would assert that once Kodak comes to terms with what it has done, it can finally create a link between its business and these principles of environmental justice. Kodak, for many years, did not realize the effects that the chemicals used in the film production were harmful to the environment. The fines that were administered by the EPA and the DEC gave Kodak the motivation to develop methods to clean up the environment as well as find alternative chemicals to utilize (P. Offermann, Personal Communication, December 5, 2015). In a twenty-first century effort to revitalize the environment, Kodak claimed "to have reduced methylene chloride emissions by 50 percent" (Niman, 2003, para. 11). It is clear that Kodak has done many things in the past to combat its environmental misconduct; it even had Analytical Laboratories dedicated to testing air, water, and ground quality" (Anonymous, Personal Communication, December 5, 2015).

In April 2013, Kodak's bankruptcy allotted it to set up a \$49 million trust fund sponsored by the sale of some of its property. This allowed Kodak to escape the future expenses relating to environmental problems. The environmental plan to retroactively mend the problem was only a portion of the multitude of expenses that Kodak was able to wash its hands of. Kodak's enormous property has resulted in pollution that has, in turn, created extensive problems. Instead of dumping chemicals into waterways and instead of emitting toxic chemicals into the air, Kodak *can* find alternative ways to produce its patents. It is my view that while protecting the environment, Kodak simultaneously will "protect all of America's people" (Environmental Justice Leadership Forum, principle 2). This adherence to the principles of environmental justice can be tied to the repercussions toxic waste carries. Waste affects many people: those who are ostracized and those who are physically and financially impaired. The alternative measures put in place a call for a higher regard of the people that Kodak has affected and for those it has treated unfairly.

Consequently, there are future plans to continually address the effects of Kodak's pollution. The DEC took initiative by investigating the damage that Kodak has done from a biological point of view. As the overseer of the examination of the ecosystems that have been disturbed by toxic chemicals, the DEC report will come out in the late spring of 2016 (Orr, 2015, para. 5). Researching better ways to protect the environment, inspecting biological results, and setting money aside for environmental projects are strategies that are currently being taken to achieve environmental justice. With this research, the findings may help stimulate economic growth and create justice for the people who were impacted. However, the government and corporate polluters cannot combat environmental justice alone.

In the interviews that I conducted, I asked people how they, as individuals, can proactively solve this crisis. With regard to the disposal of waste, one individual said "I try to go paperless as much as possible" (P. Offermann, Personal Communication, December 5, 2015). Waste can be positive; there are many ways to recycle and respectfully discard used materials and toxic chemicals. As an Eagle Scout, I have a duty to be thrifty. This means I must learn how to use resources carefully, not wastefully. In order to venerate the requirements of environmental justice, it is important to remember the vitality of proper disposal. Society must collectively take on this responsibility. Respect for the environment *will* result in respect for the people— ultimately achieving environmental justice.

In conclusion, the lack of respect for the world has largely impacted the environment and the people who reside in it. This analysis has presented ways in which this disrespect has been modeled by Kodak Company and has resulted in tormented individuals, families and the broader Rochester community. By applying the environmental justice concepts and principles that we have examined in our Natural World Unit readings, it has been shown that Kodak Company can integrate the just and humane Principles of Environmental Justice in order to generate a world full of sustainability and stewardship.

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For this research project, the author broadens her base of knowledge through the use of relevant outside sources, relates current major human rights and justice-related issues, and incorporates both a diversity-related focus and a cross-cultural perspective. This paper follows APA-style of documentation and a specific organizational structure.

# **Inhumane Treatment of Individuals Based on Freedom of Expression**

**By Julia A. Parks**

(Prof. Strock-Lynskey - Exploring Culture, Diversity, and Human Rights)

## **Section I: Introduction to Human Rights Topic**

### **Brief Introductory Lead-In:**

Freedom of expression is a right given to all people in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. For centuries, though, it has been forcibly taken away, thus making it a human rights issue (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 2008, p. 7). In a Pew Research Center survey of 38 nations, nearly all of the respondents agreed that it is important to live in a country with free speech, a free press, and freedom on the internet (Wike & Simmons, 2015, para. 1). In numerous countries, individuals who use their freedom of expression are at risk of being treated inhumanely (Amnesty International, 2014, p. 10). Torture and other means of inhumane treatment are defined as intentionally causing pain to another person for reasons such as obtaining information and punishing a committed and/or suspected crime, or for any reason based on discrimination (p. 8; Convention against Torture, Article 1). Governments worldwide still collude in this corruption of humanity by using inhumane treatment to extract information, force confessions, silence dissent, or simply as a cruel punishment (p. 6). This is a human rights issue that must be approached, resolved, and prevented for everyone's safety and freedom.

### **Thesis Statement:**

Any person who wishes to use their right of expression politically, religiously, or artistically, may be targeted or at risk for inhumane treatment. This is a worldwide human rights issue, but some of the countries where it is most prevalent include China, North Korea, Saudi Arabia, and the United States. Three major consequences that victims face are brutality, unjust arrest and imprisonment, and compulsory conformity, all of which deny basic human rights. There is a dire need to enforce the protection of the expression and the safety of all who express this right.

### **Diversity Aspects:**

Targeted individuals are affected from a diversity perspective because they are at risk if they have conflicting views from the authority figure. Anyone who wishes to express their personal opinions can be at risk when a higher power or the majority wants to keep its control (Amnesty International, 2014, p. 11). Activists, artists, teachers, poets, and members of religious sects are specifically targeted and more at risk (Amnesty International, 2016, para. 2-4). This transpires because these people are either against the government's actions or speak/write publicly about things that the government does not want society to have access to. The authority figure - in this case, the government - wishes to maintain its power and uses that power to keep people from expressing opposition views.

### **Cross-Cultural Perspectives:**

Inhumane treatment of individuals based on freedom of expression is occurring all over the world but is most prevalent in China, North Korea, Saudi Arabia, and the United States. China has implemented laws that prevent people from speaking out against the government, limiting their freedom to express themselves. According to article 105 of the People's Republic of China Criminal Law, inciting subversion is punishable for up to five years imprisonment, but according to Human Rights Watch, "[T]he maximum penalty increases to 15 years in prison for those who are considered 'ringleaders,'" which refers to those who initiate or partake in illicit activities (Human Rights Watch, 2016, para. 7). This law is vague and can be used against people who are only voicing their opinions, not trying to overthrow the government. In a more extreme case, in North Korea there are prison camps that prohibit prisoners from knowing what life is like outside of the country. Due to their forced confinement, these prisoners do not know that their human rights are being taken away. The system is engineered so well that freedom of press, thought, belief, movement, and speech are all restricted, leaving citizens with no means by which to express themselves (Scism, 2015, para. 4). In comparison, Saudi Arabia is said to be experiencing a dark age since King

Salmon took the throne in 2015 (Amnesty International, 2016, para. 1). During his short reign, the highest number of executions has been recorded for crimes that would not be punished through execution under international law (para. 8). He will be king until his death, meaning that if nothing changes, more people will be executed. Lastly, the United States is known for its freedom of expression, though there are instances where this freedom is not respected (Dolgow, 2012, para. 1). Freedom of expression is only protected in certain situations and is not protected in the workplace or within faith-based groups and organizations (para. 1). I chose to focus on these specific countries because I believe that they can implement changes so that the severity of the human rights violations can be diminished within their borders. Then future actions can be taken worldwide with the hopes to someday end the cruelty and violations at a global level.

#### UN Declarations & Other UN-Related Documents:

This research analysis will incorporate two major human rights-related documents: The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. On December 10, 1948, the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights was established so that the rights of ALL humans would be protected by law (United Nations, 2008, p. iii-vii). The Articles that I will be focusing on will be Article 5, which states that "no one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment" (United Nations, 2008, p. 4). Another article that relates to this topic is Article 9, which states that "no one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile" (p. 4). Articles 18 and 19 both protect freedom of thought, religion, opinion and expression and state that "everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief" and "everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers" (p. 7). Lastly, Article 27 states that "everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life and the community, to enjoy the arts" (p. 10).

