

PENSAMIENTO

LIBRE



Journal of the Humanities Honor Society

ISSUE 7: 2023-2024

Free Thought/Pensamiento Libre: Student Scholarly Journal of the Humanities Honor Society at Middlesex College. We publish nonfiction, fiction, poetry, and visual art. Editors: Cristóbal Espinoza-Wulach and Joseph Patrick Pascale.

Cover art: “Unbounded” (2023) digital art by Ianiza Marcelo.

Digital applications were employed in the creation of this artwork. The chosen color scheme comprised yellow to signify enlightenment and blue to signify wisdom. When viewed from a macro perspective, the artwork's components coalesce into the shape of a light bulb, commonly associated with the concept of "thought." Upon closer viewing in the details, the spiral located within the brain area of the human figure symbolizes the thought process. The spiral's movement starts inside the head, ultimately spelling out the phrase "free thought," thereby showing how thought freely flows out of the head.

-Ianiza Marcelo

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Free Thought

Pensamiento Libre

Student Scholarly Journal of the
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Renacimiento (2023) by Katherine Fallon-Reusch

Papier Mâché, Acrylic Paint, Fake Flowers, Hot Glue, Plastic Gems.

I have always loved and admired masks and decorations for *Dia de los Muertos*, so I decided to make a mask in that style. Originally, I was going to make a human skull shape, but the *papier mâché* reminded me more of a bird skull, so I decided to go in that direction instead. The shape also reminded me of plague doctor masks that were used around the time of the Black Death, and with the COVID pandemic fresh in all of our minds, I thought that it was a fitting nod to our current reality: Despite the death and destruction that pandemics cause, there is still hope for birth, regrowth, and beauty in such times.

- Katherine Fallon-Reusch

This mask was made through the Phi Theta Kappa Art for Wellness Initiative.

The Situation

Karen Edema

part 1: the intention

Romancing me is no joke
I have high standards
In which you did not fit
Originally, you took this seriously
I knew that shoulder brush was intentional
From the start
The ring on your finger never phased me
However, I was confused for a time
Sitting in denial over the love
You maintained for me
How could you be with someone else
But love me just as well?

part 2: the entanglement

For all its intent and purposes,
The enjoyment was surreal
You could make a liar out of me if I said otherwise
In the physical and emotional sense, pleasure and
pain
In the mental sense, turmoil
Nonetheless, there was enjoyment
A 'I cannot believe we're doing this' enjoyment
A 'This is so romantic' enjoyment
A 'You desire me and I you' enjoyment
And yet with our enjoyment
We burned ourselves dwell in it
I suppose we'll live with the scars

Of our first degree burns forever
It is our faults by the way
You fully know this
We ended up in this secret forest
We chose the distinct path for it

part 3: the reassurance

Take the road less traveled by babe
Don't let them see you as you walk away
I'm a part of you even if I'm apart from you
My trust for you is inevitable
As I yell your name
Within the confines of my mind
I'm fine
Trust me
Lacking substitution for the time
We've jointly spent in dread
Having given my dead weight for all its worth
Instead, trust me
It'll all work out in the end

part 4: the doubt

This forest has filled with darkness and lust
A path sadly placing a rift between us
Is this a mistake? Am I playing with fire?
The thought has occurred to me prior
But only as an undertone
To our blooming love
It seems like doubt
Has seeped into us

part 5: the consequences

We both know what we've done
I have no loyalties to your one
It seems like you don't either
But my feelings are a reminder
That she exists
She's battered and bruised
Ready to run into you
And I'm ready to flee
Like a wayward son
On his knees
For this I'll die
Be buried alive
I'll miss you for now
My beautiful guy

part 6: the closing

This is not how our story will end
This chapter is closing to mend
Our hearts and to tend
To our heads
We deserve no limitations
We deserve this
Without total damnation
 We deserve more than a situation



Masquerade (2021) by Sadae Marie Hori

Acrylic on Masonite. 18x14in.

Philosophy Glass

Escape from Prism
Subject colored views to a
Philosophy Glass

You've seen the light, but is it white? Maybe.
Depends on attitudes inside your head.
For when white light's unlocked by prism's key,
The spectrum runs from violet to red.

And that's the visible spectrum alone!
Much more remains unseen or else unheard.
Despite the subtle instruments we own.
Much that remains unknown must be inferred.

Clearly, things are not as they may appear.
The origins of things remain obscure.
Philosophers and tourists hold most dear
Not final destinations, but the tour

So join the game, don't settle for arrest
Because it's not the quarry, but the quest!

By H. Ian Smith



Books Can Take You Anywhere (2022)

by Kelly Huertas Sandoval

Adobe Photoshop

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For With You (2022) by Kayla Letra

Acrylic on Canvas. 20x20in.

Note of Appreciation

This publication could not have been possible without the support of President Mark McCormick; Executive Director Kimberly Burnett and the Marketing team; Ode Hoppie, Assistant Dean, Student Engagement; and Christian Nunez and the Printing and Communication Support team.

We also offer many thanks to Gordon Smith and Hilary Goll, children of H. Ian Smith, for allowing us to republish their father's poetry. Professor Smith taught History and Philosophy at Middlesex College until 1986. His sonnets continue to inspire.

With early nostalgia, we would like to dedicate this issue to Professor Elisabeth Oliú. An inspirational colleague whose work and commitment to excellence sets an example to us all: Thank you!

Work by Humanists

Our Humanists took a journey into the struggles, conflicts, and passions that define us as human. They learned, supported and inspired each other. In doing so, they joined the community of writers that comprises the Humanities Honor Society.

In times when humans are reduced to genes and chemical reactions, our Humanists remind us that life is neither binary nor predictable. They show us that while any chat bot can predict words, only humans can depict the intangible.



Natures Pattern (2022) by Caitlyn Semeniuk

Collage Acrylic Painting on Masonite Board.
18x24in.

For this painting, I had to take close-up pictures of nature that show patterns, make it into a collage, and then paint from that. I was going for colors that represent nature. I also added bits of gold leaf to some of the already-looking gold parts to really emphasize that color and make it pop. I love painting with acrylics, so this is one of my favorite paintings I have done.

-Caitlyn Semeniuk

Dogs on God's Roof

Jacek Brys

Seeds. Curtus can almost feel them sprouting within his pulsating blood-stream, kept full and fed through sanguine means, even as their leaves are swallowed whole by red. Light is bleeding through his arteries, a sun stored in his heart, pumping out; a fat-faced whiteness, lambent with an earnest kind of love. The grin pulling at his mouth's corners nears towards painful as the muscles begin straining stiff, tongue serpent-darting to lick his lips' rough chapping into the malleable wetness of newborn lambs. Yet he cannot stop smiling.

On the horizon, trilling: mockingbirds, their upright-standing bodies lopsided against azure backdrops of sky as they perch upon fragile sways of thick, flowering vegetation. The several-eyed, palm-sized beasts speak of Babylon streets awash in dark ash, radiantly consumed by fire wreaths. Infernos of human greed, maelstroms of self-destruction. Their songs then rasp to mimic the following darkness; a memory that they did not live through, but one that was bred into them regardless: the sight of even the flames' brightness becoming overshadowed by the artificial wash of night, eternal-seeming, turning over into archaic truth.

Nuclear end-days; Curtus knows the story well. Body and soul suffer its consequences, unfortunate past ribboning into a tender present; his own *name* is a pustule reflection of it: mutilated, broken, incomplete. He was, for a long dither of dawns collapsing into dusks, missing the *I* which would make him Curtius, present in the wake of Marcus, leaving his spinal discs to mimic loose petals, falling down along the weeping stalk of his slot-together vertebrae, rather than clattering Roman arms. He once laid within the pit, pained, yawning open with it.

But the craters left along the terrain can be ignored as they swell, rainwater stagnating into mosquito-encrusted lakes, for there are hard, brown seeds rolling in his wrinkled palms. The *I* has been found within *Iris germanica*, and it shall grow him a new life.

Forests are once again thick, their boughs heavy and drooping with leaves in such bountiful quantities that his child self would have cried in the cradle of their exposed roots, wiping ash from his pearlwet eyes. The mockingbirds waltz through their passerine dances within them, flashing white wing bars in flight, continuing to sing shrill and sure of not only Babylon's demise, but of the fruitful life hidden in its crumbling sandstone ruins. Earth covers earth. He licks the hope where it wells like yew berry blood at his gums and fattens lipidly at the very back of his throat. The soil around his home is fertile, waiting to birth.

I shall grow myself a new life, Curtus repeats to himself, giddy. I shall grow myself a new life, and eat from it; consume the I that has been land-given to me, and become Curtius.

Upon the tin roof of his house, patterned in watercolors of rust and animal droppings, two dogs stand, lolling their wide pink tongues out in the balmy springtime as though they were organs, spilling from dark, soft splits. Saliva drools, wet crystalline reins, from their jowls and down into puddles upon the metal warming their paws. Their muzzles are like black darts against cottonfat clouds that ride along the slink of here-and-there breezes, sudden and stark.

They are like that overall: sudden and stark, whole in their canine natures, unscathed and unspcial. No mutations brutally mar their slender onyxian forms. Just off Noah's ark, they seem; animus and anima. One is smaller than the other however, as if grown from the larger's protruding rib, and it is the only line of difference separating them.

Curtus ignores their presence – doesn't consider them as anything beyond specks fuzzed into his peripherals – and keeps listening to the mockingbirds, listening to how they cry out in repetitive notes, the noises scratching out of rough throats in lilts of two, five, eight. He hobbles to the small structure conjoined to his humble, one-room home, a green- house, feeling as his ankles come further undone with the hurt of fraying string ends. The greenhouse itself

is equally as jaundiced, propped up on rotted-through beams, housing deathwatch larvae, and covered with fogged scraps of hard plastic. There are chip-lipped ceramic pots within, all set with teeth of shriveled, brown sprouts. The seeds are hard in his grip.

A new life, a new life.



Fish & Trees (2023) by Hui Kuang Cheng

Woodcut. 16x20.5in.

With this print, I am trying to show the floating world.

-Hui Kuang Cheng

Art of Crying

Karen Edema

The art of crying
Consists of a reason to cry
The actual crying
And a reflection of the crying

To describe how one cries
Is to describe something
Intrinsically instilled
Into humankind
The anger, humiliation, or sadness
Prior

The swift switch from the aforementioned
To warm clear liquid filling the windows of
The soul

After
The soul in question seeming to slow
In the nick of time
Its stance
Trailing down once the windows are closed



Enjoy It While It Lasts (2021) by Sadae Marie Hori

Acrylic on Canvas. 18x24in.

The Sweetest Moments

Katherine Fallon-Reusch

In my family, every meal was secondary to the desserts, especially those created by my grandma. For me, every happy memory is connected with my grandma's baking: birthdays, holidays, and random days. It all started when I was little. I remember sitting in my grandparents' dining room looking into the kitchen, which had wooden cabinets, retro fixtures, and a cozy feeling that radiated from the heart of their home. My grandma was standing at her counter, sleeves rolled up and one of her assorted colorful aprons tied around her waist. She was adding flour into cookie dough, and a white cloud appeared around her hands like a halo. Flour was nestled in the creases of her hands as she sifted the dry ingredients together. To some, this might seem rather monotonous, but to me it was magic. Somehow, all of these ingredients combined to make delicious, mouth-watering desserts that I adored.

When I got old enough, my grandma would allow me to 'help' make her famous chocolate chip cookies. Although I left a trail of casualties in the form of batter and chocolate chips, she was forever patient. The counter was littered with bowls, the floor was covered in flour, and I looked like

I had been in a cyclone-- covered in flour (I would add it too quickly) and batter smeared across my face. But I couldn't be happier.

Fast forward a couple of years, and I was promoted to a full-time sous chef. At this point, my clumsiness had reduced slightly, so we were able to talk as we measured out our ingredients. As we chattered about everything and anything, soft strains of Bach or Mozart floated into the room, their gentle melodies and powerful crescendos accenting our voices. My grandparent's parakeets could be heard, chirping and cooing in the background. The clinking reverberation of the measuring cup hitting the side of the sugar and flour canisters added onto the quiet symphony. My grandma would pause to tell me not to push into the flour with my fingers or how to best whisk an egg yolk, and I would listen intently, trying my best to adjust my movements so that they would match her precise, effortless ones. The smell of the robust vanilla and rich semi-sweet chocolate chips playfully teased my senses as I mixed the ingredients, already imagining what the cookies were going to taste like. I would spoon out the dough onto a baking sheet, the sticky mixture gluing my fingers together. When the cookies were baking, a tantalizing smell wafted

from the oven as the chocolate started to get gooey and the dough started to cook.

When they were finally done baking an eternity later, we took them out of the oven and placed them on the same wire rack that my grandmother has had for what seems like forever and allowed them to cool. Even though I could (and often would) burn my mouth, I would eat a cookie right out of the oven, the chocolate melting in my mouth making any pain I faced worth it.

...My grandmother has been gone for about two months now, and although I have not yet been able to pick back up chocolate chips, flour, and sugar. I know that when I eventually do, it will be about all the memories and sweet moments that we shared. It will be her voice in my mind guiding me, my hands still mirroring hers through muscle memory, and the cherished times of the past playing through my mind on repeat: the laughter still tinkling, the warmth still resonating, and the joy everlasting.



Untitled (2023) by Nezzle Mendez

Gladiator

Ellen Kwon

Arid was shaken out of her thoughts, startled by the purposeful rattling of her cell bars. It was a loud, resounding noise that echoed deeply in the hollow and empty underground hallway. She looked up at the guard, squinting her eyes so that the space in between her brows creased in fine lines.

The guard (she had been in the Colosseum for months, maybe years, but she still didn't know his name) slotted a key in the padlock, the one she'd fantasized about stealing away and making her escape. With a strained grunt, he pulled the barred doors open for her to climb out. The sound it made was strident in the quiet, echoing corridor, and her brows knit together again.

"Get up and move. A generous buyer was interested in you and made a purchase, and you are to be immediately transferred."

She looked at him, still unmoving, dazed; confused. Not understanding what he was saying. The words didn't seem to reach her even though she'd heard them perfectly fine.

"Huh?"

"*For how much?*" She wanted to ask. But then in the corner of her eye she saw her manager, a sneering lady clad in a canary colored peplum, counting the gold pieces from

a thick, heavy pouch in her hands. And Arid understood suddenly, with a pang in her chest, that she was no longer needed here.

There was no point in feeling disappointment, the prisoner just let the feeling dissolve away on her tongue like a bitter pill. And then she followed the guard out; simply climbed in the transport cage they'd prepared for her, silent, and without another word.

Without so much of even a hello or goodbye from either party, Arid was gone from that place.

The drone of a cart wheels on an unsteady road blended into the background, emulsifying the thoughts in her brain with ambient noise, and the scalding sun baked the brain inside her head until she heard everything and nothing at the same time.

Thoughts of what had just transpired swirled around in her head, she wondered who had bought her, *why*, and if she was being taken to another, more vicious colosseum.

It was hot.

So she sat still, basking in the dry heat, half-intentioned on dozing off in the bottom of her metal transport despite it all.

A soft pat of rainwater *plinked* through the metal bars, remnants of the morning cloudburst that had gathered on the top of her cage the night before. Arid held out her palm

gingerly, starving for any semblance of coolness. Lukewarm water spread on her tongue as she lapped it up in desperation, but it still wasn't enough.

With every full-cart jolt—the effect of wooden wheels caught over pebbles road debris—the contents of the cart would lurch high into the air. And then gravity would yank them back down the instant after, and the metal cages would make a terrible rattling noise at the collision of wood and iron.

But no disturbances would be enough to jolt the prisoner from her ruminations. Arid looked on her memories like a long-awaited sip of water that reduced to its last drop—desperately, and wistful for the times that she had plenty to spare. Her most recent one strayed not far from the forefront of her thoughts.

It was hard to forget. It was her last piece of "normalcy," her last bit of her routine changed for the worse and her world was flipped on its head.

Arid closed her eyes and let the pending memory take over.

Arid sat with her knees pulled to her chest and chin buried between her legs. Her finger dragged straight through the dust on the ground, forming thin lines drawn with deliberation, neatly scribed into the crude, makeshift notepad. A poem she remembered from her time in school. The words were somewhat faded by time, but she found herself clinging desperately to them,

fearful that she'd let the past slip right through her fingers if she didn't hold tightly onto it.

**Through flood, through fire!
I do wander everywhere,
Swifter than the moon's sphere;
And I serve the Fairy Queen,**

She didn't want to forget. If she did, the girl secretly feared, a private worry that she'd never speak aloud, that a piece of her identity would disappear along with it.

A lit torch burned weakly right outside of her holding cell and flickered uneasily even with the lack of breeze underground. But that was to be expected. The Colosseum's chambers were always ill-illuminated and she had quickly learned to not bother looking around for blindspots or to waste her time trying the impossible task of reading a book by dim torchlight. Opportunities for happiness down here seemed to be scarce, and the Colosseum managers tried to make sure of that.

PLIP, PLOP

As to be expected, a guard remained stationed by her cell. He was young and human; Arid knew that already. Human, unlike their captors.

She had once naively thought that maybe, because there was another human here they would form a sort of same-species bond. That she might have a chance through shared empathy and that he'd take pity on her and help her escape.

So at the beginning of her encapturement, Arid felt a sliver of optimism. And hope.

But she had underestimated the power of human greed and that it always far surpassed any form of altruism.

The guard was young and hungry. He was scrawny and his cheeks were lined with starvation. Probably had food to buy, mouths to feed. Arid could understand. She too, knew the ache of hunger. Had felt the shivers take over her lank body as she was one half missed meal away from death. The way her stomach seemed to consume itself like a slow torture and then nothing – she would feel nothing for a while until a cruel breeze would carry the smell of baked bread right to her nostrils. And she remembered the way her shut eyes would flutter open with alit fervor and her mouth would pool with saliva at the mere scent and thought alone of whatever food accompanied that aroma. Then the vicious thoughts that accompanied her hunger; thoughts of thieving, taking, killing. Killing people to just have one slice, no... even just one bite of bread.

Arid could understand, so she could not bring herself to hate him.

Drip-drip

Then the drip-drop of leaking rainwater through the chamber crevices continued to permeate in the otherwise silent enclosure. A cold droplet splashed on her scalp, and she shook her head to relieve herself of the moisture much like a dog would.

The echo was not stifled under any background noise because the atmosphere laid barren of sound. There was no quiet chatter between inmates. No music to pass the time more bearably. Just silence. And the dripping.

Had it rained last night? – I wonder when mealtime is – It's probably getting close to evening by now –

Meaningless thoughts like these passed through her brain, and nothing really of value or inspiration came forward. She now lived a different life. In a way, it was better to think so simplistically, instead of worry about the next meal or the next school assignment.

The other cellmates probably had similar thoughts. That's how it was. That's how she was.

Hollow, empty shells of people.

Even in the beginning of her involuntary "employment" there before existed a little assay of conversation. Whispered words between prisoners who were close enough to hear. And sometimes in the morning Serenity would shyly recite a song. A semblance of hope existed because they could take comfort in the fact that, despite everything, they had each other.

People. Humans.

But that too, was also only just a distant memory.

PLIP, PLOP

When she first arrived here, the water sounds bothered her. PLIP, PLOP, drip, drop, it bothered her so badly that she asked the guard stationed at her cell (he was a different guard; much plumper and shorter, not the young and hungry one) if they could plug up the roof that the leakage came from, or at least line the floors with rags so it wouldn't make such an obnoxious noise.

He told her in a gruff and inconvenienced voice "No," and if she ever asked again she would be given nothing more than silence.

So in the end, she was made to deal with it.

PLIP, Plop, drip, DROP, that was the same noise that would drive prisoners in investigation rooms mad—the inconstant,

terrible drip-dropping and PLIP-plopping was a method of an inconsistent dripping of water intended to slowly break down the minds of their prisoner victims. They befittingly called it water torture. Arid would often fall asleep with her palms squeezed tightly to her ears so she couldn't hear it. She wouldn't let herself be water tortured for free. It was not quite her style to go out like that, not really.

But now it was easy to block out the noise. It was easy to feign ignorance. It became easy because she had to make it easy.

To survive.

She had learned how to deal with it.

And after, Arid learned not to ask for favors anymore.

Drip-drop

Her manager, Lady Lapid (she was never allowed to call her that, but that was her name) approached from outside of her cell. At eye-level she could spy her Lady's bejeweled corn-flower blue pumps through the metal bars. Arid thought them to be new because she'd never seen her wear that pair before. A new purchase usually meant that business was good.

But even knowing that bit of information, she didn't need to see her Manager's face to feel the smoldering temper that seemed to exude from within each step she took.

"You,"

Manager pointed a spired nail (calling it a claw would be a more accurate description), at Arid, her cold, yellow eyes narrowing as they focused on her.

You're below me, they said.

But Arid knew that already.

That's why you're standing out there in expensive, shiny shoes and I'm sitting on the cold, stone floor listening to the rainwater drip from the walls. *Arid thought.*

"You. Champion, get out there." Her manager jerked her head backwards, towards the great wooden door that was the one and only exit/entrance to the gladiator's chambers.

Arid knew what that meant.

Before earning a reputation for herself she was always referred to as "You," or "sniveling worm" or "human trash," whatever creative derogatory title the Faeries would call her. But she was only a little sheepish to admit she liked the change. Champion. After she had clawed her way up the ranks and the blood staining her fingers was so red and so real that she couldn't see the color of her own skin underneath, she earned that title. An undefeated Gladiator. Someone who had won every fight, no matter what cost. That was who she was – a champion.

'Champion' didn't sound like an insult. It sounded like she was someone to be admired. Someone to be feared. Maybe that was the one part she liked about killing. About being a murderer. That in some twisted kind of way, in the Colosseum it at least earned her some bit of respect.

Murder, after all, was a growing profession.

With a simple nod, Arid straightened her folded legs and leaned her back against the wall just enough to hoist herself upright. Hopping over to miss Manager on sleepy legs, the Champion obediently followed the hand that tugged on her leash. Obedient, like a dog.

