

# Assemblages

Conference Proceedings

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Writers' Resource Center



Rio Hondo College  
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# Foreword

The idea for *Assemblages* began in the Fall 2015 semester when Rio Hondo adjunct faculty members, Henry Leonor and Cyndi Donelan Martinez, were chatting about student conferences they had known in the past and participated in themselves as students. Remembering how those experiences had encouraged them to feel confident about their own academic careers and scholarly compositions, they thought: *Why not here at Rio Hondo?* Since they both also worked in the Rio Hondo College Writers' Resource Center, they shared their very nascent idea with WRC Coordinator, Michelle Bean, in the 2016 spring semester, who enthusiastically and generously offered the WRC as sponsor, suggesting that we make this project happen in the fall! So, here we are.

True to its original intent, *Assemblages* promotes the academic work of Rio Hondo undergraduate scholars with the aim of strengthening participants' confidence as members of a community of scholars. Academic conferences are unusual at community colleges, but we are committed to helping undergraduates envision themselves as scholars and develop academic professionalism while sustaining mentoring relationships between themselves and faculty.

Given the conference intent to balance individual academic achievement and personal development with cohort and mentor influence and dialogue, the term assemblages was selected as the conference title. A collective assemblage is explained by philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari as "[...] always like the murmur from which I take my proper name, the constellation of voices, concordant or not, from which I draw my voice" (84) from *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*.

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***Where the Wild Things Are: Sailing into the Mind to Seek the Self***  
**by Margalí Barreras**

Literature, more than to entertain, serves to teach. Childhood can be a tumultuous time. It is a time when one starts to differentiate between the self and the other, between one's desires and the other's needs. Through literature, children can learn to make sense of the world they inhabit by exploring the world that unfolds before them in a story. They can use literature to work through the conflicting feelings that arise from experiences and from the limitations of rules and norms. In *Where the Wild Things Are*, Maurice Sendak creates a safe space in which the protagonist and the reader alike can test the boundaries of the adult world. Through Max's wild journey into his own psyche, children can see that he is able to navigate through his emotions, ultimately managing to appease the psychological desires that had plagued him at the beginning of the story; by seeing this, children can find that they, too, can conquer the wild thing within.

Children are born not knowing that they are separate beings from those around them. At Max's stage of psychological development, he has become aware that he is a person independent of others and is now trying to negotiate the fulfilment of his needs within the boundaries set by his parents. Sendak deliberately adjusts use of negative space in order to illustrate the evolution of Max's psychological state. In the introduction to Max's bedroom, the boy is at his most frustrated point. He does not understand why his mother is stifling his fun and has relegated him to the isolation of his dreary bedroom. At this point, the illustration is centered on the page with a heavy white border surrounding it. In *Words About Pictures*, Perry Nodelman explains that "Sendak may be using white space around pictures to suggest a character's sense of being restricted" (53). As Max sees it, the rules of the adult world are not fair. The boy is doubly punished for his misbehavior. Not only has his mother closed the door to the world beyond the confines of his four walls, but the frame is used as a sort of a moat to lock Max in place. Even if he had managed to challenge his mother's punishment and had opened his bedroom door, there would be no *there* to escape to. He would just fall off the page. This sense of perceivably unfair confinement can develop a sense of sympathy from children toward the protagonist, having themselves, surely at one time or another, been punished for a seemingly innocuous infraction. Children can further identify with Max because they can feel as if they are participating in the unfolding of events. As William Moebius points out, "Framed, the illustration provides

a limited glimpse ‘into’ a world. Unframed, the illustration constitutes a total experience, the view from ‘within’” (qtd. in Nodelman). As the story progresses, Sendak decreases the size of the frame until at the climax of Max’s adventure there is no frame present. In fact, when Max is romping around in the jungle with the monsters, the illustrations take over all facing pages. Max is completely free to fulfill his deepest desire to freely express himself through play. And without any more boundaries, children can fully immerse themselves into the adventure.

The viewer gains further insight into Max’s personality and state of mind through Sendak’s rendering of the book’s illustrations. Though pastels and earth tones are used throughout the story, the author uses color saturation and tone to develop meaning. On the third page of illustration, Max is depicted in his bedroom. At this point in the story, Max has just been sent to his room because he has been misbehaving. Here, earth tones dominate the scene. The contents of the room blend into each other in the background because there is not much differentiation between hues. At this point in his development, Max cannot yet clearly reconcile the clash that can happen when personal freedom conflicts with consideration of others. Like the colors in the room, Max’s exuberant feeling of wanting to create mischief and have fun is muddled with the frustration of having to obey his mother’s rules. Sendak further adds to this dark mood with his heavy use of cross-hatching in the background. The darker tone achieved by this technique mirrors Max’s psychological state of mind. His foul mood is scratched onto every surface of that room. On the other hand, at the end of the book, this same room is depicted with brighter tones, and the cross hatching is light and symmetrical. After his adventure, all is right in Max’s mind. There is no more conflict to wade through. This sense of peace radiates in the use of more saturated hues. Though Sendak is still using pastels and earth tones, he has raised the saturation. This creates a sense of warmth that is further emphasized by the hot meal that Max’s mother has left in the room. Though Max is standing in the same room, the sharp contrast between the two depictions of the space illustrate the transformation that the boy has made because of his journey into his imagination.

The author’s clearest reference to Max’s wild side is through his depiction of character. Sendak uses the wolf suit to represent the untamed nature still alive in Max. Though any animal costume would have worked to communicate a sense of wildness, it is the deliberate choice of the wolf that offers Sendak an opportunity to examine the contrast between the untamed and the domesticated. Max is not a puppy ready to please its master. Max is a wolf who is ruled only by his wild instincts. The only voice he follows is

that of the guiding moon. Though Sendak wants to communicate that Max is attune to his wild side, he still wants to convey that at his core Max still harbors the innocence of childhood. This is why he depicts Max in a white wolf suit instead of a gray or black suit. Though he has a wild streak, in truth Max is just a sweet boy in search of himself. In the book's final illustration, Sendak depicts Max once again in his bedroom, still in a wolf suit, but this time with the hood off. This is the only time that Max is not depicted in a full suit. This illustration is a final affirmation that Max has conquered the psychological desires that had plagued him. In lifting his hood, Max reveals his new self—a self-assured boy in control of his own emotions.

Childhood can at times feel like a rickety sailboat adrift at sea, but literature is the lighthouse beckoning for safer shores. Children need books; they need to read. Through literature, not only can children learn to understand a character, but they can learn to understand themselves and the world around them.

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## **The Impact of Speech** **by Alberto Naranjo**

What does free speech, this sometimes-overlooked constitutional right, mean to you? To our founding fathers, this right was the cornerstone to what they believed a just society should embody. The very idea of being able to freely discuss your thoughts without fear of persecution and engage in political discourse has laid the foundation for our free society. Today, many college campuses have moved away from this principle and have begun to implement safe spaces where students can shun opposing speech instead of challenging it in civil debate. Safe spaces or zones are defined as a place, primarily on a college campus, that are intended to be free of bias, conflict, criticism, or potentially threatening actions, ideas, or conversations (Merriam-Webster). The very idea of shielding yourself from criticism or from conversations that you might find discomfiting is counterproductive. College campuses, like Rio Hondo College, should not cave into this growing movement of safe spaces that lead students astray. Students should acknowledge criticism, and engage in provocative speech or symbolisms, like a Confederate flag, instead of being offended by its mere presence. As a result, students will become well-rounded critical thinkers and be overall better individuals as they look at the world through unbiased lenses.

Rio Hondo College and its faculty have a moral and professional duty to uphold academic integrity and challenge students intellectually across contrasting viewpoints, which will enable students to grasp opposing ideas and acknowledge them. By creating safe spaces that shield students from engaging with opposing opinions or triggers like the Confederate flag, we are creating a generation of students that lack the fundamental ability of distinguishing fact from fiction. As they hang on to their version of reality and perceived truths and shut out any opposing viewpoint that challenges their ideology, they create insurmountable division and harm to themselves without realizing it. In the article “The Coddling of the American Mind,” authors Greg Lukianoff and Jonathan Haidt point out that “vindictive protectiveness teaches students to think in a very different way. It prepares them poorly for professional life, which often demands intellectual engagement with people and ideas one might find uncongenial or wrong” (45). As an educational institution, Rio Hondo College should take the necessary steps to prepare students for circumstances that might require them to leave their comfort zone.

This new college culture, as noted by Conor Friedersdorf in his

article “The Rise of Victimhood Culture”, has enabled students to claim any type of offense and feel justified by taking whatever course of action necessary to deal with it. This has led to incidents of violence on college campuses as students now view speech they disagree with to be violence. Jonathan Haidt and Greg Lukianoff go in depth on this new wave of violent speech in their article “Why It’s a Bad Idea to Tell Students Words Are Violence”:

Of all the ideas percolating on college campuses these days, the most dangerous one might be that speech is sometimes violence. We’re not talking about verbal threats of violence, which are used to coerce and intimidate, and which are illegal and not protected by the First Amendment. We’re talking about speech that is deemed by members of an identity group to be critical of the group, or speech that is otherwise upsetting to members of the group. This is the kind of speech that many students today refer to as a form of violence. If Milo Yiannopoulos speaks on the University of California, Berkeley, campus, is that an act of violence? (Lukianoff-Haidt)

The use of language has now become ambiguous, as anyone can take offense to just about anything they deemed a violent speech. This new phenomenon is just creating more violence and more division in an already polarized American political and social climate because some students now feel justified in silencing opposing ideas through physical altercations. This primitive and backwards reasoning of “I’m right and whatever you have to say is wrong and hateful” is just creating more division across college campuses. Finding common ground between two opposing groups is now becoming nonexistent, as opposing groups now view each other as the enemy that can’t be reasoned with.

College campuses should teach students to use behavioral therapies to evaluate situations or topics students might take offense to, which in turn will help students manage their feelings and emotions better. Greg Lukianoff and Jonathan Haidt further elaborate on this when they say “according to the most-basic tenets of psychology, the very idea of helping people with anxiety disorders avoid the things they fear is misguided” (Lukianoff-Haidt 48). Studies cited by the BBC in the article “Can Cognitive Behavioural Therapy Really Change our Brains?” make a legitimate case for behavioral therapies when they show that “of all the talking therapies, CBT has the most clinical evidence to show that it works” (BBC). Avoiding an opposing viewpoint does absolutely no good to students. Instead, college campuses should place emphasis on guiding students to psychologists on campus that can begin short term, goal oriented exposure therapies that can help

treat students who truly do suffer from anxiety or PTSD. College campuses should not facilitate or appease students who do not fall under this category; by doing so they are doing a disservice to them by not challenging them with opposing viewpoints or criticisms.

Though safe spaces shouldn't be a student's first course of action when faced with an emotional situation, occasions may arise when a safe space can have a positive impact on a student's life. For example, there is a legitimate threat to DACA students in our country. These students have a life changing threat looming over them, and a safe space where they can be informed and comforted by peers should be welcomed. Safe spaces that deal with real physical violence and threats that students legitimately face should be created, but when students demand a safe space for triggering symbolisms on campus, or ideas or viewpoints they disagree with, then it becomes a problem. In the article "Safe Spaces on College Campuses Are Creating Intolerant Students," author Flemming Rose pointed out how well Van Jones, an American political and civil rights activist, makes the suggestion that safe spaces shielding students from certain ideas fully "contradicts the purpose of a university" (Rose). Van Jones also had this to say when referring to safe spaces:

"There are two ideas about safe spaces," he explained, referring to some college students' request for "safe spaces," where they can get together without being exposed to ideas and speech that make them feel uncomfortable. "One is a very good idea, and one is a terrible idea." The good idea, he said, is "being physically safe on campus, not being subjected to sexual harassment and physical abuse." Jones continued, "But there is another view that is now ascendant . . . . It's a horrible view, which is that 'I need to be safe ideologically, I need to be safe emotionally, I just need to feel good all the time. And if someone else says something that I don't like, that is a problem for everyone else, including the administration.'" (qtd. in Rose)

It is more than clear that safe spaces are not the problem; it is students crying wolf for just about anything that is. This over exaggeration has diminished the real purpose for safe spaces, and it must end.

Engaging in provocative speech and upsetting symbolisms, as opposed to silencing it, have now become a thing of the past. Take, for instance, the Confederate flag that I alluded to earlier. As hated as it is, it still conveys a message; therefore, it is free speech. By overreacting to its mere presence we are giving the flag what its supporters want, which is notoriety and power. Free speech is being able to freely express your thoughts and opinions, as unpopular or wrong that they may be, without

being censored. The once classical liberal philosophy of “I disapprove of what you say, but will defend to the death your right to say it” (Voltaire), has now been long forgotten as multiple political speakers, across the country, have been banned from speaking at various college campuses. Students who take offense at opposing speech or object to having the history of the Confederacy taught in classrooms on the assertion that it represents slavery and racism need to look at the bigger picture. Yes, the Confederate flag and its history is beyond disgraceful, but restricting it only creates a mysterious allure to it.

By the way, the flag we pledge allegiance to and feel a patriotic connection towards also shares a dark and grim history. The United States, just like the Confederacy, profited from slave labor from the very beginning. The stars and stripes was flown during the infamous Trail of Tears and was waved at the horrendous and unjustified massacre at Wounded Knee. It was on the sleeves of some U.S. soldiers that burned and raped Vietnamese villages during the Vietnam War. Should we also ban or restrict our own U.S. flag because people might take offense to it? Of course not. Every country has its dark past, and colleges should teach students these dark chapters of our history, not skip them or ban them. If we don’t learn from our past mistakes, we are doomed to repeat them.

Limiting free speech should never be the answer, and Rio Hondo College should never change this philosophy. Instead, Rio Hondo College should adopt exposure therapies to help students overcome opposing views that they find stressful. As a result, Rio Hondo College will leave behind a legacy of assertive students that are ready for whatever academic challenges they’ll face outside of Rio Hondo.

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***Woman Hollering Creek and Mental Health:***  
**An Underlying Issue in Chicax Culture**  
**by Cristal Reyes**

*Woman Hollering Creek* by Sandra Cisneros introduces the reader to a story cycle that has missing pieces, providing the opportunity to gather the missing parts together. This kind of literature promotes an open mind, allowing readers to input their own interpretation of what each story has to say. These stories in the cycle share a common theme: underneath all the pain we inflict on each other is the insecurity of not being good enough. In the stories “Bread,” “Never Marry a Mexican,” and “Bien Pretty” the narrator pours out the depth of her love for the men in her life. She is at times manipulative, scarring the men *and* herself. Reading this collection, a Chicax can see people so busy trying to keep the cookie-cutter version of ourselves in the public eye while we are rotting inside.

Knowing your mother loves you and would choose you over anything in this world is a privilege not everyone has. In Mexico, women often marry young and start popping out babies, even if they are not mentally or physically ready. In “Never Marry a Mexican” the narrator struggles with mommy issues: “Ma always sick and too busy worrying about her own life, she would’ve sold us to the Devil if she could” (73). The narrator is so sure her mother would do anything to be rid of the burden in her life--her siblings and herself. Soon after her father dies, her mother marries a white man, displacing herself from the lives of her children. The mother learns her lesson: she never married a Mexican again. On the other hand, the narrator absorbs learning: once a selfless little girl who shared her Barbies, even grateful for her ugly ones, she becomes someone who needs to have it all. She takes and takes and takes. This narrative moment marks the childhood trauma that forces her to become a woman, one who has no shame for sleeping with married men.

Gender plays a crucial role in Chicax culture: men do this, and women do that. The narrator’s mother had to rely on a man for her survival, resulting in the narrator relying on men to fill the void inside her. Her self-love and mental health deteriorates because these securities do not come from within her, but from the person she shares her sheets with. The narrator of “Bien Pretty” expresses that “when I made you over, you were no longer a part of her, you were all mine. The landscape of your body taut as a drum. The heart beneath that hide thrumming and thrumming. Not an inch did I give back” (75). Her diction shows how she wants every single ounce of

her lover even though he is married and not hers. With this kind of attitude, perhaps she knows that she is in control of her life again. She knows that someone actually chooses her and is not abandoning her again, so she is selfish and keeps it all. No one wants to feel like the second choice. Although she brags about how she gave nothing back, she still tries to fill the wife's shoes. "I looked down at my shoes and felt ashamed of how old they looked" (79). Embarrassed by her old clothes, she feels like a lesser woman than Megan, her lover's wife. He introduces the two women in a suave moment because he is not ashamed of his filth, only cautious of their reactions. She tells herself that she is no longer going to sleep with him, but she ends up at his house hating his wife's Estee Lauder and *calidad* clothing. She wants to feel good enough for this man, but this seems impossible when he is married to a white woman. All she is, is a Mexican. "Never marry a Mexican": her mother's words taunt her. Her mother was not happy with the life a Mexican gave her, so of course her lover would not be either.

"Bread" reminds the reader of the passion with which Chicana love infects our veins. This type of love makes a person feel at home, but home is on a cliff; the type of love that we know is wrong and we shouldn't be lying to ourselves about, but still we lay next to this person. The lovemaking is passionate and raw and not always sincere, but it fills the void, if only for a little while. Even if it is just for a little while that is good enough for us. Chicana want to feel that we are doing it right, that our parents did it wrong, and we are right. We love so hard that there is no way this is wrong, even if he has a wife and kids at home. Even if he cannot chew his bread with his mouth closed, the bread is too much; he is chewing more than he can swallow. He needs to spit something out-- but please don't let it be me. If he spits out his wife and kids, then there is more than enough space for others. "Smell of warm bread, bread in both fists, a tape on the tape player loud, loud, loud, because me and him, we're the only ones who can stand it like that, like if the bandoneon violin, piano, guitar, bass were inside us, like when he wasn't married, like before his kids, like if all the pain hadn't passed between us" (84). The narrator tells herself that only they can handle the music so loud. She is special compared to his wife because she is different. In contrast to "Never Marry a Mexican," this narrator compares herself to her lover's wife. She believes that the man would choose her over his own family. This idea stems from her mother abandoning her poor family for a *calidad* family. She remembers what life was like for them before she knew of all the pain this man would inflict on her. Even though it all she still loves him. She continues to talk about how they have different points of view on the city. Hers is of her cousin's baby dead from rat

poison and his of the same city is charming. Their interpretations of the city symbolize how their relationships differ. He killed her, and she gave him light.

Falling in love with someone is the most beautiful experience in the world. It takes your breath away and puts you at peace in the same note. Nothing can take the experience away-- except the person who gave you the experience. This is the narrator's last step to becoming her own person and not relying on a man to fill the void her mother planted within her in "Never Marry a Mexican." "Bien Pretty" captures the Chicana strength of overcoming the pain that is dealt us and still prospering although we are killed in silence. Her lover leaves her to return to his wife and kids. He tells her so nonchalantly as if they were not words that stabbed her in the *corazon*. "What kills me is your silence. So certain, so solid. Not a note, nor postcard. Not a phone call, no number I could reach you at. Just the void. The days raw and wide as this drought-blue sky. Just this nothingness. That's what hurts" (157). Stripped from everything she has left, he is gone like nothing. Not a reassurance that what they experienced was real, just the last letter he wrote to her in Spanish. It took her five days to burn all his things: five days of letting her throat burn while she gave it all to flames. "One way or another. Even if it's only the lyrics to a stupid pop hit. We're going to right the world and live. I mean live our lives the way those lives were meant to be lived. With the throat and wrists. With rage and desire, and joy and grief, and love till it hurts, maybe. But goddamn, girl. Live!" (163). The narrator's final thoughts on life show her unapologetic way of living for herself now. She will no longer live by using men to fill the void of mommy issues from which she has been suffering. She now knows that to live is to enjoy the little moments that are everything: because she is enough.