The Convention against Torture was written in 1985 to make the fight against inhumane treatment more pronounced (Convention Against Torture, 1997). Article 1 states that people should not be subjected to torture and defines it explicitly: "Torture is any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person for any purpose and/or because of discrimination" (Convention Against Torture, 1997). This research analysis will serve to document ways in which these human rights articles are being violated because of the cruel treatment directed towards individuals who exercise their freedom of expression. Recognizing these violations makes the lack of freedom of expression a human rights issue.

## **Section II: Interrelationship between Thesis Statement, Major Issues, & Significant Research Findings**

### Part I: Overview/Background on Broader Human Rights Topic

In 1798, the United States Congress passed the Alien and Sedition Acts, which prohibited the publication of any form of writing that went against the government (American Civil Liberties Union, para. 1). North Korea's first dictator, Kim Il-Sung, instituted the practice of "three generations of punishment" back in the 1950s so that he could erase a whole family lineage as punishment for a member who may have spoken against him (Cooper, 2015). China's law against subversion was established in 1997, preventing anyone from speaking against the government, and Saudi Arabia's Basic Law was established in 1992, which does not allow freedom of press and allows authorities to take action to prevent sedition (Human Rights Watch, 2016, para. 7; Freedom House, 2016, para. 1). Amnesty International has reported ill-treatment currently in 141 countries and from every world region (Amnesty International, 2014, p. 6). The victims of this human rights issue not only are forced to suppress their opinions but are also treated inhumanely. Inhumane treatment can include, but is not limited to, violent acts such as mass executions, torture, arbitrary killings, gang rapes, vandalism, and threats due to religious and political opinions (United Nations Human Rights, 2015, para. 2). Whether or not a state has signed the human rights treaties, inhumane treatment is recognized by the United Nations as "a rule of customary international law" that "cannot be relaxed even in times of emergency" (p. 8). Regrettably, governments will invest more effort to deny or hide the actuality of inhumane treatment than to undertake effective preventative actions (p. 10). For example, in 2015 alone, there was a 20% increase in registered killings, attacks, abductions, imprisonments, and threats based on artistic expression (p. 14). This proves that these cruelties cannot be denied and pushed aside any longer.

## Part II: Major Issues Relating to Human Rights Topic & Significant Findings

After extensive research, I believe that the most pressing issues in regard to human rights are brutality, unjust arrest/imprisonment, and compulsory conformity. Across the four countries of focus, many victims have experienced extensive abuse, been exposed to horrible living conditions, and even faced death. Many of these people have not been appropriately arrested or given the proper trials that they deserve. Lastly, these members of society who wish to express themselves publicly are forced to conform and be silent. These cases are concerning and make the denial of freedom of expression a direct violation of human rights.

### Issue 1: Brutality

Although inhumane treatment is considered a crime and goes against Article 5 of the Declaration of Human Rights, it happens globally. One form of brutality is physical violence, which individuals experience throughout the countries of focus. For example, Lucas and Christopher Leonard, United States citizens who resided in New Hartford, New York, were beaten and whipped with a cord for wanting to leave the sanctuary of Word of Life Christian Church (Sanchez & Crook, 2015, para. 7). They were beaten during a "counseling session" that was aimed toward convincing them to remain members of the church. Another example of abuse occurred in China. An activist named Wang Qingying was beaten and forced to wear handcuffs and leg irons for 15 days (Human Rights, 2016, para. 5). An instance that took place in North Korea was told by a man named Shin Dong-hyuk, who watched his teacher beat a little girl to death for hoarding a few kernels of corn because it violated the rules of the prison camp (Cooper, 2015). Lastly, in Saudi Arabia, a human rights defender was given 200 lashes because he "stirred public opinion" (Amnesty International, 2016, para. 9).

Another form of brutality is forcing people to live in harsh, inhumane living/social conditions. For example, in China, Tang Jingling, a human rights lawyer; Yuan Xinting, a freelance writer; and Wang Qingying, a teacher, were refused the right to communicate with their families during imprisonment. They also were not given adequate medical treatment and were forbidden yard time for five months (Human Rights Watch, 2016, para. 5). This kind of treatment can be found in North Korea, as well. People who are exposed as being disloyal to Kim Il-Sung, the founder of the country, by organizing Christian services or by being a part of "factional political disputes" are sent to prison camps (Cohen, 2014, para. 2). One can only imagine how mentally and physically damaging such isolation and confinement would be. Moreover, in North Korea, people are forced to live under horrendous conditions in the prison camps. Camp 14 is said to hold up to 150,000 people who are forced to do hard labor and are close to starvation (Cooper, 2015). Murder is the ultimate brutality. Killing people completely silences and prevents them from personal expression. To eliminate evidence and terminate entire families, the guards kill large numbers of prisoners in the secret prison camps in North Korea (Cohen, 2014, para. 4). Prisoners are also shot for disobedience or trying to escape (Cooper, 2015). In New Hartford, New York, a young man died due to extensive injuries resulting from beatings conducted by church authorities and his own family members because he wanted to leave his church (Sanchez & Crook, 2015, para. 1-6). In Saudi Arabia, a Palestinian poet was sentenced to death because his writings were thought to be spreading Atheism, which violates a person's right to religious expression and is therefore a violation of Article 18 (Amnesty International, 2016, para. 6).

These brutal actions all violate Article 5 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Article 1 from the Convention against Torture. These peaceful members of society are being punished and experiencing cruel treatment at the hands of authority figures. The treatment of the young man from New Hartford, as well as the treatment of the activists, artists, and teachers who are victims elsewhere, all represent violations of Articles 18 and 19 because they were not allowed the freedom to hold their own opinions and to change their religion/beliefs (United Nations, 2008, p. 7). Lastly, these actions violate Article 27 because these people can no longer participate in cultural life, the community, or enjoy the arts, such as through writing, reading poems, painting and more (United Nations, 2008, p. 10).

### Issue 2: Unjust Arrest, Trial and/or Imprisonment

The second major issue is unjust arrest/imprisonment, which is a violation of Article 9 of the Declaration of Human Rights because these victims are unfairly arrested for actions that are not considered crimes. In North Korea, for example, citizens were detained for simply watching foreign soap operas or holding a religious belief, which are unjust reasons for arrest (Wally, para. 6). Tang Jingling, Yuan Xinting, and Wang Qingying were sentenced for up to five years in Guangzhou for "inciting subversion of state power," which is clearly a violation of Article 19 because

these men were using their globally-recognized right to hold an opinion (Human Rights Watch, 2016, para. 1). In Saudi Arabia, a man named Dr. Zuhair Kutbi was prevented from freely participating in the community and reporting information through media, thus making him a victim of the government violating Articles 19 and 27 of the Declaration of Human Rights (Amnesty International, 2016, para. 3; United Nations, 2008, p. 7, 10).

Another aspect of these situations that violates Article 9 of the Declaration of Human Rights is that the people who were arrested were not given proper trials or a chance to see a judge. In Saudi Arabia, peaceful activists, writers, poets, and their lawyers are not allowed proper trials and are therefore being wrongfully sentenced (Amnesty International, 2016, para. 2). This is also seen in North Korea where people are sent to prison camps without trials and are sometimes even born there (Cohen, 2014, para. 2). Shin Dong-hyuk is a victim of a practice called "three generations of punishment" in Camp 14 and was destined to imprisonment before his birth (Cooper, 2015). The goal of this practice is to eliminate the whole family line because distant members were disloyal to the dictator. Shin's uncles defected to the South during the Korean War; thus, he must repent for their actions and is imprisoned for no personally-committed crime (2015). These citizens are not given a chance to defend themselves or fight for lesser charges or their freedom.

### Issue 3: Compulsory Conformity

The last major issue is compulsory conformity, which forces members of a society to obey and stay unified under authority. One extreme method used to keep people under control is to completely isolate them from the community. In North Korea, the captives in secret prison camps are not given information about the outside world and are surrounded by electric fences that prevent them from leaving or escaping (Cooper, 2015). To make people conform, intimidation and coercion are also used to induce fear. Shin, the escaped prisoner from Camp 14, testified, "If you escape, you would be shot. If you try to escape or plan to escape, you would be shot. Even if you did not report someone who is trying to escape, you would be shot" (Cooper, 2015). Giving the prisoners strict rules and threatening to shoot them forces them to comply with the rules and follow instructions. A similar method has been discovered in China. Since President Xi Jinping became president in 2013, the government has arrested and "forcibly disappeared hundreds of activists," further restricting the freedom of expression by isolating these activists from society so that they cannot express themselves through media (Human Rights Watch, 2016, para. 8).