She left behind the poem etched into the ground and the water dripping from old pipes and they went past the young and hungry guard. Past the barred and magic-fortified exitway to the outside.

The light seemed to be blinding as the wooden door came open and even as she started to walk the halls there was already clamor and anticipation of a crowd.

It was time.

Arid felt every bump and disturbance of the wagon on the road — they shook her malnourished frame; split her eardrums. It hurt just to sit, to just exist, and the journey from inside the transporting cart rattled vibrations through her jaw with every unsteady shift and bump on the road.

...No sleep. Arid would not get to sleep for now, not with her forehead slick with sweat and her itchy bangs sticking to her brows.

Through the swathe of aspen grove, a passing wind turned the air sweet, and the breeze filtered by forest seeped a deeply calming melody of nature into her thoughts. The smell of grassy dew and clear skies was therapeutic; the only kinds of air she could distinctly recall were the dank, stuffy underground atmosphere and the “killing ring” where the only stench and taste she could think about were fear and blood (and to her, victory). She let the freshness of the outside comfort her, because she would receive none at all if she did not.

Then the wagon’s dragging across the uneven road slowed down to a stop. Arid’s ears perked ever so subtly,

registering a key-in-lock clink, and the eventual opening of her cage door. Her buyer took her by the leash, beckoning for her to follow their lead.

Don't think. Just move.

Arid trailed quietly behind her new owners, the chains that bound her hands together clinking together with every step that she took. But just like the water dripping and cart droning she quickly drowned that sound out too. Then, after walking some lengths the group stopped suddenly.

Arid looked up wearily, daring to gaze ahead. They were in a field, she realized. The shackles came off her lank wrists — things that bound her to the inner cells of the colosseum, falling to the ground in just the simplistic turn of a key.

Easy.

Too easy.

Arid only stared at the metal cuffs and felt something was wrong. Searching eyes groped for some sort of sign; some kind of cue as to what was supposed to happen next. *Was this a trick? Some sort of elaborate test of her loyalty to the Colosseum?* A dose of healthy paranoia seemed due at this point, and Arid felt the trepidation creep up on her —

"Now, be free!"

Arid startled at the sudden noise, expecting none. Beside her was a man, she realized, very rotund, almost shaped like a grape with arms and legs, and suited in a fine pressed tuxedo. There was a strange, silver patch sewn on his shoulder. It depicted a bird in flight.

This caricature of a person brought his hands up in a grandiose gesture, pumping his cane in the air and he swung it in a dramatic arc. Arid looked up at him, mint-green eyes unblinking. Perhaps in disbelief; perhaps in indifference. There was another one — a tall and thin man with a similar patch on his body. He stood a few feet back from who seemed to be his partner. He blended well into the shadows, fettering back like a bystander, like a person too afraid to interfere.

"?"

Arid only regarded him with a deadpan look and tired eyes. This probably wasn't the reaction he was expecting, *how dare an incompetent human girl feel indifference to being offered freedom?* There was a bit of panic that seemed to enter the Grape Man's system but he continued to echo his first words and movement with more exaggerated form this time. This time he said it a little more reservedly. "...Now, be free!"

And nothing again.

The man faltered suddenly, his triumphant cheer evaporating on the drop. Over his shoulder the hat-and-cane-wearing man nudged and mumbled to his companion, "Uh, Erskine, why isn't *it moving?*"

And in a flash Arid's temper exploded and was already on top of him, her claws and fangs bared, her razor-pointed nails pinned flush to his throat. They tumbled and fell to the ground in a thud and dust plumed up in a cloud from the impact. In that moment her mint green gaze seemed to

penetrate; seemed to glow with a bloody color even through the dark cover of dusk.

As her claws flexed around his throat, Arid knew this scene. It was familiar to her. Killing was easy. To take her sharp claws and plunge them into the soft cartilage of his neck – with enough force and malice they would shred like ribbons.

Arid analyzed the face that lay beneath her, the perspiration which arose from his sweat glands and pale, fear stricken expression as she quite literally held his life in between her deadly claws. She knew this face well – not him, not the top hat and cane man specifically. But there were many of his "kind", top hat and cane men in the Colosseum; men who misunderstood her as a person.

The smell of sweat and iron was an unpleasant tang in the air, her opponent came in close with their claws bared, striking, intending to kill. She could smell their rank breath as she narrowly dodged the attack, claws whizzing past her ear. Her enemy was faster than she was, but clumsier and eyes blinded by mud. She had stumbled backwards, dizzy, scared; fearing for her life. Then, in a stroke of pure luck, her hands met something hard and solid, and when she looked it was an untethered bone, broken and sharp, left over from a match before.

Then with a surge of unfound confidence and necessary determination Arid let the fury consume her as she lifted the bone and gripped it with rage as she pierced it through the underside of their jaw. "RAAGGGHHH!" She charged forward, driving it far in, not stopping even when their body bled rivers. Warm, crimson spurt instantly and spread everywhere; then her own

vision would become sightless too as it was impeded by blood but she kept going, blinded by fear and rage and survival.

WHAM

WHAM

WHAM

The dirt arena would then flow red and the smell of iron would permeate stronger than the scent of sweat and despair. Then the crowd, who had been observing with bated breath – she realized that only after she was done and panting and close to fainting from exhaustion – burst into sudden cacophony so loud that it made her ears ring.

But she realized something as she wiped the warm liquid from her eyes. There grew something inside of her. Something new she hadn't felt at all since within this trapped death game.

She lifted her right arm to the sky, pumping it with stunned triumph, much like an athlete champion after winning the world cup.

That feeling seemed to buzz over her exhaustion. It rang over the drum of her heart and the roar of an excited crowd. Then after winning fight after fight she realized she could eventually identify it.

It was pride.

They mistook her for a weakling. And, upon seeing her, they were already triumphant at the thought of an easy kill. Only until they'd find themselves quickly under her claws. Men whose faces went very pale and very fearful when they realized they were at the doorstep of death.

The tables would turn so quickly in the killing ring that stank of fear and hatred and blood.

"Give me one reason not to kill you right now," Arid drove her fingertips into the soft tube of his neck; she imprinted her fingerprints into his flesh, pressed so hard that the skin turned white, then red. To his credit, the man underneath her didn't begin to beg for mercy.

From his mouth fell what seemed to be like a slew of excuses but something she hadn't expected came out too.

"— We bought you from the Colosseum to free yo —"

"Shut up." Arid hard gaze never softened. She made a point to squeeze his throat.

False promises. Empty words. She'd heard them all before. What was different about this man right here? In the end, they all had the same, fleshy neck, and dark blood running through their veins that would spout from their deceased bodies like a crimson fountain. She'd only need to apply enough force, and then...

"If nobody is out here, then what makes you think that I won't slaughter you right where you stand and make it out on my own?"

That seemed to extinguish any words he had prepared right away. His face paled so light that Arid could swear it was almost translucent and the upper corner of his mouth trembled before it closed shut.

Then, the Grape Man's partner, the useless statuette he was before, suddenly started forwards, startling her. She noticed his gaunt face and gloomy eyes that were further darkened by the shade of his cloak hood. And he reached for her.

There was another image that came to her mind, like a crack of lightning it hit her violently and suddenly and she almost seized. Arid remembered the dark fabric that resembled shreds of shadow, then the cold glint of steel. And suddenly she felt intensely sick to her blackened core.

Arid tore her shoulder away from his grasp and climbed off.

Arid held her temples, panting hard, reeling at the memories that overwhelmed her. She ran, hoping her legs would take her far, bare feet slapping against wet grass and dirt as she propelled herself forward, and she receded into the dark and green recesses of the deep woodland.

As she raced through the wilderness, brushing past blurry trees, climbing over prickly brushes that scratched her ankles and knees, a thousand, million worries followed her.

Were those men really trying to help me? Was I wrong?

Doubt settled under her skin, worming into her insides; then there was a secondary emotion that came forth underneath. A small glimmer of an optimistic feeling – one she hadn't felt for a long, long time.

Why did I hurt him...

Arid's throat clenched as she tried to make sense of what had just happened, then her palm came up to hold her head, because suddenly the sun was too bright, the

birdsong was piercing; the thoughts chased her relentlessly, she became overwhelmed –

– **CRASH!**

And her legs, stiff and cramped from their lack of use, gave way. She realized it a moment too late – Arid's world lurched, freezing for a point in time as she felt herself stumble, then drop. Then came the explosive pain which burst throughout her body after gravity had hurtled her to the bottom. She tumbled down the hole, hitting mounds of dirt and stray stones.

Arid laid flat on her back, coughing heavily, noticing that her smarting hands and exposed skin were caked in thick, black mud. Her clothes were moist with dirty water and soaked through. She was on the bottom of a ravine, caked in mud and her own blood, hurting. For a moment Arid could do nothing but stare at the sky and wallow in the agony that plagued her.

Night had fallen quickly. Worry niggled at her brain, and she felt paranoia slip in, wondering if any Fae were after her or if she was really free. And if she should just fight through the injuries and keep moving. Then, after a while, in her total exhaustion through running and hurting and thinking, her body prevented her from any more and she succumbed to it. Eyelids like anvils, she fought sleep but lost. And her final thought before blacking out was that she hoped that she would be okay.

Arid barely dreamed, only experiencing wild thoughts and phantasmal guilt. Inner voices reminded her of her

uselessness, her inability to do a thing when it really counted, and they reminded her over and over with whispers made of malice said so sweetly despite their meaning in her ear. And in a raspy voice marred with slurred frustration she told it "Shut up." And she soon after found sleep again.

In the morning, Arid found herself safe and untouched, still at the place where she'd passed out.

The days seemed to have blurred together by now but if Arid had been keeping track correctly it had been two days since she'd fallen into the hole.

There was no food in the ravine. There was only water that came infrequently by scanty rainstorms. She would open her mouth and palms as she smelled the petrichor that came with it, but the rain never lasted as long as she would have liked.

Because she was a warrior; a champion, she healed quickly. Her body was used to taking damage and seemed to realize that, adapting itself to her climate – adapting itself to survive. That was one thing familiar to her, she was used to surviving. As Arid stared up at the cheery cerulean sky, she realized that out in the forest was no different than how it was back in there.

The place she called home.

Hunger took hold of her body, replacing her worries of being captured again with ones of food. What would she

eat...? She realized that there was a distinct lapse of information now, even before she had ever come into the Colosseum her father would come home with a great big elk held on his shoulders and its thin legs bared over each side of his ears. Then her mother would make a stew from it, or some kind of meat dish to eat with rice and beans. And within the Colosseum she was always given something to eat if she did well enough in the arena. But now... she had no idea how to get her next meal.

The hunger reminded her of something.

The last time she'd felt the stinging nettle in her stomach and the strong longing for a meal that might not come, was a long, long time ago.

The first time that Arid had ever met Serenity, a girl around her age, maybe a little younger or older, was on a sweltering, humid day. There was an unpleasant rank that settled itself in the Colosseum cell hallway, made heavy from prisoner body odor, musk, and sweaty pit stains.

"Eat,"

There was a sound from the opposite side of the imprisonment hallway, a mellow voice that came from a young woman right across from her. It was quiet enough to miss, and if Arid had been any less perceptive she was sure that she would have missed it.

The girl sat cross-legged in her cell, eyes forward (on Arid she realized), impossibly calm despite the situation. There were crumbs on her face. Arid thought with brisk hot jealousy that she wished that there could exist crumbs on her own face. A ridiculous thought to have but one merited by the emptiness in

her belly, and the continuous temptation from the smell of buttered loaves and hot food in the cell over.

Brat, She thought with contempt. And envy.

But the thought was quickly replaced when the girl from the cell across put out something bright red and round, shaped like a vibrant jewel.

"Don't you want to live? Eat."

There was a look of surprise that crossed Arid's face, one she couldn't stop herself from wearing. There it was, food – the thing she'd craved (and despite being non-religious), prayed for in the past few days, yet the irony was when it had finally appeared before her she was dubious enough to question it.

Arid's mint eyes seemed to glaze over, transfixed on the object like she was spellbound. The dim torchlights of the Colosseum holding chambers were just enough to reflect a wavering glow off its gleaming surface, like a prized gemstone at an auction. But Arid cared not for riches or jewels. At this very moment the effects of malnutrition grinded sandpaper to the lining of her stomach; tortuously, slowly. She was faint and pale, dizzy from having nothing but stale crusts, some oats, and sips of water for the past few days.

Losers didn't eat well.

At most, she'd be given a side of oatmeal to fill her belly. And Arid couldn't seem to win matches, so she often went hungry.

The survivors; the champions, would be a different story though – for them, the Colosseum managers would bring out great big trays filled with sizzling steaks, bowls heaping with soft mashed potato mounds and gravy, whole plates of buttery pasta, with bright red lobsters hanging off the tray's edges. It was a

tortuous sight and smell, one she was sure was intended to be that way. And Arid always wished that she could plug her nose and eyes at mealtime in fear that the jealousy would leak out of her pores and burn acid holes in the stone patterned tiles.

"...Give it."

The hunger overrode her instincts enough to forget this as hazardous. Pride and politeness were concepts that she'd left behind in her old life; right now she couldn't afford to reject handouts. She had the decency to picture her mother, bent at the waist, pointing a poised wooden spoon at her, asking her to "Mind your manners?"

But Arid knew the image wasn't real, and declined to care.

Serenity passed the apple through her cell with an underhand toss; it rolled to the base of Arid's cell and she picked it up eagerly, rubbing it roughly on her own shirt, in doing so spotting her clothing with dirt and unknown brown matter. Then she ate ravenously, like an animal, tearing at the yellow flesh, not slowing for taste or chewing properly. Juice spurted down her hands and turned them sticky. She chewed down the core and stem bits, hating the way it felt between her teeth, uncomfortable because it felt so wrong, but not caring otherwise since it filled the void of her belly and made the emptiness feel a little less painful.

And when she finished Serenity was still staring at her, the calmness of her gray eyes like gentle turning waves.

"Better?"

And Arid, now slightly more lucid from getting something nutritious in her system had the decency to blush and she replied

sheepishly, "Yes, but I—" There was a question that pressed forward on her mind.

"...Why did you help me?"

And in a tone and manner that bore no semblance of dishonesty, so Arid believed it with all of her being that it was true, her Savior said,

"Because, life is precious."

There was a rustle from the green and brush above, and it roused her from the memory.

Then when Arid looked down at the ground there was something white and soft on the dirt.

It was a primal reaction. Her mouth immediately filled to the brim with saliva, her burning bloodshot eyes widening to plates as her body reacted without her permission. Like a vampire, the smell of warm blood enticed her, tipped over her self control and she was suddenly on it, her spring-like legs launching, aimed to attack its soft and exposed neck. She moved towards its flashing red eye, wasting no movements or time, and tore it into bits and pieces with her claws until the taste and smell of fresh iron filled the open air.

The young rabbit seized a moment too slow, spasming after death, as if its nerves had just understood what had happened.

Arid screamed a victory cry and then she scooped red, meaty chunks of its dead body into her mouth. The taste of sweet flesh spread over her taste buds and she —

No.

Shock and horror. It stank up her nose and lungs. She felt terrified of herself, of what she wanted to do—the image felt so clear and real in her head that she *saw* it happen in her mind's eye. Arid looked at her open hand and saw red dripping from it; then the color faded quickly when she shook her head in defiance.

Her stomach turned queasily. Then slowly, her mind cleared, the smell of iron fading, the warmth on her tongue dissipating into just a memory passed. The rabbit still sat across from her inside the hole. All white. And untouched.

Then, clutching her trembling hands to her stomach, Arid turned away and forced herself to erase her thoughts. She clutched a patch of grass between her fingers, forcing herself to chew and swallow despite the terribly pungent flavor. Anything to get her mind off of it.

Life is precious. Came forth a voice from deep inside her mind.

"Life is precious," she echoed, drifting into sleep.

Last night's psychosis had long passed by now, faded into just a background pang; that sleep had done her wonders. She hardly noticed it now, her mind clearer and her thoughts more focused.

The bunny lay in the far left side of her ravine, resting, still alive. She considered it would be the same as death if she left it there, where it might be exposed to other

predators, starvation, or the elements. Then she started to wonder how to get out of the hole.

"Are you tired of being down here?" Arid asked the animal.

She expected no response. It was just a bunny after all. But as if it had heard her words for what they meant, the young hare stirred from its sleep, moving slowly, then it sprang to life. Arid watched bewildered, thinking it was a coincidence when it moved to the edge of the inside of the hole. But it lingered there, its red eyes unblinking and little ears perked slightly as if to beckon her close. So she followed it, her curiosity ambling not far behind too.

There was a small trail of divots in the dirt wall.

Arid, unsure, eyed the bunny as if it would give her answers. Then, when it would not, Arid took her fingers to the wall and began scooping out chunks of dirt. She took the bunny and plopped it on her shoulder, then began climbing up.

Arid surfaced a lot faster than she expected. Gently, she lowered it to the grass and watched it pad away into the overgrowth.

The bunny was free.

But she was not.

The dew from last night's torrid rain drew eagerly from the tall, bent waves of grass, flicking from blade to leaf, leaf to tip, and then slid straight down into Arid's anticipating tongue and throat.

She lapped it up greedily, parched, more so because the remnants of the nightmare still lingered, torturing her in waking, and she was relieved that the water gave her life and comfort from the lack she'd gained from her disturbed slumber. Distantly, Arid still wondered, though the feeling had faded a lot by now, if she was truly free and if those men really didn't intend to trick her. She wondered if she was allowed to live an unbarred existence, or if a party of Fae and dogs would soon materialize at the skyline, charging for her life.

Then Arid decided that the dew of last night was not enough hydration and she clambered over to the riverbed to seek more.

Arid sat on her knees, settling at the riverside, cupping both hands for a drink before suddenly halting, shocked that there was a beast that was trapped inside the water.

Her mouth gaped open, complexion turned to pallor. It was an ugly monster — red eyes glowing with hate, injured skin caked with dirt and dried blood, mane wild and tacked with dead leaves. The beast prowled with unjust pride and deadly fangs that gleamed with the reputation of a frequent murderer.

Then, she cast aside her fear at the remembrance of her status and ability as a warrior and she charged at it angrily with the intent to slaughter its disgraceful existence until the water broke underneath her fingertips and she realized that it wasn't a beast at all, but a mirror image. At the well's reflection, she stared bewildered until finally Arid broke

down and away to weep. Then somewhere in between, she fell asleep again.

Sleep and cry. That was a combination that seemed to commonly befall the young ex-gladiator and she slept and wept in the very shallow shade of silver-dusted fern fronds, where the waning shadow flickered with every unsteady breeze and chilled her uneasily resting form. And she laid there sleeping and weeping, wishing that the midsummer rain would wash her away too like it cast away loose twigs and leaves and wriggling bugs. Wasn't she the same, anyway? A stick, a bug, a leaf in the mud, and a failure that couldn't do anything but watch as her one cherished friend run dry of blood when crimson liquid poured out of her eyes and ears and mouth until she breathed her last breath, tortured and ragged from pain, and lay asleep for the final time.

And in the pit of her heart it ached, because she knew, solemnly, that she could never take back what happened in the past. She hated herself more than anything. The pity, the anger, the hate lit her thoughts ablaze and woke her again; how could she sleep when her head and throat and eyes seemed to burn like an unquenchable forest fire?

Yes. And that's what she wanted. She wanted to be a wild fire — destroy everything in the path, and then she herself would extinguish in a small handful of disappearing embers. Gone. And long forgotten.

Arid ripped blades of grass from their place in the dirt, grinding them between her teeth in anger, feeling the

pungent taste and smell spread throughout her mouth. It barely tasted as strong as it once did before, and she was now long used to the bitter and grassy flavor. Hot tears stung at her eyes once more, and the lump in her throat made swallowing almost impossible.

She was surely a pitiful sight, and Arid, marred with red eyes and bubbling tears, was glad that she couldn't see herself in the water right now.

"I'm sorry," she said, voice cracked and shaken with hurt. Thoughts of Serenity's gory cadaver flashed in terrible detail through her mind's eye. She wished desperately that she could erase what happened.

"Please forgive me. I'm sorry."

For the next few hours Arid would enter a state that wasn't quite sleeping but not exactly awake either. She drifted mentally, suspended in some kind of even delirious stasis; floating in space, unconscious but partially conscious. Her mind was flooded with guilt-ridden, repeating memories; self inflicted torture. She wished over-and-over that she would never wake up again. She wouldn't allow herself to leave the purgatory until she felt the punishment constituted it enough.

When she finally came to, it was dark. Despite the last time she'd been up, the sky was pitch black, this time smattered with white and pink stars. There was a snake the color of an ink pot atop the grass, its head a diamond shape and decorated in delicate silver paint strokes. She realized its little head was lifted up to look at her.

The glowing white moonlight reflected off its scales like a glittering jewel. The snake's little beady eyes met her green ones, and its forked tongue flickered passively.

"Are you here to kill me?" She asked the animal, despite herself.

The snake only stared back.

"Do you hate me?" She wondered aloud.

It didn't reply.

Instead, the snake turned, slinking away, unfurling its dark body to move out of sight. The movement agitated the dirt beneath its underbelly, spraying clods of soil and fallen petals as it flickered away and into the overgrowth.

Though she was awake for a while the delirium seemed to linger. She swore that there was a symbol in the dirt where the reptile had been, engraved loosely with circles and lines made into an animal she thought to be familiar. But when she rubbed her eyes in confusion if it really was there, there was nothing. Instead, there was only a handful of waxy, white petals left—the only proof that there was ever such a placid but deadly creature that came to visit her in the night.

Her dream still haunted her.

It played itself over-and-over every night.

"My stomach hurts,"

Serenity lay sprawled on the hard, stone floor with her hands clutched hard against her stomach. It was the cell right across from Arid's own, a little enclosure labeled with the scraggly

numbers **001**, the numeral code of the cellmate who lived inside of it, so she could see the pained frown lines and sweat that bordered Serenity's pallid forehead, and the short, sparse breaths that seemed to wrack her sickly body. She'd been like that awhile, afflicted with pain, unable to do anything but twitch and sweat.