These three stories capture an underlying truth of Chicana: not taking care of our mental health. We are so caught up on trying to be good enough for this country, that we have forgotten about what our ancestors were about. Our ancestors took care of each other; we were united. We do not want to fit the stereotype, but we want to blossom. We are stuck in a racist agenda, but that does not mean we do not flip the script. Take care of yourself and of your loved ones. We must talk about our parents' unhealthy coping mechanisms that have passed down to us. We must remember that they also have dealt with things they did not wish for: we need to try to understand where they are coming from. Stop ignoring the warning signs, dismissing them as "life is hard for everyone," because this is a stronger reason to listen and help. Not everyone can look at the brighter aspect of life like the narrator was able to; some people never feel good enough. Some

people do not start dancing to a “stupid” pop song. That is why as Chicanas, Chicanos, and Chicanx we need to start caring about our mental health and the wellbeing of those around us.

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## **The Horror of Consumers** **by Richard Santoyo**

Horror films have been very popular in the United States for many years. Horror movies are known to be films made primarily to scare audiences, yet people do not realize that these films have been used to critique American society. George Romero uses the film *Dawn of the Dead* to critique how American consumers have prioritized mass consumption of goods over more important things, such as survival.

The movie *Dawn of the Dead* is a story with four characters that find a mall to seek refuge because of a zombie apocalypse. While they are in the mall, they find stores to go into and zombies chase after them. They board up stores so they feel protected, but while they are in the stores, the characters start losing their original goal of surviving. They start to wear expensive clothing, jewelry, and things that they cannot afford. While they are in the mall enjoying themselves, a biker gang barges into the mall. When they come into the mall, they destroy everything. The biker gang shoots at the four characters in the mall because the four characters were taking refuge in a place that maybe the biker gang wishes they had found first. While the incident is happening, the zombies begin to realize that they could take down the humans, so the zombies get smart and grab one of the biker characters, whom they rip apart and eat. Then, two of the four characters are bitten and turn into zombies, while the other two survivors escape in a helicopter.

In the movie *Dawn of the Dead*, items in the mall distract the four characters, while they were taking refuge in a store. While the four survivors take refuge in JC Penney's, they start looking around and find expensive clothing. They find jewelry, clothing, and other things that they cannot afford, and they forget that they are trying to take refuge and trying to survive in the mall. In Stephen Harper's article "Zombies, Malls, and the Consumerism Debate," he states, "Romero certainly recognized the dramatic potential of the mall, which may be regarded as both epitome of corporate capitalism and--for the same reason--a potential site of resistance to the forces that regulate consumerism." Romero explains about how corporations control sales, which in turn control the people to buy their products. Corporations use commercials to show off their product by using models to show how great the product works on a person, and corporations also use newspapers to show the deals they offer in stores. In the same article, Harper says, "This function is derived in part from their origins in the literature and

cinema of the twentieth century, in which zombies are synonymous with oppression and slavery.” He means that consumers are the people who are the slave workers. Companies use money to pay either men or women to use their bodies to show off products or clothing. The reason why corporations put out new products and advertise them is so they can catch some people’s eye to buy the product. When people buy products, companies do not care about people. They keep buying and giving their money to stores and the companies happily take the money. This is a modern version of slavery.

This pattern enslaves people to their debt. Companies manipulate people, via advertisement, to believe that they need the item advertised. For example, companies such as Wal-Mart, Target, BestBuy and others sell their products early for Black Friday. They sell the day of Thanksgiving and people camp out the night before, so they can get the best deals. Usually, people would be home with their families enjoying food, but some people care more about getting the most expensive item on sale than being with family, which in the movie, the four survivors illustrate that they cannot afford expensive clothing. There is a scene in the film where the survivors go inside JC Penney’s, and they start to shop for clothes and jewelry. One of the survivors finds a coat, puts it on, and says look at this coat: “It’s so nice, I could never afford this.” Romero uses the four survivors as symbols to show how some people can’t afford a product, so they go in debt by using credit cards for important things, such as rent or groceries. Another article entitled “The More Factor” states, “To get consumers to keep buying all the new stuff you have to convince them that they already have a passé” (Maasik et al. 86). When people go into stores to buy clothing on sale, they are buying it for a bargain, so companies use actors as advertisers to show that the clothing they buy is old and used, while the new, up to date fashionable clothing is the popular trend right now. Another article in *The Signs of Life; The Culture of American Consumption* states, “Mass production, that is, promotes stylistic change because with so many products being produced, a market must be created to consume all of them, and this means constantly consuming more” (Maasik et al. 86). This ties in with “The More Factor” article because the companies have to make new products, so the consumers can buy more of the new things that are out in the stores.

While the survivors are in the mall, they look around and start to try on the clothing and jewelry. A different scene shows the survivors are staying in another clothing store and taking clothes off the racks and other items off the shelves and forget that they are trying to survive. They forget that there are zombies around, so when they are shopping in the store, a

zombie jumps on one of the characters and that zombie keeps crawling on top of him and trying to eat him. The zombie eventually bites his neck. This zombie forces the character to stay in the store, symbolizing how companies want shoppers to stay in their establishments. The zombie that was crawling on top of him is a metaphor of how companies whip us to stay in the store. However, there is also another way the companies use consumers to go shop: they use statues, billboards, buses, almost anything to advertise, and they show models dressing sexy or guys looking handsome in tuxedos, but companies do edit people's faces to look even better. When people are in the mall, some tend to look around in the stores and then go home, but others get distracted by the sales, clothing, jewelry and items that look nice. They forget about going home because of everything that they want to buy at the stores.

When the survivors were inside a store, they were trying to protect the mall and lose touch with the fact that they are protecting each other. When the survivors closed the doors, they noticed zombies were trying to get in the mall and stores. While the survivors were inside, they were fighting off zombies and bikers, so they can protect their stores. The bikers were trying to kill the survivors because the survivors own the mall. Stephen died trying to protect a store after being bitten by a zombie. He doesn't even care about his family because he has a girlfriend, Fran, and she is pregnant with his child. In *The Signs of Life*, Maasik states, "But when, one attempts to satisfy these higher needs through the simple acquisition of goods and services, consumption turns into consumerism and consumers become a social disease. Also [m]ass production, then creates consumer societies based on the constant production of new products that are intended to be disposed of with the next product year" (86). In Kim Paffenroth's book *Gospel of the Living Dead*, "Zombies do not just look like humans, thereby making it more uncomfortable to shoot them in the forehead: the point in the movies is that zombies are humans and humans are zombies like as one character exclaims explicitly in *Dawn of the Dead* (1978), 'They are us'" (10). Zombies are a representation of how some people are in the mall. There is a scene in *Dawn of the Dead* where the camera shows us the whole mall filled with zombies walking around and lying down on the escalators. There is another scene where the survivors see the zombies on the window trying to get them in the store. Romero is showing us we are those zombies walking around the mall. By using those zombies, they show how some people want to sleep on the escalators, there are kids that want to jump in the water and some of those scenes give us a picture of how some people or kids want to act in a mall. The other scene is where the survivors are trying

to escape from the zombies. However, the zombies were trying to get inside the store, and the survivors close the doors. When they see the zombies trying to get inside, it symbolizes how people act when they want to rush to get into the store for Black Friday and people forget that the workers are blocking them off to calm them down. The zombies and survivors are almost a representation of some people that shop in stores. Some want to sleep in a store and some want to protect the item. Some people that shop on Black Friday will hurt a person just to get an item they want to buy in the store.

In the movie, Romero is showing us that a virus can spread. When companies satisfy the consumers, they go and buy. When a person tells a friend about a good sale on a product, the friend goes to buy it and if both the friends go to the store they might fight for that product and forget that they are friends. This is a symbolism of the meaning of how consumers become a social disease. In Stephen Harper's article "Zombies, Malls, and the Consumerism Debate," the author says, "They 'steal' money from the mall bank, cheekily posing for the security cameras; they take all the clothes and consumer goods they desire; they play video games: and in a marvelously frenetic scene, Stephen and Pete 'tool up' in the mall's weapon mall shop with a vast array of guns." This is a symbolism of when the companies satisfy the consumers, meaning that they will go and buy their products. Another symbolism is people going to Black Friday. At Black Friday, the sales go out on the newspapers or just sales papers. People also post it on Instagram, Facebook, and other websites, so when people see it, they go to the store for the Black Friday sale. Now when the stores open, people forget about their kids being with them or the other people that are around them. Some people just storm in and kill other humans and people don't realize that they have a family and other people that want other products. There are scenes in the movie where the zombies bite some of the humans and some of the humans turn into zombies. We tell people through word of mouth. There is another scene in the movie where zombies bite a human and the human turns into a zombie and the cycle repeats. When people tell other people about sales from a store, it will spread like a virus going from person to person. Romero makes fun of the virus spreading because of some people watching commercials and wanting the product in their hands or on the body because of seeing a trend in society.

In the movie *Dawn of the Dead*, Romero makes fun of consumers in America and uses the four survivors to show how some people act when they go shopping at a store. When people are in the mall, they are in their own little world. Some people like to walk around the mall or shop for sales. The sales are what catches a consumer's eyes when they shop. Some might



get violent and not care for the people around them, so the person will get hurt or die. Romero also uses the movie to show us the possible future of our society because of companies advertising their products on billboards, buses, and almost anywhere they can advertise, and people become violent at Black Friday. I believe Romero made this movie to show us what consumers will be like when they shop, and what companies will do to the consumers so they can get richer. Romero uses the movie also to warn us, so we can avoid becoming like the zombies in the movie.

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## **Hypersexualization of Women of Color in Pop Culture's Media** **by Melissa Marquez**

Women live in a world that is constantly constraining them with certain borders, forcing them to conform to one thing and, at the same time, be shamed for it. A big influencer in this constant cycle is pop culture, specifically the media, which creates the current hypersexualized society we live in. Various forms of media portray women, especially women of color, in a provocative manner that can, on a macro level, put them in dangerous environments and make them potential victims of violence. On a micro level, these media can affect the way women think about themselves: it can affect self-esteem; contribute to the development of body image disorders such as body dysmorphia; and make women feel they must appeal to how others, especially men, want them to appear. Hypersexualization has other issues embedded into it, such as internalized racism and internalized sexism. Internalized racism enforces stereotypes and can make one hate their race and dominant features belonging to that race. Internalized sexism targets, objectifies, and fetishizes women of color and creates an industry that profits from putting women down and creating a fear that they will never be good enough. Media is the culprit of hypersexualization of women of color because representation of these women in the media is so lacking; that when there are popular television shows, music videos, and movies that feature women of color, they end up being sexualized. This weighs very heavily and negatively on these women and the communities to which they belong. On one hand, the representation itself lures them to watch said media, while doing so essentially enforces these stereotypes and reinforces negative behaviors and ideologies. Furthermore, when women of color are empowered to be themselves in a world that favors Eurocentric features and submissive behavior, they are shamed for being “too much,” “too sexual,” “too loud,” “too emotional,” too themselves. This portrayal of women of color in the media is unhealthy and, although it is slowly but surely improving, it needs immediate and drastic changes.

For starters, on a micro level, hypersexualization consciously and subconsciously affects women of color through self-image and self-projection. The documentary *Miss Representation* goes into depth on the influence of media on what women of color think, value, and consume. As far as self-image goes, the media puts importance on values that women feel a huge need to partake in. These values often dehumanize women of color because they only favor one's image rather than their intelligence or their

capabilities, thus reducing women of color to mundane categories and types. These values and categories usually, but not only, fall into ideas related to youth, beauty, and sexuality (*Miss Representation*, 2017). For example, we have magazines that display women who, more often than not, meet Eurocentric standards of beauty, are young, or are edited to erase signs of aging, and are stylized in a sexual manner. This pressures young women to look like that and shames older women simply for aging, essentially erasing them from representation and making them feel diminished.

As a result, these ideologies encourage women to consume beauty products in order to feel valued or represented. Not only does it make them consume objects, but it can also make them have plastic surgery to quiet feelings of never being good enough. Since these images favor a certain body type and certain body parts that are sexualized, society profits off this by promoting plastic surgery and the ideal that if you are unhappy with your body, you can walk into a hospital and get a quick fix. However, the problem is deeper than this “quick fix”. Rather, this stems from an internalized way of thinking instilled by media.

Because bodies are sexualized and reduced to certain standards of beauty, this can produce an abundance of mental and physical health issues, like body dysmorphia and eating disorders. Body dysmorphia creates concerns about one’s skin in 73% of cases, hair in 56%, and noses in 37% (Bjornsson, 2010). Many of the physical features portrayed in the media are the opposite of traits common to women of color. Eating disorders often affect black and brown bodies more than white bodies by a large margin (Sala, 2014). As far as self-projection, women feel the need to behave like the women they see in media, in a sexualized manner, to attain value and attention. For example, we have music videos, where certain music genres target groups racially and sexually. While man-centered videos sexualize women of color and use them as objects, female creators of woman-centered videos still feel the need to sexualize themselves, because they have been taught that sexuality sells. This essentially puts men in power of representation for both genders. At the same time, representation asserts that men are dominant and aggressive, which reinforces sexual inequality and values the male perspective and masculine attention.

This sexist outlook on already sexualized women of color can put them in environments where men objectify women and see them as objects for their entertainment and gain, whether it be sexual or in other forms. Since these stereotypes encourage men to be aggressive, they also contribute to violence against women who resist male dominance, because cultural expectations dictate that women must be submissive. Women who do not

live up to these sexist expectations risk being seen as overly-strong or overly-opinionated and, therefore, in need of being controlled. As a result, violence against women comes in physical forms, like rape, and nonphysical or emotional forms, like gaslighting. Considered together, this violence affects women of color at disproportionately higher rates than white women. According to the Oregon Department of Justice, Black women suffer violence 35% more often than White women, Asian women suffer violence at 41% more often than White women, and Brown women suffer violence at 23% more than White women (Oregon Department of Justice, 2016).

When it comes to reporting these types of crimes, we live in a society that shames women as victims of violence by protecting men and assuming women are lying. This promotes what is known as “slut shaming,” where a woman can’t say she was raped because she was dressed in a sexualized way and, therefore, she must have been “asking for it.” Women of color are put in a sort of limbo where they must appear sexual to be accepted, yet when they do so they are shamed. Due to this ideology, and the intersectionality of women of color, (such as the confluence of their socioeconomic status, education, lack of resources, and spoken language, among other things), they are often prevented from seeking help to combat the violence directed against them (ODOJ, 2016). The underlying hints of internalized racism and misogyny within hypersexuality provoke self-hatred, for being both a woman and one of color. This can make one hate women of color who speak out against cultural norms within one’s racial group, because society only values a particular kind of woman. This is because living in a patriarchal society creates ideals that shape men and how they think, which affects how they see women, which shapes the status quo.

Whoever controls the media controls the minds and thoughts of millions of people, and the people that control the media are men. Pop culture is a big reason behind the hypersexualization of women of color because it instills and reproduces these ideologies through the media. Men need to be accountable for contributing to hypersexuality, whether they are in positions of power, or simply benefitting from the unequal distribution of it. This is not to say that there aren’t women, let alone women of color, that contribute to the media, but they are comparatively very scarce. One step in the right direction would be to allow more women of color into the media industry, to let them be main characters with substance, and to let them write movies and TV shows and music that empower, rather than sexualize, women who are victims of hypersexualization. This is part of a larger issue: there needs to be equal representation in every industry, displaying every kind of gender, sex, and race just as much as they display

white, heterosexual men and women. Lack of representation means lack of input from a particular marginalized group, which silences their voices, reinforces stereotypes, essentially erases these groups, and puts borders around what they think they can achieve and what they are actually capable of achieving. According to *Miss Representation*, 4.6% of CEO's are women and 17% of those holding high positions in the media industry are women. It is no coincidence these numbers are so low: they are due to the system that makes moving up or holding high positions in industry almost impossible for women, let alone women of color. All in all, representation and the empowerment of women of color are steps in the right direction. Women and men, as a collective, must break down these gendered borders that pop culture wants to keep and reclaim sexuality by not exploiting women, but rather allowing them to define and own their own sexuality. We need to support the expression of women of color and let them occupy spaces that need new perspectives to reverse their constant hypersexuality and portray them positively. We need to rewrite and reboot the current narratives pop culture and the media put on sexuality and women of color.

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## **People for the Ethical Treatment of Advertisements** **by Samuel Covarrubias**

If an advertiser wants to capture the attention of a large group of people with as little effort as possible, there is a simple trick all advertisers use: sex. Using sex to sell a product has proven so successful that advertising agencies around the world use it for nearly every kind of product they bring to the market; cars, perfumes, and even cheeseburgers have all been successfully marketed and sold using sex to make the products seem more desirable. In these advertisements, there are a few common visuals: either a muscular, shirtless male is surrounded and adored by a harem of under-clothed women, or there is a bikini-clad female struggling to resist performing fellatio on a food product. While the use of sex, and its accompanying visuals, is simple enough for consumers to understand, the use of these visuals is problematic in that they perpetuate a stereotypical version of what the ideal male and female should look and behave like. If the visuals weren't enough of a problem, many of these advertisements use logical fallacies to mislead their audience. Depending on how they are used, ads and their fallacies can be relatively harmless, usually nothing more than a little white lie; however, when the ads use fallacies to prolong the existence of harmful stereotypes, they become problematic, downright unethical. This is where the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (P.E.T.A.) comes in.

In an ad campaign to promote vegetarianism, P.E.T.A. uses sex to sell their idea to the masses; however, while other advertisers only use sex in their ads (that are still problematic) to make their product seem desirable, P.E.T.A. maintains a similar sexual visual style but uses fallacies to plainly insult and shame those who do not belong to the vegetarian lifestyle. The fallacies used in P.E.T.A.'s ads are false authority, false analogy, and equivocation; each fallacy is used in different ads to insult men, women, and people of a larger body size. It is truly a shame that P.E.T.A. feels it needs to resort to insults in their advertising since many people might agree with the message P.E.T.A. is trying to convey, but feel attacked by their ads. By using sex in their ads to get attention and by using fallacies to insult the people they are trying to persuade, P.E.T.A. immediately loses any merits their arguments may have, and the message the ad is trying to spread gets lost.

In one of P.E.T.A.'s ads, reality television star Chantelle Houghton faces the camera with a disappointed look on her face while wearing a polka dot bustier; in her hand, she holds a foot-long hot dog that has one of

its ends drooping. In big, bold letters, the ad claims that going vegetarian is a way to fight impotence. The fallacy used in this ad is false authority; Houghton is mostly known as a television personality, model, and for winning *Celebrity Big Brother*; she has no degree in any medical field and therefore is not in any position of authority to appear in an ad that claims a vegetarian lifestyle and help with impotence. The harm of this ad comes from P.E.T.A. implying that men suffering from impotence are sexually disappointing or not “man enough” to please women like Houghton. In an interview with *Popular Science*, Y. Joel Wong of Indiana University states that “being a man is not some sort of essential quality, and that ideas about what it means to be a man have changed throughout history. Masculine identity can even evolve for an individual over the course of his lifetime” (Hess). The reinforcement of masculine stereotypes by P.E.T.A. is “harmful not only to women, but also to men and the fabric of society,” since aspects of toxic masculinity include misogyny, homophobia, and violence (Hess).

In another ad, P.E.T.A. shows a side view of Pamela Anderson sitting seductively in a bikini with markings all over her body that divide her into different meat cuts, like a butcher’s diagram of a cow. This ad claims that all animals have the same parts and appeals to the viewer’s emotions, asking them to embrace vegetarianism. While the treatment of slaughterhouse cows is disturbing and unfortunate, P.E.T.A. uses the false analogy fallacy to mislead the ad’s audience: animals, such as cows are raised and bred as a food source, humans are not. The harm from this ad is the objectification of women. In their research paper, Terrence G. Horgan and colleagues state that “[w]omen’s actual and perceived competence can suffer when they are induced to objectify either themselves or other women” so when women see Anderson advertised as an animal ready to slaughter, women begin to question if that’s what others see them as. If having to objectify themselves isn’t bad enough, women must also deal with being objectified by men. Ads that objectify women only perpetuate the stereotype that women are subservient to men and exist only for their pleasure. While P.E.T.A. and Anderson’s point may have been to show how animals and humans are similar and deserve similar treatment, Anderson reduced herself to something less than human: she became nothing more than a piece of meat.