Thankfully, the United States does not have authority figures who take such severe measures to keep people under control, but this can be seen to some extent in the workplace. Managers and bosses can limit their workers' freedom of speech and influence their political opinions by threatening to take away the employees' jobs (Dolgow, 2012, para. 2). For example, a medical supplies manufacturer named Adam Smith was fired for berating a Chick-fil-A employee on a YouTube video for being part of a company that he believed to be homophobic (Dolgow, 2012, para 2). All of these occurrences are violations of Articles 18 and 19 of the Declaration of Human Rights because these members cannot freely express their political and religious views due to the fear of repercussions (United Nations, 2008, p. 7).

### **Section III: Naysayer Argument and Rebuttal**

Some may say that this is not an issue that should be publicized, and many will also deny these injustices. For example, China rejected a 400-page document that was written by the United Nations General Assembly that addressed things such as torture, rape, forced abortions, and labor camps that have occurred in North Korea (Kaiman, 2014, para. 2). China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokeswoman Hua Chunying stated during a press conference that the document was an "unreasonable criticism" and that "politicizing human rights issues is not conducive towards improving a country's human rights" (Kaiman, 2014, para. 4). She also stated that taking the human rights issue to the international criminal court would not be helpful or improve the situation. Hua refused to answer when asked whether China would veto the report if it were raised in UN Security Council. Hua likewise refused to respond to a question that was raised about why UN investigators were secured near the border at a location where North Korean immigrants cross. Hua said that North Korean immigrants are sent back to their country where they will be put into camps but did not mention anything about the UN investigators. The article concluded by saying that China is "touchy about foreign powers highlighting their own abuses, and fear setting a double standard" (Kaiman, 2014, para. 8). This is just one example of a country's government that refuses to accept and admit that these cruelties are happening and thus tries to defend itself by calling the accusations unreasonable.

### Rebuttal:

Although some are defensive and reject that these instances are occurring, the reality is that they continue to occur. By denying its actuality, the issue cannot be approached and handled. This issue cannot realistically be rejected because evidence has been collected. For example, video evidence of the camp conditions has been recorded, and people who have escaped these camps have testified (Wally, 2013, para. 4; Cohen, 2014, para. 7). Shin Dong-hyuk's story is consistent with the testimony of other prisoners whose bodies are scarred by the cruel treatment, and this serves as physical evidence (Cooper, 2015). A reporter who interviewed Shin said "the tip of his finger is missing. He says it was chopped off as punishment when he accidentally broke a machine in a prison factory. He also has serious scars on his back, stomach, and ankles" (Cooper, 2015). I strongly believe that politicizing a human rights issue will in fact help improve the issue because it spreads awareness. The more that this crisis is broadcasted and publicized, the less authorities can negate and hide it. China is in fact setting a double standard, and it is necessary that this issue is recognized in its entirety and that acts of prevention are taken immediately.

## **Section IV: Interrelationship between Human Rights Violations & Justice Strategies**

### Part A: Justice Principles Relating to Human Rights Violations

As the documentation that I have provided in this research analysis shows, the three major issues presented do in fact constitute violations of specific justice principles. One of the principles regards the equality of rights and states that actions should be made "without discrimination of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion" (United Nations, p. 15). In the United States, Lucas Leonard was discriminated against because of his religion, and the people in China speaking their minds about the government are being discriminated against because of their political views.

Another justice domain that is violated concerns the equality of opportunities, which states that everyone is required to have "stable social, economic, cultural and political conditions that enable all individuals to fulfill their potential and contribute to the economy and society" (United Nations, p. 15). I argue that by keeping citizens in prison camps in North Korea and wrongfully sentencing the writers and poets in Saudi Arabia, the victims are unable to contribute to society in anyway. The people who are held in the prison camps are unaware of the life they could have beyond the prison fence and unfortunately are never allowed the opportunity to contribute to a community or even experience stable social, economic, cultural, and/or political conditions. These prisoners cannot establish a family and/or talk to any of the other captives, thus preventing them from acquiring any stable environment (Cooper, 2015). I assert that these social justice violations along with the human rights violations make this a severe matter that calls for direct action.

### Proposed Strategies/Actions:

To ensure equality, justice, and freedom, there are a few measures that should be considered and applied. First, torture must be put to an end. The UN Convention against Torture was created to protect people and to establish that torturers are international outlaws (Amnesty International, 2014, p. 5-6). With this in mind, I believe that there should be instant repercussions, such as prosecution, so that the crimes of these torturers can be assessed and stopped as soon as possible. One measure that has begun to address this was the global Stop Torture campaign that was launched by Amnesty International in 2014 (p. 14). It was created to implement effective safeguards against torture (p. 14). The safeguards include principles and protocols that can be followed during an arrest and detention so that people are not wrongfully or cruelly arrested or imprisoned (p. 15). I am also in agreement with the position taken by Amnesty International that all prisoners should be allowed a trial in front of a judicial authority and be accompanied by a lawyer so that they have a chance at justice (p. 15). Because North Korea denies having prison camps, they have been monitored by using high-precision satellite imagery to watch over the activities, and I believe that this must be continued (Cohen, 2014, para. 7). Proving that the violations occur is the first step toward helping protect people from injustices regarding arrest and imprisonment.

To protect people from losing their rights of expression due to discriminatory reasons, I would also assert that additional strategies should be implemented. During a special UN Council meeting held by the Special Rapporteur for Cultural Rights, some delegations noted that efforts must be made to find consensus on the definition of human rights defenders and the definition of circumstances under which they conduct their work (United Nations, 2013, para. 10). Governments should be encouraged to improve such definitions and adopt relevant terminology and

language so that these activists are protected (para. 10). Also, I trust that by adding criteria to laws that restrict the use of violence against members of religious groups as well as political and artistic members of communities who may be targeted, that the protection of political, religious, and artistic members of society will be enforced. Furthermore, I have confidence that reforming extremism laws to fall in line with international human rights standards will ensure that justice can ultimately be achieved (USCIRF, 2015, p. 182). For example, Article 105 of China's criminal law must be reformed because it is vague and does not define what actions are considered abuses of this law. Lastly, I believe that all prisoners who have been subjected to unjust actions should be released so that they can live freely and be able to use their freedom to express their opinions (p. 183). According to the United Nations, it is important that "states promote and allow public and private demand for artistic activity and create a safe and ideal environment" (United Nations, 2013, p. 6). These solutions would be retrospective justice because these strategies are efforts that focus on how the government can confront extreme acts that are founded in discriminatory motives (Stanford University, 2015). These are the necessary measures that must be taken to achieve justice.

## **Section V: Conclusion**

I strongly believe that this human rights injustice must be put to an end because if not everyone is protected under the jurisdiction of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, then no one is. It is necessary to provide protection and safety to all who express these rights, especially in countries such as China, North Korea, Saudi Arabia, and the United States. Freedom of expression is incorporated into the United Nations documents for a reason. Before these rights were established, people suffered all over the world. The suffering is still occurring. It is being hidden and becoming more severe. It is time to take action and give the people who have experienced these injustices peace, protection, and freedom. I believe that in order to prevent these acts of cruelty and injustice, future research efforts must be made to discover how many countries are in fact covering up their actions and what measures these countries are taking in order to do so. The findings of this research can provide the United Nations with information that may help it construct policies that will prevent a country from erasing evidence.

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All FYS students are asked to read a book prior to their first semester at Siena. After reading the novel *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia*, the overarching question posed to those in this section was: "In what specific way do you empathize with the protagonist?". In this compelling first-essay-of-the-year, the writer focuses on her own aspirations and values and compares them to those of the protagonist by offering substantial textual evidence paired with personal experience.