"Are you bleeding?" Arid whispered back, inching closer to reach the openings in between the cell bars. Her left hand stretched through one of the gaps. Not for escape – no, she couldn't fully make contact with Serenity from this distance anyway. Rather, it was made as a gesture of comfort. I'm here for you, her hand seemed to say. Arid knew better than to dangle any body parts outside of her cell lest a guard see her. But it was a risk she was willing to take.

"No. It just hurts,"

But the pain Serenity was in seemed to dampen her self-restraint because the 'no' came out like a 'nooough' – drawn out and unable to suppress the bubble of pain that seemed to desperately want to escape from the confines of her body.

In the distant background Arid heard the clamoring Clink of the magic fortified door opening, then closing. And then dread crawled into her throat because Manager visiting almost never meant anything good.

"So,"

Manager bent down to meet her at eye-level. Her forearm slung over her own bent knee and met Arid's mint gaze with steady judgment. Contempt.

It was impressive, really. Arid secretly admired that she could squat in heels.

"What the fuck was that today? Are you trying to fuck me over?" A hand slammed on one of the metal bars, loudly, making her jolt. Arid squeezed her eyes shut, wondering exactly what she'd done wrong and dreading another tirade.

"So what. You think you're tough? You think you're tough shit, is that it?" A hand shot through the bars of Arid's cell at an inhuman speed. Faster than she could ever react. It clamped over her throat like a vice.

Arid gasped for breath.

A chained human girl and an adult, magic-wielding Faerie. It was shooting fish in a barrel – there was no contest. Arid knew that if she really wanted to, Lapid could kill her. And unlike if it were the other way around, nobody would bat an eye at the death of a dispensable human. Her corpse would just be dragged out to the pits and thrown with the rest of the loser gladiators.

Her manager's arms were clad with black lace, she observed, a fine fabric that Arid knew that she could never wear, let alone touch. She struggled against Lapid's grip, her own hands trying to pry off the chokehold but still careful to not graze her clothes.

"N..." Arid felt her vision go spotty. "No, of course not,"

"...Off..." came from across the cell hallway.

"What did you just say?" Lapid swiveled towards the source of noise, still pissed, her left palm shining with magic.

"I said. Fuck off, leave her alone." Serenity's voice, though still pained, was fierce with anger.

In the corner of her eye Arid could perceive it, a tall ghost cloaked in all black, where his face should have been was only bone, yellowed and worn from the aftermath of unforgiving time

and the sockets of his eyes were hollowed out like the inside of a dark, endless tunnel.

"What did you just say to me, you little bitch?" Arid felt her body drop and the air refill her lungs as Lady Lapid released her grip to saunter towards the other girl. She gasped for air, choking.

"No, nonono – " and the cage bars rattled violently as she shook them with fierce desperation. The figure hung along the corner of their hallway, and she could sense his suffocating presence though nobody else paused or deigned to comment on the deathly aura. He slunk quietly, purposefully, gleaming silver in his hold, a stain of black seeming to permeate the air around him.

In the pit of her stomach she felt it. Inexplicably, to even herself, she just instinctively knew that something was wrong, horribly wrong. The hairs on her arms raised and gooseflesh formed in anticipation. She had to stop it –

*The reaper sauntered slowly, bare feet padding softly across the stone tiles, making no sound, and he passed the cell at the furthest end of the hall, labeled **010**. Then he continued down calmly as if in no rush at all, passing the numbers one-by-one, almost peacefully despite Arid's hysteric state. His scythe clacked against the cell bars like a xylophone as he moved ahead. At her side, the loaf that sat on the side of her cell had lost its steam, the crust now hard and stale. The pad of butter atop turned hard in the time she'd ignored to eat it.*

Lady Lapid stalked forwards, yelling profanities, her beautiful face turned ugly with rage. Then she took her palm which still flowed with an uncast spell and released something in the air. Something strange.

Nothing happened at first. But time moved like a jar of molasses, tipped upside-down with the thick straps of the black syrup only touching surface after what felt like an eternity. The cloaked man eventually reached the last cell in the hall, the one marked with **001**. And Arid swore she could see the upper corner of his bony jaw tilt a little bit upwards. And he swung it in a great arc –

“STOP IT. STOP.”

He didn't listen, and swiveled his weapon heavily; the moment it hit her body it dissipated into thin air. Yet crimson spittle dribbled from out her outstretched mouth, and Arid watched in mute horror as her friend's storm gray eyes rolled to the back of her head and her whole body tipped; red specks flew in every direction, the terrifying thud of a dead weight on solid ground followed shortly after.

There was then an excruciating pause that punctuated the air.

The death reaper only stood there, above the young victim.

Life was such a fragile thing.

The screams that escaped from her mouth and expelled by her powerful lungs were piercing, raucous so it deafened her own ears too. Her own howls of agony ripped her eardrums, split them 'till they were void of sound, and the only thing she could hear was the manic bloodlust that demanded that she torture, kill, and take Lapid's head on a like. She would relish in her manager's cries for help and the fading light from her demonic eyes.

As of that moment, she understood that Serenity was no longer of this world.

Life was so fragile.

Like a flower. It bloomed and then faded away.

It could be ended at the will of someone carelessly treading forth, like a hiker trampling a white blossom as he went up his trail.

*Arid's body remained immobile, wracked with grief and guilt and madness. The hooded figure lingered by her side throughout, only fading when the last torchlight extinguished by the unlikely passing of underground wind. And she stayed like that, stayed comatose until the next morning, where they mopped up the bloody bits and remains. And then all that was left afterwards was a red stain, of who used to be Cellmate **001**.*

She had been walking for hours, through some substance she thought to be like a viscous river, only when she looked down there was nothing really there.

There was a long path, worn by time and human traffic, which in the middle split down with a fork in the road.

There were two ways.

So Arid decided to take the right wayward path, the one marred by hate and bloodlust and because she knew that the feel of it was familiar to her and she embraced it. Then, the moment she embarked a thick, ink-colored liquid began to spill onto the path that she walked, then suddenly she was in a box, and the blackness was sloshed all the way up to her neck. And more shadows flowed in, filling the box to its brim, filling her eyes and nose and mouth and ears and then she herself became the darkness.

Arid thrashed but she had no form. She tried to scream but made no sound. She became nothing but distilled despair; Arid was snatched up by the recesses of her mind and next she —

— Found herself awake again.

The sting of biting air and cold whipped past her cheeks. At her pace and this weather it was impossible for it not to. But Arid ignored the pain because she was on a mission.

Strong legs carried her uphill — ten yards; twenty, then fifty. Arid eventually lost count. At some point it no longer mattered. Her legs burned as her muscles churned out lactic acid but the sting would only encourage her to keep fighting more because it reminded her that she was alive. That she was getting close. The dirt that had always seemed to feel cold and sodden was warm and solid beneath her footpads (like a cheer-on from the beck of nature itself).

Then Arid reached the apex where she could see the unmistakable figure of the Colosseum even from where she stood in the clearing. Her heart beat furiously in her chest.

Only, something was wrong.

A thick, black plume of smoke came from inside the Colosseum; orange and yellow flames licked at the base of the building and climbed slowly up its great walls. People, Fae and humans alike, ducked out from the Colosseum, scurrying desperately from the site like frenzied ants. The

inferno blazed with a fervor that engulfed the oil-slick walls with insatiable heat.

Arid didn't feel the white petals slip from her grasp, nor did she register the subtle thud it made as it met jungle flooring. Instead, her thoughts were on the fire. The one that was destroying everything. Destroying her home.

The sight wrought precipitation from her tear ducts — she thought the water to be rain at first and rejoiced at the prospect of the fire being extinguished that way. But the taste of salt and defeat entered her mouth and she realized that it wasn't the weather but rather her own tears. She hardly noticed them fall; the water from her body would do nothing to extinguish the flames that destroyed all.

By her side Arid, even in her agony, could sense someone near. In the corner of her vision she saw a man overlooking the scene. He had long, black hair, and wore a completely untroubled expression. On his shoulder, she noticed, there was a silver patch patterned with a threaded insignia.

And despite it all, he smiled at her. As if the background wasn't filled with dark, suffocating smoke in the air and the clamored panic of terror-stricken Fae.

From his pocket he produced a singular white tulip and presented it to Arid. And hesitating, twinging with confusion, she took it from him gingerly and accepted it.

She was afraid to hold something so fragile, afraid that it would turn to dust between her fingers. Yet she felt calm. For what seemed to be the first time in eons Arid's heart

was steady. Her mouth moved into the shape of a small smile.

Because she knew that she would cherish the flower for time to come.



Photo Manipulation (2022) by Kelly Huertas Sandoval

Adobe Photoshop

My Life as a Flight Attendant; Navigating the Ups and Downs

Brenda Neary

I have been a flight attendant for nearly twenty years, performing a wide range of service and safety related tasks all at 37,000 feet. At surface level, it may appear that the life of a flight attendant is all glamour, traveling from city to city, meeting new people and having exciting adventures, however, there is so much more happening behind the scenes. There are few people who get to say they travel the world for a living, and I can tell you firsthand about the good, the bad, and the ugly of human nature. Traveling has a way of bringing out both the best and worst qualities of people, so fasten your seatbelt for a journey through the not always so friendly skies.

I was just barely nineteen years old when I started this job, and I was simultaneously excited, fearful, and anxious. Of course, with any new job come these kinds of feelings; this job, however, was on a different level. As a new flight attendant, I started with an on-call schedule, where I had set days off for the month, and the rest, I was subject to being called at any time, to fly anywhere. I always had my suitcase packed with a coat, bathing suit, umbrella, and of course, extra underwear, because I could be gone for up to six days. Despite being at the beck and call of crew scheduling, I had a wonderful time and saw places I never would have otherwise. I have traveled to Rome, where I

saw the Vatican and Trevi Fountain and ate the most amazing pasta. I sat right at the edge of the spectacular Cliffs of Moher in Ireland, visited Tel Aviv and the biblically historical city of Jaffa, and eaten mussels in Brussels. I have hung out on a beach with pink flamingos in Aruba and stood on a balcony on Fat Tuesday in New Orleans tossing out beads to party goers.

One of the most unique aspects of this job, however, is this great contrast. Along with the fun and excitement, there also come delays, cramped passenger seating, long hours, sleepless nights, and being witness to the ugly side of human nature. I have seen a fist fight almost break out because of a reclined seat. I have been cursed at, countless times, for such reasons as delays, running out of overhead baggage space, or simply asking someone to follow the rules. I was once called a liar because I ran out of someone's first choice for a meal. People can also be disgusting. I have had to close off lavatories that were, shall we say, sprayed in yuck. I have had someone try and hand me their soiled underwear to dispose of, had trash thrown at me, and even been projectile vomited on. Do some people really think this job is glamorous?

Of course, people are not all bad; I have heard incredible stories and had the opportunity to witness people do some amazing things. While lack of personal space on an airplane can certainly cause tension, it can also bring people together. I have met people from all walks of life, with diverse backgrounds and reasons for travelling. One

person may be headed to say their last goodbyes to a loved one, another may be moving across the country, and yet another may be going on the vacation of a lifetime.

On a regular basis, I see gestures of kindness, like people giving up their aisle or window seats, to sit in the middle seat so a family can all sit together. I am regularly treated to candies, chocolates, and gift cards by passengers who just want to say thank you. I have seen a man give up his first-class seat to an active-duty military personnel and sit in his middle seat in the way back. In every single medical emergency I have had onboard, there have been people ready and willing to help in any way. These gestures, however big or small, have done so much to restore my faith in humanity when it feels like we are all constantly bombarded by negativity.

Most people view flight attendant as just a service-related position, with misconceptions as to what our job responsibilities really entail. Flight attendants can spend anywhere from four to six weeks in initial training, then must attend annual training to stay current. We are trained to fight fires, respond to medical emergencies, be aware of security issues, evacuate an aircraft within ninety seconds, and de-escalate tense situations. While, thankfully, most of these events do not happen on a regular basis, I have had to use my training to handle many unnerving situations. I recall one of the scariest situations I have had onboard; mid-flight, the captain called the flight attendants to inform us we would need to prepare the cabin for an emergency

landing due to a hydraulics issue. While the pilots were running through their safety checklists, we were running through ours as well, ensuring the cabin was secure, briefing passengers to aid in an evacuation if necessary, and most importantly, performing a special safety demonstration detailing proper brace positions and instructions for an orderly evacuation. I was nervous and filled with adrenaline, but my training automatically kicked in and I remained calm and collected. Thankfully, we landed safely and did not need to evacuate, however this incident was a reminder as to just how quickly things can change and how important my job is in an emergency.

The airline industry has gone through many changes in the twenty years since I began flying. Between recessions, and a global pandemic, and shifting weather patterns, we are seeing more frequent delays and cancellations, and greater tensions among the travelling public. The media is constantly inundating us with stories and videos of belligerent, intoxicated, violent passengers starting fights in airports and onboard airplanes. I am frequently asked how I can still do this job, given these current circumstances, and my reasoning is yet another skill I acquired through my experience as a flight attendant: empathy, and patience. While not every situation can be de-escalated, I have found that active listening and empathy can help most of the time. When someone has had an unpleasant experience, ultimately, they want to be heard and understood; I try my best to do that every day.

As the seasons of my life have changed, I find myself craving the stability of home and family, and I have found this job has the unique ability to adapt to that as well. With time and seniority comes better pay, more flexible schedules, added vacation time, and opportunity for a more grounded life, should that be what you desire. While I appreciate all the opportunities my job presents, the ability to work one- or two-day trips domestically and be home most nights may be the greatest of all. I can enjoy time with my family and be home for all the important milestones. As for how long I plan to work here, who knows; our most senior flight attendant has been flying for 50 years! Maybe one day I'll even gain that initial excitement back when I first started, and travel to new and exciting destinations. For now, however, my favorite layover is home.



The Tree Couple (2023) by Hui Kuang Cheng

Unframed Linocut. 10x12in.

I was carving a tree, but the tree's branches were cutting off, losing the connection.

After it was printed, it looked like two people there, a classmate even came up and asked me

"Is this you and your husband in the abstract?" I loved it right away. ☺

-Hui Kuang Cheng

Special Report:

Understanding Involuntary Celibates (INCELS)

In the 2022-2023 academic year, Middlesex College's Honors Program introduced a unique approach. Honors students were offered the chance to enroll in Professor Andrew Dzurisin's Sociology course during the fall semester, followed by Professor Shannon Bertha-Angulo's Human Sexuality course in the spring. What made this format special was that both courses focused on the same topic: Incels. By taking both courses, students gained an in-depth understanding of the Incel population and examined it from multiple perspectives.

In Dr. Bertha-Angulo's course, students were presented with two assignment options. The first was a curriculum assignment that focused on providing solutions to discourage individuals from joining the Incel community. The second option was a survey assignment, where students had to create a survey from scratch, administer it, and then analyze the collected data. Students used the research they gathered in Professor Dzurisin's course as the stepping stones for their final projects.

These projects provided students with an opportunity to apply and develop knowledge acquired over a year-long experience.

“Incels also believe in hypergamy- the idea that women will only seek partners of “higher status” (ADL), leading to a lifestyle of playing the victim, rather than seeking ways of self-improvement.”

INCEL: A Survey

Emily Fox

The purpose of this survey was to highlight popular topics in incel communities and to see if anyone outside of these communities shares similar opinions.

Research

The literature surrounding Incels paints a shocking picture of an online community that people often write off as trolls and/or as a joke. Incels, involuntary celibates, are a community of men with incredibly violent, isolated, misogynistic views of the world (ADL). At the core of their beliefs, they believe that women are the root cause of all problems faced by the incel, and a direct threat to not only their masculinity but their livelihoods (Sugiura 2). Incels believe they are wholly undesired by women, due to a woman's ability to choose her partners in life, and the Incel's physically undesirable looks. This leads these individuals to an incredibly isolated lifestyle, believing in acts such as "blackpillling,"- when a "male believes that no matter what he does to improve himself, he will never find a romantic and/or sexual partner and is

doomed to a life of unhappiness and rejection,” (ADL). Incels also believe in hypergamy- the idea that women will only seek partners of “higher status” (ADL), leading to a lifestyle of playing the victim, rather than seeking ways of self-improvement.

The incel community began as an online forum for people who were involuntarily celibate- having no luck with sex, romance, and/or dating, founded by college student, Alana (Bates 22-23). At first, it was a harmless community, with many people, including Alana, even leaving it once they found luck in their love lives (Sugiura 4). The community was eventually radicalized by those with extreme views and turned into what it is today. This manner of thinking, and Incels themselves, exists in the “manosphere,” a culmination of men’s rights groups that exist in response to feminism (Sugiura 5). The issue with the manosphere is the increasing amount of violent rhetoric that exists within it, which planted the seed for the incel community to thrive. The Incel community is now considered the “most violent corner of the manosphere” (Bates 19).

Incels have created a hierarchy in their community, based on attractiveness. At the very top are the “Chads” men who are considered attractive, sexually successful, and the only ones women are

attracted to and open to sleeping with (Vox). "Chads" are both hated and idealized in this community; the men are jealous of their success and hate them for it, yet they wish they could be them (ADL). "Stacys" are the hyper-feminine equivalent to "Chads," they will only sleep with "Chads," and pay other men no mind (Vox). The same hypocritical view exists towards "Stacys;" they are considered dumb and slutty, with many violent incels wanting to commit violent crimes against these "Stacys" and/or kill them, yet they also lust after the "Stacys" and wish they could sleep with her. There are also "Beckys," women who are considered average, but still promiscuous (Bates 37), and are supposed to feel lucky to receive any male attention (Vox).

The men in this community are mostly seeking to validate their feeling of victimhood, using women as a scapegoat for their problems (Sugiura 5). As a result, the attitudes toward women in this group are rather shocking and vile. Women are not seen by incels as human beings, instead referring to them as "foids," short for female humanoids (ADL). There exists a deep and complex hypocritical view of women in this community. Women are so deeply hated yet lusted after at the same time. These incels are the ones who want to sexually take advantage of women, yet as soon as a woman has sex, she's a

“roastie,” a woman who “has had too much sex..to suggest that this deforms her labia, causing them to resemble roast beef” (qtd. in Barnes 34). These men also believe that rather than a woman being able to choose her sexual partners in life, they inherently owe men sex, and should be grateful for any attention from men (ADL.) Neo-nazi Andrew Anglin writes:

Women crave men who call them stupid and claim they shouldn't have any rights. They also crave being tied up, beaten, and raped. Look, I hate women. I think they deserve to be beaten, raped, and locked in cages. (qtd. in ADL)

Another terrifying and harmful belief held by the incels is that of reverse rape. Incels claim that women withholding sex from them constitutes as a form of rape and is just as harmful as rape and sexual assault (ADL). This radical idea on top of the other ideas held by this group have caused members to carry out terroristic attacks. Self-identified incel, Elliot Rogers, killed six people in 2014, targeting women who fit the appearance of “Stacys,”(ADL), and another self-identified incel, Alek Minassian, killed ten people in a similar attack in 2015 (ADL).

The incel logic has found itself becoming slightly more mainstream with the rise in popularity of social media influencer, Andrew Tate (Beiza). Like the values of the incels, Tate believes that masculinity is under threat. Tate places importance, like incels, on becoming an “Alpha Male,” defined as “a personality type that describes someone who is dominant, arrogant, competitive, confident, etc.,” (Beiza). Tate also believes that women should be considered men’s property, echoing the misogynistic values of the incel community. While not a self-described incel, his values align with many of the incel communities and can be extremely harmful to young people consuming his content. Like many incel forums, many of Tate’s platforms were quickly banned in response to his misogynistic rhetoric (Beiza).

In conclusion, the incel community, while mostly comprised of men looking to play the victim rather than change their lives around, can be extremely dangerous. They pump out horribly misogynistic views, backed by fake science, statistic, and academic findings (Bates 42). To “blackpill,” and accept your life as unmeaningful due to virginity is horrifying. In the wake of multiple domestic terroristic acts carried out by self-identified incels, it is good that the true threat of these individuals is

beginning to be taken seriously. Hopefully, these men seek the resources they need to live a fulfilling life, rather than submitting to the consumption of this dangerous rhetoric.

Analyzing the Survey

The purpose of this survey was to highlight popular topics in incel communities and to see if anyone outside of these communities shares similar opinions. Most of the questions are based on fundamental incel beliefs. It was distributed to 33 friends, colleagues, and friends of friends. 58% of participants were women, 39% were men, and 4% were non-binary. Politically, 39% of participants were Democrats, 30% Apolitical, 21% Other, and 9% Republican. The majority of participants fell within the 25-34 age range (70%), with 24% being 18-24, 3% 35-44, and 3% 55+. Most participants were also social media users, 94%, with only 6% who do not use social media. Facebook and Instagram were the most popular platforms used among participants.

To begin, these were the multiple-choice questions that had the most resounding answers among participants. The majority of participants

agreed/strongly agreed (78.7%) with the statement "I consider myself a feminist," and disagreed/strongly disagreed (90.9%) with the statement "Feminism is harmful to women." All participants (100%) disagree/strongly disagreed that "women owe men sex," with 96.9% disagreeing/strongly disagreeing that both "women should be sexually submissive to men," and "women should be submissive to men in everyday life." 90.9% of participants disagreed/strongly disagreed with the statement, "Women who are not and never have been sexually active are more admirable than women who are sexually active," and 87.9% disagreed/strongly disagreed with the statement "Traditional gender roles are important and should be upheld. (i.e, the woman as a housekeeper, men as breadwinners)." Lastly, 60.6 % disagreed/strongly disagreed that "sex is more physically important for men," and 72.7% disagreed/strongly disagreed with the statement "It is harmful to men if women do not provide them with sexual attention."