In their final ad, P.E.T.A. rented a billboard to showcase another of their arguments for a vegetarian lifestyle. This ad features a beach in the background with a backside shoulder view of a female of a larger body size on the far-right side of the billboard. In large, bold text the ad asks the viewer to “save the whales” while underneath, in smaller text, the ad also asks viewers to “lose the blubber: go vegetarian.” This ad uses the



equivocation fallacy to give the word “whale” a double meaning: it stands in for both the animal and the derogatory term for overweight people. With this fallacy, P.E.T.A. can claim the organization was only referring to the animal since whale hunting is an activity that P.E.T.A. has been vocally against; however, because of the inclusion of the female figure and P.E.T.A.’s track record of questionable advertising, one has to assume that this is just another in a long line of ads that are meant to insult and shame non-vegetarians. Also, P.E.T.A. seems to suggest that choosing to be a vegetarian is the only alternative to “lose the blubber” which isn’t true at all. In fact, if done incorrectly, a vegetarian diet can be unhealthy. Because of ads that insult larger sized people, there is a growing movement “of informed fat people... starting to realize that the shame and stigma directed toward them isn’t justified, and they don’t need to remain silent in the face of disrespect” (Averill).

In conclusion, advertisements are a form of communication, and P.E.T.A.’s ads do them no favors in spreading their message to the world. In “Communication: Its Blocking and Its Facilitation” by Carl R. Rogers, the author states that the “solution [to miscommunication] is provided by creating a situation in which each of the different parties comes to understand the other from the *other’s* point of view” (379) which is exactly the problem P.E.T.A. has: the organization prefers to communicate its point of view in an unethical manner. P.E.T.A. chooses to take a holier-than-thou approach with their insults and shaming in their ads, and, because of this, no one is going to pay attention to P.E.T.A.’s underlying cause: the ethical treatment of animals. If P.E.T.A. were to use Rogers’s solution, perhaps they’d find more success in changing the minds and attitudes of others. Unfortunately, P.E.T.A. is unlikely to change their methods, as their current strategy gets them enough attention, albeit largely negative. For an organization that strives for the ethical treatment of all animals, no matter how big or small, they consistently treat a single species unethically: humans.

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## **Technology and the World of Tomorrow** **by Jessica Rosas**

Technology is machinery and equipment developed from the application of scientific knowledge. Technology has been advancing at a fast pace. It has made it easier to acquire information as well as store it. It has become the main structure of many industries, as well as the basis for major databases used by hospitals and police departments. Technology has advanced so far that we have created cars that do not require drivers, and made life and communication easier for people with disabilities, including blindness. However, what does this mean for the employment industry? With the advancement of technology more jobs are being created, thus helping the economy grow and slowly closing the income inequality gap.

Technology has been around for thousands of years and has made the lives of people a little less complicated. The first piece of recorded technology is the abacus. It is the first known calculator and was invented in Babylonia in 2400BC. In 300BC the binary number system was invented by Pingala, and in 724AD the first mechanical clock was invented by Liang Ling-Can. Although compared to today's technology this may not seem like much, they were the first milestones in the history of technology (Alchin). In 1041AD, the first movable type printing press was created by Bi Sheng, and in 1450AD the alphabetic, movable type printing press was invented by Johann Gutenberg. In the late 1400s – early 1500s the ball bearing was invented by Leonardo Da Vinci together with flying machines, including a helicopter, the first-mechanical calculator, and one of the first programmable robots which became the original blueprints to today's technology (Alchin). In the late 1500s and early 1600s Galileo Galilei created the pendulum (1581), the thermometer (1593), and the microscope (1601), earning him the title as the father of modern science (Alchin). Three-hundred and sixty-six years later, in 1967 the first ATM was created by John Shepherd-Barron (Alchin). The years 1963-1990 became crucial to the world of technology with the invention of video games, the Ethernet, the World Wide Web, floppy disks, and personal computers. This advancement of technology over the centuries has become so remarkable that some people have become afraid of being replaced by such technology (Alchin).

Many people believe that the advancement of technology will lead to a large amount of unemployment; however, the Cloud system shows that more jobs are being created. The Cloud is a network of remote servers hosted on the Internet and used to store, manage, and process

data in place of local servers or personal computers. An article from *Opposing Viewpoints* titled “Cloud Technology Will Create Jobs” states, “Recruiting firm Robert Half Technology found that, in 2009, 43 percent of chief information officers said that their departments are either ‘very’ or ‘somewhat’ understaffed. Unemployment for IT professions was just 5 percent in September, far less than the national average, and in a Microsoft study, 54 percent of IT decision makers said they are ‘hiring as a result of the cloud’” (Jerome). The Cloud, therefore, is helping create more jobs rather than taking them away. This means by changing storage systems it is also helping many companies including the government to save money. As the author, Sara Jerome, goes on to say, “The Office of Management and Budget said that if each department and agency moved just three projects to the Cloud, the government would save \$5 billion.” Google has created many jobs by switching to the Cloud along with RackSpace and Salesforces.com. In fact, “the cloud is already putting Americans to work. Google’s team has more than 1,000 employees, Texas cloud company RackSpace employs 3,700 people, and California-based provider Salesforces.com has 235 open positions” (Jerome). Technology, therefore, helps create more jobs. But, it also does more by helping with the environment.

In recent years, environmental problems have become a big issue that most people seem to simply ignore. However, technology can help with environmental problems by creating more jobs in the science fields. In “Six Ways Tech Is Helping the Environment” by Blue and Green Tomorrow, it shows six different ways technology can help save our environment. Renewable energy is energy from a source that is not depleted when used, such as wind or solar power. This organization explains how “products like Tesla’s solar panels, which look just like regular roofing tiles, have made them more accessible and appealing to consumers.” Switching to renewable energy helps our climate, health, and economy. It costs less than electrical power, and it is environmentally friendly.

Environmental monitoring is the systematic sampling of air, water, soil, and biota to observe and study the environment, as well as to derive knowledge from this process. Technology helps protect not just the environment but also its inhabitants, like animals that have the risk of becoming endangered species. In fact, “in areas where poachers frequently hunt endangered animals, conservationists have begun using drones to keep an eye on the area. The drones act as security cameras that can cover vast distances, making it more difficult for those hunting illegally to get away with breaking the law” (Blue & Green Tomorrow). It also helps to make sure that companies are following environmental regulations by checking

the air around them for pollution.

The sharing economy is a recent development that reduces our environmental impact by enabling individuals to purchase less and use fewer materials. Uber and Netflix are part of the sharing economy. Uber makes it easier for people who do not own a car by transporting them without having to take a bus. It is also much cheaper for passengers than taking a taxi, while allowing the drivers to create their own schedules and make money. Netflix has reduced the amount of DVD rentals through online streaming, reducing the use of postage, transportation, and the amount of physical copies made. Technology helps keep track of how many people have been transported with Uber as well as making it safer for passengers by providing the information of the driver. This sharing economy and environmental awareness has led to two improvements: the first being the protection of the environment and the second being the creation of new science and service jobs.

Technology, therefore, is not only good for the environment and job creation, but it also helps people save money. An electric car is an automobile that is propelled by one or more electric motors, using electrical energy stored in rechargeable batteries or another energy storage device. Since electric cars run only on electricity, they produce less pollution than regular cars tend to create. “The price of electric cars is dropping as well, due to technical improvements in the costs of the batteries needed to run them. In fact, experts predict they’ll be cheaper to own than traditional vehicles by 2022” (Blue & Green Tomorrow). Homes tend to use the most amount of energy, making people pay large amounts for electricity within each bill. Switching to “smart homes” helps people use the right amount of energy which also saves people money. A smart home is a home equipped with lighting, heating, and electronic devices that can be controlled remotely by phone or computer. This way the owner can keep track of things that are overusing energy.

Finally, by going digital it can help lessen the amount of paper we use. Digital transformation is the change associated with the application of digital technology in all aspects of human society. People these days tend to pay bills online. As well as making transactions, it reduces the amount of paper being used therefore saving trees and reducing deforestation for the use of paper. These six steps show how the advancement of technology helps the environment, helps create jobs in different fields such as environmental science, environmental technology, as well as jobs working with solar panels, and helps people save money.

There are additional benefits to the advancement of technology. Technology can also help people come together. Social media such as

Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Google's Hangout help people who live far from each other stay in contact. My mother, Antonia, is of Mexican descent, and she has no way of visiting her family in Tijuana. The last time she saw her siblings and cousins was seventeen years ago. However, due to the advancement of social media, she can talk to them every day and even see them through video chat. This technology made it possible for her to say goodbye to her mother before she died. It also makes it easier for people to communicate even when they are close, simply by calling or texting them. Now, we can conveniently and quickly communicate from person-to-person without people having to be next to each other.

Technology also helps to save lives, simply by being able to use it to call for help when we need to for emergencies, such as calls to 911. It helps the operator stay in contact with both the dispatcher as well as the person who needs help. Now you can text 911 which makes it more convenient when someone is in a situation where making a noise determines if they live or die. Technology has grown so much that even paramedics can use defibrillators to help people whose hearts have stopped beating, giving them a higher chance of survival before reaching the hospital. The advancement of technology has become so great that many people rely on it in their workplace. Computers are used in every job. They contain the information of the employees as well as keep track of finances. Unfortunately, though, the ability of technology to keep people together and to save time, lives, and information is so great and so widespread that many people fear they will be replaced by technology.

Technology can help create jobs, but there are people who think otherwise. An article from *Opposing Viewpoints* titled "Many Jobs Will Be Replaced by Technological Innovation" makes some interesting points about people losing jobs due to technology. The article states that "for more than three decades, technology has reduced the number of jobs in manufacturing. Robots and other machines controlled by computer programs work faster and make fewer mistakes than humans" (Condon & Wiseman). Machines make less mistakes than workers as well as increase production making it more appealing for industries who would only have to invest on maintenance rather than paying workers every 7-15 days. "It's replacing workers in large corporations and small businesses, established companies and start-ups" argue Condon and Wiseman. Machines are also replacing workers in stores such as Walmart and CVS which have self-checkout, making it faster for people to do their shopping. In addition, "technology is replacing workers in developed countries regardless of their politics, policies and laws. Union rules and labor laws may slow the dismissal of employees,

but no country is attempting to prohibit organizations from using technology that allows them to operate more efficiently—and with fewer employees” (Condon & Wiseman). Unions protect workers. Unfortunately, they can only make the process of technological integration slower, in order to protect these workers from being replaced by machines. Many companies like Walmart, Macys, Target, and many others use technology for people to do online shopping. This makes it easier for people to do their shopping when they have no time to do it in person. This means by reducing the amount of face to face time people spend when dealing with companies, technology makes things easier and more efficient for people.

Technology provides less mistakes, and it’s faster as well as cheaper than employees. While dealing with a person when out shopping can provide a positive experience, there is also the chance of it being a negative one. For example, there are certain stores where the employees judge the customers simply by the way they are dressed. They can be rude and create a negative experience, making it less likely for someone to return. With technology, people can use cameras to keep an eye out and make sure no one steals anything without having to be behind someone the whole time they are in a store. It can help with the safety of the customers, ensure that employees are not rude, and that employees and customers both have positive experiences

This argument reveals that while some statistics and studies prove that technology is helping increase job creation in some fields, there are others that might be negatively impacted by technology’s efficiency and lower costs. Technology has both good and bad aspects. Nevertheless, it will become the backbone of society in every aspect. It is what brings us together as well as what can tear us apart. People have become so dependent on technology that they rely on it for everything. When someone goes out somewhere they use a GPS for directions; they no longer stop to ask for directions or know how to use a paper map. However, using a GPS helps people save time by letting them know which is the fastest route to take, as well as how long it will take them to get there. It can help employers hire new employees by posting ads on various websites, like Indeed.com. It also provides websites where people can look up videos about pretty much anything like how to build a chair or even a house. Unfortunately, it is making people interact with each other less and less every year. However, it is helping clean the environment, provide faster and more efficient services, save lives, and keep us connected. So, just like everything has its pros and cons, so does technology.

Technology is machinery and equipment developed from the

application of scientific knowledge. It is what people make of it, how it is used, and how it is refined. Technology can provide many jobs, especially in new fields, it can help the environment, and it can help keep people connected. Technology is the advancement of what people can create. It is what can help us keep moving forward and advancing as well as help people gain more knowledge. With the help of companies and different programs like Cloud technology it can help the job makers create more jobs. By creating these new jobs, the economy grows and the working class can slowly close the income gap.

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## **Dolls, Laundry Sets, and Gender Stereotypes** **by Emily Menjivar**

Imagine being a parent walking through a toy aisle in Target. You spot hot pink boxes filled with yellow and pink hearts along their sides. Inside each box there are dolls with various shades of brown and white skin. Some dolls have pink ruffled dresses with matching leggings and shoes. One has black hair in pigtails wearing jeans with white heart designs. You find one that catches your eye. She has dark brown wavy hair, large deep brown eyes, and tanned skin. She seems almost lifelike with her teal and gray plaid skirt, mint colored sweater with long white sleeves, and mauve boots over cream-colored knee-high socks. She looks just like your daughter. Same skin tone, same hair, and the same eyes. You think that, finally, there's a doll that your daughter can relate to. This is the experience the toy brand Our Generation (OG) wants parents to have when considering purchasing their products. The company wants parents to feel as though they are making a wise purchase by buying a doll that their daughter can relate to and be empowered by. While this is a great message for a company to have, sometimes profits can skew company goals. When companies like Our Generation claim to empower girls while also being cost effective, their end product contributes to the same gender stereotypes they claim to oppose.

Our Generation dolls have largely been marketed on social media platforms, specifically on YouTube. While the brand has its own YouTube channel with ads for their products, the bulk of its advertisement is through reviews on major "toy channels." The success of toy channels has grown considerably over the past few years among children and parents. Children watch these videos to yearn for the latest toys. Parents watch to be in the loop on which toys are essential for their child's upcoming birthday. OG dolls have become very popular over the past year due to glowing reviews from these channels. Their reviews are often in line with the overall message of the company: these dolls are good for your daughters because they look like them. The dolls are meant to be more than inanimate objects. They are meant to be "role models" to girls in a world where role models are hard to come by. They are supposed to allow girls to express their individuality through play with these dolls. This message suggests that the consumer lives in a society where individuality and ethnic and racial diversity is repressed. They live in a world where gender-stereotypes are reinforced through other toys like Barbie. As Juliet B. Schor points out in "Selling to Children: The Marketing of Cool," companies like OG "position [themselves] as kid's best



friend, on their side in an often-hostile environment” (223). Toys such as those sold by OG are purposefully marketed as a “girl’s best friend” in the face of a repressive society.

Indeed, the brand largely reflects on gender stereotypes and the repression of individuality consistently in their advertisements to adults. It places an emphasis on allowing girls to create their own narrative for their generation instead of being handed a narrative about their lives through social norms, thus the name Our Generation. In this case, society values those who diminish their differences in order to fit into societal expectations of what is acceptable and normal. It is through this context that the brand targets well-meaning parents by promising that their daughters will be empowered through dolls that look like themselves. These dolls break away from norms in which dolls are normally light skin toned with blonde hair and green colored eyes. There is variety in OG dolls as there is variety amongst everyday girls. OG does this while also emphasizing that their brand is more affordable than other similar brands, like American Girl dolls. By appealing to a parent’s desire to empower their daughters, the brand is manipulative. Schor asserts this same idea by claiming, “Children are a major influence market for parental purchases” (223).

While OG denounces gender stereotypes, many of their doll accessories promote these same stereotypes. One accessory that comes to mind is the “Tumble and Spin Laundry Set,” which include a miniature washer and dryer, a dirty laundry basket, an iron and ironing board, and detergent. If the brand is supposed to empower girls through imaginative play, why does a girl need to play with an object that represents the epitome of gender stereotypes for many women? This seems rather problematic. While many other doll companies sell accessories that are what French philosopher Roland Barthes states as “microcosm[s] of the adult world” in “Toys,” it is the significance of these items in the adult world that leads to problematic implications (38). Take for example, one of OG’s competitors, American Girl. The dolls themselves are stylistically similar to OG dolls. They also offer a variety of ethnic as well as “historical” dolls. Each doll comes with a book about the “backstory” of the doll. OG only offers a few dolls with a corresponding book but at an increased price than their regular dolls. American Girl also offers many books with fictional history, mystery, advice, and educational themes. One particular book that stands out is *School Rules!: Math* that offers math advice and exercises. Where OG delivers “It Seams Perfect!” sewing machine accessories, American Girl accessories include a science fair set with a miniature telescope and presentation board and a sport storage bench that includes a jump

rope, football, and baseball bat. American Girl actively seeks to combat stereotypes in their products, and it shows in their choice of accessories. Their accessories illustrate that girls and their dolls can be involved in sports, math, and science. Why is it that the more expensive American Girl dolls, at a price point in the triple digits, offers better and more empowering accessories than OG? Why do the girls who can only afford the OG dolls have less educationally geared options? While trying to reduce prices for their products, OG is sending the message that parents who can't afford expensive products for their children don't deserve for their daughters to be exposed to items that repress gender stereotypes. Educational materials and truly empowering toys that can enrich a girl's life are meant for those who can afford it.

In this context, we can see that when important messages about girl empowerment and diversity meet price reduction, the former can often become negatively impacted. On the surface, OG is a great idea. Who wouldn't support a company that tells girls of every nationality that it is okay to be different, it is okay to be you? OG is not perfect, and it falters when it comes to gender stereotypes. Companies such as OG fail to understand that a girl cannot create her own narrative simply by accepting herself. She must also forge her own path against stereotypes that claim she belongs in the kitchen. She must use education to fight back those who claim her place is not in the laboratory but in the laundry room. She cannot only learn that her physical appearance is acceptable but that her physical presence in education and the work place is acceptable as well.

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**Persuasion through Wording: An Examination of *A Modell of Christian Charity***  
**by Michael Neely**

Which is more critical: individuality or communal success?

This is not a question that merits a simple answer. Indeed, as far back as humans began to stray from individual pursuits and group together, we have observed countless examples of the war between people asserting their individuality and those who take a step back in order for their society to flourish. However, there is one particular battle that warrants a single focus, which is John Winthrop's sermon *A Modell of Christian Charity*. Legend has it that Winthrop publicly delivered the sermon in 1630 upon the Puritans' arrival in Massachusetts Bay Colony. Although the exact location is uncertain, Winthrop's impact on American Literature remains undisputed, as his text was intended to unite his then-disorganized people and transform their anxiety and distress into something much more proactive, productive, and prolific. But how did he achieve such a phenomenon? Most importantly, Winthrop's diversified and synergistic diction serves to coalesce his people, while it also stands out as a plea for them to choose a side in this war, the side of mutual success. Indeed, as Winthrop claims through his particular word choice and phrasing, for society to function, we must all be willing to conform by making the necessary sacrifices and sharing similar beliefs and goals—all for the greater good.