## **Creating Versus Pursuing Happiness in Mohsin Hamid's *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia***

**By Julianna C. Rauf**

(Prof. Liptak – Crossing Borders in Literature and Film)

Mohsin Hamid stated in a 2007 interview, "I believe that the core skill of a novelist is empathy: the ability to imagine what someone else might feel. And I believe that the world is suffering from a deficit of empathy [and that there are] failures of compassion towards people who seem different" ("Harcourt Interview"). In Mohsin Hamid's novel *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia*, he writes in the second person point of view, allowing the readers to put themselves in the shoes of the main character. This makes it easier for the reader to empathize with the protagonist. In particular, I personally relate to how the protagonist pursues happiness in the future instead of creating happiness in the moment throughout the novel. His main goal in life is to become filthy rich, and he believes this would make him happiest. However, instead of living happily in the moment, he takes steps to obtain future happiness through wealth.

Throughout the novel, each chapter is started off by a statement about a self-help book. In the chapter "Learn from a Master," this particular self-help book statement says that there are two steps in writing an effective self-help book, that the book is actually helpful, and that whoever is helping themselves should have an idea of what help is needed. It also says that those helping themselves should have an idea about who they themselves are. Mohsin Hamid writes, "So be honest here, and ask yourself the following question. Is getting filthy rich still your goal above all goals, your be-all and end-all, the mist-shrouded high-altitude spawning pond to your inner salmon?" (77). After this statement, the main character goes on to say, yes, becoming filthy rich is beyond all else. He says that nothing else matters to him - not happiness, not relationships, not anything. There's even a chapter in the novel dedicated to why you shouldn't fall in love because according to the protagonist, it gets in the way of business. By saying that wealth is above all on his list of priorities, the protagonist puts off anything that could potentially make him happy in the moment in order to be happy in the future. After reading this statement, I could empathize with the desire to become rich and putting it above all else.

Growing up, I was always asked what I wanted to be when I was older. Most kids had the generic answers of wanting to become an astronaut, a doctor, or a stay-at-home mom (in the case of my youngest sister), which would allow them to experience happiness in the process of becoming what they wanted to be. My answer, however, was that I wanted to be rich. As a child, I thought this was an acceptable answer. I didn't care what I did with my life, or whether it made me happy or not. I only cared about how rich it would make me. Even this past summer, I found myself pursuing this goal. Instead of doing what made me happy, I went into college with the idea that I'd be a biology major and become an anesthesiologist. Because of the money that anesthesiologists make, I pursued this even though I find biology dreadfully boring. In the case of the novel's protagonist, he never talks about what



he wants to be or do that would make him happy. Instead, he talks about ways to get rich in general. Just like the main character, I do things for myself that would make me happy in the future, not necessarily happy in the moment.

In the beginning of the chapter "Work for Yourself," the protagonist says that books are a "co-creative project" and that when you read a book, you have to imagine. He then isolates this powerful statement, cutting it off as though it's a separate thought: "And when you imagine, you create" (Hamid 97). Here, Hamid reflects on the ideology of the main character. The protagonist always imagined himself as being rich; therefore, he spends his life creating wealth. Unfortunately, emotions are set aside throughout his life because he concentrates on a rich future. Another quotation from the book that helps support this idea is in the chapter "Have an Exit Strategy," when the protagonist has an epiphany and realizes that feelings and the relationships you make are what truly matter. Hamid writes:

We are all refugees from our childhoods. And so we turn, among other things, to stories. To write a story, to read a story, is to be a refugee from the state of refugees. Writers and readers seek a solution to the problem that time passes, that those who have gone are gone and those who will go, which is to say every one of us, will go. For there was a moment when everything was possible. And there will be a moment when nothing is possible. But in between we can create. (213)

The protagonist is saying that we shouldn't flee from time and seek refuge in the future; instead, we should focus on creating our lives and living in the moment. This is a lesson I learned and was moved by after reading this novel.

If the protagonist had imagined himself as happy instead of filthy rich, he would have done whatever it was that made him happy. Similarly, if I were to imagine myself as happy instead of rich, I would be doing things that make me happy in the moment, instead of doing things that will only determine my wealth in the future. For example, over the summer I work what I think to be one of the most outrageous jobs on earth, waitressing at a local restaurant. I work six to seven days a week from seven in the morning to eight at night under horrifying working conditions. The things we are illegally forced to save off of the tables is appalling, and the way the guests treat us is completely demeaning. On top of that, my coworkers do a fantastic job of making my life miserable, and the boss is the cheapest man alive. People always question why I work there, and my answer is always, "the money." Between the tips and my paycheck, I can make, on average, seven hundred to twelve hundred dollars a week, which is much more than most people my age. So sure, I come home almost everyday crying, I miss my friends unconditionally because I never have time to spend with them, and all-in-all I am one of the unhappiest people on earth, but at least I'm rolling in the dough. Just like the protagonist, I seek money no matter how miserable it makes me in the moment.

However, in the chapter "Focus on the Fundamentals," there is a turning point in the novel. The reader begins to see how the outlook of what's important to the protagonist changes. This also happens to be where I first began questioning my personal motives. Throughout the chapter, the protagonist is living his everyday life as an old man. During one part in particular, he goes out to run errands, and he sees people longingly staring at pricey items. The protagonist states that it is not always

clear to you that they themselves, beneath the poses they strike, really know what they stand for either, any more than you did at their age. But what you do sense, what is

unmistakable, is a rising tide of frustration and anger and violence, born partly of the greater familiarity the poor today have with the rich, their faces pressed to that clear window on wealth afforded by ubiquitous television . . . At times, watching the stares that follow a luxury SUV as it muscles its way down a narrow road, you are nearly relieved to have been already separated from your fortune. (201)

In this excerpt, the protagonist talks about how individuals don't know what they themselves stand for and how they are poisoned by social norms and corrupted by greed. He also says how he is happy that he is no longer wealthy. The people staring in the window remind him of how his desire for wealth consumed him at their age, and he then reflects upon how it no longer means anything to him, as though becoming filthy rich was completely meaningless. This is utterly ironic because up until this point in the novel, the only thing the protagonist wanted was to be rich, and now, being rich means nothing to him.

I empathize with the protagonist in this way not because I'm old enough and wise enough to have had the same experience, but because after reading this novel, I questioned whether or not becoming rich should be the most important goal in my life. The way the protagonist sees the people looking through the window or watching the SUV is the way I began to see myself after reading this novel. I was so consumed with being rich that I didn't know who I really was, and this got in the way of my happiness. I cannot recall the number of times I've seen something I wanted, whether it be a mammoth house, a Ferrari, or a pair of Beats, and have told myself, "One day, I'm going to have all of that." This has caused me to be ungrateful, always wanting more and comparing myself to others and what they have that I don't. By doing this, I would become unhappy with what I had at the moment, and I'd seek happiness through what I could potentially have. Just like the protagonist, I used to be consumed by the desire for wealth due to what I didn't have, causing me to be unhappy with what I currently had.

Another way I empathize with the protagonist is how towards the end of his life, he focuses on the relationships he has made. No, I likely am not near the end of my life, but I did near the end of how I used to feel about pursuing happiness versus creating it after reading this eye-opening novel. By empathizing with the character in the very beginning, I grew with him, and my outlook on my life motives changed, just as his did. While the protagonist is indirectly reminiscing about what his life lacked, he says:

As you create this story and I create this story, I would like to ask you how things were. I would like to ask you about the person who held your hand when dust entered your eye or ran with you from the rain. I would like to tarry here awhile with you, or if tarrying is impossible, to transcend my here, with your permission, in your creation, so tantalizing to me, and so unknown. That I can't do this doesn't stop me from imagining it. And how strange that when I imagine, I feel. The capacity for empathy is a funny thing. (Hamid 214)

The protagonist is saying that he empathizes with the reader for the relationships they've made and the feelings they've felt. He says that he understands what it means to be loved and that he would like to form a relationship with the reader because the relationships you make in your life are what matter in the end. Another example of when the protagonist states that relationships are what matter most is when he is dying and says: [F]or despite all else you have loved, you have loved your father and your mother

and your brother and your sister and your son and yes, your ex-wife, and you have loved the pretty girl, you have been beyond yourself, and so you have courage, and you have dignity, and you have calmness in the face of terror, and awe, and the pretty girl holds your hand (Hamid 222). When facing death, the protagonist can only think of the people he has loved in his life, and the wealth he had acquired doesn't occur to him even once. It's as though becoming filthy rich was completely meaningless, and the only thing that mattered is the people he loved along the way, the people who made him happy.