A split in answers can begin to be seen in the remainder of the multiple-choice questions. "Masculinity is diminishing," was met with 42.5% of participants agreeing/strongly agreeing. Out of this 42.5%, it was split 50/50, with 7 men agreeing and 7

women agreeing. 57.6% believe that “Physical attractiveness is a scale and/or hierarchy,” however 75.8% disagree that “Women only want to date typically attractive men (“manly” attributes-physically fit, strong jawline, etc.);” the majority that agreed, 24.2%, with this were women. “Men who are virgins are less attractive and desirable than men who are not,” was met with 72.7% disagreeing; the majority of those who agreed were men. Overall, 66.6% agreed that “When dating, many believe physical attractiveness is more important than personality.” The majority that agreed were women.

Another split in response can be seen when participants were asked if they thought “dating apps are harmful to men,” and “dating apps are harmful to women.” 57.6% agreed that they are harmful to men; the majority that agreed being men and 1 non-binary. 66.7% agreed that they are harmful to women, with both men and women agreeing. The responses to “Men are too picky/selective when dating,” and “Women are too picky/selective when dating,” also feature a split in responses. 55.1% agree that men are too picky, and the majority agreeing were women. 62% believe that women are too picky, the majority also being women who agreed. The final split can be seen when asked if “men physically need sex,” and if “women physically need sex.”

58.6% agreed that men physically need sex, the majority again being women that agreed. 55.2% believe women physically need sex, again, the majority being women that agreed.

The open-ended responses offered a fantastic view into the minds of the participants in order to compare them to the thought process of incels. Here are the prompts, and the most intriguing answers.

"If you agreed/strongly agreed that dating apps are harmful, in what ways are they harmful;"

"They can cause people to hyperfocus on what they think makes/could make them attractive to other people to a negative degree. A cottage industry of pickup "artists", grifters, and manosphere types also tend to reinforce toxic behavior among those that may not traditionally find success at first glance on dating apps as well." (Woman participant)

"Do you think "toxic masculinity" is actually toxic? Should men be more masculine in today's world? Why?"

"Yes masculinity is what it needed. You cannot have a good world with just a bunch of soft people. Masculinity is also good for a woman to have. This is not a fairytale universe do you think if you

eliminated masculinity all problems would go away, absolutely not." (Woman participant)

"Can feminism be harmful to men? In what ways?"

"Yes. it can be misconstrued. just like male incels there are also female incels, who will take certain situations in normal environments and blow things out of proportion." (Male participant)

Concerning the idea of "reverse rape;"

"I think using the word "rape" is very strong in this sense. However, I do think choosing to not be with someone due to race, gender, weight etc is a personal preference. Everyone has a right to have a choice in this sense. I do believe there is a person for everyone out there. I think everyone at some point in their life has been rejected in some way. Yes being rejected is emotionally damaging but I think to say it's reverse rape is a bit much. People who have been through actual sexual trauma and rape cannot be compared to someone who was just sad they were rejected. Calling something reverse rape feels as if we're taking away the definition of actual rape." (Woman participant)

"Can this "reverse rape" be harmful to men?"

“No, men who are not sexually satisfied should reflect on themselves as to what makes them undesirable.” (Male participant)

67% of participants were familiar with Andrew Tate, with 72% agreeing that his narrative is dangerous.

Responses to the prompts about Tate are as follows:

“What parts of Tate’s narrative do you agree/disagree with?”

“I think he’s right about a lot of things such as men being men and needing back up masculine men. Everyone’s changing to be less masculine it’s the way the government wants men to be now. I’m for feminism but at the end of the day I need or want a man to move my fridge not me. I disagree with how he’s cocky about it. How he shows off. He gets a little carried away but I think men need someone like him these days. We’ve gotten too soft.” (Woman participant)

When compared to the research on incels, the majority of participants in this survey seem to understand that most of these topics, while they can be actual concerns, do not truly exist in the real world and are extremist in nature. It was quite surprising to see how many women hold similar opinions to that of incels. It was actually the most

surprising result of the survey- to see women answering the way an incel would. Most of the 50/50 topics concerned gender roles, dating sites, and toxic masculinity, all of which are highly sensitive subjects in today's social climate. It truly makes me wonder if constructive conversations were had surrounding the topic presented in this survey between women and incel, would this help solve the incel problem? Would incels be able to see women as actual people with thoughts and opinions, or would they rather continue to "blackpill," and wallow away in self-pity?

This survey offered a great perspective on controversial topics from mostly young consumers of social media, the majority of which (22 of 33) were familiar with incels prior to this survey. It is also a great reminder that as exposed as people are to the internet, not everyone falls victim to rhetoric and communities like incels, and it is important to understand what is true and what is not.

Opinion

I would be lying if I said this was an easy project to do. The subject material is so heavy and dark, especially as a woman. Trying to understand the

mind of the incel was something that did not come easily; I truly could not and still cannot comprehend why someone would choose to live their life this way. The highly hypocritical mind of an incel, as horrible and frustrating, is incredibly intriguing to learn about.

Thanks to having a great support system of friends, and lots of online social media friends, the survey was able to gather quite a few responses very easily. Within two days, I had 33 responses. The only change I would have made is to try to give it out to more diverse age groups. My family was uninterested, and I had been so eager to gain a “boomer” generation's opinion. I do believe this would have made it more difficult, however, as I can believe many of them would have been confused by the subject matter and following questions.

This whole project and curriculum make me truly grateful to have such forward-thinking friends, and especially grateful to have a boyfriend that frequents reddit who does not agree with or support the incel logic. I feel truly horrible for the people who get caught up with Incels, even though it can be quite rare for a relationship with an incel to actually take off. I am truly grateful that during my time of online dating, I (to my knowledge) never came across or interacted with an incel.

I also was happy to bring awareness to the seriousness of incels to the people surrounding me while working on this project. Like many, I too had the belief that incels were not a true threat, just nerdy, loser men. Quickly into this research, I learned just how much of a threat they are, and I truly hope my survey was both a talking point and an eye-opener to my participants. Even if one out of 40,000 incels became violent, it is one too much, and actions should be taken to guarantee the chance of it happening again is slim.

In conclusion, I also find myself thinking about the innocent victims of Elliot Rogers and Alek Minassian. It is so heartbreaking that they lost their lives in the name of an absolutely absurd movement. As evil as these incels can be, I truly hope most of them find the help they need and become valuable members of society, leaving behind this hateful, violent rhetoric.

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Untitled (2022) by Kelly Bartko

“The biggest problem for incels is that women are allowed to select their partners and can say no if they are uninterested in a particular male’s advances.”

“With the rise of technology, men can find comfort in dating apps at their fingertips. For introverted men and social awkward individuals, this is ideal.

However, the problem arises because men are receiving rejections at a much higher rate daily than one would receive in a lifetime in the past”

Incels: A survey

Erica Santiago

“thirty-one percent responded that they personally knew an incel.”

Research

It appears there has been a constant battle of the sexes throughout history. Here in the United States, there is a new threat brewing. Many would call the incel movement still in its infancy stage, however I view a threat as a threat, no matter how small. Incels, or involuntary celibates, have been increasing in size and popularity among like-minded men who view women and men who they deem more superior to them as threats. There are several recorded acts of violence including mass shootings directly linked to incels. These incels have amassed on online forums nestled in the “manosphere” and have gained a larger following during the pandemic. But what exactly are incels and what is their ideology?

Men who coin themselves an incel are usually lacking self-esteem. They believe women are not attracted to them for various reasons. The most popular reason is they believe they have lost the “genetic lottery” and are unattractive. Men who an incel sees as “winning the genetic lottery” are

classically good-looking, muscular, and capable of having a sexual encounter with any woman he chooses. Incels refer to these men as “Chads”. Women that an incel views as beautiful, sexy, and unobtainable are referred to as “Stacys”. Incels are obsessed with female beauty however, they believe those who wear makeup are committing acts of fraud. In the journal titled *Incel Activity on Social Media Linked to Local Mating Ecology*, Robert Brooks, Daniel Russo- Batterham, and Khandis R. Blake have outlined what incels believe stating, “Men who believe that they fall short in terms of masculinity (i.e., acceptance threat) or whose dominance is threatened by gains made by women (i.e., status threat) are more inclined toward the rejection, defeat, and violent anger that characterize incels” (Brooks et al., 2022). The lack of self-esteem causes a distortion on reality.

Incels are anti-gender equality and by proxy, anti-feminism. In their forums, you will read about a desire to go back to rigid traditional gender roles and worshipping of patriarchy. The belief is that women owe men sex, servitude, and subservience. Elaborating on this, Ashley L. Peterson (2022) suggests, “Some incels conceive of a past sort of golden age of the patriarchy, in which looks weren’t important and women were always sexually

available” (pg.1). The biggest problem for incels is that women are allowed to select their partners and can say no if they are uninterested in a particular male’s advances. Incels believe that without gender equality and Chads, they would have a chance at a sexual relationship with Stacys (Brooks et al., 2022). The manosphere is driven by high levels on misogyny, anti-feminism, and those fighting for men’s rights. It’s no wonder incels have found a haven there to vent and bond with other likeminded men.

Women in high positions of power fuel incels belief that women are to blame women for stealing these employment positions from men. This would imply women are seeking out higher education and striving for financial independence. In an article published in the Washington Post titled *Opinion- Men are in trouble. ‘Incels’ are proof*, Christine Emba (2019) points out, “Women are surging ahead, out-enrolling men in colleges and universities. A new uncertainty about their place in the world is leading men to spiking levels of anxiety and depression” (pg.1). It is important to note that the majority of incels are unemployed and living at home with their parents. These men feel a great kick to their ego when they see women advancing and they can not see a future for themselves. There is a sense of

hopelessness and many incels will instruct others to improve on their physiques and financial status to become appealing to “Stacys”. William Costello (2022) claimed, “Women’s socio-economic success, combined with their mate-preferences, creates a culturally skewed sex-ratio of highly educated and selective women, to economically unattractive men” (pg.1). Why are these men up in arms over their lack sexual encounters? What else is at play driving these obsessions?

It is not surprising when you hear that incels struggle with mental health. It is a well-known fact incels feel a loss of control in their life and live in the victimhood mindset. What are some factors that contribute to the victimhood mindset and overall poor mental health? With the rise of technology, men can find comfort in dating apps at their fingertips. For introverted men and social awkward individuals, this is ideal. However, the problem arises because men are receiving rejections at a much higher rate daily than one would receive in a lifetime in the past (Costello, 2022). This, coupled with poor mating performance is a recipe for disaster. Many self-labeled incels have stated that they suffering from depression and anxiety, but how many seek out therapy to combat these afflictions? Incels are flocking to these forums looking for sympathy,

comradery and support but are vulnerable to manipulation by other incels. These incel forums are popular because they are self-reinforcing. Anne Speckhard, Molly Ellenberg, Jesse Morton, and Alexander Ash (2023) shed light on this citing, "Those who had not tried therapy reported that they viewed it as "a scam," "a waste of money," or that it would not help them fix the physical aspects to which they attributed their status as incel" (pg. 19). The danger then starts when there is constant exposure to high levels of misogyny coupled with poor mental health and vulnerability. Why are women and men becoming increasingly scared of incels and why are they becoming more mainstream?

Violence has ensued and women and men the incels considered "Chads" have been targeted and murdered. The perpetrators were later hailed heroes. As incels sweep across the world and gain popularity, the threat becomes larger. Emba (2019) wrote:

"At its most horrifying extremes, self-described incels have taken their anger out on the women they believe are refusing them. At least two mass shooters have left behind manifestos identifying themselves as adhering to incel

ideology and explaining their actions as taking revenge on the world that hasn't given them the women, they think they deserve" (pg.1).

These radicalized incels are the most dangerous because they are truly convinced that women deserve the violence inflicted on them as well as the men they believe have taken the women from them. They become martyrs for the cause, ridding the earth of problematic humans that stand in all incels way. The scariest thought for me is that the government has had extreme difficulty shutting down these forums. The misogynistic hate is allowed to spread, fester, and spark into acts of violence. There is little to no regulations on these sites making them a free for all. There are signs that these incel forums have now become home to hyper-nationalist, anti-feminist movement.

Incels are vulnerable men who often suffer from a lack in self-esteem, depression, loneliness, anxiety, and skewed interpersonal views. They seek refuge on online forums where some are preyed on and manipulated to commit acts of violence. Incels hold very misogynistic views and do not believe women to be equal to men. They also believe women owe men sex and should not hold positions of power. Incels believe they have lost the genetic lottery and

are obsessed with female beauty. The dangers are growing daily and becoming more mainstream. The threat is real, and something needs to be done to protect the public.

Analyzing Results

Conducting this survey was a fantastic experience. I was blown away with my results from the very beginning. I had one hundred and one respondents and their ages ranged from eighteen years to fifty-four years and older. The largest group of respondents were women at eighty percent and the rest were a mix of men, transgendered, & non-binary/ non-conforming. It was important to me to have a larger population so there would be a variety of respondents from all ages and walks of life so I would get a wider range of answers.

I initially sent this survey out on social media. When a few responses came in, I was able to review the results. Many of the responses were strong responses (strongly agree, strongly disagree) and pro traditional gender roles. I noticed that the majority of these responses were from individuals who had education level at associate's degree or less, or "other" which would include certifications in a trade. One factor may not have anything to do with the other, but rather, just something I noted. This proposed the question- Will higher education lead

to pro- feminism and a shift from traditional gender roles? When the survey was shared by others, and responses peaked at one hundred, I again reviewed the results. The results indeed showed that the higher the education level, the more pro-feminism responses I received. Incels hold very strong traditional gender roles similar to those I asked in the survey. They do believe that women owe them sex, and they also believe that the rise of feminism has led to them not be unsuccessful in sexual encounters. However, there are many incels with higher education degrees.

I naively assumed most individuals are feminists and if you identified as a woman, you automatically were a feminist. When reviewing the survey results, I kept in mind that eighty percent were female respondents but only sixty-six percent claimed to be feminists. I was eager to read the results to the follow up question “Do you believe feminism is bad for society”. To my surprise, ninety-three percent responded “No”. The two results did not reflect each other, and this led me to believe that those who responded no did not accurately know the definition of feminism. If sixty-six percent claimed to be feminists, then I expected sixty-six percent to agree that feminism is not bad for society.

Forming negative opinions of others based on how many sexual partners they've had was a question I was excited to review. Incels condemn women who have had multiple sexual partners and call them despicable things, and yet they want a girl who is in touch with her sexuality. The results showed that seventeen percent said that they think negatively about women who have had many sexual partners. Astonishingly, twenty-three percent said they would think badly of men who have had many sexual partners. This was a result I was not expecting. I was expecting for more people, including women, to be more judgmental about women's sexual partners than men. As a society, we are just now beginning to really see a shift in this viewpoint, however you typically will see this in individuals who are "Generation X" and "Baby Boomers". This is a more conservative viewpoint and it's no surprise that it has been adopted by incels.

Rigid gender roles are a huge part of incel ideology, but do individuals believe that strict gender roles pose a threat to society in general? According to my survey, twenty two percent of respondents do not believe that men who hold rigid gender roles ideology pose a significant threat to society. When considering all my questions, I

expected to see some individuals respond no to that question. Although the majority responded yes, when compared to the responses to the question “Is feminism bad for society” (Seven percent responded yes), you would expect the same individuals to not see a societal threat by having rigid gender roles.

Another incel belief is that women have taken jobs and positions of power away from men. I put this into a yes or no question. Five individuals responded “yes” to that question. This is fascinating that people in today’s society would believe this at all. I tried to look at this objectively but struggled with feelings of frustration. I am able to see now why so many of my respondents claimed to know an incel; thirty percent in fact! Perhaps some of the individuals who took the survey would classify as an incel themselves.

Incels are still not commonly discussed and there are many individuals who do not even know what an incel is. When I asked what the proper meaning of incel (involuntary celibate) was, three responded “Internet intel specialist”, two responded “internet celebrity”, and four responded “inactive cells”. I was happy to see that the majority were able to answer correctly, however, thirty-seven people claimed to have been unfamiliar with the term incels. That is a

huge number. That highlights the need to make the public aware of incels and the dangers they pose.

One topic that split respondents down the middle was on the topic of violence. I asked if the individual believed that certain acts of violence was justified. I expected this to be a tough question to answer because there are so many different cultures and backgrounds answering these survey questions. There are also so many possible scenarios people might see violence as acceptable. Some people believe harming a pedophile is acceptable, some think beating a robber is acceptable. Violence among incels is not an uncommon topic. It is frequently mentioned that men should inflict violence against those they consider to be “Chads” and “Staceys”. A whopping forty percent agreed that some forms of violence are justified!

Opinions

To say that I was thrilled to conduct this study would be an understatement. I have never conducted a survey like this before and I was excited to learn as much as I could from the results. I welcomed the challenge of learning new research methods to gather information on a topic I initially knew nothing about. Using the Office 365 to set up the survey was extremely easy; however, I found the

real challenge to be forming the questions the survey. I struggled to come up with questions that were directly related to incels. Meaning, I did not directly use the word incels until the very end. Although I was initially unfamiliar with the term incels, I hadn't considered the possibility that others were potentially unfamiliar with the term as well. Once I was able to reconstruct my questions, I was able to find a pattern I could follow to lead up to my final questions using incel as a term.

I did have difficulty finding participants for the survey at first. I shared the survey through social media because I felt that would give me the most diverse population. I received a few responses. I then posted on these social media sites that I would appreciate it if people shared my survey with others. My survey responses grew from ten responses to just over one hundred responses within hours. I found out that many individuals really enjoyed taking this survey and researched more about incels after taking it. I had to shut down the survey early before it grew any larger.

When I viewed the demographic responses to my survey questions, I was thrilled to see that I had a very diverse population. Although eighty percent of my survey respondents considered themselves White/ Caucasian, others claimed to be Hispanic,

Black/ African American, Asian/ Pacific Islander, and Other. The only group with zero representation would be those of Native American/ American Indian descent. To my surprise, seventy seven percent of respondents had received some formal education whether it was a certification in their field or an associate's degree or higher. Thirty-three percent had only a high school education or less. This gave me a great range for responses that I was able to collect and analyze.

This survey opened my eyes to many things, but the topic it really opened my eyes to was how many individuals, despite their ethnic background or education, viewed sex similarly and held onto traditional values. For example, one section asked you to rate your level of agreement to statements with the options given: highly disagree, disagree, agree, and highly agree. One statement that was been rated was "Women owe men sex". To my surprise, some individuals responded agree and strongly agree! However, eighty-one percent responded strongly disagree. This means that out of one hundred and one respondents, four individuals believe men have a claim over women's bodies and the respondents believe women owe men sex whenever they want it. Another rated statement was "Women should be in charge of housework and

child rearing". Eleven percent agreed and one percent strongly agreed. This showed me that there is a percentage of respondents who believe traditional gender roles should still be in practice today. Although this is a common theme in incel ideology, I did not expect to see that big of a percentage agreement for both statements.

The biggest eye opener was ultimately about the population of incels. Before this class, I had never heard of incels. I have studied a good amount of information since I first heard of the term and I was under the impression that, like me, the majority of respondents would not have heard about incels. Much to my surprise, thirty-one percent responded that they personally knew an incel. This was incredibly unsettling to me when I read the results. Incels are increasing in size and are becoming more mainstream but the fact that thirty-one percent of respondents personally knew an incel is a cause for concern.

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Ummey Tahamina
Lonely Day, 2021; Charcoal

Lonely Day (2021) by Ummey Tahamina

Charcoal

My goal is to reach an advanced level of expertise in the creation of 3D content so that I will be able to convey complex stories that are accompanied by stunning visuals. My perspective is that stories are a one-of-a-kind opportunity to investigate the complexities of the connections that people have with one another, as well as an effective method for communicating cross-culturally applicable messages. I use animation as the vehicle that enables me to serve as a constructive influence on other people by producing stories that serve as a mentor to younger people through the use of storytelling that is rich in meaning, lessons, and artistic expression.

- *Ummey Tahamina*

Burgeoning Scholars

We had a transformative, edifying, and fun academic year. Here are some highlights.

Editors

The Truth Among the Lies:

Examining Three Certificates of Removal Related to Roda, an Enslaved Girl of Middlesex County, New Jersey.¹

Christina Ascolese

Slavery is often taught and looked at as mostly enforced by Southern states in America up through the Civil War. The truth is that slavery still existed in the North; while Northern states may have started to gradually abolish slavery after the Revolutionary War, it was still considered legal in New Jersey until January 23, 1866, when the abolishment of slavery was signed into law through Constitutional Amendment. By 1818, sugar and cotton were becoming booming industries in the South. Enslaved peoples were the most common labor source for such plantations that needed hundreds of workers. Meanwhile, factories and industrialization

¹ The ideas in this paper were first developed in Dr. Denise Rompilla's History of Women course in Winter 2023, and continued through an independent study with this professor. I would like to thank Dr. Rompilla and Professor Kristal Langford, Public Historian at the Lost Souls Public Memorial Project, for their help and suggestions, as well as Dr. Terrence Corrigan, Coordinator of the History Program at Middlesex College, for helping with my personal development of critical thinking by looking at events through multiple interpretations.

were beginning to boom in the North. With less reliance on slave labor, the value of an enslaved person started to decrease for those in the North compared to that of the South. Due to these changes, some individuals went as far as kidnapping people, trafficking them, and moving them to the South where their existence would create more profit. It is important to acknowledge that not only did this happen in New Jersey, but it happened in Middlesex County.

One such person involved was Jacob Van Wickle, a judge in Middlesex County. In 1818, he illegally trafficked individuals by forging their documents as well as lying about their ages. Van Wickle's slave ring was an operation with many people involved, including his son Nicholas Van Wickle and his son-in-law Charles Morgan, who had moved to Point Coupee, Louisiana and established a sugar plantation.² To understand their crimes, the exact laws that would be broken must be understood.

In 1804, the Act for the Gradual Abolition of Slavery was passed in New Jersey. This law meant that any child born to an enslaved mother on or after

² For a fuller account of the Van Wickle slave ring, see James Gigantino, "Trading in Jersey Souls: New Jersey and the Interstate Slave Trade", *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies*, vol. 77, No. 3 (Summer 2010), pp. 281-302.