To convince a multitude of people to agree with a single individual sounds easier said than done, and that is why Winthrop uses his speech to accomplish something pivotal: to center on God instead of himself. In essence, he proclaims that God is imperative to society because, without his influence, society would begin to erode. To instill God's almighty power into his listeners, he first chooses to invoke fear through language. Winthrop claims that he and his people are the "chosen ones" (given that they are Puritans/believers of faith), so God expects more of them as opposed to non-believers. He argues that God would be extremely upset with his followers if they betrayed their relationship, iterating that "the Lord will surely breake out in wrathe against us, be revenged of such a perjured people, and make us knowe the price of the breache of such a Covenant" (388). Focusing on the element of disapproval in this passage, Winthrop is not merely saying God will be angry. Instead, he utilizes powerful words to describe the anger of an omnipotent figure, such as "wrathe," "revenged," and "perjured." In choosing to use words that signify vendetta, anger, and blasphemy, Winthrop

has reminded those who are listening of the potential consequences that betraying God could entail and, in doing so, permits his followers to display their vulnerability, which he will soon manipulate. Now, many leaders would stop their speech there—fear is usually enough to get people to obey commands. Still, Winthrop knows that people fearing him is not enough. He still needs them to be productive and work for their cumulative survival. So, Winthrop needs to calm them down after terrifying them over God’s power—he must also remind them of God’s love and affection toward them. Winthrop assures his followers that as long as they obey God and adhere to his influence and will, they will surely “walke humbly with God . . . the Lord will be our God and delight to dwell among the bond of peace” (388). The differences between his diction in the first passage and this one are revealing. Here, he appears much more optimistic and kindhearted, given his usage of the words “delight” and “peace” when compared to “wrathe” and “revenged.” He is allowing his people to smile and experience relief after their previous confinement to terror. He has committed two crucial actions in a matter of minutes: assured his people’s adherence to himself and furthered the doctrine of Christianity. Now, he needs only to convince them to unite in a common goal.

Winthrop then accomplishes that goal, as well. At the outset, Winthrop’s next argument evokes utilitarianism, defined by *Merriam-Webster* as “a theory that the aim of action should be the largest possible balance of pleasure over pain or the greatest happiness of the greatest number.” In other words, it is the principle that the good of the collective supersedes the benefit of one person. Thus, Winthrop argues that if the colonists’ interests vary or differentiate in any regard, they will have no common goal; nothing will ever be accomplished. Indeed, the first “reason hereof” that he brings up is their need “to hold conformity with the rest of God’s works,” and later to work together as “every man might have need of each other, and from hence they might be all knitt more nearly together in the Bond of brotherly affection“ (380-381). Winthrop uses phrases that appeal to any readers’ or, in this case, listeners’ pathos. His pairing of “brotherly affection” and “need of each other” work in conjunction to paint an image of a loving society that works together to bypass hardships and create a better life for everyone. For if they do not share common interests, then they could not possibly survive for years to come. These phrases also contain Christian metaphors, as Christ is the son of God and in his life advocated that we are all his children; hence, we are all brothers. If we are family, it becomes easier for us to want to help each other out. If Winthrop had not used the language of Christianity for guidance, his people might feel

more inclined to stick to themselves. Instead, he reassures his people that not only are they all family; they are tied by a connection much more potent than one could possibly imagine—the connection they universally share with God. He and his people are bound through religion, but they also have a task to perform for future settlers.

That task, which is Winthrop's final proclamation, revolves around the Puritans being an example for future societies to follow. According to him, if Massachusetts can succeed as a colony, other communities and nations will uphold the teachings they have collectively instilled and endlessly celebrate their legacy. As Winthrop famously declares, "Consider that we shall be as a City upon a Hill, the eyes of all people are upon us" (389). Through his celebration of American allegiance and uniqueness, he instills the fear of God into his followers and convinces them to conform and work together toward a common goal. For if they are successful, then they are to be envied and commended for their accomplishment. Winthrop is very subtle here; he combines both fear and celebration simultaneously. When he speaks of how "the eyes of all people are upon us," this phrase alone invites an optimistic anxiety—the thought that his listeners will be observed and judged by others—but if they do well and listen to him, those same observers and critics will want to be like his audience. Winthrop warns his listeners of the danger, but they want to take that risk because of how confidently he delivers this sermon—how much he wants to try to succeed in turn makes them want to do the same. Speaking of the model society that Winthrop proposes, he also provides an example of how the colonists' society will be envied. He claims that above everything else, the laws and ordinances of the land will treat everyone without bias or prejudice, in contrast to many other societies that "[shew] mercy to a rich man, in some sudden danger or distresse, and allsoe doing of meere Justice to a poor man in regard of some perticular contract etc" (381). It is imperative to take into account Winthrop's sentence structure and argumentative tools. His choice of "mercy" and "meere Justice" bring up an unfortunate trend we have observed throughout history—the idea that governments treat the rich well and the poor poorly. He utilizes the compare and contrast technique to illustrate the differences between what is a just society, and what is not. To put it another way, he uses unjust and flawed forms of government to supplement how the Puritans' future government will surely correct those wrongdoings. In this case, they are to treat everyone rightfully, regardless of their wealth. Winthrop definitely is an excellent multitasker, as his one sermon alone accomplishes three goals—invoking fear, love, and celebration for all who may have reservations about the colony they will soon establish.

Some leaders have tremendous difficulty appealing to the public and uniting them together in times of anxiety and distress. For one reason or another, they are unable to produce speech that permits their audience to understand the world through their perspectives and agree with them. Winthrop proves to be the opposite. His clever word manipulation exemplifies a strategic and intelligent leader. He knows exactly what to say and how to say it. It remains evident how contemporary American society looks to him for inspiration. From Winthrop's famous phrase, "A city upon a hill"—the idea that America is a land in which others around the world seek to live—to the image of a society that remains unstoppable due to its belief in mutual success, his influence is long-lasting. From invoking fear, (such as President George W. Bush and his invitation to stand with America or to side with the Islamic terrorists), to inspiring others, (as with Martin Luther King Jr. in his many speeches), Winthrop provides suitable tactics for effective leaders. These tactics might just add to their benefit. They might just become more versatile leaders. Because despite the challenges of being placed in the center spotlight, forming a brotherly love among people and projecting one's philosophies commiseratively, Winthrop illustrates that these qualities are, in fact, not impossible to attain.

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**Amy Tan V. Maya Angelou**  
**by Manuel Rodriguez**

It takes a bit of courage and strong will to be a rebel in mainstream culture, antithetical to one's own predilections. A rebel is someone who, by definition, rises in opposition, a countercultural figure, if you will. They stand for what they believe in, even if they are afraid. In Amy Tan's "Fish Cheeks" and Maya Angelou's "Champion of the World," both protagonists show these countercultural traits of rebellion against the prevailing norms and mores of the day. Tan and Angelou both stand up for what they believe in and, although they both dealt with everyday opposition, Angelou is more of a rebel than Tan. First, Angelou is more mature because of her diverse background, which forced her to rebel even at an early age, while Tan looks to absorb what culture is around her. Secondly, Tan views America as the ideal beauty that she admires, a culture she enjoys inhabiting. Angelou views American society as violent, counter to established norms. Angelou's portrayal of America shows her rebellious traits. Subsequently, Tan and Angelou were oppressed minorities in America at a young age, but Angelou seems to be more of a rebel for not letting it affect her. Both Amy Tan and Maya Angelou struggle to achieve their countercultural qualities; however, Angelou is a stronger counterculturalist because she demonstrates the characteristics of a rebel more than Tan by being true to who she is.

Angelou's background, as an African American growing up in the South, causes her to have certain cultural viewpoints upon her own race that make her the stronger counterculturalist to mainstream society. On the other hand, Tan grows up in a more modern America with less discrimination than Angelou, thus causing Tan to be less against the prevailing norms. Being the weaker rebel, Tan is so socially conditioned by mainstream America that she has no sense of pride for her own culture. It is something as simple as a crush on an American boy that causes her to change her views, proving her fickle. Her likes and interests even suddenly change then. Amy Tan denies her favorite cultural Chinese dish while at the table with this boy's American family. An American family causes her to absorb negative energy and feel awful all night. Tan has hopes and dreams of being the Ideal American beauty which shows her negative views toward her own cultural heritage. Being a 14-year-old oppressed minority causes her to lose all the countercultural traits she might have had.

On the contrary, Angelou has a much more complex discriminating cultural background, being an African American child in the late 1930s,



which allows her to demonstrate countercultural traits. She does not allow mainstream American white people to affect her African-American background, who she is, or where she comes from. Angelou views America as violent and awful, making her a counterculturalist for not agreeing with the white America she is living in. Angelou has pride in her race. Since she is an African American in the same moment Joe Louis is, he serves for her as a pop culture hero who transmits to her a sense of cultural pride. Angelou champions this African American boxer as one of her very own, “A Black boy” she continues, “A Black mother’s son” wins a boxing match and becomes the champion of the world. These pop culture references of “champion” and “mother’s son” directly demonstrate how much more of a counterculturalist Maya Angelou was more than Amy Tan because she stood true to her culture and remained who she was no matter how harsh the conditions were for her culture in mainstream America in the 1930s.

Angelou’s negative views on the mainstream America she lives in also causes her to be more of the counterculturalist. Conversely, Tan has positive views on the mainstream America she lives in which is why she is not so much of a rebel. She questions, “what would he think of our noisy Chinese relatives who lacked proper American manners? What terrible disappointment would he feel upon seeing not a roasted turkey and sweet potatoes but Chinese food” (Tan 74). In these words, she is directly discriminating against her own cultural heritage and is ashamed of her family and the delicacies they have every night for dinner. Tan is also praising the Americans for the manners they acquire, which indicates the positive views she has on America. This is why she is not a counterculturalist, but a fan of the mainstream culture.

Angelou views America in a brutal way. In the late 1930s, her race was being treated inhumanely. “It was our people falling. It was another lynching, yet another Black man hanging on a tree”, she rebelliously states, “One more woman ambushed and raped” (Angelou 95). Maya Angelou addresses all of the wrong, brutal ways white mainstream America treated her race at time when speaking out about it was taboo. Her honest and defensive truth about the pop culture that was counterculturally going on against her race make her a rebellious heroine. During the 1930s, African-Americans were dramatically oppressed minorities and Maya Angelou played a role as opening a hand of acceptance and inclusion for her very own culture, one of them which shaped her background, driving her to be a counterculturalist.

Whereas Amy Tan lived in a more modern America where her Chinese family was considered oppressed minorities, but it was not enough to shape



her cultural background or cause her to rebel similarly to Angelou. “I found out that my parents had invited the minister’s family over for dinner,” Tan cried (Tan 74). Tan rationalizes her mainstream culture as the culture she accepts. This shows how Tan’s family background was not as oppressed, because two different races in Amy Tan’s modern America could sit together and eat at a table together. “It’s a polite Chinese custom to show you are satisfied,” her father explains (Tan 75). Tan’s father’s ability to explain and share a Chinese custom with the Americans and have a voice demonstrates how easy times were for the Tans, thus disqualifying her from being a counterculturalist.

On the other hand, Maya Angelou as stated before lived in harsher times, which defined her cultural heritage as one of more oppressed minorities. While watching the boxing match, Angelou says, “We didn’t breathe. We didn’t hope. We waited” (Angelou 96). With these words, she expresses the reality of her race having no voice, not even to simply cheer for a boxing match they were excited for. Angelou states, “Some bitter comedian on the porch said,” “That white man don’t mind hugging that nigga now, I betcha” (Angelou 95). Here, the comedian’s joke addresses the fact that a white man would not even touch a Black man showing the issues of Angelou’s background that drove her to be a counterculturalist. Maya Angelou is more of a rebel because she witnessed and lived through times antithetical to her culture where her race was the incomparably oppressed minority.

To conclude, Maya Angelou demonstrates rebellious traits by being true to her cultural heritage and herself, which makes her more of a counterculturalist against mainstream America than Amy Tan. Angelou was the greater rebel for taking pride in who she was. Mainstream America could not shape Angelou’s views like it did Tan’s. Both characters have a cultural background, Angelou’s being harsher, which causes them to think certain ways, but Maya Angelou was the one who carried those ways and stuck with them. Not letting mainstream America affect her, Maya Angelou was more of a counterculturalist than Amy Tan ever was.

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## **My Story: How Immigration Relates to Me and My Family** **by Anthony Chavez**

Immigration is a highly interesting topic to analyze, and it is a life-changing event for those who embark on the journey to settle in a new environment. Studying the stories of immigrants moving into the United States in search of a better life and enduring the endless obstacles, while transitioning to their new environment, is extremely inspiring for me. My family is connected to these thousands of stories of individuals immigrating to the United States. My mother is one of those individuals who immigrated to this country in search of a better life. Immigration is a significant factor in the history of this nation that contributed to shaping the nation into its form today, with my mother and early British colonists in New England possessing many similarities, despite living centuries apart.

My mother immigrated to the country from her home in La Paz, Bolivia, in South America in the early 1990s. Despite the significant gap between the 1990s and the 1600s, her story shares similarities with those people who immigrated to the colonies in the 1600s-1700s. Although in different time periods, the challenges faced are enormous and life-changing. From the Bolivian immigrants' perspective, they landed in a country completely different from their homeland, a country with different people, different cultures, and a different landscape. Experiencing this new environment was an overwhelming feeling that my mother described to me; additionally, it was important to constantly remind oneself to continuously move forward each day, no matter how hard it becomes.

Similarly, the English, who moved over to the colonies beginning in the 1600s, had motivations of their own. For example, one group of English people, the Pilgrims, were individuals who immigrated to the colonies to practice their own beliefs that the Church of England condemned. The *Gale Encyclopedia of U.S. Economic History*, edited by Thomas Riggs, explains that the Pilgrims suffered a “disastrous first winter in which almost half the group died, [but] the Pilgrims’ settlement at Plymouth grew steadily and by 1660 included nearly of all of southeastern Massachusetts” (1010). The Pilgrims, along with other groups, endured hardships in their new environment. Far away from home, the colonists were on their own to learn to survive in the new environment and establish themselves as permanent settlers. Likewise, my mother had to learn to survive alone in the urban jungle to establish herself, while overcoming obstacles such as the language barrier. However, once established, she was able to prosper and conform to

the new culture in the country. Similarly, more of the English immigrated to the colonies upon learning that colonists already in the New World were able to prosper and live off of the land.

My mother immigrated to California and settled in Los Angeles, where she found several jobs and sent money and letters to her family in La Paz to let them know how she was doing. In one of the documents in the book *Major Problems in American History* by Elizabeth Hoffman-Cobbs, “Indentured Servant Richard Frethorne Laments His Condition in Virginia, 1623,” Richard Frethorne writes, “...I myself am at the making hereof, this is to let you understand that I your Child am in a most heavy case by reason of the nature of the country is such that is Causeth much sickness...” (37). Although my mother was in no danger of the environment or other people, she did discuss the numerous hardships she endured in Los Angeles. Richard Frethorne and my mother struggled in an environment that was foreign to them. Both experienced dangers in different ways, yet both experienced the same difficulty in transitioning to the environment. Another article in the Hoffman-Cobbs book displays the similarities between my family history and those of historical figures. The article, “The Indians’ Old World,” by Neal Salisbury, describes the shift in analyzing the migration of peoples into America: “Yet a growing body of scholarship by archaeologists, and students of Native American expressive traditions recognizes 1492 not as a beginning, but as a single moment in a long history utterly detached from that of Europe...” (25). This statement displays the beginning of European immigrants, such as the English, Irish, and Germans, arriving to the colonies as just one moment in a longer history of migration. Eventually, other groups in other parts of the world, such as Central and South America, would migrate to America in waves, just like the Europeans immigrated here in the sixteenth through nineteenth centuries.

My family story of my mom immigrating to the United States is very similar to the stories of those who settled in the colonies over four hundred years ago. Immigrants from all over the world settled in various regions of the colonies where they endured the pain and hardship that is included with immigrating to a new location. My mother was able to prosper and eventually received an education in the early 2000s, when she attended Rio Hondo College and transferred to Cal State LA, where she received a BA in Child Development. Her story inspires me greatly; she moved to a country with nothing, yet was able to earn a degree in higher education. My mother is one of the millions of immigrants who moved to America from another country; her story connects with the immigrants who first came to the colonies in search of better lives, and it also connects with the millions of

immigrants who have continued to move America throughout the centuries.

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## **Free College** **by Rebeca Cardenas**

A college education is essential in our society in order to be successful and those without one are often limited to what they can accomplish in the workforce. A college degree attracts more opportunities, which means that a good job that pays well is more likely to be given to someone with a degree. Although many would like to get a college education, they are unable to do so because it has become expensive to attend college institutions. Many would say that the state provides help for those who struggle to pay for college through financial aid, but not everyone meets the extensive requirements and are often denied federal aid. Free college would result in more students attending school instead of working extensive hours, more students completing their studies and graduating, and more financially stable people; as a result, our society would have an abundance of skilled workers, leading to economic growth.

It has become increasingly costly to attend a college institution and many students find themselves working to pay for their academic expenses, but there is often a repercussion. If one takes into account the cost of tuition, student fees, parking fees, books, other supplies, and their cost of living, one can comprehend why students need to work; however, the necessity of working long hours can force students to risk putting their education on hold. In the article “The Struggle of Work-School Balance” by Gillian B. White, we are informed that about 14 million Americans work and take courses at college institutions, but “students...wind up leaving school because of difficulty managing work and class are likely to find themselves stuck in some of the same jobs they might’ve gotten if they hadn’t gone at all” (White). Extensive hours of work are necessary to cover the cost of college and of living, but they also result in overwhelmed students who drop out of school in order to avoid working those long hours to pay for college expenses. Students are at a disadvantage as they are working full-time to fund their education, but they struggle to balance both roles. A full time job takes away valuable time that could be spent studying for classes. Of course, many would encourage working while attending school because it teaches time management skills, which is valued even after college; however, students are already learning how to manage their time as many are enrolled as full time students and have to manage the rigorous work load that accompanies college courses. Working extensive hours and going to school results in overwhelmed and over-worked students. Free college would allow

students to spend more time focusing on achieving good grades in their classes, which would lead to more college graduates and more employees in professional fields.

College graduates are needed in order for there to be a growth of employees in specialized fields, but there is decline of enrollment that keeps our employment rates stagnant. In “Are College Cost Cutting Enrollment?” the author, Tibbet Speer, reveals, “fewer people seem to be signing up for college these days, and the biggest reason is money... Fees have doubled since 1988-89 in the University of California and California State University systems. Community colleges have seen similar fee increases” (Speer). The cost of college tuition has increased to the point where students do not enroll in school at the collegiate level because it is out of their price range, but in order for our society to prevail we need more graduates to work in their professional field. The opportunity to attend a free college institution would result in an increase of enrollment and college graduation. Post-graduation, students will begin looking for jobs in their professional fields, which will allow for the economic growth of our nation and will fill jobs that our society needs. Some would argue that we would then have too many graduates and not enough jobs; however, Hans P. Johnson and Deborah Reed estimate in “Can California Import Enough College Graduates to Meet Workforce Needs,” that by 2020 thirty-nine percent of jobs will require a college graduate worker, but only thirty-three percent of the population will be college graduates. Therefore, at this rate, we will have more jobs than graduates, and we could close the gap of the thirty-three and thirty-nine by providing a free college education so graduates can work the jobs they are well educated on. These graduates will be able to work in their professional environment while making a favorable income and building our economy.

As more students graduate from college institutions and acquire jobs, it is important to notice that they will be making significant amounts of money that will help our economy. Graduates who make good money are likely to indulge in more spending because they have the finances to do so. According to “The Economics of Higher Education,” a report by the Department of the Treasury and Department of Education, “Cross-country comparisons have found that countries with higher educational attainment have higher GDP growth rates” (US, Dep. Treasury). GDP, or gross domestic product, measures how fast our economy is growing and our economic growth can be connected to consumer spending. Consumer spending measures how much money one spends on different goods and services, so the more one spends on these goods and services the more one is supporting our economy leading to a growth in businesses, jobs, and

personal income. In “Just How Much Better off are College Grads Anyway,” authors, Tami Luhby, Tal Yellin, and Caroline Matthews reveal that a person who has only completed high school will have a weekly wage of \$678 compared to a college graduate who will be making \$1,227. A person who is financially stable has more flexibility to spend money, which is why college graduates working in professional fields help our economic growth. Many would say that regardless of college, people will still be spending money, which would continue to help our economy, but those who make more money are likely to indulge in spending more often. This economic growth through consumer spending would be more prosperous for our economy if more people were financially able to spend more often. If people had access to a free college education, more people would have a college degree and be eligible to apply to attractive jobs that pay well; therefore, consumer spending would increase improving our economy.