The message Hamid conveys is that relationships are what's truly important, so hold on to them. In the case of the first statement, when the protagonist was describing the actions of the unknown people referred to as "who," he said that with particular people in mind. While reading that passage, I did, too. I was thinking mainly of my mother and recalled the number of times she has held me while tears were pouring from my eyes, whether I was hurt physically or emotionally. I thought specifically of the time when I was racing my bike down my driveway, which seemed as steep as Everest at the time, and I wiped out. I was bleeding everywhere, and my mother washed me with water and hydrogen peroxide and just let me sit in her lap as she held my head and stroked my hair, comforting and protecting me, immediately causing me to relax. After reading the novel and changing along with the protagonist, I was able to empathize with him because I realized that the relationships I create during my life are what will make me happy in the end, much happier than if I focus on acquiring wealth.

My whole life I have heard it said that you should do what makes you happy. For me, doing this wasn't easy because I simply didn't know what made me happy due to not paying it any mind. I empathize with the protagonist because all my life I have focused on becoming happy primarily through wealth, instead of making myself happy in the moment. Of course it's important that you pay attention to the future, but that doesn't mean you should let it consume you. Through this novel, I have grown with the protagonist and realized that the best way to reach happiness is by making yourself happy in the moment, and that this is done not by obtaining any kind of possession, but instead through feelings and relationships.

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For her war-related research topic, this student chose to focus on veterans and post-traumatic stress disorder. She adeptly draws the reader in with a personal connection that complements her argument and research.

## **Social Support for Veterans with PTSD**

**By Sara A. Rauschendorfer**

(Prof. Woolbright - War)

I developed post-traumatic stress disorder after the tragic deaths of my father and friend. I grappled with finding my place as an adolescent suffering from a mental illness that no one seemed to understand. Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) involves experiencing a traumatic event and produces a variety of uncomfortable symptoms; most people know this. However, no one could understand why I was irritated by sensory triggers, like lights and noise, or why I seemed distant and unconcerned with typical teenage drama. At night, I sat in my room alone, crying, repeatedly trying to make sense of the traumatic events that I dealt with. To make matters worse, I practically parented myself, frequently cooking dinner and cleaning. No one tried to help me talk through my trauma.

Similarly, many veterans face this void when it comes to social support. People often avoid talking about veterans' experiences or misunderstand them, which has a silencing effect. A deeper understanding of PTSD involves being aware of its causes. Post-traumatic stress disorder is a deep-rooted problem in the body, not just a bunch of irritating symptoms, as my frustration with lights and noise was considered. PTSD is developed when one of the human body's natural responses to a threat, the freeze response, is improperly discharged, thus trapping traumatic energy inside the body. That traumatic energy invokes strain on the body's autonomic nervous system, resulting in the symptoms that PTSD victims cope with. Every time someone reacts negatively to another person with PTSD, the traumatic energy in his or her body becomes stronger and his or her symptoms worsen. The lack of social support and the tendency to suggest any type of treatment that comes to mind exacerbate the disorder. Proper social support and understanding are essential to laying the framework for healing veterans who suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder.

Often, when veterans come back from war they experience shame and guilt, making it impossible to discuss their trauma with their families. In "After War's Trauma, Words Don't Work," Ruth Ben-Ghiat argues that veterans often keep their war experiences silent because they cannot articulate their struggle in a way that pleases their listeners. There is often a lack of support from the loved ones of a PTSD sufferer when they hear about the frightening aspects of war. Ben-Ghiat explains that "there is, for one thing, the trauma; there is also the desire to protect one's family. There is guilt over killing - and guilt over surviving. And there is the sheer difficulty of how to explain it: how to put an exceptional state into everyday language" (Ben-Ghiat 2). Veterans who suffer from PTSD struggle to express their experience to their families because they feel guilty and shameful about their actions. They are challenged by the concepts of being murderers and of surviving when others do not make it. They usually remain silent about these feelings because they do not want their family members to think of them in a negative way. For example, no child wants his or her parents to think of him or her shooting someone else. Additionally, veterans with PTSD feel a sense of shame if they speak about the negative aspects of war. For soldiers and veterans alike, "[I]t was unwise to appear defeatist or unpatriotic by conveying the horrors of the battlefield" (Ben-Ghiat 2). Veterans with PTSD often feel that they are unpatriotic if they

explain what happened to them at war; doing so could make people think that they are not supporting their country. There is a fear of judgment, leading veterans dealing with trauma to choose silence. The guilt and shame are contained inside a person dealing with post-traumatic stress disorder, which stirs up his or her traumatic energy even more. A platform for discussion about the terrible, traumatic experiences of war would allow for a release of some of this energy and is necessary to heal people suffering from PTSD.

People need to understand the trauma PTSD victims go through in order to give them a space to become reengaged with life. Paola Mieli's "Trauma and War Trauma: A Clinical Approach" uses Freudian theory to prove this. Essentially, this theory proposes that trauma creates a disconnect from one's identity and from society. For survivors of war-time extermination camps, the witnessing of "continued deaths and torture emptied out any surge of life or any attempt to rebel, prompting a forced fall in both hope and ideation, as well as a total loss of attachment from life" (Mieli 12). When people are extremely traumatized, they cannot feel connected. Due to the numerous deaths and torture linked to war, veterans suffer such disconnect. People need social support in order to reconnect with others and with life. This social support comes from people understanding trauma. Mieli argues that people should "never cease to try to understand - even where understanding ends - what is a historical and ethical necessity. It is a call for awareness, for assuming our responsibility in a history that we are part of and that can repeat itself" (Mieli 11). Mieli suggests that people should make an effort to understand tragedy, even if it is challenging to do so. This gives a wider understanding of trauma, which helps PTSD sufferers to heal. Even though it is a lot easier to avoid that which is difficult in life, it is necessary to face one's fears about the causes of trauma in order to prevent and treat it. This is very important regarding social support because when the societal causes of trauma are addressed, the chance of PTSD worsening greatly decreases.

Without this social support, veterans cannot get better. In "The Role of Social Support in Exposure Therapy for Operation Iraqi Freedom/Operation Enduring Freedom Veterans: A Preliminary Investigation," Matthew Price uses an experiment to prove the necessity of social support for veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. A lack of social support can actually push PTSD sufferers away from seeking help. Price explains that "over time, those with PTSD avoid members of their support network in an effort to reduce perceived threat and to increase perceived safety" (Price 93). In other words, people with PTSD tend to see those who could be potential supporters as dangerous. This could be a result of a negative response when trying to obtain support. When someone does not understand PTSD and lacks the tools to support a victim, it causes the victim to fear asking for help. Unfortunately, this leads to self-isolation and causes further damage in terms of traumatic energy. The aforementioned experiment investigates the effectiveness of exposure therapy in a group of veterans where the levels of PTSD and social support varied from person to person. It concludes that without social support, therapy is not effective, which leads Price to conclude that "there has been evidence to suggest that increased social support helps to facilitate the natural recovery process in those that have experienced a trauma" (Price 97). People who have a proper support system are able to heal more easily. They are able to talk about their struggle and lessen the strength of their symptoms through the release of some of their trapped traumatic energy. Additionally, their therapy is more effective. However, if someone works

through an issue in therapy and then goes home and receives a lack of support, it can send him or her back to square one.

When the loved ones of a trauma sufferer suggest the first potential solution that comes to mind when they see the symptoms of PTSD playing out, they are denying effective social support to that person. Naturally, most people choose to take the easy way out. However, suggesting that veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder simply take medication or participate in whichever therapeutic method seems the most accessible are not solutions. Some people do believe in the benefits of medication for the treatment of PTSD. For example, the Mayo Clinic's staff says that "several types of medicine can help improve the symptoms of PTSD" (8). However, medication is not effective at healing the symptoms of PTSD; it only suppresses them. Moreover, medicine does not rid the body of its trapped traumatic energy. Another simple "solution" and common example of improper social support is people suggesting Veterans Affairs health services as a treatment option for veterans who suffer from PTSD. As an article from *The New York Times* makes clear, the Veterans Affairs (V.A.) cannot handle the increasingly large volume of PTSD sufferers requiring treatment: "Although the departments have substantially increased their mental health staffing in recent years," the author points out, "the demand for services has increased even faster, causing [lengthy] waits" (2). There is a lack of support for veterans dealing with PTSD from the very agency charged with caring for them. Furthermore, the treatments provided by Veterans Affairs health services are questionable. A report from the Department of Defense and Veterans Affairs shows that "neither department really knows whether the treatments offered and applied are effective" (1). In making this comment, the author is warning people about the inconsistency of the V.A.'s treatment options. Although veterans are often referred to the V.A. for PTSD treatment, the results are insufficient because simple solutions to trauma do not exist. Veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder need support in seeking proper treatment.