July 4, 1804 would be considered free at 25 years old for males, and 21 years old for females, and would carry the status of “slave for a term.”³ On February 1, 1812 the state of New Jersey passed another law stating that any enslaved person who was to be moved out of the state first had to verbally give their consent before two judges. If the enslaved person was a child under 21 years old, they would be required to give consent and have their parents’ consent as well. This consent would have been recorded in a document called a certificate of removal. Once issued, these removal certificates were then transcribed and copied into a book by the county clerk. In this book there would also be records of those who were freed from slavery called records of manumissions.

The certificates of removal for Middlesex County, New Jersey are recorded in a bound book called the Book of Manumissions.⁴ An examination of the certificates of removal signed by Judge Jacob Van

³ See Gigantino, “Trading in New Jersey Souls”, p. 282. Individuals, including children, born before July 1804 remained “slaves for life” unless freed by their owners or by the constitutional amendment in 1866.

⁴ The Middlesex County Book of Manumissions 1800- 1825, *Special Collections and University Archives*, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey.

Wickle and transcribed and recorded in this book often include language that could tie a person to slavery for life. The majority of the certificates of removal signed by Jacob Van Wickle specify that the enslaved persons were to be removed to Point Coupee, Louisiana, “to serve Colonel Charles Morgan and Nicholas Van Wickle or either of these there serve executor administrators and assigned jointly or severely.”⁵ This language deliberately kept an individual in perpetual servitude as it meant that either Charles Morgan or Nicholas Van Wickle could decide to give away the individuals to anyone of their choosing. A child who would have become free under New Jersey law could easily be passed from person to person in Louisiana, where the enslaved, who only had the status of property, could be willed or gifted to other individuals. This meant that the crucial distinction of “slave for a term” could easily become lost.

In comparison to the certificates of removal signed by other judges in Middlesex County, those signed by Jacob Van Wickle have many inconsistencies. In other certificates transcribed and

⁵ See, for example, any of the certificates of removal signed by Judge Van Wickle in the Book of Manumissions, from pp. 219-226. The language of the documents is identical.

recorded in the Book of Manumissions, the status of the enslaved person typically is defined as a “slave for life” or a “slave for a term”, and the documents also note where the enslaved person was originally from.⁶ However, the certificates signed by Jacob Van Wickle have no acknowledgement of these things.

There is also little to no semblance that these certificates of removal were being kept track of in order. For example, in the Book of Manumissions, the dates for certificates signed by judges other than Jacob Van Wickle have mostly been entered into the book by the county clerk, William P. Deare, in chronological order based on when the enslaved individual was brought forward before the judges to give their consent. There are some instances where the dates of the certificates of removal are not consecutive, but those signed by Jacob Van Wickle have dates that jump forward and backwards constantly.⁷

In addition, the length of time between the date that the enslaved are said to have been brought forward before the judges to give their consent, to that when the certificates were received and

⁶ See, for example, certificate x in the Book of Manumissions.

⁷ See the documents related to Roda and her family, 232, 234, 241, discussed in the following paragraphs.

recorded by the Middlesex County clerk, is vastly different from others not issued by Jacob Van Wickle. In the certificates of removal issued by other judges, William P. Deare, the Middlesex County clerk, received and recorded the certificates in the Book of Manumissions either the day of or only a few weeks after the certificates had been issued.⁸ By contrast, in those signed by Jacob Van Wickle, an individual may have come forward before the judges in February, but the certificate was not recorded by the clerk in the Book of Manumissions until May – months later when the individual would have already been long gone on a ship bound for New Orleans.

A closer look at the certificates of removal for one family raises further questions. Roda, a girl being 14 was taken to Louisiana along with her mother, Hager, her brother Augustus who was four, and her sister Mary, who was two. Roda, depending on her exact birthday in the year of 1804 - if her birthday fell before July 4th, or after - could have been a slave for life or slave for a term per New Jersey law.⁹ For her

⁸ See, for example, certificate 218 which was signed by a different judge in March and received and recorded in March.

⁹ At the time of this writing, the birth record of Roda has not been identified, leaving the status - whether slave for a term or slave for life - in doubt.

siblings, Augustus and Mary would be guaranteed their freedom at age 25 and 21 respectively under the status of slave for a term, though whether that would be honored would be highly unlikely if they were sent to a Southern state.

There are three certificates of removal in the Book of Manumissions associated with Roda and her family. The first, which can be found on page 232, is solely about Roda. The document states that Roda was brought forward on February 27, 1818 and consented to going to Point Coupee, Louisiana. 232 is the only certificate of removal that states that Roda's mother, Hager, consented to this as well. The problem with these documents is the fact that they do not match up with the dates. The second certificate of removal, on page 234, states that Hager was brought forward with Roda, Augustus, and Mary, her three children, on February 26, 1818, but the date on this document, which physically comes after 232 in the Book of Manumissions, is dated to one day before the previous document. Despite two different dates of being brought forward before the judges, both certificates of removal were said to be received and recorded on May 20, 1818. The fact that Roda appears in both 232 and 234 is a curiosity in that it would make no sense that Roda would have had her own certificate of removal as well as being

included on a separate certificate of removal with the rest of her family. In fact, Roda is the only person to have had her own certificate removal as well as being in another one out of the 77 signed by Jacob Van Wickle and recorded in the Book of Manumissions.

The third certificate of removal on page 241 only adds more complications to Roda's story. Page 241 lists nine children, including Augustus and Mary, with the oldest being nine years old and the youngest only seven months. It also mentions who the mothers of these children are, which in the case of Augustus and Mary is Hager. Roda is not on this document. It is important to note that this certificate of removal states that the children were "to serve Colonel Charles Morgan & Nicholas Van Wickle or either of them their heirs or assigns the male children above named to serve until they arrive to the age of twenty five years and the female to serve until they arrive to the age of twenty one years." While the mothers' wishes are unlikely to be held in the long term, "the said respective mothers declared their desire that these said children should not be

separated from them.”¹⁰ This is important as it would further separate Roda from her siblings. Although it would end up unlikely to be followed by the time they reach those ages, it feigns an interest in following New Jersey law of “slave for a term.” It also means that in this certificate that Hager desires to remain with her children Augustus and Mary, while Roda does not even have that stated.

Page 241 also has a much different, noticeably earlier, date of February 10, 1818, for the children and their mothers supposedly being brought forward before the two judges. If this was true, then at the very least the certificate on page 234 is a lie as the dates are over two weeks apart. The certificate on page 241 is even more questionable as there is a second date listed on the bottom of the document in a sentence which states “In Testimony whereof we have hereunto set our hands the 23 day of April 1818” - which is over two months after the date listed on the top of this document. This is in addition to the received and recorded date of June 8, 1818, yet another separate date from the other two certificates

¹⁰ The Middlesex County Book of Manumissions 1800- 1825, *Special Collections and University Archives*, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey. Page 241.

of removal related to this family which were received and recorded on May 20, 1818.

Having all three certificates, the question becomes when the individuals listed were actually brought forward before the judges. Unlike other certificates of removal not signed by Jacob Van Wickle, the person who brought Roda and her family forward is never identified in two of the three certificates associated with them. On page 232 and 234, only Nicholas Van Wickle is stated to be taking Roda and her family to Point Coupee, Louisiana to serve himself or Charles Morgan. This is in contradiction to 241, which states that a man named James Brown brought forward amongst the others Augustus and Mary. It is likely that all of these inconsistencies are lies on a paper that when scrutinized, would reveal that these documents are not legal.

When looking at the three certificates of removal in order of the date issued rather than the order they are entered into the Book of Manumissions, things become even more questionable. In the first, dated February 10, 1818, a lot more information is given, even the fact that the children are to be seen as slaves for a term as well as who their mothers are. The second, dated February 26, 1818 adds in Roda, with the mother and the other children, but says nothing about slaves for a term. And finally on the third,

dated February 27, 1818, there is no mention of her siblings, only that Roda is completely isolated with her mother consenting to her leaving the state of New Jersey for Pointe Coupee, Louisiana.

Why is Roda treated differently in these three documents? A very plausible explanation is that the end for Roda was to be separated from her family. They could have sent her on a separate ship out of New Jersey, using the individual certificate of removal despite her also being on a certificate of removal with her family. Although under New Jersey law Roda was a child at 14, in the South this would have been a prime age for enslaved girls to begin reproducing. Girls of childbearing age had a higher economic value for the Southern economy. The value of forcing a young girl to become pregnant would add persons to a slave population where the life span was on average only 30. Additionally once a child was born, a girl such as Roda could find herself being forced into the position of acting as a wet nurse for the children of the planter and his wife.¹¹

¹¹ For more information on the interaction between white and enslaved women in the South, see Stephanie Jones-Rodgers, *They Were Her Property: White Women as Slave Owners in the American South*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020.

With all of the inconsistencies within these certificates of removal, the biggest question is why. Multiple certificates that were recorded by Middlesex county clerk William P. Deare state they were received and recorded on the same date, such as the certificates on pages 219 through 239 all being received and recorded on May 20, 1818. This is inconsistent with other certificates of removal in the Book of Manumissions that have a variety of dates for being received and recorded by the clerk. With them all likely being given to Deare all at once, the entry into the book appears rushed, which would explain the order being all over the place. One likely theory is that by the date that the certificates were supposedly received, the enslaved had left long ago, and the certificates were needed to cover up what had been going on illegally.

This can be corroborated by further examinations of the Book of Manumissions and a court case. Looking back at the Book of Manumissions on page 218 with Judges Jacob Van Wickle and William Outcalt presiding, it is clear that not even William P. Deare is innocent. The certificates of removal on page 219 and subsequent pages are stated by Deare to have been received and recorded on May 20, 1818, months after the enslaved supposedly came forward before the two judges. However on page 218,

Deare's record states that the certificate of removal transcribed here was received and recorded on May 25, 1818 - a date which is five days *after* his entry on the next page. Even if the dates when the certificates of removal were issued were not in order when handed to the clerk, the dates in which the certificates of removal are transcribed and recorded should appear in chronological order. On June 19, 1818, Charles Morgan and Nicholas Van Wickle, Jacob Van Wickle's son, were indicted and brought to court for an "Indictment for Misdemeanor" of illegally removing individuals out of New Jersey.¹² Others were involved and tried, such as William P. Deare, who claimed to have no knowledge of the slave ring, despite his inconsistent certificate of removals surrounding Jacob Van Wickle. All would be acquitted. It is highly likely that due to his status as a judge, Jacob Van Wickle had advance time to prepare for this case. This is a plausible explanation for why William P. Deare would make a variety of mistakes on so many legal documents,

¹² For the legal documents connected to the attempted prosecution of Van Wickle and his associates, see the Van Wickle Slave Ring Digital Collection, <https://www.state.nj.us/state/darm/WebCatalogPDF/VanWickle/VanWickleTableOfContents.pdf>

such as rushing to enter multiple certificates of removal on the same day at the same time.

When looking at history, primary sources may appear as the best and most accurate source to understanding what was happening, especially looking at a legal document. And yet, the validity of this information must be critiqued, must be called into question, and examined beyond blind trust. Focusing on the three certificates of removal surrounding Roda and her family, the inconsistencies call into question how valid they truly are. The questions that are brought up all are things that will need to be researched further to come to further conclusions.

The individuals sent to the South by Judge Jacob Van Wickle were sentenced to a life of hard labor, forced pregnancy, most likely a shorter life, and for the children who had the status of slave for a term became a life as a slave with no eventual freedom. A girl like Roda who would find no chance of freedom in the South, except if she bought her freedom or ran away.

Appendix 1. The Middlesex County Book of Manumissions 1800- 1825, *Special Collections and University Archives*, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey. Page 232

232
 Removal
 Roda

State of New Jersey
 Middlesex County

Be it remembered that on
 this twenty seventh day of
 February in the year of
 our Lord one thousand eight hundred
 eighteen Nicholas Van Wickles, Sr. of the
 County of Middlesex in New Jersey brought
 before us said Van Wickles, and John
 Outcall Esquires two of the Justices of the
 Court of Common Pleas of the County and
 State aforesaid his female Slave named
 Roda aged fourteen years and the said
 Roda and her mother Rager consenting
 thereto being by us examined separately and
 apart from her said Mother declared
 that she was willing and that she
 freely consented to remove and go out
 of this State with her said Mother to
 Saint Louis in the State of Louisiana
 and there to serve Daniel Morgan
 Esquire as Van Wickles or either of them
 their heirs Executors Administrator and
 assigns jointly or severally.

In Testimony whereof we have
 hereunto set our hands, the day and
 year first above written.

Nicholas Van Wickles
 John Outcall

Received May 20th 1818 Secured by
 Deane

Courtesy Special Collections and University Archives, Rutgers University Libraries.

Appendix 2. The Middlesex County Book of Manumissions 1800- 1825, *Special Collections and University Archives, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey.* Page 234

234
 Removal, Hager and
 children Roda, Mary
 and Auguste

State of New Jersey ss: Be it remembered that
 Middlesex County - on the 20th day of February
 in the year of our Lord
 one thousand eight hundred and eight teen
 Nicholas VanMickle of the County of
 Middlesex in New Jersey brought before
 us Jacob VanMickle and John Outcalt Esqrs
 two of the Justices of the Court of Common
 Pleas of the County & State aforesaid his
 female slave named Hager aged twenty
 nine years with her three children Roda
 a female of fourteen years and Mary age
 two years, Auguste a male child aged four
 years and the said Hager being by us
 examined separately & apart from her said
 master declared that she was willing
 and that she freely consented remove
 and go out of this State to Point a la Pape
 in the State of Louisiana together
 with her three children aforesaid
 there to serve John Charles Morgan
 and Nicholas VanMickle or either of
 them their heirs Executors Administrators
 Assignees jointly or severally.

In Testimony whereof we have
 hereunto set our hands the day and
 year first above written.

Jacob VanMickle J. J. J.
 John Outcalt - J. J. J.

Received May 20th 1808 recorded by
 Deane

Courtesy Special Collections and University Archives, Rutgers University Libraries.

Appendix 3. The Middlesex County Book of Manumissions 1800- 1825, *Special Collections and University Archives*, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey. Page 241

241

(Nessora, David, James, Benjamin,
 Mary, Augustus, Reynald, Daniel,
 Hercules, Daniel & Dorcas - }
 }

State of New Jersey, Hillsdale County, Be it remembered that
 on the tenth day of February in the year of our
 Lord one thousand eight hundred and eighty three James
 Brown of the county of Hillsdale, in New Jersey brought
 before us Jacob Van Hook and John Butteall Esquires
 two of the Justices of the Court of Common Pleas of the
 County and State aforesaid his female servant
 named Harriet James aged three year four months
 and twenty eight days child of David - and on the
 twenty sixth day of February in the year aforesaid
 Nicholas Van Hook of the county and State aforesaid
 brought before us as aforesaid his female child of
 named Susan aged seven months child of Phoebe
 and Mary aged two years and Augustus a male
 child aged four years the said Mary and
 Augustus children of Hager - and Reynald aged
 six weeks child of Rachel - and the wife of John
 Daniels aged seven months child of Sarah and on
 the 9th March Hercules a male child of Charles
 aged two years two months and seven days - and
 Daniel aged nine years and Dorcas aged one year
 children of Christian - all which children above
 named as far as they could answer being with
 their respective mothers by us jointly examined
 separate and apart from their said masters declare
 they willingly and the said respective mothers
 declare their desire that these said children should
 not be separated from them, but should with their
 remove and go out of this State to Saint Croix
 in the State of Louisiana and then to some place
 Charles Barragan & Nicholas Van Hook or either of them their
 heirs or assigns their female children above named
 to serve until they arrive to the age of twenty
 five years and the females to four until they
 arrive to the age of twenty one years. - For
 testimony whereof we have hereunto set our
 hands the 23 day of April 1818
 Jacob Van Hook } Justice
 John Butteall }

Received June 18 1818 Sec'd
 D. C. Clark

Courtesy Special Collections and University Archives,
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Animal Testing: Detrimental to the World ‡*Krystal Bailey*

During a protest about primates in science, American activist Camille Marino was arrested at the University of Florida for removing content conducted during a study that involved animals. Marino tweeted, "They refer to animal torture as 'welfare.' When they say animal experiments are 'necessary,' they mean 'necessary,' they mean necessary for profits. When they carve up, poison, burn, mutilate, murder, and call us 'extremists,' then our only job is to stop them. Whatever it takes" (Marino). Animal testing makes humans in the 21st century agitated for several reasons, including their love for animals, and it is not always practical. In 2018 it was reported that 780,070 animals were used in experimentation (Velez). Although many scientists think animal testing can benefit research, there is much danger when using animals in science because it harms the creatures and patients for whom the animals are abused. If non-profit organizations and celebrities advocate for wildlife,

‡ Krystal submitted this paper in her English Composition Class II- Professor Dademo. While completing this paper, Krystal worked with Joseph Lisnow at the Writing Center.

animal testing will stop. Then, scientists would explore alternatives such as computer modeling and organs-on-chips to animal testing more often.

Animal testing is unethical and should be terminated due to animal freedom is violated, abused, and killed. As well as animal experimentation is expensive for taxpayers just for the results of animal testing are not accurate. A nutritionist from the United Kingdom, Sanket Shrotri, discusses animal testing as unethical. In the article "7 Reasons Why," Shrotri talks about a few reasons why animal testing is improper, such as consent, costs, and wasted animal lives. According to animal activist Shrotri found, "According to PETA, Experimenters force-feed chemicals to animals, conduct repeated surgeries on them, implant wires in their brains, crush their spines, and much more" (Shrotri). The author neglects to mention that animal testing violates the creature's freedoms. Animals are confined to cages throughout their limited lives and experience loneliness and terror. Animals die due to scientists injecting diseases into the creatures and surgeries performed on innocent animals. These situations would not happen to humans in the 21st century. Also, humans involved in the debate would argue that citizens in the United States are paying excessive taxes. Animal

testing is expensive for the citizens and can cause a more significant upset, leading to a backlash to pharmaceutical companies, scientists, and the government.

Animals have activists like Evanna Lynch and Kat Von D take a stand against animal testing to try to get a change to occur. In the article "10 Celebrities," Hammond Shuara has a Bachelor of arts in social psychology and talks about celebrities being influential voices to humans in the 21st century regarding using animals as test subjects. Hammond found, "As animal rights is entering the mainstream social consciousness, celebrities are increasingly using their fame to go above and beyond for animals ("10 Celebrities')." Hammond should have considered the importance of having a powerful voice advocating on a subject as important as animal testing. Some animal activists like Evanna Lynch show their support by being vegan and not eating meat due to learning about animal testing. Lynch also does not wear any animal fabric clothing due to it causing harm to animals. Other animal activists like Kat Von D show their support by launching cruelty-free makeup brands and volunteering their time to speak out to the public and their followers on social media as animal

advocates. These celebrities can have a louder voice than those who do not have as many followers.

With animals and humans being from distinct species, scientists need to ensure that when testing medications, the substance is safe before, during, and after going to drug companies, doctors, and patients. In the article "The Beginnings: Laboratory," the unknown author talks about the role of the FDA in animal testing. As well as how medications are affected by animal testing. "Such tests show whether a potential drug has toxic side effects and what its safety is at different doses. The results point the way for human testing and much product labeling" ("The Beginnings: Laboratory"). The unknown author must consider that the cycle is still ongoing when scientists successfully develop medications. These drugs are passed down to pharmaceutical companies, doctors, and then patients. Each medication affects each patient differently and can have various side effects. Sometimes, no matter what dose a patient takes, the drug will not work for that individual. It is essential to patients with an illness requiring medications that scientists develop each medication and monitor them as closely as possible through each stage. Animal testing fails ninety percent of the time, and drugs that fail animal testing can only worsen the illness.

Alternatives, like organs-on-chips and computer modeling, can benefit research and are more effective than animal testing. In *Alternatives to Animal Testing*, the unknown author argues that there are successful alternatives to animal testing. These alternatives should be used and explored more. "Tests on animals to find out if chemicals or drugs may harm the developing baby can only detect sixty percent of dangerous substances. But a non-animal test using human stem cells has ninety-three percent sensitivity at detecting substances known to cause developmental problems" (*Alternatives to Animal Testing*). The anonymous author fails to consider computer modeling as an alternative that would not harm any people because the human models are on a computer, and no actual human beings or animals are being abused. It is inexpensive for the taxpayers and the government as well. Organs-on-chips is another successful alternative to animal testing. Scientists can use these chips because the chips copy the cells and similar features to the human body. Right now, organs-on-chips cannot stand alone as an alternative because this is just a chip, and scientists are still exploring this alternative.

However, scientists believe animals being tested benefits research. In the article "Animal Testing Pros

and Cons: Where Both Parties Stand," freelance journalist Brittany Hopkins argues the benefits of using animals in science. Hopkins states, "every known medical breakthrough has a basis in animal research. Some medical breakthroughs include vaccines to control viral diseases, antibiotics to fight infections, and chemotherapy to cure cancers" (Hopkins). Hopkins must consider that many scientists need much support with animal testing. It can be frustrating when animal testing does not improve science. When scientists are pushed to continue experimenting on animals, creatures are being murdered as a result. In the article "Stephen Hawking Supported Animal Research," author Nahla Bassam, who has a bachelor's degree in business administration, argues that animal testing is not beneficial to research. Bassam notes, "I think the fuss over the use of animals in medical research is ridiculous. Why is it worse to use animal experiments to save lives than to eat them, which the majority of the population are happy to do?" (Bassam). The author neglected to consider that when humans in the 21st century eat animals, they benefit from the nutrients that the animals provide them. Humans need proteins such as meat, poultry, fish, eggs, and dairy to survive daily. Animal testing causes the creature unnecessary physical and

emotional pain and does not make a significant difference to the scientists or the patients.

With technology being so advanced today, animal extermination should not be a choice made by the government and controlled by scientists. Society knows animal experimentation is morally wrong due to the animals being abused. Animal testing does more harm than good to the patients. The alternatives to animal testing are the solution to end animal extermination. Animal testing should be considered animal abuse, particularly after President Joe Biden and the Food and Drug Administration declared that using animals as test subjects in experiments would no longer be needed. Scientists should focus their attention elsewhere and be subjected to fines or jail time if they continue experimenting on innocent animals.