Free college would allow potential students to attend college institutions and our society would in return benefit. Students right now struggle to afford the cost of attending college and at times choose to work in order to avoid the expenses. Enrollment rates are decreasing because students have the predisposed idea that college is expensive. Our society has more jobs than we have graduates when we could have just as many graduates as there are jobs. Our society needs to provide free college education for willing students in order for them to continue an educational journey that will prove to be not only prosperous for them, but for everyone else, as well.

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## **A Seat in the Classroom** by Lorissa Tercero

In Sociology 101 class, students study human social relationships and begin to analyze and explain the important matters that occur in society, such as race relations. Race relations are the behaviors between different races living within the same community. Many artists play a key role in providing insight in today's culture, society, and/or politics, such as Solange Knowles. Solange is a well-known R&B artist who recently debuted her new album, *A Seat at the Table*, discussing several themes dealing with the black community. For instance, she begins her album with the song, "Weary," setting the tone of self-empowerment and finding her identity as a black woman. She then begins to mention the importance that everyone is human, referring to the prejudices and mistreatments that black people are faced with. As an assignment, Rio Hondo students should analyze the album, *A Seat at the Table*, especially the songs "Mad," "Don't Touch My Hair," and "Where Do We Go," by Solange, to discuss and raise awareness on the issue of black lives being oppressed and discriminated in society.

In the assignment, students will dissect each song and create an analysis of what the artist is depicting and how it applies to society now. The student will choose one out of the three songs and create a presentation on it. The presentation must be 6-8 minutes long, include a thesis, and explain the point the artist was trying to depict. The presentation must discuss the theme of the chosen song and how it reveals the discrimination of black lives. Also include examples, (articles, pictures, videos, etc.), of how the message reflects on today's society. Along with the presentation, students will write a 500-word, double-spaced summary on each of the other two songs, totaling 1000 words. The summaries should be in MLA format. The summaries should have an astute analysis of the songs, discussing the overall themes Solange is portraying, and the message each song depicts.

In "Mad," Solange justifies her right to be angry with current social circumstances. Before the song begins, the interlude illustrates her father as a young boy during the beginning of integration expressing how his childhood was spent living in "the threat of death every day," which made him angry towards society because he couldn't live a happy childhood unlike those who were not of the minority. As she begins the song, Solange explains that her feelings are valid, but that it is important to "let it go," in order to move on and not dwell in anger; however, throughout the song she explains how hard it is for her to "let it go," given the issues she has faced.



For example, Lil Wayne is featured in this song and begins to mention the struggles of being a black man. In his second verse, he mentions the consumption of a Xanax, a drug used for anxiety, which can insinuate the anxiousness of being a black man with the current issue of police brutality or overall environmental issues. According to statistics, unarmed black people are “twice as likely” to be killed by a police officer compared to a Caucasian man (“42 Shocking Police Brutality Statistics”). As a black man in the United States, he knows the unfair treatment upon the black community. He expresses this as a “burden on his back” and reveals the metaphor stated in his next line of wearing a “cap and gown,” confessing his inner conflict of feeling misunderstood and alone because many are unaware of the daily struggles dealing with discrimination in the black community. Lil Wayne then mentions another issue that is faced within the black community, which is prison sentencing. Once convicted, the Sentencing Project reports that “African Americans are 21 percent more likely to receive mandatory-minimum sentences than white defendants and are 20 percent more like to be sentenced to prison,” in correlation to the song Lil Wayne mentions in his lyrics “Are you mad cause the judge ain’t give me more time,” in reference that he is black bringing insight to the alarming statistic (Kerby).

Solange purposely placed her song, “Mad,” next to the interlude to describe the justification of the “angry black woman” stereotype. The frustration projected throughout the song is especially expressed during the chorus. In the lyrics, Solange is justifying the “black angry woman” stereotype, she reasons that she is angry with society for the oppression she and the black community face. Solange is also conveying this idea that society deems black women who are assertive or determined to be an “angry black woman,” and Solange takes pride in that, in a sense. She opens the idea that being angry is acceptable, as is being assertive. Michelle Obama was criticized in a book for how she was characterized as some “angry black woman,” because she is a powerful black woman, it is intimidating for some. She explains that “there will always be people who don’t like me,” justifying the idea of society’s pressure on black women always looked at as angry (Associated Press). This hidden hardship of society’s inner desire to want to fit in and be favored and Solange is promoting the idea in her album to take pride in one’s natural self, targeting black woman especially. Solange ends her song with her resentment with her constant outcry against police brutality, angry black woman stereotypes, the imbalance of prison sentencing, and yet she indicates this new focus on how she is “not really allowed to be mad,” pointing out that her expressing her anger is not socially acceptable, instead it is correlated back to the “angry black woman,”

stereotype.

Solange continues to promote the idea of self-love and taking pride in one's natural beauty in her next song, "Don't Touch My Hair." Before the song begins, Solange places an interlude of her mother speaking about black pride. Solange's mother voices the significance in having black pride and the suppression of black people that continues to be the message Solange reveals throughout the song. She names and begins the song with the phrase "don't touch my hair," as a metaphor for her self-pride in her natural beauty, stating "don't" in reference towards society censoring her black pride. She is also revealing the inner conflict black women are faced with from society with their natural hair. In the work place many black women have confessed the "unspoken rule" of wearing "straight hair for the interview," and "natural hair once you're in the door," which acknowledges society's "unspoken rule" that straight hair is socially more acceptable rather than natural hair (Honey). Solange targets black women specifically because even at a young age they are forced to believe natural hair is not acceptable. In Butler High School, in Louisville, Kentucky, the dress code states: "hair styles that are extreme, distracting, or attention getting will not be permitted. No dreadlocks, cornrows, twists, mohawks, and no jewelry will be worn in hair" (King). The "distracting" hair styles are a popular form of natural hair many in the black community wear today, and the policy subliminally sends the message that these natural hairstyles are not acceptable.

During her chorus, Solange is repetitively stating, "what you say, oh? What you say to me," linking her experience of micro-aggression with society's negative stereotypes and racist comments that have been made about black women. In the work place, "many of those employers also harbor racist beliefs," and believe the negative stereotypes that black women are, "lazy, insubordinate, late belligerent," and they also hold this connotation of being stereotyped as the single mother (Ortiz). Solange purposely places the phrase throughout her song of self-love and empowerment to denounce the negative comments and stereotypes made about black women. For instance, the phrase, "for a black girl," the backhanded "compliment" reveals an implication of dehumanization, because of her ethnicity, it belittles black women as less than equal. Solange is acknowledging these connotations and encourages the idea of natural Beauty (Randle). Solange bluntly states not to touch her pride and not to test her mouth, stating the notion that she is speaking out to represent herself and her community. She is proudly declaring that black lives matter, which could be about the current movements that are occurring right now such as the Black Lives Matter movement.

Solange continues to support the Black Lives Matter movement with her next song, “Where Do We Go.” Throughout the song, she articulates about fleeing her childhood home, because her father was forced to quit his job due to their race. She expresses throughout the song how she felt like an outcast not being accepted from her community because of her ethnicity. Which allows, especially the black community, to relate to her social rejection such as Rachael Malonson, winner of Miss Black University of Texas, who received a great amount of backlash because of her biracial identity(Jaramillo). During the song, Solange expresses how she and her family felt like outcasts similar to Malonson. This shifts to a new focus of colorism, a bias/ discrimination based on the shade of skin color, revealing another difficulty the black community faces amongst each other: the idea of “not being black enough.” Solange encourages her listener to love one’s self, and this song on a deeper lever, allows the black community to relate to her. During her chorus, she questions her place to go, “where do we go from here,” indicating the social rejection, oppression, and discrimination that she and the black community faces.

*A Seat at the Table* should be taught in Sociology 101 class to allow students to become socially aware of the racial segregation that is relevant to this country. In today’s culture, students would benefit from relating to an artist they are aware of and this would help them to engage and understand the ongoing conflict that the black community is facing. *A Seat at the Table* encourages black women to “take pride in being black,” and their natural beauty, and embrace the “angry black woman” stereotype. Solange also discusses what many of the male black youth are faced with, such as police brutality and harsh sentencing in the justice system. Rio Hondo students should analyze in the album, *A Seat at the Table*, the songs; “Mad,” “Don’t Touch My Hair,” and “Where Do We Go,” by Solange to discuss and raise awareness on the issue of black lives being oppressed and discriminated by society.

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## **Beauty in the Struggle** **by Alex Rodriguez**

In *Woman Hollering Creek* by Sandra Cisneros, she uses the term Chican{x} to identify chicanismo and to provide a preview or a perspective regarding Hispanic households in particular. Cisneros utilizes many traits and characteristics that can be found under a Mexican's household. She also adds her own little twists that make the story cycle. Cisneros does not directly address experiences of her life, but they are definitely related to her personally. This writer uses stories that share a setting, share a common theme, and also share a narrative style.

Cisneros utilizes two particular settings that "Barbie-Q" and "My Tocaya" have in common. The setting of a story is crucial for the reader because it provides a visual of where the story is taking place. In the short story "Barbie-Q" the setting seems to be in the little girls' imagination, which can be considered close to a pool. At the beginning of the story, it is revealed that the little girls are playing with Barbies next to a pool. One of the little girls says, "Yours is the one with the mean eyes and a ponytail. Stripped swimsuit, stilettos, sunglasses and a gold hoop earrings" (14). It appears the little girls can be anywhere in the world, but at that particular moment, they are imagining their dolls. Deeper into it, it can be seen that they are dreaming about having certain Barbies. It could be inferred that poverty can be a reason for that. It would not be surprising if Cisneros paints this picture for all people to see that Hispanic communities tend to be low-income communities. Further, into the story, the author reveals perhaps the real setting, which is in the street. The little girl states "Until next Sunday when we are walking through the flea market on Maxwell Street! Lying on the street next to some tool bits, and platform shoes with heels all squashed" (15). In this particular line, it can be seen that poverty is present, since the little girl is talking about picking up this doll she found in the street. This description also gives the impression of seeing things other people might not want any more as a treasure to those who do not have them.

The story "My Tocaya" is basically based on a girl gone missing in a low-income community, similar to the setting of "Barbie-Q". There is a line in "My Tocaya" revealing the setting of the story. The narrator states "Have you seen this girl? You must've seen her in the papers. Or then again at Father and Son's Taco Palace No.2 on Nogalitos" (36). The description of the setting gives the impression of a Hispanic community, since the taco palace is brought up. Most taco places are located in low-income

communities, which gives the story location. Both of these stories are connected by similar settings.

Cisneros also incorporates a common theme between the two stories “Barbie-Q” and “My Tocaya.” The theme is the lack of support within a Hispanic community. In “Barbie-Q”, we can see that although they are just little girls playing around, the lack of support applies. One of the little girls says, “Kiss, kiss, kiss. Then the two barbies fight. You dumbbell!! He’s mine. Oh no he’s not, you stinky!” (14). This line demonstrates the lack of support between these little girls. Although, they are just children, behavior like this can develop into jealousy and envy when older. Also, these kids are modeling adult behavior. The story “My Tocaya” is about teenage girls who do not like each other. In this story it could be seen that they are older girls who envy and do not like each other. The narrator states, “Turns out Max Lucas Luna lives next to the freak/ ‘Yeah, right’, I says, trying to blow her off I don’t want to be seen talking to the freak” (38). The words that Patricia uses to describe are very harsh and cold-blooded. Although, they are “tocayas” meaning to have the same first name, one of them feels awful about the other one. The lack of support or lack of humanity is presented when Patricia refuses to help find the other Patricia. Once again the author of this story shows exactly what it is like to grow up in this environment where no one helps each other.

Finally, Cisneros also uses stories that share a narrative style. The story “One-Holy Night” is based on a little girl who is misled by an older man. The old man lies to her to be able to have sexual relations with her. This gives the audience a stereotype. Just because an older man is sick in the mind, it does not apply for all older men. The little girl states, “I never asked about his past. He said it was all the same and didn’t matter, past and future all the same to his people. But truth has a strange ways of following you” (29). This particular line provides that the little girl put her trust in this man who was despised by her grandmother because she knew his real intentions. Without a doubt all human beings should be careful of other people, but at the same time it does not mean all people are the same. The next story “Never Marry a Mexican” is about all Mexicans being the same, which can be considered as a superstition. A mistress makes a strong statement on how she does not care to be a home wrecker. The mistress states “And it’s not the last time I’ve slept with a man the night his wife is birthing a baby” (76). It appears, she does not have any respect whatsoever for herself, and at the same time it does not mean all “Mexicans” are alike. Both of these stories are constructed by a background and a climax that give the stories a colorful explanation to the audience.

Last but not least, Cisneros gives a taste of what it is like growing up in poverty in a Hispanic household and in an environment where nobody supports one another; instead, they do the opposite. Cisneros does not directly address experiences of her life, but they are definitely related to her personally. She paints vivid pictures with her pen that provides the audience with a sense of understanding of a Hispanic household. All of her stories are great stories and they are based off of real life experiences. Cisneros encourages people who do not believe in themselves to keep trying and never give up. She started in a low-income community and now she has been recognized by former U.S. President Barrack Obama. Sandra Cisneros shows that it is about where you finish, and not where you started.

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## **The Edible Elephant in the Room** **by Cesar Arciniega**

As humans continue to grow and thrive within society, food companies always seem to stay one step ahead. Individuals tend to eat, eat, eat, and eat again, dodging the edible elephant in the room. In modern times, many people tend to turn a blind eye when purchasing and consuming foods. The origin of food and what is in the food an individual consumes definitely should be taken into consideration. Many issues have emerged within the category of food ethics and health; for example, diabetes and various other health diseases are at an all-time high. This can be the effect of many factors that go into the production of food such as GMOs and massive assembly lines that produce massive amounts of food. Sadly, the food that is being packaged and processed is from the hard-working, illegally treated and underpaid workers; an additional concern is that the animals that we consume today are being mistreated, just like the food industry's workers. Despite the abuse that the food industry's workers and its animals endure, they still help provide food to billions of people worldwide and have kept many people who live in poverty alive. Yet, the rapid technological advancements in terms of how food is produced have had many effects on the ethics of food. A solution to this may simply be to move back to a simpler time when plants and animals were grown more primitively.

Genetically modified organisms, also known as GMOs, modify the animal or plant to grow faster, bigger and better than before. This technology in food has fed billions of people in poverty and will continue to feed the world. Dr. Robert T. Fraley, in *The Huffington Post* article "Let's Use Organic and GMOs to Feed the World" states, "We've already identified the technologies and policies that can let us raise enough food for 9 billion people on the land we're using now to feed 7 billion." If GMOs were never invented, the world would never be compared to what it is today in terms of food. Countless numbers of individuals worldwide would be starving and lives would undoubtedly be lost due to starvation. Fraley mentions later in the article that different types of farming and techniques can be used, such as precision farming and breeding GMO and organic foods to form hybrids (Fraley). These techniques definitely set up a bright future for the population that is growing rapidly. As the projections show, the population is expected to be 9.7 billion people by 2050, making GMOs and other technological advances in the food industry crucial to survival.

The food an average person consumes goes many places before



it arrives at a kitchen table. Just about every individual searches for the most affordable deal; however, what is the real cost of food? This question may seem to be simple to some people as they may answer the cost is the price they paid. However, there is definitely a dark truth to the true cost of an individual's food. Industrial workers are illegally brought to the U.S. to bring food to our society to fill American dinner tables. These workers are nicked and dined as they pick our fruit and package the holiday turkeys to keep our bellies full. In the article "Immigrants in the U.S. Food System" from The 2014 Hunger Report, writer Andrew Wainer states, "More than 70 percent of all hired U.S. farm workers are foreign-born, mostly from Mexico, and about half are undocumented. Many arrive in the United States to escape poverty and hunger in their homelands. They can earn more money in the United States, but they still live on poverty-level wages and suffer from food insecurity." In this example, Wainer shows the true struggle of industrial workers who are illegally brought here to work in the big food corporations. These hardworking men and women come here sacrificing everything they have, leaving loved ones behind, only to be paid the very minimum and still go to sleep hungry. The majority of the food in the grocery store, in the restaurants, and on the dining table is packaged and processed by the slave-type work of those illegally paid and mistreated workers. Sadly, this is the system that Americans have created. It is definitely a produce-food-now-and-ask-questions-later process, and this definitely needs to change. In terms of producing food now and asking questions later, the animals definitely do not get a free pass either. Food industry animals are only known as a price tag.

Cheeseburgers would not sound nearly as good if an individual knew the conditions in which the animals live. Many animals that are consumed today are mistreated and held in compact rooms with unsafe living conditions. The term "animal" is almost irrelevant to the way these cattle are treated. They are seen as an economic gain rather than an animal with a heartbeat and pulse just like humans. These helpless animals feed families around the globe, keep their bellies full, and endure torture in return. "Factory Farming: Misery for Animals" by People For Ethical Treatment of Animals or PETA states:

When they've grown large enough to slaughter or their bodies have been worn out from producing milk or eggs, animals raised for food are crowded onto trucks and transported for miles through all weather extremes, typically without food or water. At the slaughterhouse, those who survived the transport will have their throats slit, often while they're still conscious. Many remain

conscious when they're plunged into the scalding-hot water of the defeathering or hair-removal tanks or while their bodies are being skinned or hacked apart.

It is extremely hard to fathom the type of torture that is displayed everyday toward these defenseless animals; sadly, it is a reality that is occurring every day in the majority of meals in America. If the brutal treatment of these industrial animals does not hit home, then you are a part of the problem. It is damn near the devil's work to be slaughtering these animals in such an inhumane way. Artist and animal rights activist Paul McCartney, in the video "Glass Walls," states, "If slaughterhouses had glass walls, everyone would be vegetarian" ("Glass Walls"). This is a very true statement. The media often depicts food industries as being an aid to society. Rather than exposing the dark truths behind these brutal slaughterhouses, many individuals refuse to acknowledge the "Edible Elephant in the Room," the suffering of these animals before they hit the kitchen. The questions that constantly arise while talking about this are: What is the real cost of your food? Does the line get drawn at the mistreatment of workers? Does the line get drawn at the constant suffering of animals with a pulse like humans? Or does it get drawn at the risk of our own health?

As food production has increased rapidly, the diseases such as heart disease and diabetes have increased as well. Heart disease is at an all-time high in the United States. This is without a doubt the result of GMOs and lack of sanitation in the processing of food. There have been several cases involving E. Coli, salmonella and so much more in our industrially processed foods today. People have died because of food, and this is not going to change if industries keep selling genetically modified foods, poorly processed meats and unsafe dairy products. One tragic example of this is a young boy named Kevin Kowalcyk; he was affected by the E. Coli virus that was inside a burger he ate prior to his death. In the article, "Kevin's Story" by Foodborne Illness, Kevin's mother Barbara Kowalcyk states:

Later, that afternoon, we were given the diagnosis: E.Coli O157:H7. On August 3rd, Kevin's kidneys started failing. He had developed the dreaded HUS. Late that night he was transferred to the Pediatric ICU at the University of Wisconsin's Children's Hospital. Mike and I spent the next eight days living in that hospital – watching our beautiful son slip away from us.

Foodborne illness is any illness resulting from the spoilage of contaminated food, pathogenic bacteria, viruses, or parasites that contaminate food, as well as toxins. This has become a major problem in today's society due to the fact that industrialized foods have chosen quantity over quality.

Furthermore, in the past, these conditions only occurred due to food spoilage. Now these issues occur in fast food restaurants and local grocery stores. According to “Estimates of Foodborne Illness in the United States,” Scallan H. Hoekstra states, “CDC estimates that each year roughly 1 in 6 Americans (or 48 million people) gets sick, 128,000 are hospitalized, and 3,000 die of foodborne diseases.” This statistic seems unreal to most people. Unfortunately, this is the society we live in today. These stories of the people who die from foodborne illness are rarely shown in the media because the food and meat industries are far too powerful. With these outrageous statistics and unethical treatment of humans and animals, there must be some sort of solution to lessen the problem.