Social support for veterans with PTSD involves providing them with an open platform to discuss their experience and becoming educated on the disorder and its treatment options. Making people feel uncomfortable about discussing their mental illness makes it worse. Taking time to gather information about what veterans with PTSD deal with is crucial, as Mieli suggests, and it is necessary to help veterans gain the resilience they need to deal with their trauma. The National Institute of Mental Health argues "[a] resilience factor that may reduce the risk of PTSD [is] seeking out support from other people such as friends and family" (3). In other words, veterans with PTSD need social support from their loved ones in order to heal. By giving these trauma victims the freedom to express their experience without judgment and fear, loved ones are eliminating the probability of shame and guilt, as Ben-Ghiat discusses. Additionally, when veterans who have post-traumatic stress disorder feel safe to talk about their struggle, their traumatic energy has an opportunity to be partially released. Finally, social support involves educating oneself about the possible treatment options for PTSD. Seeking treatment at the V.A. and taking medication are not viable options because they rarely yield proven successful results. Social support and understanding are key components in the healing process of veterans with PTSD. As for my own experience, after receiving social support, my therapy became much more effective. I was able to implement lifestyle changes that were crucial to my healing process because of the understanding from my loved ones. Veterans with PTSD have no room for improvement if they do not receive this level of social support.

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For the FYS-War class, students developed original arguments regarding diversity in the military. This author convincingly argues that women, if qualified, should be allowed to enter the Army Rangers.

## **Female Army Rangers**

**By Alexa V. Reilly**

(Prof. Woolbright – War)

The recent decision to open all combat roles to females throughout every branch of the military has come under fire because some feel that adding females will ruin unit cohesion and create an unprofessional atmosphere. Most criticism surrounds the opening of infantry and ground forces such as the 75th Ranger Regiment to females. This Regiment is the world's premiere light-infantry unit; it is a flexible, willing, and highly-trained special operations force that is readily available to complete any mission, no matter the difficulty or the time frame. Rangers must be courageous, physically and mentally tough, disciplined, motivated, and intelligent soldiers who specialize in carrying out various highly difficult operations behind enemy lines. Additionally, they must be experts in short-notice deployment as the Regiment is the largest special operations unit in the U.S. Army. Many people have stated that females simply cannot qualify to serve in this force. However, there are males who fail all the time, yet they are not criticized or punished for their failures. Still, females, until recently, were not even allowed to attempt Ranger School for fear that they would fail. This is not to say all females will pass and make it into the Regiment, but rather females should at least be given a chance. If a female is able to meet the high standards set by the Army and the Ranger Regiment, there is no reason why she should not be allowed to attend Ranger School and when she graduates, proudly display the Ranger tab on her upper left shoulder.

One of the arguments against females becoming Rangers is that they would be far too emotional under extreme stress to effectively make decisions. However, Lieutenant Colonel Polly Montgomery, as mentioned in Kirsten Holmstedt's *Band of Sisters*, disproves this argument. When one of her close friends, a senior master sergeant, was accused of sexual harassment, Montgomery did not get emotional. Holmstedt writes, "As commander, she had to move the squadron beyond what had happened. She held a meeting and addressed the situation" (413). LTC Montgomery put her mission and her squadron before her friend; she took an unbiased and objective stance on the entire situation. She could have gossiped or emotionally defended her friend, but instead she decided that it was more important to shut down any possible drama that would have resonated from the situation. She focused on keeping the fabric and fundamentals of her squadron intact, which was a fantastic example of leadership in trying times. It is always hard to distance oneself from a situation that involves family or friends, for the natural inclination is to defend them. However, LTC Montgomery pushed her emotions aside and focused on her duty as a commander. Any leader with the same level of tenacity and dedication to her job as LTC Montgomery would be a benefit to elite military forces such as the Army Rangers.

However, Virginia Held's "Cultural Norms, Gender, and the Environment" demonstrates a contrasting argument. Held takes issue with the idea that females are capable of serving in combat roles in the military. She states, "Maternal practice and its norms thus differ from military practice and its norms in that the latter accept violence to achieve its aims" (46), which boils down to the ancient notion that all females are meant to simply be mothers who do not commit violence. In reality, however, there are females all over the world capable of being violent; Lynndie England and her involvement in the Abu



Ghraib torture scandal is a compelling example. However, a misconception that civilians such as Held adhere to is that one must be a barrel-chested, steely-eyed killer in order to serve in the military. This is simply not the case, and violence is not a quality that is gender specific. Furthermore, violence is not a prerequisite for service in the military. In dire circumstances, however, it is sometimes necessary to acknowledge that killing is the only option. It's kill or be killed. A person does not need to have a violent nature but must be willing to do what it takes for self-preservation and to save fellow soldiers in order to protect this country. Gillian Scott offers a devastating response to Held's argument in her letter to the editor, "Women Can Adapt to Challenges of Combat." With one simple sentence, the flaw in Held's argument is exposed: "They [females] should be judged on their abilities and not on pre-conceived notions of what they're able to accomplish" (Scott 1). She acknowledges that many don't believe females can make the cut; however, that is not a valid reason to ban them from trying. In doing this, our country is limiting its pool of potential recruits by promoting an environment in which not everyone is encouraged to succeed and become the best they can be.

Females are going to serve in combat roles regardless of men's opinions. In fact, it happened even before the ban was lifted. During the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, women, although technically not serving in combat positions, found themselves in combat, given the nature of war. In this time, despite not being recognized, they did almost as much as the men. Women have gone out on patrols, fired vehicle-mounted machine guns through a war zone, acted in bomb disposal units, conducted raids, and interacted with Iraqi and Afghan women. Men cannot interact with the Afghan and Iraqi women due to cultural taboos. How is it expected for women to interact with these foreigners if they aren't permitted in the combat zone? It's not. Men are expected to violate the foreign culture and search the women for weapons. In the case of suicide bombers, this has caused many unnecessary deaths, deaths which most likely could have been prevented if a woman had stepped forward to search the Afghans or Iraqis. This jeopardizes the lives of our servicemen and women because of a ridiculous law we have. We are putting males into unfair positions that also can cut ties to other countries, and it shows that we have a lack of respect for other cultures.

Despite the logic behind allowing females in combat-ready units, many objections have been raised. One is that females apparently serve as distractions to males and have a higher chance of being sexually assaulted. This is the males' go-to explanation as to why females should not be accepted into prestigious programs. Rather than changing the males' behaviors, we simply restrict females' behaviors and opportunities. Another argument against female inclusion is that women will degrade the standard. The standards are very high for Army Ranger training, and that is a known fact to all males and females who are interested in this program. Many males believe that should females be accepted into Ranger School, the standards would be lowered in order for them to pass. This jeopardizes the Regiment's effectiveness and prestige. I do agree that the standards should not be lowered. But, how is it known that females cannot pass the existing requirements for Ranger School? Once again, males are making assumptions about what females want and need. Why are females allowing males to tell them what is best for them? Males fear that should the standards be lowered and more females pass because of this, that the issue of sexual assault and rape will increase out of jealousy and spite. There is a simple solution to this: don't lower the standards or, an even better idea, teach males not to rape. Also, with more females in a unit, the chances of sexual assault are lower. If a female really wants to become a Ranger,

she will push herself and train beforehand in preparation for the difficulties she will face in Ranger School. The solution is to open the Ranger School to females, keep the standards the same, and eliminate gender discrimination within the school. See how females do. The worst thing that could happen is that they don't pass and they don't get their Ranger tab. No one is asking for the standards to be lowered; females are just asking to be given a chance. If they don't pass, then males get what they've been fighting for all these years since this ban was put in place, and they get to stroke their fragile egos.