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The Sky is Falling (2022) by Sadae Marie Hori

Watercolor and Acrylic on Paper. 19x24in.

The Calamity of Climate Change and the Preservation of Natural Resources.*

Kerat Bengar

Abstract: This essay underscores the works of three environmentalists, Edward Abbey, Janisse Ray, and Rachel Carson; and two opinionists, Holman W. Jenkins Jr. and William Tucker to ascertain whether renewable energy or nuclear energy better substitutes fossil fuels. From deducing the ethical, emotional, and logical appeals for each argument, the efficacy of renewable energy stood on its own.

Dying. The Earth is dying. Climate change, the permanent shifts in Earth's temperature and weather patterns, accounts for egregious damage to the balance of nature and continues to do so. This destruction of the environment, including scathing heat waves, frequent droughts, rising sea levels, warming oceans, and melting glaciers, harms the safety of animals, plants, and humans alike. Furthermore, disappearing habitats and fluctuating vegetation sources from elevated global temperatures jeopardize indispensable biodiversity. Along with periling wildlife, humans face an increased risk of waterborne, infectious, cardiovascular, and respiratory diseases. Interestingly yet alarmingly, humans

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themselves bear the culpability of this environmental havoc from the proliferation of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. Under natural conditions independent of human activity, carbon dioxide and a handful of other greenhouse gases capture the Sun's heat to maintain habitability and support life on Earth. Industrialization and mass production, however, exacerbate this outcome and thus exacerbate climate change. Buying packaged food products, driving a car, using water, running the heater, generating waste, and other daily tasks we think little of all contribute to greenhouse gas accumulation. While these advancements have bettered the quality of modern day-to-day life, they have also deterred the sanctity of our planet; making the distinction between climate change and human lifestyle analogous. Hence, the purpose of this paper is to explore the responsibility people, corporations, and the government have toward preserving the natural world—our natural resources—to constrain greenhouse gas emissions. The analysis will draw upon three research articles that demonstrate the dangers of employing fossil fuels over renewable energy, and two that support nuclear energy compensation.

In the era of mass industrialization and corporate consumption, fossil fuels, otherwise known as non-renewable energy, have driven the climate change disaster to extremes. Replacement of nonrenewable

natural resources such as coal, oil, and nuclear energy takes millions of years and sometimes proves irreplaceable. In environmentalist Edward Abbey's "FORWARD!" he stresses the repercussions of mining and fracking for these fossil fuels and minerals: "With bulldozer, earth mover, chainsaw and dynamite the international tinder, mining and beef industries are invading...our forests, mountains and rangelands and looting them for everything they can" (1). This interference with nature disrupts the habitats of wildlife and the preservation of trees. To further divulge, Janisse Ray's "Forest Beloved" exemplifies the importance of conserving ecosystems and forestation, "Below [the longleaf pine flatwood trees'] flattened branches, grasses arch their tall, richly dun heads of seeds, and orchids and lilies paint the ground. Purple liatris gestures across the landscape...the flowers...seek the flashes of Bachman's sparrows and ruby-crowned kinglets, and the careful crossings of fox squirrels and gopher tortoises...[while] the red-cockaded woodpeckers [nest] in the hearts of the pines" (1-2). To elaborate, she describes a longleaf forest safeguarding the various animals and organisms that rely on this ecosystem as a home. In addition to providing refuge to animals, trees also absorb the air of carbon dioxide, therefore decreasing gas buildup in the atmosphere.

However, as deforestation continues to run rampant, compounded with numerous other nonrenewable energy exposures, the Earth's decline burgeons.

Rachel Carson's chapter "The Obligation to Endure" from her book *Silent Spring* augments the hazards all life forms face from these fossil fuels. "[This pollution] of air, earth, rivers, and sea with lethal materials...is...irrecoverable...the contamination of man's total environment with...[such dangerous] substances that accumulate in the tissues of plants and animals and...penetrate the germ cells shatter or alter the...material of heredity upon which the shape of the future depends" (Carson 350-352). Carson explains that humankind, plant life, and animal diversification will eventually fail to sustain themselves under the current rate of nonrenewable energy usage. Ergo, mining, fracking, and deforestation ruin nature's biospheres and endanger life. Employing renewable natural resources like plants, animals, water, air, and sunlight in place of nonrenewable outlets impedes these catastrophes. Furthermore, natural processes replenish renewable energy over and over again. These resources last indefinitely if people leave the systems that they thrive under undistorted. All of these sources discuss the several different ways the extrication and operation

of fossil fuels release toxic air pollutants and encourage the implementation of renewable energy sources instead.

While these environmental activists champion renewable energy, some feel only nuclear energy, a type of nonrenewable energy, properly compensates in the place of fossil fuels. Moreover, Holman W. Jenkins Jr. substantiates that “curbing carbon” cannot “make up the difference” given the hypothetical elimination of fossil energy in his opinion piece “The Future of Nukes, and of Japan” (1). In regards to a nuclear reactor meltdown in Japan, he proclaims that “Complicating matters in Japan’s case is also the failed cooling of spent fuel...contributing to a burst of emissions that alarmed but didn’t threaten the wider public. Tokyo Electric has an almighty mess to clean up, but even in circumstances compounded by a region-wide natural disaster a Chornobyl-scale release seems likely to be avoided—in which case this year’s deaths from nuclear power will be less than those from coal mining accidents” (Jenkins Jr. 1). In other words, Jenkins Jr. contends that “mostly contained” nuclear radiation solely affects the plant workers (1).

In the same vein, William Tucker asserts “..six ounces of [nuclear energy can]...power a city the size of San Francisco for five years...That is why the environmental impact of nuclear [energy] is infinitely

smaller" (Tucker 1). To elaborate, Tucker accentuates nuclear energy's ability to fulfill the demands of the modern standard of living. Although harnessing renewable energy presents a challenge, many more obstacles arise in the application of nuclear power. For example, Jenkin Jr.'s loose and pernicious nuclear radiation quelling proposition lacks dependability, and such a cataclysm affects far more than just plant workers. To delineate, during a nuclear explosion, a chemical called Strontium 90 expels into the air, enters the surrounding grass, and settles in the bones of a human until they die. Strontium 90 also passes through underground streams, killing cattle, vegetation, and those who drink from wells (Carson 351).

Each year, laboratories concoct up to 500 new chemicals outside of the biological realm that people and animals must adapt to (Carson 351). Additionally, although nuclear power upholds the "consumer demands of a contemporary society" as Tucker conveys, drilling and extracting materials require more equipment and power. This idea amplifies environmental degradation and squashes Tucker's second point of nuclear energy having a smaller carbon footprint. Also, the cost of extraction exceeds the worth of the extracted material. As a result, the sacrifice of nature eclipses the advantages of the little amount of nuclear material procured

from the Earth, and this hindrance validates renewable energy's efficiency in circumventing climate change.

Having reviewed both sides of the debate, I find that the utility of renewable energy behooves our environment much more than fossil fuels, and even more than nuclear energy. Greenhouse gas buildup from human-driven nonrenewable energy ventures has aggravated climate change. Mining, fracking, and deforestation all emit toxic pollutants and play a part in deforming the homes and health of living creatures. The pro-renewable energy side of the discussion appeals to ethos, pathos, and logos equally when depicting the drawbacks of a society that relies on fossil fuels to function. The reader empathizes with the derailing circumstances of the planet, trusting the environmentalists' logic behind encouraging renewable energy in place of the current nonrenewable approaches. Meanwhile, the other side of the spectrum fortifies the notion that nuclear energy matches the outputs of fossil fuel expenditure better than renewable energy. With neutralizing demand, this standpoint also devalues the threat of nuclear radiation to life and the environment. Though garnering renewable energy lays a grueling task, fallacy engulfs the principles behind nuclear energy defense. Noxious radiation exposure and the high

price to drill nuclear elements from the ground outweigh the benefits of using them and further destroy nature. Demeaning the welfare of Earth and its inhabitants loses this reasoning's credibility and increases the readers' reluctance to commiserate.

Accordingly, I believe that renewable energy should replace fossil and nuclear energy, considering its eco-friendly ability to regenerate. To expand our understanding, analysis of the greenhouse effect provides insight into the solemnity of the climate change crisis. In particular, Earth now retains more heat and experiences warmer temperatures from the greenhouse gas emissions of industrialization. A forecasted temperature increase of 2.6 to 4.8 °C will happen globally in the next decade, in addition to irrevocable alterations to the planet's atmosphere and biospheres if the greenhouse effect continues its trajectory. Rising levels of ocean pH and melting polar caps risk marine life. Other visible marrings of climate change include acid rain, pesticides, and the weakening of the ozone layer. These drastic changes to our Earth's environment will become dire straits tomorrow, seeping into the security of our future. In short, the anthropogenic repercussions of fossil fuels have already taken a toll on the planet, so humanity must deliberate a course of action to combat the long-term afflictions of climate change.

To reiterate, the purpose of this paper was to navigate the obligation we have in sustaining our natural resources and assuaging the greenhouse effect. The study examined three research articles that showcase the liabilities of utilizing fossil fuels instead of renewable sources of energy, and two that endorse nuclear power satiation. The sources that bolster the renewable energy concept exhibit the many ways the functioning of fossil fuels adulterates the air with toxic gasses, which will leave Earth bereft of its flora and fauna. The sources in opposition to renewable energy and in favor of nuclear plants neglect the repression of impaired reactors, debasing the cogent fear of radiation exposure. They also propose that nuclear power withstands the brunt that fossil fuels leave in their wake while scarcely hurting nature. However, the intrusive and expensive process to acquire a small amount of nuclear matter overshadows the service the environment undertakes. Correspondingly, opting for renewable energy lessens fossil and nuclear force pollution and mitigates climate change. In sum, Earth has endured enough degenerative fossil fuel operations, calling upon humankind to amend its transgressions and plan to resist the permanent consequences of climate change.

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Retro Setup (2023) by Lizzete Rivera

Computer Generated.

For this project, I wanted to bring nostalgia to the viewer. This 3D setup is inspired by the Commodore 64 computer, the highest-selling computer model of all time, and the old videogame consoles from the '80s. This is my representation of how a gamer's desk looked back in the day. For the creation of this composite, I used the software Maya, Substance Painter, and V-ray. The original image that was used as a background was originally taken by Andrej Lišakov and published on Unsplash.com.

-Lizzette Rivera

Discord: Be Careful Who You Meet†*Nezzle Mendez*

People read and hear stories about online predators on social media, but unfortunately I had to deal with such a experience while only being a teenager. For me, Discord has both positive and traumatic memories, but I still use it today because now I have my account restricted, so people do not message me until I add them as a friend. Discord is a platform that lets people, ages thirteen-plus, talk and hang-out with others. In my junior year of high school in 2020, being around sixteen and joining a Discord group call with people around twenty-three to thirty-five. My personal experience with Discord was being manipulated by a person who was in the same friend group as I was whom I personally thought was my friend, but they were not. He made me feel like I was isolated and needed them every day. When we talked, it quickly become sexually and pushy on their end. I for one listened to him, as he was twenty-six at the time, in our call and sent explicit pictures and he did as well. I thought it was

† This paper was produced with the mentorship of Dr. Jacob Bender within English Composition II, Spring 2023. While completing this paper, Nezzle worked with Joseph Lisnow at the Writing Center.

a joke and felt uncomfortable, thus informing him he needed to stop. This is why Discord should be moderated as for minors/teens to not be manipulated by pedophiles, or the government will have to find people to do it for themselves. I do not care how the government does it, but Discord needs to be moderated now more than ever before. Therefore, while Discord is a good way to connect with people around the world, but the government should moderate it so that pedophiles are restricted because they pose a risk to minors.

Although Discord is a platform for both children and adults, it does not verify users' ages at signup since doing so might put other users, especially older ones, at risk. Discord is used by users to communicate with people on servers, who have similar interests or who wish to meet new friends. I myself will be part of the argument that Discord staff should moderate their platform, or the government will do it themselves. The problem is they are forced to hire moderators as some senators and business people believe in any case is a violation of the First Amendment of the United States Constitution. The government can set its own restrictions and control users, who do not have permission to be on the site. The workers in Discord do not seem to care about children on their platform and how it became unsafe

for anyone, especially children. Discord does not have the option to use parental controls. Do not let any children under the age of thirteen join servers that contain unsafe for work (NSFW) content. Also, it defaults automatically with the highest level of safety and privacy available. Therefore, people are trading content with others that they should not be showing others.

This issue is important to me because I do not want any children or teenagers to experience anything similar, and I want to keep them safe from predators who do not belong on the site or any social media. In "The Latest noted Discord Statistics: Servers, Revenue, Data, and More," business owner Werner Geysler, "there are about 350 million people on Discord from 2016 to 2020 and about 150 million active users are currently on the site" (Geysler). Discord is still a platform for children, and it poses a threat to them since they are unaware of the risks involved in staying on the site. The majority of Discord users are children who are still learning the difference between right and wrong. They are therefore going to be in a difficult situation and not be able to understand what is happening since it will be too late for them.

Some of the users on Discord are minors. In "Self-Generated Child Sexual Abuse Material: Youth Attitudes and Experiences in 2021," the Thorn in Partnership with Benenson Strategy Group found, "about 34% of those currently on the platform are minors" (10). Some children lie about their age there. The topic is worth arguing for the protection of children and their safety. There is a server with NSFW content that does not censor it because the children lie about their age and people who are up to twenty-one plus do not know and probably get in trouble because there are users that should not be there in the first place. The stake of it is that some servers on Discord be censored by those running the platform or the government. Discord does not change anything that is going on their platform. If the government sees what is going on, Discord wants it to be deleted because they see less action. Discord does not keep children protected. Knowing that does not help me now because I thought it would never happen to me, but it did. Although, going forward, people need to know what is happening in Discord to stay safe.

Minors will never know who they are speaking to, and they can communicate with anyone around the world on the internet. People will lie about their

age online and hide their true age from others. According to “Video Games and Online Chats Are ‘Hunting Grounds’ for Sexual Predators,” it noted, journalist Nellie Bowles and reporter Michael H. Keller noted, “Kate reached out to Discord to alert them to the problem. The company wrote back saying that because her son had deleted the messages, it no longer had the data and could take no action (Bowles and Keller 4). As Discord believes that predators do not exist on their platform, simple will not fix the problem. They will get emails for the parents of the children, but will not take any action since they lack information and refuse to act.

Discord will issue a statement to give the impression that they will solve the issue, but this is false. The issue is that predators are aware that while they will not face consequences online but they will in real life. According to “A White Supremacist Used Messaging Apps Discord, Kik, And A Fringe Kink Website To Groom A 12-year-old, According To A Federal Prosecutor,” editor Rachel E. Greenspan noted, “When asked about Larson’s indictment, a Discord spokesperson told Insider in a statement, “We take the safety of all discord users, but most importantly our younger users, incredibly seriously. The spokesperson said that when the company became aware of this case, the platform banned users,

shut down servers, and continues to be engaged with law enforcement” (Greenspan). The spokesperson did not confirm whether Larson himself was banned from the app (Greenspan). Discord will be aware of the cases but will do nothing as they will claim in their statement. In order to maintain its image, Discord will not give a damn if someone gets hurt, especially if it is a child.

Even if some claim that predators have the right to free speech, I would essentially disagree, as their actions are criminal. I do not care whether individuals express their right to free speech. It is pretty much pointless of saying that because that person is a predator and did something involved with it, will still be a crime. According to “Amos Yee Suspected To Be Recruiting Fellow Pro-Pedophiles On Twitter Again With 50 Throwaway Accounts,” Coconuts Singapore noted, “Despite her son’s clearly twisted opinions, Toh has continued to defend Yee’s right to free speech, depraved as his message is. In defense of her indefensible son, the mother rebutted [...] assisting Yee obtain political refugee status in the United States (Singapore).

Regardless of what some people may think, everyone has the right to their own opinions, even those that include supporting predators. However, it is bad for other individuals since people are pretty

much commit a crime and believe they should face the consequences of their actions.

There are others who were in the same situation. I am not the only case according to "Social Media Victims Law Center" stated that 33% of women under the age of thirty-five report having been sexually assaulted online. We had this group as well and this person knew everyone before I joined, so I was scared if I told everyone there and they would not believe me. As this person was showing their true colors was so wrong and I never thought my friend will like this. This person wanted pictures and I trusted them as a friend. When they sent me this, I just said "no," and I do not want to do it because I knew it was wrong. Although, little did I know that the person kept on texting me to do it or going on voice calls to do it. Scared as I was, because I did not know what to do and just did not want to be mad at me, to continue being my friend. So, as night was going on and we played with everyone in the group, everyone left the call, and I was there with them was happy with everyone because I did have fun playing the game and did not know that the person would take that away from me. They call me and want me. The call was going well and we kept playing the game. They asked me to open my camera and I felt comfortable and did so. Then, they told me some

dirty thoughts they had about me and it was weird, but I want them to be happy. Therefore, I just listened to them and never though this will happen to me as it did on the Discord when I was in middle school and I really thought this will stop but never will. So, I did it and they wanted more, I gave them that and they wanted more, but I was so tired and wanted to sleep.

The next day, I realized what I just did and wanted to tell the others from the group, but I was disgusted with myself and believe they will not believe me about the assault. Half of them live in New Jersey, but I never want to tell them because the person told me not to and to keep the assault like it never happens. That is what I did and I felt worse because this was in the back of my mind as we kept on playing games and the person kept on going on. They wanted more and, I was okay and just listen to the group for almost two months. I personally wanted them to stop and the only person who could do that was me and so I did. The reason for it was that I talk to one of the people in the group, and she is a nice and amazing person to talk with and pretty much was a big sister to me. After the meeting, I think of two points that were I never told them because she told me that they were all been friends since freshman year of high school and they grew up

with each other as a group and individuals. My second thought was to get out of this group because they were not bad people, but amazing people. I have met, but for myself mentally to not go through this as a person who was suffering from one person in this group. So leaving was final straw I needed to pull myself out of what was going on and keep it a secret from everyone else. Therefore, I left the group without any questions and unfriended some and only two people that was my 'big sister' and one friend. The person did text me and ask why I left the group and unfriended them. But, I ignored the message as it seemed as if they got the message at least something smart.

It is apparent from the Act on Telecommunications 1996 that some attempts at reforming the telephone and broadcast industry were not as successful as they could have been. In "The Telecommunications Act of 1996," it noted, "In addition, it set rules against child pornography and other objectionable content on the Internet. Out of all the sectors in the communications industry, telephone services saw the most deregulation. The Telecommunications Act eliminated a number of old laws that had kept these companies from fully competing with one another" ("The Telecommunications Act") busy with their broadcasting and newspaper stations shows how

the act is handled well. As a result, there are situations where the media is meant to ensure different ideologies are well represented, so they remain well-represented.

Mark Zuckerberg is a person who believes Facebook is a good platform for letting people have a voice. Even if the platform is the cause of scandals, such as the rise of anti-vaccine misinformation and the number of data scandals, as people are entitled to free speech. In "I'm a Very Idealistic Person: Mark Zuckerberg Believes Facebook is Still Fundamentally a Good Thing Even after Christchurch and Cambridge Analytica," Editor for Insider's UK bureau Shona Ghosh believes, "giving everyone a voice online is fundamentally a good thing, despite serious issues such as the livestreamed Christchurch shooting, the Cambridge Analytica data leak, and misinformation" (Ghosh). The purpose of Facebook was to give everyone a place to be able to express their opinions and ideas. As Zuckerberg serves people around the world, he gets to see the amazing projects that people can accomplish and he is able to put theory into practice.

Alex Jones was using social media platforms to talk about his personal opinions and thoughts. He has the right to keep talking about his opinions on social media as it is his freedom of speech. In "Poll:

Majority Believe Alex Jones Should be Banned From Social Media Platforms,” Harper Neidg noted, “some conservatives such as Sen. Ted Cruz (R-Texas) have objected, saying it violated Jones’s First Amendment rights” (Neidg). There are a lot of people who will tell others that Jones should remain on social media and should not be banned, which has happened on many of his online platforms. They believe Jones’ First Amendment rights, as a United States citizen, are being violated if not as he should be able to express his opinions as he sees fit.

As the internet is involved with our life and will continue to be as the years go on. I do think that we should teach kids that they should alert their parents if they connect with someone online who may be a potential predator so that their parents can take action, such as calling the police and informing them of what is happening. According to “A Teens Guide To Social Media Safety,” it noted, “If somebody you met online sends or requests provocative pictures, tell an adult. You have to approach online friends (who you don’t know in the real world) as a potential predator...because even if it feels like you know them; you really don’t know who they are.” Children should be taught that not everyone online is trustworthy since they could be a potential predator.

For adults to protect their children from harm. Children should always let their parents know who they are speaking to.

In conclusion, since pedophiles present a risk to children, even if Discord is a good method to interact with people throughout the world, the government should control it. While one would call the police if someone was attempting to pick up a minor in a public park, the issue here is the same as it is on social media. If we consider social media to be a public area, then enforce the same laws as we do to public areas. Discord will continue to be a problem because they do not care what their users do or if it happens on their platform, just like how teens were able to leak classified United States documents about the war in Ukraine in the middle of April this year, and Discord did nothing about it while the government got involved and even though the teens got arrested. The government will check users and add safety measures to children accounts in order to keep them safe on the site. Since it is common knowledge that minors would never install safety features on their own, we must get someone else to do it for them in order to keep them away from harm way.

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Colorful Together (2023) by Caitlyn Semeniuk

Paper Collage. 16x20in.

Collage is one of my favorite types of art, and I decided to combine that with everything I like, mainly by using my favorite colors. I tried to use words to describe me because I wanted the words to mean something and not just something thrown together.