The solution to this drastic problem seems far-fetched; however, something so simplistic may be the answer. Instead of giving farmers huge factories and assembly lines, they should move towards a primitive outlook. This method will supply jobs to countless Americans and create a safer and more stable environment. The push towards a more primitive state of mind will have many people doubting the process. It will be difficult, but sadly, this may be the only option we have before the numbers of deaths and illnesses begin to double. If the genetically modified organisms and industrial food factories are replaced by organic farms, foods will always be secure. With this being said, where the food is being processed and what is in the food will never be questioned. This resolution will also provide jobs to thousands of unemployed Americans. The push towards a more primitive way of farming and raising animals will not only benefit humans but will improve society as well.

All in all, as modern food technology progresses, many people will continue to be fed. As the human population is expected to reach 9 billion, many people will need the help of this technology in order to survive. However, the question that arises is: What is the true cost of food? Factors such as GMOs, massive assembly lines, and illegally treated and underpaid workers are the true cost of food today. If this true cost of food does not affect the consumer, maybe the cost of their own health is the turning factor. These major factors have led to the many deaths and mistreatment of not only humans but animals as well. At the rate at which food is produced in this obscene way, more lives will be lost and the health of every industrial food consumer will be in jeopardy. A difference needs to be made soon; people should never avoid the edible elephant in the room.

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## Language of Love by Emiliano M. Miranda

The doctors buzzed around while nurses darted to and fro. Yet there was a sense of stillness in my grandma's hospital room. As she lay motionless, strapped to her hospital bed, she was becoming more and more frail every time I saw her. It was just a few days ago, but today, she looked even more lifeless and thin. Her hair was glowing white. Her face sagged just a bit more now. When I entered the room, she was asleep, and if you did not notice her chest moving up and down ever so slightly, you may have thought that maybe she would look like this as the hand of death wrapped itself around her and whisked her soul away as she took her last breath, leaving us to mourn her loss. Death is always sad, no matter if it's your neighbor, the nice man from the market or, in this case, your grandmother. I felt so helpless as I sat by her bed. I had moments where I prayed and stared into the ceiling and walls, as if they somehow could drown out the sting of death. I just sat there helpless. I was wishing I could do something, but there was nothing I could do.

Growing up in East L.A., I did not live near my grandmother; she lived in Norwalk, adjacent to the 5 freeway. My grandmother really never babysat me or my sister and often times she was pretty crabby. Compliments were never in her vocabulary, and you would be hard pressed to find her at your school graduations or special events. She was a tough woman who was involved with her own "things." It seemed as if she did not have time for your interests. My days were filled with playing football or baseball in the middle of the street. Dreams of Steve Garvey and Magic Johnson danced like sugar plums in my head. After school it was home to do chores and watch TV. It could have been the *Cosby Show*, *Voltron*, *Different Strokes* or *The Facts of Life*. The TV was tuned to one of these shows unless my dad was watching *This Week on Wall Street* or *Firing Line* with William F. Buckley. TV was a big part of our life. At home we often joked around with my dad, recreating hypothetical scenes like the *Cosby Show* with my dad as our Bill Cosby, humorous but cool. Once when I came home with a questionable grade in English class—one that was lower than what was expected such as an A or at worse a B—my dad sat me down and let me know with firm disappointment that I only speak one language and that mastery of the English language was paramount. He would say that it wasn't good enough to know English, that we needed to make the words dance as they came out of our mouth, almost doing a cross between a tap dance and waltz. I later learned that there is rhythm in speech, and words have a cool

beat if you do it right.

I understood what he had told me and I never came home with a bad grade in English again. But I was a little upset with that statement later on in life as I had my third job. My first job was an ice cream scooper at 31 Flavors in Whittier on Beverly and Norwalk. My second job was adjacent to 31 Flavors at the Chevron gas station. I was drafted by the owner as he had liked my work style. Everyone knew that Kermit Jones was a penny pincher, and he knew that if he offered me just a little more money, I would leave 31 Flavors for the gas station in a heartbeat to become the manager and close the place up every night. But my third job was working at the Montebello Town Center. I worked for Kay Jewelers as a junior salesman. With my outgoing personality, I was made for sales. The Montebello Town Center, located somewhere between East L.A. and the San Gabriel Valley, had more than its share of Latino customers. This was the first mall of this caliber on the east side, and customers were flocking to it like bees to honey. As for me, I enjoyed all that the work environment had to offer, but I often found myself hiding my name badge, as if that would help any when the strong Latino “*gente*” would approach me for help. With a name like Emiliano, I couldn’t run away fast enough as they approached me in Spanish for help. All I could say was “*Si*” and nothing more, as if I knew the language and I was agreeing with them. I would somehow manage to say, “*Esperate un momento*” while I grabbed Brenda or Victor who were both fluent in English and Spanish. I always gravitated to the English-speaking customers and my fellow English-speaking coworkers.

Those moments always felt wrong because I knew I was running from the internal inherent truth of who I really was, a *Mexicano* born in California, a *Chicano* born in East LA. If I ever wanted to try to learn a Spanish word or two, it was off to my neighbors Carlos and Mars Arajo. Mars was short for Marcelino. We, like so many other kids, had given him a nickname that was not only cute and shorter, but somehow it was also a crossover: it was American sounding. There at the Arajos I would learn about *Churros*, *Bunuelos*, *Pan Dulce*, *Panqueques*, and the strong scent of Pine Sol on Saturday mornings. Gloria, Carlos and Mar’s mom was so humble. She cleaned houses for a living, but she was so proud of being *Mexicana* that she would take the time to teach us a word or two, maybe a whole sentence if we would sit in her kitchen and keep her company while she made *capirotada*. So began my journey of at least trying to learn one word at a time or a word a day to bridge the gap between here and nowhere in *Spanish-landia*.

My friends weren't any better really. All of us would "dis" the Spanish speaking kids at my school or those who did speak Spanish would only respond to a parent or to a grandparent, but Spanish wasn't spoken out in the open with us friends. That same attitude carried over to sports as well. It was no Spanish and no soccer. All of us cool kids spoke English and played baseball or football. When someone lost the football in the trees or we didn't have enough guys to play baseball, if someone would produce a soccer ball, it was time to go home—or at minimum time to play hide and go seek.

I don't know why it was, but there was a disconnect when it came to the Spanish language. Trust me, I was always proud to eat a burrito and have tamales. "Juanito's" on Floral were the best, and I just loved it when mom took a break from cooking and came home with Juanito's tamales, but I just couldn't fully embrace the Spanish.

As my grandmother got a little older, she started to have an affinity for all things Mexican. After my grandfather had died, she married Nacho, a man who played in a trio and sang in Spanish. She would press us kids to speak to her in Spanish. We never obliged and even thought to ourselves "What's wrong with grandma? She's tripping." It was she who had scolded my mother for allowing us to play at mid-day outside. She would tell my mom that we were going to get dark and then wouldn't be able to get a job. It was she who had told my mom not to teach us Spanish because she didn't want us to have an accent or have trouble in school like all the other kids. But now she wanted to hear it. She wanted to hear the sweet serenade of Spanish with its romance and grandeur. She wanted to hear it, but none of us took it to heart. We just laughed it off as we got straight A's in English all through junior high school and high school. It was funny then, but it wasn't funny now.

My grandmother was dying and time was running out. From time to time my mom or my Tía would come in the room and adjust her pillows and make her a little more comfortable even though she was asleep. They would do it the way only a woman can be sensitive to a mother or even a child. I would look at my Tía as she would lovingly, and without being asked, caress my grandmother and ever so gently make the sheets smooth and tidy. As my grandma woke up, she looked at me and said,

"*Mijo*, you're here?"

And I said, "Yes, Grandma, I am."

"I thought you were your Tío. I was dreaming about him."

Not only did people say I looked like my uncle who had already passed away, but they said I acted like him too. I began to cry as I knew

my grandma was losing her grip on life, like the gentle breeze whisking away, flowing by with a gentle flutter. My mom came back in the room and reminded me that more people wanted to come in and, with only two chairs, I had been sitting in one of them for a good amount of time. As I got up to leave, I hugged my grandma a little extra tightly this time, kissed her on her cheek and said, “Te amo, Abuela. Te amo.” She smiled, almost knowing that took a lot out of me. Sometime later that night she slipped away into the fog of death.

My Spanish has improved since then. I may not know how to speak Spanish perfectly, but I do know how to say “Te Amo, Grandma. Te Amo.”



## **Memes, Rage, and Culture: An Explosive Splice** by Marvin Contreras

On August 12, 2017, neo-Nazi and alt-right groups gathered in the town of Charlottesville, Virginia to hold a “Unite the Right” rally protesting the planned removal of the statue of General Robert E. Lee. Caucasian men marched with torches and chanted racist and anti-Semitic slogans while counter-protestors gathered against them. Violence between the warring ideological factions erupted when a car driven by an alleged neo-Nazi drove into a crowd of counter-protestors—killing Heather Heyer. This tragic death traces back to fringe humor manifested in memes by members of the alt-right. The seeds of the violence exhibited in Charlottesville could indeed be seen online. Memes—seemingly innocuous—have the capability to dehumanize and spread disinformation in a nihilistic blend of information and entertainment.

The word *meme* was coined in 1976 by biologist Richard Dawkins in his book *The Selfish Gene*, in which he described a meme as a self-replicating unit of culture. Like natural selection, memes form through transmission, mutation, and replication. In their article “On Memes: The Movement That Took the Internet,” Ryan Beehler and Danny McAullife discuss and elaborate upon Dawkins’ conception. Replicating units of culture known as memes is not limited to online humor as we have come to know them but “could also include melodies, fashions, design elements, learned skills and much more” (1). One of the ways in which this also defines facets of a culture is the way “cultural evolution propagates successful memes and eliminates memes that are unable to replicate” (1). As the modern internet became the primary mode of cultural propagation, the function of memes has narrowed to what we now recognize as a specific form of online humor.

As a medium of the internet, the term *meme* covers a wide array of different characters and conveyed emotions. Beehler and McAullife discuss how the modern conception of memes came to be: “One of the most successful meme formats appeared on message boards ... in the late 2000s. The format, still used today, consists of a set-up and punchline in white block text superimposed over a background image” (2). These quick bites of humor present within the text reinforce the image or contrast it with irony to produce the intended effect. Examples of this include “The Awkward Moment Seal” as shown in Figure 1. Memes as an object of humor seek to express common human traits and emotions and derives its uniqueness

from its ability to be constantly molded and formed by millions of meme creators and users around the world. Various humor sites like *9GAG*, *Achan*, and *Reddit* propagate their brand by promoting accessibility and creative freedom to the average user. This constant modification of memes in our current modern-day internet produces a fast-moving atmosphere where culture is constantly purified and condensed into the cleanest forms of human connection, humor, and emotion. This cultural potency often reflects both the proudest and most shameful dimensions of civilization.

Above all else, memes present a crucial facet of millennial expression. The types of humor and art that millennial creators produce trace thematic patterns. Traits that typify these millennial forms of art and humor are a nihilistic sense that traditional meanings have been lost and that there are now reasons to be skeptical of truths we once considered unshakable. In her article “Why Is Millennial Humor So Weird?” Elizabeth Bruenig discusses the changing landscape of humor in the flourishing era of digital communication. The author observes: “Studies show that traditional sources of meaning, such as religion and family formation, are less relevant to the lives of young people than they were to our parents. The moral structure they produced has been vastly loosened and replaced with a soft, untheorized tendency toward niceness ...” (1). This loss of meaning has spread throughout a generation continually searching for something more—transforming the way art and humor is created and pervading all forms of product that they generate.

In the digital age, the ubiquity of information available to the common person comes with a price—the spread of mis- and dis-information through the internet, where rumors have a habit of becoming misunderstood as fact. The skeptical nature within millennial circles could be correlated to the search for meaning amid a world heavy with information overload. Bruenig observes:

...Information is both more accessible (and perhaps more oppressively omnipresent) than ever and also less reliable; people select their own facts, and business-funded think tanks produce reports indistinguishable from hard data, except that they are not remotely true. Brands pose as friends on social media, especially to millennials, and if the line between real and artificial isn’t obliterated, it certainly seems to matter less than it once did. (2)

The welding of national identity, rage, and online culture are changing the meme and cultural landscape. Ideological difference has

brewed between regions of the country long before the recent divided atmosphere; however, culture wars have recently permeated an unlikely battleground—online humor. In her article “Now Is the Summer of Our Discontent: Memes, National Identity and the Globalization of Rage,” Michelle Mielly considers the spread of information and rage in a generation where digital anonymity prevails. The author analyzes the momentum built in recent years by anti-globalist factions that would form what would become known as the alt-right. Not exclusive to the United States, these groups defend and spread their views further by utilizing the pervasion of social media and memes—thus expanding their influence across the internet.

The 2016 election cycle in the United States and meme culture mutually fed off each other. Memes circulated the internet concerning all the candidates, but it was the Republican nominee that was the focus of many online creators from the left and right. The ubiquity of the meme modification and replication became a war for cultural dominance between the candidates as their various Twitter accounts spread and curated memes themselves. Throughout the electoral process and his present-day term, the president continued to retweet to more than 30 million followers controversial memes from his core base. Weeks after the events in Charlottesville, Virginia, the president retweeted a cartoon image of a train ramming into a CNN reporter with the caption reading “Fake News Can’t Stop the Trump Train” as shown in Figure 2. The meme was deleted, but critics condemned this behavior and cited it to argue that the president incites violence against journalists. His supporters counter that these are objects of humor—nothing more. The article, “RTs=Endorsements? Trump’s Retweets of Outlandish Memes a Signal to His Base” by David Nakamura makes the argument that the current president’s use of memes serves a larger purpose:

At a time when Trump’s public approval ratings have tumbled and he is taking fire from conservatives for flirting with bipartisanship on immigration, the president’s promotion of the outlandish content—created and distributed by his most ardent supporters—aims to rally his far-right base. (2)

The intersection between online humor, political purpose, and information becomes clearer with every tweet the President composes and spreads. If their context and influence is ignored, memes could be passed off as insignificant. Yet memes present a reflection of culture—often illustrating qualities that are easy to ignore. They have the capability to exploit our anxieties and fears and be used by those with questionable motives.

Memes pose a unique ability to curate humor with both information and entertainment to consumers in a way that promotes nihilism and disinformation. In his article “White Supremacists Joked About Using Cars to Run Over Opponents before Charlottesville,” George Joseph highlights pre-Charlottesville sentiment within online conversations among white supremacists. The author describes an online environment in which discussions of potential violence were frequent among white supremacists. A most astounding fact, the memes displayed in Figure 3 were shared less than a month before Heather Heyer was killed. Memes will not disappear. They have proven to be the principal digital communication tool for the millennial generation—compounding their fears, anxieties, and hopes for the future. Instead of ignoring them, we should place more significance on the type of humor circulating the web and connecting us all in the modern age.



*Figure 1: An example of the awkward moment seal meme*



*Figure 2: A tweet that President Trump retweeted*

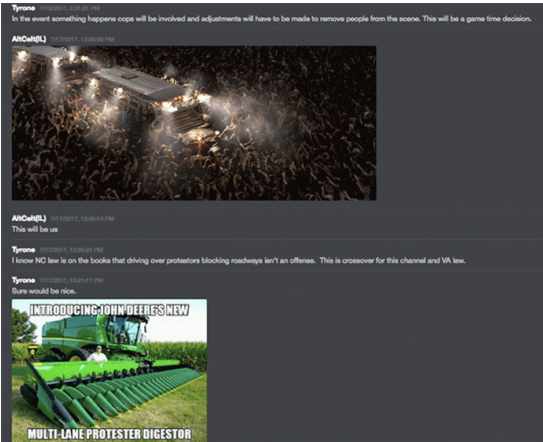


Figure 3: Chat group detailing fantasies of violence

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**Border and Margins, and Rising Up as an Activist, Author, and  
Speaker: The Life and Times of Luis Rodriguez  
by Megan Hernandez**

Growing up in the margins and borders of East Los Angeles, Luis Rodriguez did not let labels of being poor, gang-affiliated, or a druggie affect his emphasis on getting an education and becoming a leading *literati* in the Chicano movement. In *Always Running*, Luis Rodriguez discusses his life of being born into a working-class existence which produced a mix of mechanics, migrant workers, and many fellow Hispanics living paycheck-to-paycheck. Early on in academia, from kindergarten to high school, Mexican meant being tracked as a “C,” which carried the insult and added connotations of “stupid” or “retarded” students who were only good for working with their hands: inevitably, Rodriguez discusses these students working in wood, print and auto shops. As a gang member and a drug dealer who had sex with prostitutes, Rodriguez was continually tempted into a life on the borders or margins of society which would lead to prison or worse, the possibility of death. Rodriguez’s academic journey reads like a case file of living on the edge: dropping out at the age of 15, returning at the age of 17 to graduate from high school, attending college and subsequently dropping out again, and returning again as a re-entry student to community college. Ultimately, he ended up taking night classes, earned his credentials, and developed his vocation to become a well-known writer, poet and activist for his community.

Rodriguez grew up in areas in which few opportunities were offered to anyone, especially Mexicans. Rodriguez declares, “They were mostly Mexican, in ‘C’ track (what were called the ‘stupid’ classes), and who made up the rosters of the wood, print, and auto shops” (36). Rodriguez was subsequently tracked into vocational educational classes because his last name was “Rodriguez.” He discusses his upbringing and journey and being always perceived as being less valuable because, Rodriguez emphasizes, teachers would track Mexicans into classes that were always applied because they believed Mexicans did not have the potential to learn. On the other hand, teachers favored Caucasian students and labeled these students as “professional-class” students in honors classes because teachers cared about their academic journey and where and what they would be doing as professionals after college graduation. Rodriguez resisted the learned helplessness and hopelessness many of his neighborhood brethren experienced.

The neighborhood Rodriguez grew up in did not classify him in terms of who he was subsequently to become. In his autobiography, Rodriguez recounts, "If you came from the hills you were labeled from the start" (45). For Rodriguez, the "hills" represents the borders of marginalization because the city was on the wrong side of Monterey Park, the side commonly referred to as the "poor side" or ghetto. Rodriguez was automatically labeled for just being from the "hills." Teachers automatically labeled him as a "low-life." Soon he began to think of himself as a "low-life," self-fulfilling the prophecy that Rodriguez himself was what he was being labeled as, marginalized or from the border. Rodriguez was emotionally empty. Because the educational system and neighborhood failed him, he joined a gang and started abusing substances at the tender age of twelve. Unfortunately, as a teenager, he had no one to look up to and had nothing to look forward to. Rodriguez believed what society said about him, that there would be no way out of the borders and margins of the hood. The best he would be able to do was be a laborer and stay in the neighborhood. His neighborhood determined who he was and who he would later become, or so he believed.

In the learned hopelessness that Rodriguez experienced, he found an outlet out of the marginalization and borders of poverty, drugs, and gangs as he found his voice. He writes, "It never stopped, this running. We were constant prey, and the hunters soon became big blurs: the police, the gangs, the junkies, the dudes on Garvey Boulevard who took our money, all smudged into one" (78). Rodriguez found his authorial voice because he realized he could do more with his life if he wrote about what he experienced rather than hustling out on the streets or affiliating with the gangs that tempted him. After attending high school and college and dropping out, he came back both times and subsequently continued his education until he found the proper support and network to ballast him to become a leading proponent of the Chicano movement. He wrote about what he knew, both in novels and poetry, and found acclaim and recognition for his contributions. His community lauded him for coming up and becoming an agent of critical consciousness, as he wrote about the very upbringing that oppressed and limited him to the borders of invisibility and ignominy. As a Chicano activist, Rodriguez encouraged youth and communities to stay in school and not give into gang life, drugs, prostitution and the like which could have eventually led to death or institutionalization.