As stated before, Rangers are courageous, mentally and physically tough, disciplined, motivated, and intelligent soldiers. Many females also possess these qualities but are not given the chance to show them simply because they have two X chromosomes in their genes whereas males only have one. It is a ridiculous notion that women can be banned from something like serving our country in elite forces of the military simply because of their gender. It seems to be in America's nature to discriminate against anyone who isn't a heterosexual white male. I love my country, I really do, but when people are being told "no" because of something they can't control, such as their gender, it really opens my eyes to the fact that discrimination continues to follow us today. "America the Beautiful" is not as beautiful as one might think.

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After taking a field trip to Greene Correctional Facility and engaging in conversation with sixty inmates who are taking classes through the Hudson Link for Higher Education in Prison program, the FYS students in this section were asked to write a response paper that offered summary, analysis, reflections, and connections. In this focused piece, this student offers insightful commentary on this experience and conveys how impactful it was for her.

## **The Privilege of Education: A Visit to Greene Correctional Facility**

**By Elise C. Seifritz**

(Prof. Rody-Wright – Incarceration)

Greene Correctional Facility is a medium security prison that is home to 1,800 inmates in Coxsackie, New York. General inmates are housed in dormitories, while hard-to-manage inmates can live in a special housing unit called S-Block. Like many prisons and jails, Greene Correctional Facility is protected by barbed wire, tall steel doors that only open one at a time, and many security officers. However, besides the physical look of it, Greene is not the average, dark, depressing prison where officers and workers want nothing to do with the inmates. At Greene, the vibe is relaxed and warm. Officers talk to each other and laugh while workers come to work with smiles on their faces because each day at work is a life-changing one. The prison feels more like a rehab center than a penitentiary because people there want inmates to get the best out of incarceration; they want the prisoners to take advantage of the opportunities that are available to them. These aspects of Greene Correctional Facility were extremely surprising to me, ultimately changing my thoughts about prisons. The trip made me realize that I have to look at everything with an open mind because there is always the chance of things being better than how they may at first seem.

One of the great aspects of Greene Correctional Facility is the offer of education to inmates. According to Eric Westervelt of NPR, there are 32 states that provide some type of college-level or post-secondary education. However, he states that “[u]nfortunately, these programs are substantially underused because many inmates lack a means to pay for them” (Westervelt). Luckily for the inmates at Greene, the education is privately funded, so they do not have to worry about not being able to afford classes. The education program at Greene is associated with Hudson Link and Siena College. There are more than 60 inmates who take educational classes two to three times a week while also engaging in a variety of jobs. When listening to many of the inmates’ stories, it is clear that education has brought them more hope than they ever had before. Almost all of them see themselves graduating from the program with a future job and also making a difference in the community and family they destroyed while on the outside. The director of the educational program, Sean Pica, is an example of prison success. He was incarcerated at multiple facilities for 17 years but while he was in prison, he received an education. The ability to do so led to his mission of giving back when he was released. He is a mentor, role model and angel of hope for the inmates. Sean is dedicated and excited to see what the future holds for prison education, and it was easy to see that all of this positive energy increases the inmates’ desires to learn.

Along the same lines, the men in the program exert control over their environment by going to class, doing their homework, getting a job, and staying busy. The busier the inmates are, the less likely they are to get into trouble, which would put them at risk of losing their education. One of the questions posed by my classmate during the field trip was that if the inmates could have changed anything about

their pasts, what would it have been. Every man in the room said they would have continued with school. They now realize how important education is, and they do not take it for granted. For them, learning comes before working out or going to the yard because it is so important and special to them. The men put every ounce of effort into their education, and given the program's success, it pays off. Those in the Hudson Link program are intimidating to the other inmates who are not so lucky. Also, most of them would never risk getting into trouble because that would mean losing the privilege to learn, and after having lost it once, they never want to lose it again.

Even through all the hope and happiness in the room, there was still a sense of despair deep down. The men are locked up which means that they have limited time with their families. They still get up each day in the same environment and are reminded of what they did to put them in prison. It will always remain with them, and by looking at some of the men's faces, I could see the sadness they feel. Even though we did not get to tour the prison, I believe we would have witnessed even more despair in the men who do not have the opportunity to get an education, for I imagine it would be like living a life without hope or a future for most of them. At least the men in the Hudson Link program have a chance to start a new chapter.

Having the ability to hear the stories of inmates has changed my outlook on prisoners. I realize now the societal stigma about prisoners is inaccurate and that it is important to stand up and fight against the stereotypes. Many of the men who are locked up are average people who made one bad decision or were in the wrong place at the wrong time and now suffer the consequences. I definitely will never forget the extreme differences between college in prison and college on campus. Even though at both places you receive pretty much the same education, the amount of effort and dedication the prisoners put into their learning experience surpasses anything on a college campus. The inmates enrolled in the Hudson Link program are not just learning for the fun of it; they are learning because it is the one thing that makes them feel like people and not just numbers. It is the thing that makes them feel like they can make a difference in their lives and the lives of others. Life is too short to waste any time. Take it from the prisoners: Do not waste time taking advantage of anything. Live every moment to the fullest and love what you have.

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Westervelt, Eric. "Measuring the Power of a Prison Education." nprED. NPR.org. 31 Jul 2015. Web. 1 Nov 2015.

In this research paper, the author takes a critical view of online support for social justice causes. This paper uses a variety of traditional and digital sources as well as APA citation format.

## **Slacktivism: The Epidemic that Discourages Societal Change** **By Shannon E. Stout**

(Prof. Dennis Tamburello, O.F.M. – Technology)

When thinking about the impact that social justice advocates have made in years past, one might conjure up ideas of hard work and constant petitioning for movements that they believed needed to begin. If a person in America believed that an aspect of their justice system should be defunct, one might have dedicated their entire livelihood to ensure that justice would be rightly served. There were hours and hours of protests and petitions, and sometimes lives were lost in the process. However, when one thinks about change in today's society, it mostly involves this routine: scroll, scroll, like, share. In our modern world, there is a great barrier between what people think is making a difference and what is actually making a difference. Scholars have actually coined a term for this ineffective change—slacktivism. Slacktivism can be seen throughout our modern society's social media networks. It can make people feel as though they are truly creating a change, when in reality, they are not. If people want to make a lasting change, they must want to "get their hands dirty" and really fight for what they believe is right. An activist should get involved in a real organization and do something concrete. For now, though, slacktivism is a technological best friend to those who want to create change.

Before one can understand the impact that slacktivism has on movements, one must first understand the role that social media outlets play in this. There are three different ways in which social networking users share their concerns for causes on various applications. The first of the three can be seen through what are called the new media situations. According to Saxton and Wang (2013), new media includes, "Blogs, websites, email, text messages, social media, and social networking sites" (p. 852). All of these platforms are used as computer-based marketing strategies that are geared towards a population of technology users. The earliest forms of new media can be found on companies' websites and through their emails (p. 852). This type of advertising only allows the company to have a one way form of public communication: from the cause to the people. Indeed, a person might respond to an email, but this does not mean that others will necessarily see the response a critic might have to an organization. New media allows for no response from their recipient, but rather it only involves a one-way flow of information.

Social media, compared to new media, is in a completely different realm when it comes to communication. It first began "in the mid-to-late 2000's . . . [when] social media sites such as blogs, wikis, Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter allowed individuals and organizations to participate in online discussions, connect with others and create and share information" (p. 852). These forums allow discussions, where people can freely share their ideas and make their points. Unlike new media, social media is a tool where people can take what they learn from a certain company and respond to it in a way that is not necessarily connected to the company. These improvements in social communication between companies and their communities have allowed for a more interactive way for people to get involved with issues relevant to their beliefs.

Lastly, there is a more professional forum where people might choose to share information.

This can be found in formal social networks, such as *Facebook*, *Flickr*, *LinkedIn*, and *Twitter*. These applications can also be referred to as social networking sites. This type of digital communication can allow “[o]rganizations and individuals [to] create formal ties to other users of their choosing” (p. 852). On these sites, users have the ability to message their followers. They can also regularly post status updates, photos, and tweets that will be shared among users who follow their organization. This is a great way to establish digital ties because it allows for two-way communication between the organization and the network of people that the organization is trying to reach (p. 852).