Free Tuition: The Price of Equity in American Colleges. ‡

Lizzete Rivera

Over decades, higher education in the United States has become a luxury that perpetuates inequity. The elite institutions that are considered engines of upward mobility have become less accessible for low-income students over time (Thompson, 2017). Among other challenges, high tuition represents a barrier for low-income students and marginalized communities to access better opportunities in life (Reppond, 2019). While some people think that creating tuition-free universities will reduce the quality of education and favor higher-income scholars, making colleges tuition-free will increase diversity and benefit disadvantaged individuals often discouraged from completing their education (Winograd & Lubin, 2020).

In the United States, getting a college degree has been a way to close the social status gap. Unfortunately, this achievement is not easy for underrepresented minorities that usually make less income than white Americans (Ho, 2011). According

‡ This paper was produced as part of student course work at ENG 122H: English Composition II Honors with Professor Celia Winchester.

to the U.S. Census Bureau in 2019, 72% of the population 25 and older who have earned a college degree are white Americans while Black, Asian, Latino, and Native American individuals combined made up less than 30% of this population (Bryant, 2021). A Latino child that received protection from deportation known as DACA cannot apply for Federal Aid (Wintemute, 2023) narrowing their options to private scholarships and in-state financial aid. Nevertheless, some policymakers like Ron DeSantis have pushed to repeal access to in-state tuition rates for DACA recipients (Al-Arshani, 2023). In an interview with Veronica Bonilla, a Black Latina immigrant from Colombia and former student from Middlesex College, commented that students from underrepresented backgrounds need more guidance to apply for financial aid such as scholarships and student loans. According to Veronica, financial aid is vital for some students, and it becomes influential in accessing higher education and therefore better opportunities for social mobility. Based on Veronica's experience and the information from other authors, one of the main struggles that a student faces to access higher education is the inability to pay pricey tuition, the lack of information to request financial aid, and the disqualification to apply for it for foreign students.

Additionally, underrepresented minority groups and low-income students that are considered high achieving restrain themselves from applying to selective schools for which they are qualified (Harris,2018). According to Kantrowitz (2021), these students are afraid of the total cost that a selective school involves so they are more likely to enroll in a lower-cost school. This phenomenon is known as undermatching, and it is a serious problem that gives them a big disadvantage in climbing to a better social status and changing their lives generationally (Griggs, 2021). In the opinion of Griggs (2021), this inequitable system perpetuates socioeconomic disparities between the high-income and low-income classes. As mentioned by several authors, free-tuition colleges will promote equal opportunities for all students that won't need to choose a college based on their financial needs (Bouchrika, 2023; Lopez, 2020).

Moreover, underrepresented minority groups and low-income students have a hard time paying back student loans (Ramirez, 2022). In addition to scholarships and grants, student loans have been a way for many people to be able to attend college. Paying off student loans is not always an easy task, especially if you can't find a well-paid job. According to Chow (2019), women, blacks, and Hispanics earn

less than their male and white counterparts. This pay gap makes it difficult for those groups not only to pay for college but also to provide for their families once they have been incorporated into the workforce. In a 2019 paper published by the organization Dēmos, it is mentioned that “many minority students were substantially behind their white and Asian counterparts in repaying their loans 12 years after graduation. Black students, male, and female, held over 110% of the original balance, and Native American students close to 100%. Latino students fared slightly better, though female students held more debt (86%) than males (79%)” (As cited in Pallardy, 2019). By waiving tuition in colleges, those underrepresented groups will use the time after graduation to build wealth instead of carrying the burden of a student loan.

Furthermore, low-income students that borrow money to pay for their higher education are less qualified after graduation. In 2018, Christiana Stoddard and Carly Urban, researchers in the Economics department at Montana State, found that students who require student loans, have lower retention rates, lower GPA, and take fewer classes per semester compared to students that don't (As cited in Chow, 2019). Therefore, those students have worse academic performance, and fewer

opportunities to take internships or participate in extra-curricular activities that could help them to develop an early career (Chow, 2019). Making college tuition-free will help those students to focus on their studies and be more competitive once they join the workforce.

Lastly, waiving tuition will increase college enrollment and completion rates, especially for low-income students who are often the first generation to attend college (Winograd & Lubin, 2020). For instance, in 2017 Tennessee launched the program Tennessee Promise that allowed students to complete an associate degree free of tuition at a community college. “The percentage of Black students in that state’s community college population increased from 14% to 19% and the proportion of Hispanic students increased from 4% to 5%. Students who attend community college tuition-free also graduate at higher rates. In their article, Winograd & Lubin mentions that “Tennessee’s first Promise student cohort had a 52.6% success rate compared to only a 38.9% success rate for their non-Promise peers” (2020). According to the Department of Education data in 2017, “eliminating tuition had cost at least \$79 billion dollars a year, however, the federal government spent \$91 billion on policies that subsidized college

attendance” (As cited in Deming, 2019). By making college more accessible, minorities that hardly pursue a degree will attend college at higher rates.

After analyzing the advantages of free tuition, it may sound like a solution to fight the lack of equity and diversity in colleges as well as reducing disparities between social classes. Opposing views say it will not fix those problems. By making college free for everyone, students that belong to the upper class will receive a big advantage over students from the lower class (Bruenig, 2015). Students from low-income families are less likely to attend college. Tuition is not the only barrier to enrollment, at the same time they must cover other expenses like food, clothing, housing, and transportation (Akers, 2020). While low-income students struggle with those expenses, their wealthy peers will benefit from free tuition strengthening social inequality (Bouchrika, 2023). According to Akers, the funds that would be used to waive tuition for everyone should be used to help the poor and underrepresented overcome the obstacles that they face every day (2020). Strempel and Handel, higher education experts, argue that “decision- makers should instead look more closely at the social and economic issues that affect students, such as food and housing insecurity, childcare, transportation, and personal technology” (As cited

in Dilworth, 2022). Free college won't favor the students who need it the most but will put the students who already have their daily expenses covered in a better place.

Another argument from the counterpart mentions that making college tuition-free will affect the country's economy (Rhine, 2019). In 2016, Vermont Senator, Bernie Sanders, called to cancel student debt and make two and four-year colleges tuition-free and debt-free (Kamenetz and Westervelt, 2016). In 2018, New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy embraced the idea and suggested raising taxes on affluent residents from 8.97% to 10.75% (Vedder, 2018). Vedder mentioned that after decades of research, a rise in taxes as proposed by Governor Murphy would mean out-migration of the productive citizenry that would move to zero-state-income tax states like Texas, Florida, and Tennessee that tend to outperform high-income tax states like New Jersey and California (2018). On the other hand, public education is funded primarily by property tax (Norton, 2018), by waiving tuition, taxes will go up for property owners regardless of if they take advantage of such benefit. Under those arguments, free-tuition college is too expensive for the nation because the direct and indirect costs will be split among taxpayers that already struggle to

pay mortgages, auto debt, and credit cards. (Friedman, 2022).

Additionally, detractors suggest that making colleges free will devalue education. According to Norton (2018) “When faced with challenging and rigorous classes, some students will realize they are in danger of failing and play the “W” card. As in withdrawing from the class. Depending on the grading system at the college/university, a “W” grade may not factor into the grade point average calculation. But withdrawing from a class has financial ramifications. At least until now. Once tuition becomes free, I predict increased abuse of withdrawing from classes. After all, the financial incentive to finish what you start has been removed.” Authors Harris and Baecher (2019) mention in their article “The Unintended Consequences of Free College”, that by not paying tuition, students will take less ownership of their studies and would feel no pressure to pass a class with the minimum grade. Abdukadirov suggests that “since it’s free and there’s nothing to lose but time, they could always go back to college whenever they regain the drive to become degree holders” (2023). While there are many high-achieving students who would benefit from free tuition

college, many others will see it as an easy way to get a degree with little to no effort.

Furthermore, making college tuition free will decrease the value of a college degree. In her article, *The Pros and Cons of Free College*, Josephson mentions that free college will make job offers more limited due to the increase in mediocre graduates and competitive workers will have to pursue higher degrees to “stand out from the crowd” (2022). In the US, the percentage of adults with a bachelor’s degree is 32.1%, if this number increases drastically, companies will offer lower salaries and fewer benefits since anyone would be qualified to get that job (Abdukadirov, 2023). Employers will ask for more credentials for jobs that do not require them. This phenomenon is known as degree inflation (Cooper, 2018). Degree inflation has a negative impact on students that did not pursue a bachelor’s degree and will have lower opportunities than the students that finished college including Latino and Black students (Morgan, 2021).

Lastly, by making college tuition-free, most of the State Universities will be underfunded (Abdukadirov, 2023). Schools like Tennessee State University, known for being the only Black State College in that state, have limited their ability to provide scholarships and housing to students due to

missing out on \$57 million in state matches according to a study by the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities. Generally, Black students who enroll at Tennessee State are less likely to graduate than Black students at the state's other public colleges and universities (As cited in Mitchel, 2021). By waiving tuition, colleges will rely on the government for education financing to run. As enrollment grows, classes will result in overcrowded classrooms and fewer teachers per student ratio (Prosperor, 2023).

In summary, the government can do much more for low-income students so they can jump to the next social class. Students need to cover their basic needs such as food, housing, clothing, and transportation to take advantage of free college. It is needed to bring up this topic when talking about politics. Citizens must advocate for pilot programs such as TN Promise that have been proven to help low-income students (Westervelt & Kamenetz, 2016). Researchers should measure the benefits of such programs to have enough data that will lead to better decisions. Making college tuition-free will help low-income students to succeed in life but this aid should be carefully planned. Policymakers should consider the results of new research before promising programs such as student debt

forgiveness that will more likely benefit wealthier students and increase inflation (Friedman, 2022). A nationwide free college is unlikely to happen anytime soon, however, the best tool at this moment for students is information. High school and community college counselors can help students to find out their best options to graduate debt and stress-free.

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Untitled (2023) by Kelly Bartko

Transnational Voices: A Selection

Transnational Voices share poetry, essays, short stories composed by their community.

If you want to hear and see far-away lands, forget about James Webb. Enjoy the reading.

Work on this selection was promoted and supported by Professor Shaheen between 2019 and 2022.

Amour Maternelle: Maternal **Love**.

Amour pour une femme qui pleure de san **G**.

Balloté la vie D'haïti avec mon père**E**.

Resté toujours à souffrir de comble de bonheu**R**.

Amour anniversaire ton discours est toujours un
madapola**M**.

Honneur pour moi de raconter l'histoire d'une
sar**A**.

Anulle autre pareilles ton sourire est un Cristal**iN**.

Moi **ABRAHAM** tu m' as à pris être éblou**I**.

Amour maternel**E** .

Roi-Abraham Saint-Vil

Hoy quiero cantarle a la vida
a la humedad del vino
a las paredes mordidas
por el sarcástico invierno

Dándome golpes en el pecho
con los ojos despiertos
entre bodegas vacías
y alucinantes recuerdos

Cantarle a mis padres
permanente delirio
en el espiral de las olas
y sus gallardos faldones

Entre cansadas ramas
gargantas roncadas
y la congoja del tiempo
refugiado entre rocas
He de orar boquiabierto

las plegarias de mi madre
cuan párvulo en cuna
sollozando su aroma

Soy mitad mar..... la otra,
vigía de océanos apostado
en el mástil mascando
el sereno

Mientras el viento arrecia
arrastrando mi atuendo
hacia morbosos corales
impregnados de estrellas

Hoy quiero cantarle a la vida
a la humedad del vino
a las paredes mordidas
por el crudo invierno....

Aldo Mario Revilla

My Life Values

Shaimaa Azzam

There is a wisdom in my country that says, “Whatever you plant in your kids will affect not only on them but also their society.” There are many types of parents. There are the easy parents who never ask their children about their actions or what they did. On the other hand, there are the rigid parents who have hard rules, and it is not easy to change their minds. My parents were kind of in the middle: they are not so easy or even very rigid, so their parenting affected my whole life. It affects my work, my social life, and my relationship with my kids. My parents’ values, which they planted in me, are to be committed to my promises and to be sympathetic with other people.

My first value which my parents tried hard to teach me is to be committed by any promise or word I have given to anyone. It is kind to be an honest person, even with yourself. Sometimes people can change their life depending on our promises to them. My parents said to me, “If you become an honest and committed person, people will trust in your decisions and thoughts.” They will follow you without any fear from anything. If anyone tries to ruin or disrupt your life, you will find people who will protect you, because you never disappointed them. For example, one day my kid had a party at his school, and I promised him to come and join him. He wanted me to come to see his new friend. There

was bad traffic that day because of a crash on the road. I was very late, and I could not reach him by any way. His friend kept saying to him that I forgot his party and I would not come. However, my son was very sure that I would come and there was something that happened out of my control that forced me to be late. When I heard about his situation later, I was very happy that I am a trustful and honest person in my son's eyes. This makes me feel comfortable because I knew at that moment that my son will be the same in his future. All this happened because my parents taught me to be committed to my words.

In addition to committing to my promises, my parents put in me the value of being compassionate for other people. They taught me how to have empathy. They helped me to understand that everyone has his circumstances and problems in his life. They helped me to know how to feel with other people and when I should take a hard action and when I should not. They planted in me to feel for the needy or poor people and try to help them. They said to me, "You should have empathy even with animals, and if you hit this point you will understand people's needs because people can talk and express but animals cannot." My parents said to me, "If you could be that person, you will find the happiness in your life." For instance, one day I was walking on the street after having my lunch. Then, I found a dog at the side of the curb. I was shocked

when I found his leg was injured badly. I took it quickly to the vet to see what he could do for his leg. After three days, I was very happy when I found the dog returned to its normal life and walking easily.

Indeed, our parents or our caregivers affect so much in our life and our attitudes with others. My parents gave me useful values in my life which were represented in being a committed person with my promises and being a compassionate person who has empathy for others. They helped and raised me as hard as they could to be good and useful in my society. What my parents tried to teach me at the past, I am trying to do the same with my kids now. That was the meaning of the expression which is said in my country. What my parents planted in me affected me and will affect my kids in the future, and then the entire society. Therefore, parents should be very careful about what they teach their children.



Photo Manipulation (2022)
by Kelly Huertas Sandoval

Adobe Photoshop

The United States is a Place to Transform Yourself into the Person You Want to Be

Karen Saenz

The beauty of United States is based on welcoming and transforming people who are looking for a change in their lives. That's what I learned when I came to this country, and I started to understand how it works. The United States is a dream for people who are looking for big opportunities and a change in their economic welfare. I came for another reason, which is based on the thoughts of my father about my education and my life. For a long time, the United States was a dream for me; it was my dream place to study and prepare myself in education. My father and my mom didn't agree about it, so I started to grow up and I felt more comfortable in my country, Colombia. I was building my own life, I had friends and I almost started my career there. I was in a moment where I wanted to stay there, because I got everything that I wanted without complication or work. Nonetheless, my life started to change. I have always heard that the life is in a constant changing, everything can happen and surprise us with a purpose. I understood it when my parents

decided to broke up their 20 years marriage. They took the decision about my sister and me to come to the United States and live with my father, who has lived in this country for many years. At that moment, I didn't want to change my lifestyle because I was so happy in Colombia and I didn't have obstacles there. However, I knew it was the best option for me, because my father is the only person who can help me to afford my education. Finally, I'm living in the United States with my father and sister. I came on January 2018, and my life has been transforming every day. In the first moment, I didn't want to accept my new life. I felt discomfort and nostalgia, I was clinging to my life in Colombia, where I had my boyfriend, friends, and everything that I wanted (money, no responsibilities, and an easy life). After, I started to study and work. Also, I left all my connections of Colombia in the past. I left in Colombia my kid personality and I started to think like a 125 woman. As a result, I started to see the beauty of United States. I began to see the reality of the world because this country showed me a place where people have to work to get what they need and want. Therefore, I became an independent and responsible person, the opposite of the person that I was in my country. I'm working to improve every step that I give to my

future and the person I want to be some day. I think, the plans that God has for us are always perfect not matter the circumstances before the success. I was in Colombia living a fairytale life, where I couldn't see reality because I always had everything in my hands with just by saying "I want..." Then I came to the United States, when I started to see the reality of the world because I started to work for the things that I aspirate. I am focusing my mind in learn from every situation, and I am improving myself to be the person I dream based on these things. I am taking advantage of the opportunity that my parents are giving to me because I am converting to a better person that is working for her own things. The purpose that God has for me is indefinite for this moment, 126 but I know that he has a big and perfect plan for my life in a future that is going to make me be thankful with my parents and the opportunities this country gave me.

Things I Could Not See Before COVID-19

Stephanie Perez

People commonly do not think about what will happen the next day and live only the moment without making plans for the future, and unfortunately, a pandemic like COVID-19 must come to change that situation. If that is true and the pandemic comes with a lot of painful moments, it also helps a lot of people to restructure their lives, and one of those people is me. When the pandemic started, all the things changed in my life, family, and my community. I didn't know what was going to happen the next day, everything was uncertain, and my life took a 360 degree turn. But day by day I learned many lessons from the pandemic because I asked myself one question: If people overcame the 1918 influenza pandemic, attacks like 9/11 or other bad moments in the world, "Why can't I"? My family and I decided to see the positive part at this moment and found many positive effects of the pandemic. The two most important positive effects were to learn to be a good member of society, family and the world and people taking more responsibility for their health.

First, one of the most important positive effects of the pandemic was learning to be a good member of society, our family, and the world. For example, people learned to be good people with their society when all the stores closed, and the people shared their clothes and food with the poor people.

However, we could also learn to be a good member of our families because all the families stayed in their houses and spent more time with their partners or kids. In my case, before the pandemic I did not have good communication with my husband, and the pandemic taught me to be a good wife. Furthermore, the people in general do not treat the environment carefully, but the pandemic taught us to be good people with our environment. People learned to care for plants and animals, and in the newspaper we saw that birds recovered spaces in the cities or bears walking on the France's streets, wonderful moments.

In addition, the second of the most important positives of the pandemic was people taking more responsibility for their health. For example, people learned about preventive health. Many people do not pay attention to their health and never go to the doctor for a checkup of the body, but the pandemic taught us to be alert with our bodies. Furthermore, with the pandemic, mental problems also started,

but it was a good reason to take mental health more seriously and bring the necessary awareness of its importance. Also, for the young people the pandemic was the reason for thinking two times before starting with the sexual activity, and they started to control and prevent sexual disease.

In conclusion, the two most important positive effects were to learn to be a good member of society, family and the world and people taking more responsibility for their health. COVID-19 was terrible for the people around the world, affecting the people of different ages, but also, we could learn to be strong people. After the COVID-19 pandemic the people cannot wait for another big problem, health issue, or natural disaster to change their lives in positive terms. We need to start right now; another chance won't come.

Our Economy

Supply Chain and Logistics Management Business Model Presentations and the Human Connection

Sonal Pandey, PhD shares a selection of work on Supply Chain Management and her thoughts on the interplay between business, culture, and human connections.

Given the relevance of this business on our county, we know you will find it interesting.

The relationship between these business models and humanity lies in the impact they can have on individuals and communities. Each of these models addresses the specific needs and desires of people, contributing to their well-being and enhancing their overall human experience.

The personal training business model, for example, focuses on promoting health and fitness, which directly impacts individuals' physical and mental well-being. By providing personalized fitness plans, motivation, and support, personal trainers empower individuals to take control of their health and lead healthier lives. This contributes to the betterment of humanity by promoting overall wellness and longevity.

Similarly, the T&G Convenience Store business model caters to customers' convenience and accessibility needs. By offering a convenient shopping experience, this model acknowledges the importance of saving time and effort in our fast-paced lives. This convenience can positively impact individuals by reducing stress and allowing them to allocate more time to other meaningful activities, such as spending time with family or pursuing personal interests.

The business model centered around tea lovers embraces the idea of socialization, passion, sharing, and learning within the community. By creating a space for individuals to connect, share their passions, and learn from one another, this model fosters a sense of belonging and human connection. It provides an avenue for people to engage with each other, form meaningful relationships, and broaden their perspectives. In this way, it contributes to the enrichment of human interactions and the cultivation of a supportive and inclusive community.

Overall, these business models serve as catalysts for positive change and growth in individuals' lives. They address fundamental aspects of human existence, such as health, convenience, connection, and personal development. By focusing on these elements, they contribute to the betterment of humanity by improving individual well-being, promoting social connections, and creating opportunities for personal growth and fulfillment.

-Sonal Pandey, PhD

Personal Training Business Model

Seanly Villadarez

Personal Training Business Model



Personal training is essential because it provides personalized fitness plans tailored to an individual's specific goals, needs, and fitness level. Personal training offers motivation, support, and accountability to help individuals achieve their goals and maintain a healthy lifestyle.

By –Seanly Villadarez

Dr.Sonal Pandey - SCL Class

BUSINESS MODEL CANVAS

KEY PARTNERS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gym Studio • Nutritionists • Dietitians • Physical Therapists 	KEY ACTIVITIES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing personalized workout plans • Keeping track of progress • Offer nutritional guidance KEY RESOURCES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certified personal trainers • Fitness Equipment 	VALUE PROPOSITION <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customized fitness plans • Convenience • Motivation, support, accountability • Injury prevention 	CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIPS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular check -ins • Motivation and encouragement • Communication CHANNELS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website • Referrals • Social media 	CUSTOMER SEGMENTS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Athletes • People recovering from injuries • New people looking to get into fitness • Seniors
COST STRUCTURE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Salaries and wages • Rent and utilities • Equipment and supplies • Insurance 		REVENUE STREAMS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fitness classes • One on one training sessions • Merchandise • Products 		

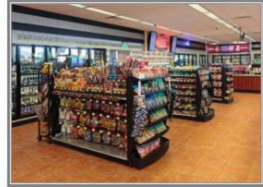
Conclusion



The personal training business model is important because it allows personal trainers to provide customized fitness plans and personalized support to their clients, helping them achieve their health and fitness goals. This model also offers personal trainers various revenue streams and business opportunities, while providing their clients with motivation, accountability, and expertise that can help them maintain a healthy lifestyle.