Rodriguez was classified from the start because of how marginally he grew up: the location, the color of his skin, and his socioeconomic status.



All that was expected of him was to become a gang member, to end up in prison or dead, or to seek a low paying hands-on vocational job, which would cause him to stay in the ghetto for the rest of his life and propagate the same vicious cycle he was born into. Rodriguez became the label he was offered but through academia, he rose above the label, margins and border towns to become a storyteller who controlled the stereotypes and labels that others gave him. As a *literati*, activist, and speaker, Rodriguez was able to add to his accomplishments as a venerable man who became a voice for his people and a success from his neighborhood in East Los Angeles. Through his writing, Rodriguez was able to give back to his community in story, deed, and action.

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***Woman Hollering Creek***  
**by Briana Robles**

There has never been a writer quite like Sandra Cisneros, nor have I ever encountered stories like the ones she writes. *Woman Hollering Creek and Other Stories* is truly a compilation like no other, one which is relatable to those who come from a Mexican-American or Chicano background. Raymond Paredes defines Chicano/a/x writing as that “in which the writer’s sense of ethnic identity (*chicanismo*) animates their work. . . . Often through the presentation of Chicano/a/x characters, cultural situations, and patterns of speech.” Cisneros’ writing exemplifies “chicanoism” within all of these short stories. She shocks us, makes us laugh, makes us cry, but most of all she makes us remember her characters and their experiences. She uses this story cycle quite like magic, tying everything together with a few short words, all the while impacting the reader completely.

Throughout this collection, themes recur which help readers remember the characters and their stories. One theme that repeats throughout several stories is Early Maturation. In “My Lucy Friend Who Smells Like Corn,” many of the narrators speak like children. Some, like Salvador and the narrator from “One Holy Night,” are thrown into the “real world” far younger than they should have been. In “Salvador Late or Early,” the narrator depicts a young boy with the responsibilities of a man. His father is not mentioned in the story, and his mother is described only once to explain that she tended to the baby (10). Every morning Salvador gets his younger brothers up and ready for school, combing their hair and feeding them breakfast. Every morning, the same routines repeat, and every afternoon they “scuttle off dodging the schoolyard colors” right on home (11). Normally, the parents have the responsibility of getting the children ready for school and picking them up when the bell rings, but Salvador is described as a small boy. Many would think he should be outside playing with other kids, but his life is quite the opposite. Cisneros portrays a boy taking on an adult’s responsibility. Just like Salvador, the narrator from “One Holy Night” also finds herself taking on adult duties. This girl, who is only thirteen years old, has the mindset of a middle-aged woman. After she succumbs to her seducer, she states, “I know I was supposed to feel ashamed, but I wasn’t ashamed. I wanted to stand on top of the highest building, the top-top floor, and yell, *I know*” (30). Her grandmother then sends her to a convent in Mexico to wait out her pregnancy and raise her child. She is thrown into adulthood too fast for her own good. These

characters endure and will not be brought down, just like in many Chicano families.

Another way that Cisneros makes her stories unforgettable is her narrative style. Quite a few of the stories in this “book of magic” include narrators having a conversation with readers. In the stories “My Tocaya” and “Bread,” the narrators relay a message or story to the reader directly. Patricia, the narrator in “My Tocaya,” describes a girl who disappears and comes back from the dead, in a way. In the last paragraph of the story this is especially apparent: “All I’m saying is she couldn’t even die right. But whose famous face is on the front page of the *San Antonio Light*, the *San Antonio Express News*, and the *Southside Reporter*? Girl, let me tell you” (40). The simple phrase, “Girl, let me tell you,” brings the conversation to a close but also makes the reader want to continue the conversation. This narrator-reader connection is just as apparent in “Bread” when the narrator reminisces about a memory with a lover. “That’s just how it is. And that’s how we drove. With all his new city memories and all my old. Him kissing me between big bites of bread” (84). It is as if the narrator is telling the reader about this memory with the same desire she experienced in the moment. This conversational style demonstrates true art; it helps visualize the moment a little more clearly with a better understanding of the emotions and passion.

Cisneros also uses shared narration and character combinations that are the same, yet appear in different stories. The stories “Tin Tan Tan” and “Bien Pretty” perfectly exemplify this. In “Tin Tan Tan,” Rogelio Velasco, also known as Flavio in “Bien Pretty,” writes Lupita a poem. Every letter that starts a new paragraph spells out “Lupita,” and in every paragraph Flavio writes of the greatest love and heartache he has ever experienced. He says that no one will ever love her like he did, writing so passionately and fiercely about his feelings for her. In “Bien Pretty,” Lupita, or Lupe, explains that she had loved Flavio, but that he also loved others. He had two wives in Mexico, as well as Lupe in the United States. Flavio reveals that he must return to Mexico to deal with family issues having to do with his sons, leaving Lupe speechless and hurt (157). The grief felt while reading this was real and true, but the optimism from Lupe was expressed even more powerfully. On the very last page of the story Lupe says, “And every bird in the universe chittering, jabbering, clucking, chirruping, squawking, gurgling, going crazy because God-bless-it another day has ended, as if it never had yesterday and never will again tomorrow. Just because it’s today, today. With no thought of the future or past. Today. Hurray. Hurray!” (165). Despite the agony and confusion that she felt after Flavio left her, Lupe

thrives and looks on the brighter side of life. Flavio, on the other hand, experiences anger towards Lupe, which suggests the guilt he feels. These stories are perfectly connected, through characters and their emotion.

Sandra Cisneros is a writer like never before; there will not be anyone else like her in this lifetime. Her use of words is like watercolor paints drifting across the paper, just like the masa spread on the corn husks to make the holiday tamales. The two go so well together. These characters will make an impact on the reader always, no matter how many times you read them. The audience will remember the *nalgona* bread and the hundred balloons of happiness. It will be hard to forget the magic that is *Woman Hollering Creek*.

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***Dawn of the Dead***  
**by Yanina Mendoza**

They shake as they take the air. Their feet turn inward; maybe they are walking on their ankles. They are wounded and each one of them has a different style bandage on their heads. A torn shirt reveals bloody stomachs or a chunk bitten out of their neck openings. Their clothing is destroyed and each one of them has a bloody mouth. Their fingernails are torn and bloody. Their mouths fall open. They moan or possibly it is more of a suspiration, like the long-vocalized exhale that might come from a corpse. George A. Romero's *Dawn of the Dead* (1978) is one of the best zombie movies ever known for using entertainment as a way to critique current events, as well as to send a hidden message to the audience about the "terrible truths about human nature, existence and sin" (Paffenroth 13). The movie takes place in a zombie-infested mall where the four main characters, Fran, Steve, Roger, and Peter, are taking refuge. These survivors get distracted by the goodies at the mall, forgetting what really is going on outside of it and not questioning why the zombies keep on being drawn to it. Zombies have been around the media for a long time demonstrating different social conflicts. George Romero's *Dawn of the Dead* is a great example that portrays issues of excessive use of authority, sexism, and consumerism in American society.

*Dawn of The Dead* depicts police using excessive authority and power. In the movie the SWAT team, which includes the main characters Peter and Roger, clears out an infested zombie building where many of the zombies are being held hostage by the apartment dwellers who are locked in apartment rooms and the basement for supposed extermination. The commander uses excessive power to get in the building for one purpose: to kill zombies. Yet, the officers overuse their power and end up killing not just zombies but people who are alive as well. The commander insults everyone who gets in his way. His main goal is to kill zombies, yet he acts without any care for the actual people who are alive. The armed men also use not only their gun power excessively, but they are verbally and physically abusive as well. One of the officers says and keeps repeating, "Blow all their asses off... low life bastards... blow all their little low life Puerto Rican and nigger asses right off." The SWAT men push people around, shoot at them, destroy their homes, and create more chaos than what is actually happening. An example supporting the movie scene is a quote from the book *Gospel of the Living Dead* that studies the scene to a much deeper purpose. It explains that "the scene shows graphically, in the most horrible carnage

of the film up until the end, how unprepared the authorities are, and how fatally futile the doctor's advice would be if heeded. The police burst into a housing project occupied by blacks and Latinos, killing several, as several officers are lost to residents who return fire" (47). In today's society many of today's recent events involving authorities overusing their power can be related to this scene. Incidents like this not only happened in 1978 with the Vietnam War but are still happening today. An example may be found in the article "Police Officer Who Fatally Shot 15-Year-Old Texas Boy Is Fired." On April 29, 2017., a police officer shot into a moving vehicle full of teenagers and one of them was killed. The victim turned out to be African-American. In the article, it says that "[the police chief] declined to describe [the officer's] disciplinary record" (Fernandez). By not talking about the officer's disciplinary record, the police chief's actions show that police officers use excessive power because their badges signify that they are the law.

Another prevalent theme in the movie is sexism. During the women's rights movement, women wanted to be considered equal to men. In the book, *Gospel of the Living Dead*, it states, "Romero and the other filmmakers use the fantastical 'disease' of zombies to criticize the very real disease of racism, sexism, materialism" (17). The quote is explaining the way men were against women having power. For example, in *Dawn of the Dead*, Steve reveals Fran's condition when he lets the men know without her knowledge that she is pregnant. Peter gives Steve advice about how he still has time to do something about it, meaning she could have an abortion. Fran finds out about the conversation they had and becomes upset because they had not included her in the decisions they had been making for her. Because of this, when they come up to Fran, she gives them a stare to show that she is angry. Then she gives them ground rules, letting them know that she wants to be part of the decision-making too. Even when the zombie infestation is going on, the characters act as if nothing has changed. The characters still treat Fran the same way men treat women in our society. This means men make women feel less confident about themselves as well as make them feel weak. So, in reality, we are what they call the disease against people.

Besides sexism, in the movie *Dawn of the Dead*, the four main characters are stuck in a world full of consumerism. Zombies represent humans obsessively shopping for irrelevant things in the same way zombies are obsessed with eating brains. In the movie, the four main characters, Fran, Steve, Roger, and Peter, fly over the city looking for shelter, when they come across a mall they decide to stay in. Roger and

Peter realize they have full access to the entire mall. They get the keys and legitimately go shopping for things they feel they need without fear as they both mock the zombies. The survivors later realize they can kill every single zombie in the mall and have everything to themselves without worrying about being bitten. During this process of removing the zombies, Roger gets bitten by a zombie. Throughout the movie, the audience sees his pain while he is transforming into a zombie, yet his pain does not stop him from going shopping. In reality, shopping is heaven itself; they made the mall theirs. After they obtain full access of the mall, which is now zombie-free, they decide to go shopping once again. They have “create[d] a shopping utopia for themselves, a place where they can temporarily ignore the threat of the zombies” (Harper). This quote explains that no matter what was going on outside of the mall, the survivors forgot about it and began to do what was normal for them, shop. It is a sense of American consumerism, where everything is at their fingertips to consume for free. To our society it is normal for people to buy because they want everything, but people do not pay attention to what is happening in the world. To the *Dawn of the Dead* survivors living in luxury in the mall, they get a dinner table, crystal plates, cups, a very expensive TV, as well as a radio, knowing that to survive they really do not need these types of luxury items.

Later on in the film, a biker gang gets inside the mall after asking the survivors for permission to go inside so they can all share the goods. Peter and Steve decide they don't want anyone else inside besides themselves, so they don't respond. The bikers get angry and break into the mall, which lets zombies in. The bikers destroy everything they touch, just for the fun of it, believing that if they can't have it, nor can anyone else. This is like our society. For example, after Thanksgiving there is a day when the price of almost all products go down and people go shopping. This is called Black Friday. People camp outside of Walmart, Target, or Best Buy to get the best deals. However, people have been trampled over and have killed workers. Also, when shopping, people have fought for products in order to have them for themselves or their families. In other words, zombies are just a demonstration of ourselves. As Paffenroth explains, “for Romero, it is not the zombie bite that turns us into monsters, but the materialism and consumerism that turn us into zombies” (12). Zombies themselves are not the scary part; we are the monsters addicted to shopping no matter the consequences.

George Romero's use of zombies to portray and to send a message to his audience about social conflicts at that time when the film was released in 1978 can still be used to relate to today's social issues. The film shows

how police overuse their power for their own benefit and try to control everything. The reason why they believe they have power over people is because they have a badge that shows they enforce the law among the people in the cities. Also, when the film came out years after the women's rights movement, all women were still being treated the same— as stay-at-home moms. The movie shows how men treated women by excluding them from conversations. Women at that time were trying to be equal to men. Women can still relate to this issue today, because they are still fighting to be considered equal. The main concern in the movie, however, is consumerism. This connects us with zombies, because humans never feel like they have enough products in their lives. People shop for things that are not needed and kill each other to obtain products without realizing the consequences. Zombies are the same— they kill to eat. For us, in society, wanting more and more without ever feeling like it is enough because we do not look at the consequences of our actions is what turns us into monsters.

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## **A Wall of Solidarity** **by Imelda Beltran**

Immigrating from Mexico and other Latin American countries is so difficult even though they are the neighbors of the United States. It is easier and quicker to emigrate from other nations, because some of those people have suffered from persecution, are political refugees, and are victims of natural disaster events among others. History shows that Mexico has been one of the strongest allies with the United States. During the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo between 75,000 to 100,000 people were offered blanket naturalization, and another 10,000 were naturalized during the Gold Rush (Gutiérrez). During the expansion of the rail system, U.S. employers began to look to Mexico to fill a demand for labor in basic industries including agriculture, mining, construction, and transportation (Gutiérrez). There was a reversal of migration flows during the Great Depression of 1930, when an estimated 350,000 to 500,000 Mexican immigrants and their children were pressured to leave in a mass repatriation campaign coordinated by local, state, and federal officials (Gutiérrez). Immigration back into the United States resumed after the United States entered the Second World War in 1941, due to the farm labor shortage as a result of war mobilization (Gutiérrez).

Mexico is next to the United States, which is considered a sufficient argument not to give Latino people legal status even though it is on the list of countries with the most migration into the United States. Individuals from other countries, such as The Democratic Republic of the Congo, Syria, Myanmar, Iraq, and Somalia, can obtain legal status through refugee immigration (Zong and Batalova). Cuba was one of these countries, but the Obama administration ended the refugee policy that favored Cubans (Gonzalez). Mexico may be next door but that should not change its refugee status. There are individuals who are persecuted by the cartels but cannot come legally to the United States as refugees. Eligibility to immigrate should not be determined by the country of origin; it should be determined by the political problem. Immigrants contribute to this country economically, culturally and demographically.

First of all, immigrants from all over Latin America are contributing to the economy of this country in many ways. From personal experience, an example of this is the vast amount of businesses that are owned by immigrants. These immigrants are consequently creating jobs and paying their taxes. Today, the immigrant population is creating a range



of professionals such as doctors, teachers, lawyers, scientists, engineers and entrepreneurs. There is also a plethora of strong and capable humans who take the hardest jobs as housekeepers, babysitters, labor workers, dishwashers. They all contribute to the economy of the United States by having the love and discipline to pursue their dreams. President Obama stated at a naturalization ceremony held at the White House:

The lesson of these 236 years is clear – immigration makes America stronger. Immigration makes us more prosperous, immigration positions America to lead in the 21st century and these young men and women are testaments to that. No other nation in the world welcomes so many new arrivals. No other nation constantly renews itself, refreshes itself with the hopes, and the drive, and the optimism, and the dynamism of each new generation of immigrants. You are all one of the reasons that America is exceptional. You're one of the reasons why, even after two centuries, America is always young, always looking to the future, always confident that our greatest days are still to come (Furman and Gray).

There are immigrants who change their lives with passion, discipline, responsibility and dedication. These immigrants are able to be an elemental part of the economy of this country.

Second, this is a country of cultural diversity where people from all over the world can find a space where they are looking to fulfill their dreams. Meanwhile they are also trying to engage in a new culture and preserve their own culture with traditional meals, vestments, dances, music, and family values. Immigration is not undermining the American experiment: it is an integral part of it. We are a nation of immigrants, and "Successive waves of immigrants [keep] our country demographically young, enrich our culture and add to our productive capacity as a nation, enhancing our influence in the world" (Griswold). Immigration has enhanced the culture of this country and I cannot think of a United States without immigrants, because the diversity of cultures creates this wonderful country.

Lastly, one of the myths of the United States is that this country does not need more people; however, according to Robert Reich, immigration is essentially important to the retirement systems. Right now, each person who is retired has 3 workers contributing to his social security. If the immigration population declines in 15 years, there will only be 2 workers contributing to each retired person's pension. This means that there will not be sufficient funds to keep the retirement system active. It is upsetting that the government does not see the reality. Immigration has declined from 12.5

million in 2007 to 11.2 million in 2015 (Reich). We have to understand how the system works. This information is important and should be available to everybody. Unfortunately, today the media just presents one side of the story.

On the other hand, opponents to immigration currently argue that illegal immigration harms the United States. Steve Malanga said, “Unskilled, uneducated illegal workers add little to the U.S. economy, drive down U.S. wages, hamper economic modernization, and create an underclass unlikely to move up the economic ladder” (Miller). This is what Mr. Steve Malanga had said without real proof; in fact, I believe it is the complete opposite of what he said. All you have to do is look at states such as Alabama. Visiting California colleges and universities, you see many Latino students who are advancing to a better education.

In conclusion, Mexico and other Latin American countries like El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua, just to mention some, contribute economically, culturally and geographically to this country. I cannot think of the United States without immigrants. The diversity of cultures and peoples creates this wonderful country. Even though President Donald Trump has persisted in the construction of a wall, we should construct a wall of solidarity with our people and keep fighting for what is right. We the immigrants deserve better and should be getting it. We need to move forward for comprehensive reform that includes everybody who has already settled with deep roots in this country.

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## **Lights, Camera, Bullets** by Charles Flores

Individuals have grown up in their respective societies understanding the purpose of law enforcement as well as the central idea of these laws people are to abide by. On the side of the law there has been reluctance to uphold those same laws in regard to their own police officers and the crimes they may have committed which is why there are constant discussions about the enforcement for officers to wear cameras upon their uniforms. This enforcement is due to the rise in police shootings across the United States and the treatment of the officers and the victims involved in the matter. The topic of wearable cameras placed upon police officers, as well as the release of the footage of crimes they have encountered, is a subject containing a multitude of opposing beliefs. The issues that keep police footage from being released to the public has made the police shootings a prominent discussion topic in society. This topic should be discussed thoroughly because of the rise in police shootings and the protests by the public that inevitably follow. Such a discussion will present the stressed relationships between the citizens and law enforcement and give insight to the individuals who have not kept up or heard of the less public shootings that have taken place. By releasing the police footage to the public, it will enlighten the public of the prejudice that is aimed towards minorities, it will present the issue of police officers protecting their own and not holding them accountable to the law, and finally it will establish a relationship of transparency between law enforcement and the citizens.

Samuel DuBose, Freddie Gray, Walter Scott, Michael Brown, Jr., Eric Garner, Laquan McDonald, and Tamir Rice. These are a few names of the black victims who lost their lives because of excessive force that led to their shootings by police officers. These are only a few names in a handful of minority shootings by the police between 2014-15, which has only increased over the years. In a *Huffington Post* article, it states that, “Six out of ten black men say they have been treated unfairly by police because of their race, according to a 2015 study” (Craven). Another statistic from the same article states that black males from their teens to their late thirties are more likely to be killed by police than any other demographic and that this group is 15% of all 2015 deaths from law enforcement (Craven). This shows how black Americans are already facing prejudice from their early adult lives because of the color of their skin. In a case in Baton Rouge, Louisiana involving a black man named Alton Sterling who was shot by two police

officers outside a convenience store, the officers had determined that he was armed and dangerous before shooting him. In a statement released by Abdullah Mulfahi, who is the store owner, Mulfahi stated that “the officers had Sterling pinned down and that he was not reaching for a gun when the officers fired” (Aamer). At the crime scene there was an additional witness who recorded the incident that showed the officers shooting once, before the camera turned in the other direction prior to an additional sound of a shot. This shows how the officers had no substantial evidence that Sterling was dangerous or that they were in immediate danger except for the concept of racial profiling that some officers often conduct when they are on the job. This incident was only made public because of a citizen documenting the encounter. It begs the question of whether this incident should be documented and released by the department or kept quiet?