All of these tactics can be extremely useful when trying to inform people about a cause that needs attention. However, because of the digital technology that is involved, the user's response could be seen as slacktivism. Usually when companies gain loyal financial donors, their causes gain necessary monetary funds needed to help solve an issue. Slacktivism is helping another with their cause digitally while not physically making a change. This is called donation by action. A person can share or like a post all they want, but that is only creating a microscopic impact. This word-of-mouth advocacy is usually practiced by non-donating followers of a cause. Saxton & Wang (2013) comment on the shame of this when they explain that “*Facebook* users will easily ‘like’ a cause, promote a cause, and become ‘fundraisers’ for the cause; however, it is more difficult to get them to actually donate” (p. 865). It seems odd that people are more apt to like a *Facebook* page than actually do anything to personally help the company and its efforts. A person might believe that they are truly making a difference by supporting an organization in their online efforts, but that is not really making much of a difference in the real world.

Many people will like a page on *Facebook* and think they are helping a cause, even if they are not necessarily making a difference. It was found that *Facebook* donors do not seem to care about efficiency ratios or how well a cause is actually being helped (p. 850). Schumann and Klein (2015) studied the phenomenon of people showing digital support in virtual life rather than helping an organization in organic life. They found that “low threshold digital practices such as signing online petitions or ‘liking’ the *Facebook* page of a group are thought to derail subsequent engagement offline” (p. 308). It would only make sense that people would want to help an organization achieve justice, rather than just letting the activism stop as soon as they log out. However, this is not the case. For slacktivists, their “actions indeed reduce the willingness to join a panel discussion and demonstration as well as the likelihood to sign a petition” (p. 308). Why do people participate in slacktivism if it does not help anyone? Schumann and Klein (2015) found that “slacktivism addresses needs that pertain to individuals’ sense of group membership” and that this practice is “thought to make users feel good about themselves” (p. 308). Slacktivism is embraced by people who need a sense of belonging to make themselves feel good. If a person likes the page of a non-profit organization, it makes them seem as though they are a good person, and therefore, makes their online followers have a more positive view of them. This participation supposedly “makes users instantly feel good about themselves and elevates their self-esteem” (p. 309). Self-esteem is sure to be boosted when a person decides to share a post that makes it seem like they are making a difference. But, in actuality, these “‘many clicks’ are dismissed as ‘the ideal form of activism for a lazy generation’” and are “for users who do not want to ‘get their hands dirty’” (p. 309). In other words, slacktivism makes people feel good about themselves without having to put in too much effort for the cause.

Americans between pre-teen and grandparent ages typically have access to some type of social media. When viewing a simple *Facebook* or *Twitter* feed, it is natural for a person to wander over to the “Trending Topics” section. In this part of the news feed, a person can find what is really buzzing in the media at the time. When there is some kind of traumatic event, like the terrorist attacks in Paris in December 2015 or a national movement to donate money to a cause, like the Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis Association (ALSA), people are drawn towards their feed, and they automatically show their support. Mead (2015) wrote a blog post explaining that most people are only advocates for a cause when it is prevalent in the news. Mead makes a relevant point: “[I]t’s way easier to be pro-life during January, when the March for Life comes around. And it’s a lot easier to jump on board with being pro-life when it’s a trending topic on *Twitter*, than it is to live out this controversial moral belief every day.” Why is it that we only care about a cause when it is trending in our media? How does that make a difference?

In August 2014, there was an enormous viral campaign to support the ALSA. It was called the “Ice Bucket Challenge” and participants were encouraged to dump a bucket of ice water on their heads and donate money to the Association. After the bucket was dumped of its icy splendor, participants were then supposed to nominate their friends to join them in the campaign. After this movement was launched, there were millions of videos posted on various social media sites. According to Wolff-Mann (2015) of *Time Magazine*, even President Barack Obama participated in this challenge.

During this viral campaign to raise funds to support the ALSA, some people voiced concerns about the motives of the participants in this challenge. It seemed as though some of them were more caught up in this viral sensation than actually supporting the cause. In fact, some participants donated less money than a typical donor, and they often did not know much about the disease. According to Charity Navigator’s Acting COO, Tim Gamory, “Some people didn’t even know about ALS—it just became [the] Ice Bucket Challenge” (Wolff-Mann, 2015). Here we see an instance where the trend was more about the viral videos and the hype surrounding them, than the actual cause.

Even though many people just made the videos and neglected to actually donate any money, there was a definite increase in ALS awareness. Some may say that this is an important aspect to getting the word out to the public and making a difference, and this is definitely a step in the right direction. However, it is just one step. In order to really make a change, a person must leap to advocate for their cause, not just step. During just the month of August 2014, searches on the ALS Association’s website went from 500 to 68,000. But, directly after that surge, the numbers went down again. According to Wolff-Mann (2015), the national chapter of the ALSA states that Ice Bucket Challenge brought in \$115 million in August 2014, as opposed to the \$23.5 million raised in all of 2013. The ALSA definitely gained followers and the value of the increased awareness cannot be calculated. However, even though there was an amazing turnout in support, as Wolff-Mann says, “Many of the donors were flash-in-the-pan.” Gamory explains that there are two different kinds of donors who participated in this craze. There are those “who are deeply engaged in the cause, giving over many years, and those who respond to the social media wave.” The social media response can be seen as comforting, and it creates the illusion that an organization is being helped. However, this aid is usually only present when the trending topic tugs at people’s heartstrings and is soon forgotten.

More recently, slacktivism presented itself in the response throughout social media to the attacks on Paris. For weeks, #prayforParis was trending all over every social media outlet, and people were

changing their *Facebook* profile pictures to those with a Parisian flag filter. According to Garber (2015), this was done so that people could “express their sadness and their solidarity and their fear and their empathy after Paris was attacked . . . . [These are] ways for people to convert compassion into media.” A person’s media compassion may seem like they are making a change, but no real difference is being made. Garber (2015) notes, “Millions of people with no connection to Paris or the victims mindlessly throw in their two cents: performative signaling purely for their own selfish benefit, spreading information that is often false and which they have not vetted at all, simply for the sake of making noise.” Here, we see selfishness again. This is extremely frustrating when it comes to comforting the families of those who were lost. Instead of helping the families by donating funds or writing cards or letters, people merely point attention to the fact that they are keeping the Parisians in their prayers. Garber (2015) sums up these acts in a provocative way, saying that “the filters and hashtags treat the Internet not just as a commercial platform, but as an empathy engine.” These hashtags and filters are not helping anyone except the person posting them. Yes, people are indeed standing in solidarity with their Parisian brothers and sisters. However, this is not really promoting any sort of change. It simply calls attention to the fact that there is a problem in the world that needs attention. If a person changes their profile picture so that it has the French flag over it, it only makes the person look like they are more empathetic and does not help them participate in any type of change.

Some people recognize this selfishness in our use of social media. Anthony Jeselnik (2015), a comedian, jokes about what people do right after a tragedy: “They run to their social media . . . and they all write down the exact same thing, ‘my thoughts and prayers’ . . . You are not giving any of your time, your money, or even your compassion. All you are doing is saying, ‘don’t forget about me today.’” We often see this response after tragedies. All it really does is bring the attention back to the writer. There is definitely a selfish component to slacktivism. Garber (2015) actually thinks that there is an unspoken “empathy button” that social media sites put on their networks. For several weeks after the attacks, *Facebook* would encourage its users to “Change your profile picture to support France and the people of Paris.” Even though it may seem like this is helping the people of Paris in their time of need, the only thing it is helping is the owner’s social profile and the way people feel about them by calling attention to an important problem in our world.

Slacktivism is a growing practice in the United States. It is a way for people to feel as though they are making a difference without truly getting “their hands dirty.” This is occurring on many levels of social media communication. These selfish acts can create the illusion that they are aiding society in some way, but they really are not making much of a difference. The Ice Bucket Challenge definitely aided the ALSA financially when it was trending on social media, and the same occurred with the Paris attacks. However, when it came to actually making a difference, people found it easier to just like a page, rather than to get involved in the creation of a substantial and sustainable change. There is definitely a way for this generation to make a difference. But it cannot be done in little trending blips. In order to create a real change that will last a lifetime, one must pick a cause that they are passionate about and personally get involved with the organization to make a change, rather than just liking their *Facebook* page. True change is out there for us to make. Rather than just sharing a page that highlights a cause, we can truly make a difference and allow others to notice that change for themselves without trying to get personal recognition.



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