When individuals become police officers, they abide by a code that is set in place for them and their colleagues, but what is that code exactly?

On my honor,

I will never betray my badge,  
my integrity, my character,  
or the public trust.

I will always have  
the courage to hold myself  
and others accountable for our actions.

I will always uphold the constitution,  
my community, and the agency I serve. (theiacp.org)

This Oath of Honor that officers take when they begin the job presents the nature of the job and the moral code that comes with it, yet there is an important part that some officials fail to abide by which is the accountability towards themselves for their actions. The officers are not the only ones solely guilty of conducting this mistrust of the oath; the department also protects the officials and does not hold them accountable as they swore they would. This is an issue because it shows a “protect-your-kind” mindset. This means that fellow officers and the department will protect their other police officers who may have committed a crime and lie to make sure they don’t get arrested and do not hinder the department’s reputation. An example is the case involving the police shooting of a black American teenager by the name of Laquan McDonald, who was shot by officer Jason Van Dyke in Chicago. Van Dyke shot McDonald until his gun was empty. The reports by the officer states that McDonald was swinging a knife at Van Dyke and his partner in an aggressive and exaggerated manner. The other officers at the scene also stated that McDonald was advancing and raising a knife

towards Van Dyke even though there is no evidence of this on the footage of the incident (*Chicago Tribune*). This is only one incident that shows the protection among their own officials by law enforcement departments. There are other cases of this happening, and it shows how police officers are free to do what they want without facing repercussions, but instead continue to enforce the mentality that officers are not held accountable to the law. Since this footage was published, it has shown a corrupt department that is supposed to protect citizens and hold everyone accountable to the laws in place, yet they do not. If there wasn't a video released of this, then there wouldn't be public outrage and demand for change; this incident would have actually been disregarded and swept under the rug, which is why the footage needs to be released so the truth is placed out there and not the synthetic truth published by the department in their press conferences on the matter. The police department should punish the ones responsible and state to the public what has occurred instead of protecting the names of the department and the officials who work there. This can happen by adopting a relationship of transparency between themselves and the ones that they took an oath to serve and protect.

The order for transparency is a vital demand for both the department and the public, for without it, there is withholding of the truth. By releasing footage from police officers' cameras or any footage that has documented the event for the public, it will show that no one is exempt from the punishments of the laws that have been broken. An example of this is actually directly tied to the previous example involving McDonald and Van Dyke. A judge ordered the release of the video of the shooting. This order resulted in protests against the officer being protected and not being punished for the crime. It wasn't until it was released that he was charged with first degree murder. This was four hundred days after the shooting. It was over a year later when the officer was finally convicted, but it helped to start a relationship of transparency and will help bring justice for the public and the ones who have suffered the loss, as well as help the department regain the trust of the public because of the increase in these shootings and withholding of the truth. There are law departments across the country that have established a successful relationship of transparency between themselves and the public. A San Diego University professor conducted research on the topic and found that there are departments that have established powerful methods which support their relationship of transparency and prove they take the matter seriously. Professor Joshua Chanin found that police agencies that were monitored by citizen review boards tended to have higher transparency ratings. He found that

departments with review boards by citizens are more likely to have a higher transparency score in comparison to other departments. He states that the board reviews different factors of the operations conducted by the police and how they handle complaints from the public (Balko). This is an intelligent concept for the issue and proves to be working since it shows involvement between the public and the department as well as it develops a relationship of trust between the parties. This is a system that other departments should adopt so that they can develop a better relationship with their own community. Even though there would be an improved relationship between the public and law enforcement, when the footage is released, there are many who fear that the release of such footage that depicted extreme violence actually could do more harm than good.

The public is always clamoring for the footage of police shootings to be released so they may know the truth, but many may not be able to handle the footage they might see. If the video were to be released, some children may access it and may be traumatized by what they see and grow up in fear of the police and the world that they are not yet accustomed to. Although this is a valid worry, there are individuals who argue that releasing the footage can actually enlighten them. The footage could be seen by everyone, and the public could witness how their fellow citizens are being treated by individuals who are there to protect them. It would produce a demand for new officers and establish a stricter hiring and training program since there has been an increase in these unfortunate killings. By releasing the footage, people are protecting their children and their futures since there would be an improved department of the law by the time they are a teenager or adult. Wouldn't it be better to protect them for the long term when they are becoming adults just like the ones who are being shot and the ones who are demanding justice? This can be achieved by showing the footage to the public and presenting the law departments in a light that many may have not seen before.

Once the footage has been released there can be an establishment of a healthy, responsible, and trustworthy relationship between the public and the police. There would be a less fearful America and stronger unity between everyone who lives under that star-spangled banner. This can happen by releasing the footage to show and stop the prejudice directed towards minorities, stopping police departments from protecting guilty officers, and establishing a relationship of transparency between the departments and the public. This would help achieve a more unified United States and help establish the idea that everyone is equal, free, and safe in the U.S.

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## **Civic Engagement, Disobedience and Lasting Democracy: Thoreau, Gandhi and MLK** **by Brian Centeno**

When discussing the subject of civil disobedience and engagement and democracy, Henry David Thoreau, Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr. utilized their authority as political peace leaders to fight for liberty, equality and the pursuit of inclusivity through radical passivity and nonviolence. They all were willing to sacrifice not only their reputations but also their lives against discriminative or prejudicial government policies, which they defied or protested. In his famous essay, “Civil Disobedience,” Henry David Thoreau practiced what he wrote in bespeaking the reasons to protest radically against an unjust government which condoned slavery and the morals behind refusing to cooperate instead of supporting abolition. In *Essential Gandhi*, Louis Fischer details how Mahatma Gandhi protested against the rationing of food for his native Indians and against segregation of his people into “ghettos,” while at the same time abstaining from honoring the British salt tax since only the upper British elite could afford it. Gandhi’s teachings and beliefs influenced the great American Civil Rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr. In *Martin Luther King, Jr., On Leadership*, Donald Phillips emphasizes that King always paid tribute to Gandhi as one of the most important sources of his own radical passivity, civic engagement, and democratic values. This connection is emphasized in King’s bus boycotts, speeches, book signings and imprisonment. Although living eras apart, Thoreau, Gandhi, and King were all connected by integrity, morality, and a code of ethics. They also all worked toward a world not filled with greed, racism, and hate and had a willingness to be the change they wanted to see in the world. All three peace leaders had very radically different upbringings in different eras. Their experiences molded and shaped them all to engage civically for those who were subjugated and discriminated against because they were considered different from the dominant group.

Henry David Thoreau was born on July 12, 1817 in Concord, Massachusetts into a modest New England family. Born the third of four children, Thoreau was a nature-loving individualist, poet, abolitionist and a leading proponent of the transcendental movement. Thoreau began his studies at Harvard in 1833 but refused to accept his degree since it cost five dollars, thusly rejecting ostentatiousness. Thoreau was the first of the three peace leaders to practice civil disobedience and wrote of it in his famous essay “Civil Disobedience.” In this essay, Thoreau clearly speaks of the

reasons to protest against a government promoting slavery and considers the moral implications of refusing to cooperate in freeing slaves. Thoreau opposed slavery and the Mexican American War and led an underground railroad helping slaves escape to Canada.

Almost a half century later and with few or no rights, Mahatma Gandhi was born on October 2, 1869 in India. India had been under foreign British domain for centuries and maintained a caste-slave system in which Indians were indentured to the motherland. Initially known as Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, Gandhi was later named Mahatma, which means “a great soul,” apropos for this second peace leader. Following the Hindu customs, Gandhi married at the age of thirteen but stayed at his parents’ house to continue his education. At the age of eighteen, Gandhi went to London to study law but failed. Not to fret, after leaving England, Gandhi went to South Africa where he achieved his spiritual wholeness and gave up his Western lifestyle and dependence on commodities. Gandhi was a philosopher and a peaceful man who embraced humility, truth and love.

Gandhi’s teachings influenced the great American Civil Rights Leader, Martin Luther King, Jr. King always paid tribute to Gandhi as one of the most important sources of his own radical passive values. For instance, Donald Phillips states in the book *Martin Luther King, Jr., On Leadership*, “I came to see for the first time that the Christian doctrine of love, operating through the Gandhian method of nonviolence, is one of the most potent weapons available to an oppressed people in their struggle for freedom” (Phillips 59). Martin Luther King, Jr., like Gandhi, also suffered horrendous physical discrimination from the ruling majority. Martin Luther King, Jr. was an African American born in 1929 in Atlanta, Georgia. He graduated from high school at the age of fifteen, earned a bachelor’s degree from Morehouse College, spent three years in the theological seminary, and eventually achieved a doctoral degree in philosophy from the Boston University School of Theology. King was also the pastor of the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church and the president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). King opposed segregation, inequality between African Americans and whites, and supported inclusion and civic engagement. King led the Civil Rights Movement based on Thoreau’s and Gandhi’s theories of nonviolence.

All three activists, Thoreau, Gandhi and King, suffered different types of oppression by nondemocratic states and countries. All three men disagreed on how their exploitative government was being run civically. For example, Thoreau was an advocate for the slaves; he was disgusted with his fellow citizens who were concerned merely with making money

for themselves. Slaves were being utilized as machines. Thoreau strongly believed that the government was corrupt and unjust, as was the Mexican-American war, which he believed the government promoted. Gandhi and King, on the other hand, experienced injustice in their own flesh. Gandhi and all other Indians were treated as slaves in their own country. The British had taken dominion and were leading a poor industrialized nation, which evidently made the Indians poorer and more miserable. Indians had no rights. Gandhi stated in Louis Fischer's *The Essential Gandhi*, "I discovered that as a man and an Indian I had no rights. More correctly, I discovered that I had no rights as a man because I was an Indian" (151). The British exploited the Indians, limiting their rations of food, placing them in "ghettos" and destroying their villages to construct high end, luxurious buildings. Indians had no opportunities to obtain a good job because they were all reserved for the British upper middle class. In addition to all this impropriety, Indians were being charged taxes, could not produce salt for themselves, and could not have any other form of income not linked to the British hierarchy. Similarly, Martin Luther King, Jr. experienced face-to-face segregation on a daily basis. King opposed inequalities between whites and African Americans which were justified under the "separate but equal" court decision after *Plessy vs. Ferguson*. Everything was segregated: schools, libraries, hospitals, parks, churches, cemeteries and all forms of transportation. Accommodations for African Americans could be clearly distinguished by signs which said, "white" or "colored." In *Martin Luther King, Jr., On Leadership*, Donald Phillips says, "There was also hard punishments for violators of the "separate but equal" doctrine. Blacks, for example, would be arrested, convicted and sentenced to serve on chain gangs where they worked from sunrise to sunset, were chained together and then put behind bars at night." (Phillips 16). One of the worst and most undemocratic facts during the greatest discriminatory times in the United States against African Americans is the fact that African Americans had no rights under the Constitution. The evident oppressions, injustices, greed, and discriminatory practices gave these three activists the passion and courage to fight for freedom, justice, equality, and dignity for their people.

Civil engagement and disobedience have diverse roots, but their main democratic advocates have been Thoreau, Gandhi, and Martin Luther King, Jr. These three peaceful advocators used civil disobedience and nonviolent methods to end oppression of their people. Gandhi's non-violent resistance doctrine was influenced by Thoreau's advice to resist things that were wrong. Thoreau suggested that individuals could resist immoral government action by refusing to cooperate. Martin Luther King, Jr. learned

as he profoundly studied Gandhi's ideologies in college that Gandhi had taken his inspiration from Thoreau's essay "Civil Disobedience." Based on those ideals, Gandhi created a new method of dealing with oppression that he named "Satyagraha," which translates as "truth-force" or "love-force." The Satyagraha involves the principles of strikes, boycotts, and protest marches. In the book *Martin Luther King, Jr., On Leadership*, Donald Phillips says, "Martin's ideas surrounding nonviolent resistance were based on a combination of Mohandas K. Gandhi's actions and Christians' values" (Phillips 57). Gandhi advocated truth as a weapon, which King later interpreted as the truth of love, a higher type of love, near Godly love, for the inclusion of all. Gandhi and King took the power of love and truth as instruments for social and collective transformation.

Stephen Nathanson says in his *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, "[W]ith[in] the tradition of Thoreau, Gandhi, and King, [nonviolence demonstrates] four features [:] (1) illegal; (2) nonviolent; (3) public; and (4) done to protest a governmental law or policy" (Nathanson 259). Thoreau refused to pay taxes in his hometown of Concord, Massachusetts; that was illegal, nonviolent and public. In addition to this radical passivity, Thoreau suggested individuals withdraw support in person and in property, for to go to jail for it was the true place for a just man. Thoreau asked that those who protested slavery be "locked up in the county jail" (Thoreau 2.8). Gandhi and King incorporated Thoreau's ideas in their own nonviolent methods of protests. Gandhi urged desegregation and unification of his people just like Martin Luther King, Jr. utilized fasting and meditation, which were vital for the spiritual growth, democratic civic engagement and mindful daily strength to keep the good cause for their people. Gandhi told his people to stop supporting exploitative powers in any way they could, for example, spending money on laundry, working an unjust job or paying taxes to the crown. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Gandhi both encouraged and organized large numbers of people to disobey the law as a means of protest. The nonviolent method is defined as a method of action, which profoundly impacts both the user and the target. Its purpose is to create awareness in the community and to create a crisis or tension to promote confronting the situation. If enough people were to disobey the law, it might be impossible for a government to enforce it.

Thoreau, Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr. have left an enormous legacy for humankind. Thoreau was a little different from Gandhi and King because of his lifestyle and family status. Lacking the necessary power, charisma and influence that Gandhi and King later possessed, Thoreau garnered little or no public attention. Thoreau's signature moment

is his defining the ingenious revolutionary idea of civil disobedience. His eloquent writings have influenced many, and will influence more. Gandhi influenced the upheaval of inequality in Africa, India, and, eventually, the United States—through Martin Luther King, Jr.—while Martin Luther King, Jr. accomplished his dream after his death: Within a week after King’s passing, Congress passed the Civil Rights Act of 1968 and President Johnson immediately signed it into law. In the book *Martin Luther King, Jr., On Leadership*, President Johnson was quoted as saying, “Martin [Luther] King may have paid for this piece of legislation with his life” (332). In addition to this, segregation laws became unconstitutional. Many others were influenced around the world by King’s legacy and doctrine. King became a recognized world icon when he won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964. He is also well recognized as one of the greatest orators in American history. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s doctrine continues to bring hope to the poor and oppressed people of all races, all over the world. Millions of people have been granted respect and have acquired the hope and courage to speak up against injustice because of Thoreau’s, Gandhi’s and King’s influence. All credit cannot be given to one man, for it is the legacy of a civil disobedient idealist, a great soul, and a humble-righteous man.

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## Maurice Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are*: The Imaginative Journey by Briceida Reyes

Maurice Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are* illustrates a child's desire to be "wild" and the imaginative journey on which he embarks in order to fulfill it. Max, the child introduced in the story, is bound by the walls of his bedroom while having the desire to escape to a different world. To do so, he accesses his imagination, giving life to endless possibilities of fun. Psychologically, Max intends to not be confined, to have authority and to have fun. Perry Nodelman's analysis in *Words About Pictures* explains Max's psychological desires through the use of space, images, and colors.

Using the illustrations that depict different sizes and the use of border space that changes as the story progresses, Sendak makes it prominent throughout the book that Max does not want to be confined. Illustrations of different sizes and border space change as the story progresses. At the beginning of the book, Max is located inside his home, attempting to build a fort and that becomes the first example of his confinement. His attempt to build a fort means that he desires to be outside, but he is confined by his home. This is also where there is the most use of border space, which is a principle described by Nodelman as a means to "suggest a character's sense of being restricted" (53). This makes the reader "focus" on a part of the book that "demands [their] involvement" (Nodelman 53). This restricts the image, making it the smallest illustration within the whole book and also making the reader feel Max's confinement. The next two pages of the book illustrate Max chasing his dog down the stairs and him being sent to his room. Each page has progressively less and less border space, making more room for the illustrations to get bigger in size. Eventually, "that very night in Max's room a forest grew" taking up most of the illustration's border space, filling it up with plants (Sendak 7). This occurs until he reaches his peak of imagination, where there is little to no border space, allowing the illustration to take up most of the page. This allows the reader to come to the conclusion that Max is becoming less and less confined, given that the images are getting bigger and the border space is getting smaller.

Along with being less confined, Max also desires to have some sense of authority; this is shown in how he treats the monsters he creates, giving those images the power of being the main medium of interpretation. Sendak demonstrates Max's eagerness to be in power at the beginning of the book, where he chases his dog with a fork while jumping off the stairs, giving him elevation, thus making him bigger than the dog (4). This moment of power



is challenged when his mother sees what he's doing and sends him "to bed without eating anything" (Sendak 5). This takes Max's power away; and powerlessness is what he uses as motivation to create his land of monsters where he can rule himself. Once there, Max begins his contact with the monsters by ordering them to not move and then to have fun. "'Now stop!' Max said and sent the wild things off to bed without their supper" (Sendak 29). Max mirrors his mother's behavior with the monsters as he sends them to bed without food, just as she did with him. This is another one of Nodelman's principles; he explains, "surface appearances create feelings and attitudes [and] mirrors interior feelings and attitudes" (Nodelman 49). This means that the images that the author chooses to put in the book are there because the illustration "is significantly important" (Nodelman 49). The significance of the images plays a big role in illustrating the fact that Max's mother has the authority from the beginning of the book, which drives Max to desire it for himself. The images in the book allow the reader to be able to interpret Max as the authoritative ruler of the monsters because the monsters obey him. This shows that Max's alpha-dog behavior is derived from his mother's overbearing grasp on his mischievous behavior.

Max's mother's authority puts a clamp on his yearning to have fun, which is less and less of an issue, as shown through Sendak's use of color, as the book progresses. When Max is in his house, there is little use of color in the illustrations. His house is shown in hues of muted yellows, pinks and a touch of green. Most of the colors, though, are present in his bedroom as an insight to it being the location where his imagination is going to come to life. Max is sailing in his own boat at the beginning of his imaginative journey (Sendak 14). This is Sendak's first prominent transition of colors; it is an attempt to illustrate Max's desire to have fun by adding reds, vibrant yellows, greens and blues, which bring a livelier look to the images. Another example is the monster's "yellow eyes" which are vibrant and not the muted shade that was used at the beginning of the book (Sendak 20). Nodelman writes that "psychologists Benjamin Wright and Lee Rainwater suggest [...] 'it is saturation which manifests itself most powerfully [...]' (66). This means that sometimes the use of colors has less influence than the saturation of the colors within the images. The saturation of colors seems to increase as Max is having fun. When Max was bored, attempting to have fun while still following his mother's orders, the colors were muted, but as the story progressed and he got to have his own fun with the monsters, the colors became more vibrant. Overall, the colors used in the book were rather dark which made the saturation, when it occurred, that much more of an obvious change. Color was subtly used to demonstrate Max's psychological need to

be a child and have fun.

Sendak uses points given by Nodelman to portray Max's psychological desires. Notably, Max's desire not to be confined is shown through the use of space and the use of small to large illustrations, as well. Furthermore, his yearning for authority is shown through the use of images, showing him as the leader of all the monsters, mirroring emotions within him of wanting power. His level of excitement and imagination is shown through the use of saturation of colors, being bold where he is having fun and more muted when he is not. Overall, every aspect of the book—from space to images and colors—proved to be essential in bringing to life the psychological desires Max's character possessed.

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