T&G Convenience Store Business Model
Gittens Saint-Aime

**T&G CONVENIENCE STORE
BUSINESS MODEL**



INDIVIDUAL PRESENTATION

Gittens Saint-Aime

Dr. Sonal Pandey- SCL Class



**T&G CONVENIENCE STORE
BUSINESS MODEL**

1. VALUE PROPOSITIONS
2. CUSTOMER SEGMENT
3. CHANNELS
4. CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIPS
5. REVENUE STREAMS / MODEL
6. KEY RESSOURCES
7. KEY PARTNERS
8. KEY ACTIVITIES
9. COST STRUCTURE

1-VALUE PROPOSITIONS

T&G Convenience Store is a new convenience store located in Edison, New Jersey. Our purpose is to meet the demand of the area residents at Edison including Middlesex College. We have been identified that there is no convenience store within 3 miles that serve the population in this area. Therefore, T&G Convenience Store offers products and services as follow :

- Alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages
- Snacks
- Basic groceries, and ready-made coffee
- Donuts, and hot food
- Gas for cars, car wash and air machine for tires.

As a result, for all of residents, students and other people who access this area it will be a perfect choice and opportunity for them to come in, stop in and purchase their preferred products to fulfill their needs without having to go out of one's way.

2-CUSTOMER SEGMENT

The target market for T&G Convenience Store will be all residents, students, employees working in the area, particularly at Middlesex College in Edison, New Jersey, and also all travelers who access to this area. Our store will be open to every customers who would come from all demographics, social and ages.

T&G Convenience Store offers best quality products and services to fulfill our customer needs in this area, that will be a perfect opportunity for them to come in, stop in and purchase their preferred products as needed at any time because we are open 24/7 store. T & G will provide excellent customer service by ensuring our staff is kind and helpful. We will welcome customers, provide assistance and suggest products which will guarantee our customers have the optimal experience when coming to T & G convenience store.

3-DISTRIBUTION CHANNELS

T&G Convenience Store will use a physical channel distribution to provide products and service to customers. Therefore, all our products and services will be available and accessible for customers at our store at Edison within 1 mile to Middlesex College at any time. Our store will be accessible for all customers, clean and well maintained. T & G will also have its mobile ordering app that can be downloaded and used by anybody as a virtual channel as well. The mobile ordering app will allow customers to customize their orders and pay electronically and will eliminate the need for cash transactions.

4-CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIPS

For T&G Convenience Store, demand management is one of the most critical components of running day to day operations. Therefore, we will utilize promotional campaigns to attract customers and increase their demand. We are offering competitive advantage based on our ideal location within 3 miles of our neighborhood, large selection of snacks, beverages, and freshly made items and also our gas is sold from the highest quality gas distributor. And also offer a competitive price at T&G Convenience Store.

To anticipate customer demand, it will be significant for T&G to forecast customer demand and stock inventory accordingly and also we will adjust our staffing level in response to customer demand and ensure there are enough employees on hand to meet the needs of the customers.

To keep our customer satisfy and meet their specific needs on a regular basis T&G will provide excellent and unique customer service by ensuring our staff is kind and helpful. We will welcome customers, provide assistance and suggest products. To get more customer and make them spend more money, with a good marketing plan, T&G will use promotions, websites, advertise our convenience store with billboards and have our own mobile app where customers can use mobile ordering. Moreover, we will also offer a rewards program through the app, which will give our loyal customers discounts.

Additionally, we will use various channels to measure customer feedback including online surveys, social media and a comment box located by our entrance/exit.

This Photo by Unkown author is licensed under CC BY

5-REVENUE STREAMS / MODEL

T&G Convenience Store's revenues will receive from the sales of its products and service customers such as gas, car washes, grocery, snacks, beverages, alcoholic beverages, and hot ready made food which are revenues drivers for the store.

Based on the forecast sales, the average monthly sales for T&G will be \$ 25,000, for the first year period based on the assumption of a 3% growth in monthly sales.

As a store, the cost drivers for T&G convenience store will be the overhead costs required in order to staff and maintain a profitable and successful convenience store. The most expenses will be the payroll cost, rent, utilities, store supplies and inventory, car wash maintenance, and marketing materials.

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6-KEY RESSOURCES

The day-to-day operations of T&G convenience store will be financed by a combination of investments from the owners, private equity, debt financing and from the sale of our products and services T&G is seeking \$300,000 in debt financing to open the convenience store.

The funding will be dedicated towards paying the rent of store, purchasing materials and equipment needed for the operations and purchasing the initial inventory. Funding will also be used for keeping three months of overhead costs to include payroll of the staff, utilities, and marketing costs for the convenience store.

The breakout of the funding is as follow

- Rent the local for the retail store located at an intersection for three years : \$ 75,000
 - Purchase material and equipment and build the layout of the store : \$ 105,000
 - Purchase the initial inventory : \$ 50,000
 - Keep three months of overhead expenses (payroll, rent, utilities) : \$ 35,000
 - Marketing costs : \$ 7,000
 - Working capital : \$ 28,000
- Total \$300,000

6-KEY RESOURCES (Continued)

Among the resources that T&G Convenience Store will need to perform its activities the human resources are crucial to manage efficiently its daily operating functions :

- Gittens and Tim will be the Owners and general managers of the company. They will oversee all staff, hire, train, and manage store inventory, and supplier contracts and relationships
- Gittens will be the Head Manager to be in charge of the convenience store when. He will also supervise all aspects of managing a convenience store.
- Bookkeeper, will be in charge of payroll, accounts receivable and payable, and tax payments. T&G will have a staff of 6 employees to assist with customer service and maintenance.

7-KEY PARTNERS

Our key Partners includes Shareholders, Suppliers and Customers.

SHAREHOLDERS :

They shareholders include the investors who are the owners of T&G Convenience, Gittens & Tim. They will bring 30% of the funds needed to start the project. They will also be responsible of the Top management of the Store.

FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS :

For buying equipment, material and getting the 70% reminding financing funds needed for the operations of T&G Convenience Store, we will get credit from local bank institutions at New Jersey.

SUPPLIERS :

Our products will be sourced from local farms, suppliers and vendors all located within the tristate area. The suppliers will be responsible to provide T & G Convenience Store with all products needed. They are all local providers. The products are received and stocked in our distribution center, which is basically our warehouse. It is located near to our store.

CUSTOMERS :

Are Come to the store to produce their demand and buy available products. The target market for T&G Convenience Store will be all residents, students, employees working in the area, particularly at Middlesex College in Edison, New Jersey, and also all travelers who access to this area. Our will be open to every customers who would come from all demographics, social and ages.

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8-KEY ACTIVITIES

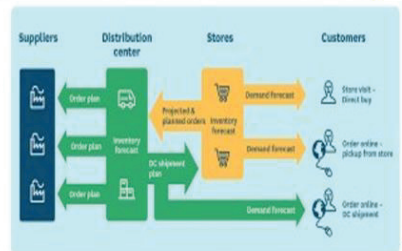
The main operation of T&G convenience store consists of the following :

SUPPLIERS : Buying all products needed from local providers.

DISTRIBUTION CENTER: Those products are received and stocked in our distribution center, which is basically our warehouse. It is located near to our store.

STORE : The distribution center send products as requested and needed by to the store for selling to customers.

CUSTOMERS : Come to the store to produce their demand and buy available products.



This diagram by Tolkmann under a licensed under CC BY

8-KEYACTIVITIES (Continued)

T&G convenience store has to perform these activities before starting its operations :

- Rent the local of the retail store
- Built the layout of the convenience store
- Sign contracts for gas and grocery supplier
- Purchase all store inventory and supplies
- Hire and train convenience store staff
- T&G Convenience Store opens for business

9-COST STRUCTURE

The structure of the most important operating cost and expenses of the T&G convenience store related to its activities will include of the following :

- Cost of goods sold
- Rent
- Salaries
- Marketing
- Initial expenditure
- Depreciation of the Equipment
- Loan interest

T&G Convenience will use the cost-focus strategy by keeping the cost and hence price of its products and service below that are competitors to target the narrow market at Edison, closely to Middlesex College . Based on its cost structure, T&G has a prosperous future in the market sector by being among the top 10 convenience stores in New Jersey, particularly at Edison, in terms of its profitability, products quality and availability, and customer satisfaction .



Introduction

- As we see so many coffee shops and cafes in our areas, I thought what about the Tea lovers like myself?
- As I designed this business model, it opens its door to all of the people who embrace a holistic lifestyle, and even those who do not and may be enlightened. This is a complete experience allowing us to socialize about our passions and learn from others in our community.

Value and Need



Allow your taste buds to indulge in the essence of our traditional teas. Customize your own personal blend from our large assortment of loose leaf teas. While you sip yourself on an amazing journey enjoy the comfort of our amazing all natural sandwiches and handmade desserts.



Once you have fulfilled your emotional needs, visit our Market Place and check out our selection of Handmade Skin and Hair Care Products and YES we even have products for your fur babies!

Customers

- Anyone who is looking to embrace a holistic lifestyle. Sim.plici.tea offers USDA organic wellness blends with the highest quality teas, herbs and spices. Each blend are custom selected by you, for your specific needs. With certain health goals in mind, as all promote healthy healing, and supporting your body's overall wellbeing.



SimpleTea is an E-Commerce business

Please visit our local tea house in your area you can find our location at www.simplicitea.com

Channels

Through, the use of omni channels you can also download and check out our APP or find use on Facebook and Instagram.

Our App offers you in site to so much more. Find out where our Pop-Up shops will be, also our products will be coming to your local Farmers Markets and Health Food Stores. Here you can also find some great recipes and so much more.

Customer Relationship

- As we thrive on customer satisfaction, we love hearing what our customer are saying.
- We value all feedback, please visit any of our social media accounts to let us know how we are doing. If there are any likes or dislikes please let us know that too. We will release surveys monthly to ensure we are meeting our customer's needs.
- Sign up for our Simpl.you loyalty club. You don't want to miss out on rewards and our latest promotions and coupon offers.



Revenue Stream

If you love our teas as much as we do, you may wish to join our Sim.plici.tea of the month club. With this subscription you will receive our unique blend of tea with flavors of what is in season, you will also receive a complimentary recipe for a seasonal dessert and some fun accessories.

Our handmade Skin and Hair Care products are always available for purchase on our website. Please note these items are made-to-order and will take a bit longer to ship.

Resources



Finance- in order, to start up my business I will need to take a small business loan. This will allow me the capital to get a rental space, and all inventory items to start my business.



Physical-This area will allow us the space for the tea house and a kitchen to produce out retail inventory.



Human – I will need someone to monitor all marketing, social media and human resources management.

Partners

- Sim.plici.tea is an LLC, so there are no partners.
- Suppliers- Sim.plici.tea makes all of our products in house and purchases all ingredients from our local wholesalers such as Costco or fresh from our local Farmers Market.
- All of our teas are USDA organic which we order from our local supplier.



Activities



Production-Everything is made fresh and in house. All of our online orders are made-to-order. Items in our market are limited, but if need they can be ordered and produced.



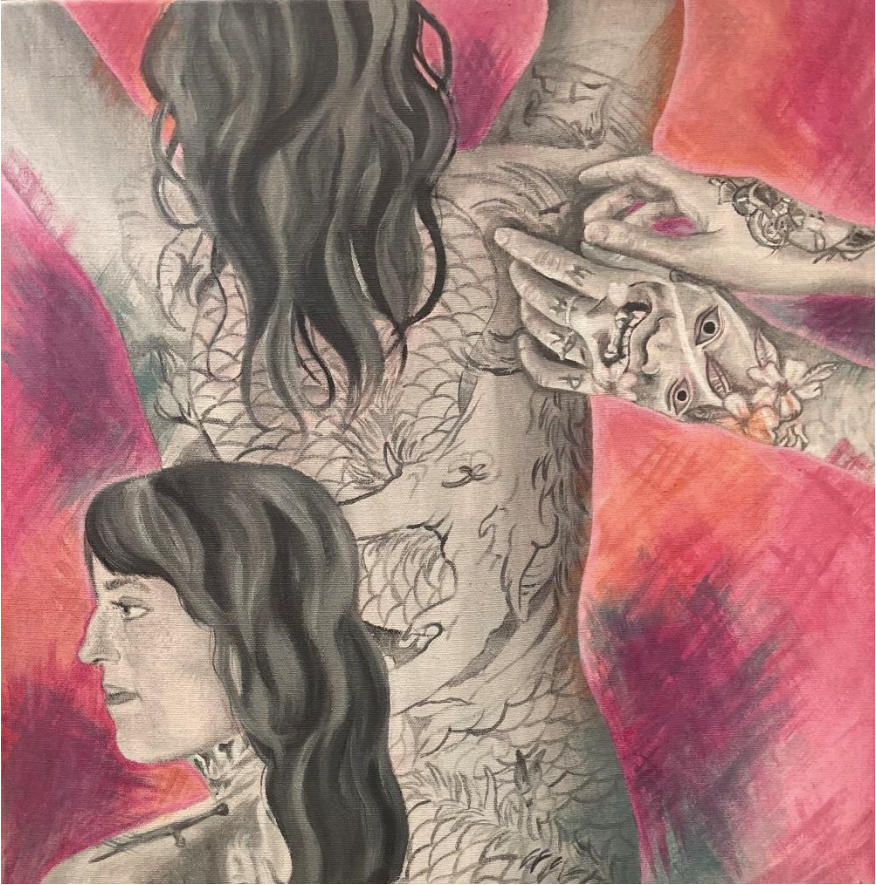
Packaging- We use sustainable packaging for all of our merchandise and to-go items.

Cost



Conclusion

- In a world dominated by our on - the -go lifestyle, we now have a place to go, to simply slow down for a moment, and take some time to reflect on the day.



For Montana (2022) by Kayla Letra

Acrylic on Canvas. 20x20in.

This piece was done layer by layer, adding washed out acrylic paints to create the background. I am always inspired by the loved ones in my life. Here I paint my beloved partner from different angles, as she is my ongoing inspiration.

-Kayla Letra

About the Humanities Honor Society

Created in 2015 as the History and Philosophy Honor Society, this organization sought to open a space for students with an interest in teaching and researching memory and traditions of thought. As time progressed, it became evident that understanding humans required a broader approach. For that reason, in 2018, we became the Humanities Honor Society.

The Humanities Honor Society engages its members in the art of understanding humans as beings who feel, think, imagine and create. As importantly, members learn about the beauty of teaching others. Members accomplish this by working with a faculty mentor and volunteering at Middlesex College Learning Center under the supervision of the Learning Center Coordinator.

Cristóbal Espinoza-Wulach and Joseph Pascale
Society's advisers

Sobre la Sociedad Honorífica de Humanidades

Creada en 2015 como Sociedad Honorífica de Historia y Filosofía, la organización buscaba crear un espacio para aquellos alumnos interesados en el arte de enseñar e investigar la memoria y tradiciones de pensamiento. Con el tiempo, se hizo evidente que entendernos requería una perspectiva más amplia. Así en 2018 llegamos a ser Sociedad Honorífica de Humanidades.

Nuestra organización desarrolla en sus miembros el arte de entendernos como seres que sienten, piensan, imaginan y crean. Los miembros desarrollan esas habilidades bajo la guía de un profesor/mentor. Además, miembros trabajan en el Centro de Tutoría bajo la supervisión de su director.

Cristóbal Espinoza-Wulach and Joseph Pascale
Mentores y Consejeros

Members for Academic Year 2020- 2021

Members worked with a faculty mentor and Joseph Pascale learning the arts of teaching and researching different topics associated with humanities.

Jacek Brys is an Education Transfer. He hopes to become a high school English teacher and develop a career as a creative writer

Karen Edema is Psychology major. She hopes to pursue a career in either clinical or research psychology. Karen loves writing poetry and her favorite book is Normal People by Sally Rooney. She has a cat named Rain.

Katherine Fallon- Reusch also known as Katie, is a history major at Middlesex College, as well as a part of the honors learning community. She loves to read, write, and to engage in other creative pursuits. One day she wants to help others discover the joys of learning through either being a librarian or teacher.

Ellen Kwon is majoring in Business Information Systems. She loves to write short stories and hopes to work on a novel soon.

Brenda Neary is majoring in Dietetics and member of the Honors Learning Community at Middlesex College. As a student with a career, she has learnt to navigate the challenges of balancing work, home,

and studies. Upon graduation, she plans to transfer to a four-year college with hopes of becoming a Registered Dietitian.

Artist Biographies

Kelly Bartko has a passion for arts and sports. She played volleyball for our college and worked with Professor Susan Altman on Teen Art Festival, March 2023.

Hui Kuang Cheng started taking courses at Middlesex College, going on to earn an Associates Degree in Accounting. Following graduation, Hui Kuang started taking art courses, finding fulfillment in making pottery, printmaking, and painting. “They have opened a charming and mystical world to me.”

Sadae Marie Hori’s goal as an artist is to use all of her life experience, loss, pain, and joy and blend them into works that intrigue the viewer. She is also a passionate activist and enjoys creating thought-provoking art for causes including climate, indigenous’ rights, and criminal justice reform.

Kelly Huertas Sandoval majored in Media Arts and Design (Advertising Graphic Design). She graduated in Spring 2023. While at Middlesex College, she was a member of *Phi Theta Kappa* and *Kappa Pi* (Art Honor Society), and she was awarded

the Frank M. Chambers Award for Academic Achievement and is recipient of the award for outstanding academic achievement in her major. Following graduation at Middlesex College, she is pursuing a BFA in Graphic Design with a minor in photography.

Kayla Letra majored in Fine Arts and graduated Middlesex College in Spring 2023. She transferred to The College of New Jersey to further pursue her career as an Art Education major. She hopes to encourage young students to pursue the arts. She is forever grateful that her time at Middlesex College developed her passion for teaching and painting.

Ianiza Marcelo recently moved to Middlesex County from the Philippines. Ianzia is enrolled in the Allied Health program at Middlesex College with the intention of transferring to the Nursing Program.

Caitlyn Semeniuk is a Fine Art major at Middlesex College. She is interested in both traditional arts, where she does primarily painting and collage works, as well as digital character design. She has had a passion for art all her life, but it wasn't until enrolling at Middlesex College that she was able to explore art in a whole new light, expanding on art and not holding back on new ideas and projects. Caitlyn wants to become an independent artist and character designer, utilizing traditional and digital

art.

Ummei Tahamina graduated from Middlesex College with a degree in Gaming and Animation. Ummei previously studied graphic design and multimedia, 2D animation, and desktop publishing in Bangladesh. While at Middlesex College, Ummei was on the Dean's List and inducted into *Phi Theta Kappa* and *Kappa Pi* (Art Honor Society). Ummei plans to continue on to a Master of Arts in Animation.

Transnational Voices Biographies

Shaimaa Azzam is Egyptian but was born in Saudi Arabia. She went back to Alexandria, Egypt, when she was in first grade. She was married in 2007 and has three children, two boys and one girl. She came to the United States in 2018 and is a full-time student at Middlesex College. She hopes to join the dental hygiene program and get her associate's degree.

Roi-Abraham Saint-Vil was born in Haiti. At 10 years old, he migrated to America 15 days after the devastating large-scale earthquake that struck the country on Jan 12th, 2010. Abraham is passionate about his education. He graduated from Middlesex with a degree in Computer Information Security in 2020. He is attending New Jersey Institute of Tech-

nology for CyberSecurity. He was involved in numerous extracurricular activities at MCC including organizations like the Caribbean Connection Club and Work 'n' Play. In addition, he was a candidate to be the MCC school president in 2018. His poems have been published at newsletters and magazines.

Estefany Perez was born in Peru, where she grew up with her mother and grandmother. After earning a degree in animal husbandry, she came to the United States in 2016 with a suitcase full of dreams and projects and began to work on a farm in Missouri. Estefany has a beautiful family and a beautiful daughter whom she loves very much and for whom she came to the ESL program at Middlesex College. The truth is that her four-year-old daughter has taught Estefany that she should not stop moving forward to help her and the dreams she has for her, as well as to achieve her own life's projects.

Karen Saenz grew up in her country, Colombia. She came to the United States when she was 17 years old and is still learning the new things that are surrounding her in the United States. Ms. Saenz is majoring in Biology. In the future, she sees herself working in a hospital as a doctor helping kids. She would like to be a hero for those kids that are fighting to survive. Ms. Saenz has achieved her dreams thanks to the support of the people who love her and thanks to the faith she keeps in everything she does.

Aldo Mario Revilla Gutiérrez es peruano de nacimiento. Por cosas de la vida, no terminó sus estudios superiores debido a que desde muy joven se dedicó a la vida empresarial. Está casado y es padre de dos hijos. Le encanta practicar deportes, especialmente el fútbol, y su pasatiempo favorito es escribir poemas desde hace mucho tiempo, escritos a los que llamo, la inspiración de su alma.

Aldo Mario Revilla Gutiérrez is Peruvian by birth. Due to life events, he did not complete higher education because he dedicated himself to business from a very young age. He is married and is the father of two sons. He enjoys playing sports, especially soccer, and his favorite long-term hobby is writing poems—writing that he calls the inspiration of his soul.

Special: Understanding INCELS

Emily Fox is a history major. She is member of the Honors Learning Community and Phi Theta Kappa. In her spare time, Emily enjoys relaxing with a good book and hanging out with her six dogs at her home in South River.

Erica Santiago is a Psychology major, member of the Honors Learning Community and Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society. As a non-traditional student, she has successfully juggled school and motherhood. Erica

hopes to pursue a career in Marriage & Family Therapy.

Burgeoning Scholars

Christina Ascolesce majored in Psychology and History. She was recognized for the highest academic achievement among History majors. She has been an intern both at the Lost Souls Public Memorial Project and the Monmouth County Historical Association. She has an interest in understanding the lives of people throughout history and uncovering what it meant to live in different time periods. Christina will start at Rider University in the Fall of 2023 where she will continue to pursue a Bachelor's Degree in History.

Krystal Bailey. Besides writing, she enjoys are reading fiction books and watching wrestling. Krystal is an animal lover and enjoys helping others. She likes to volunteer her spare time, especially when it involves animals, children, food, and people needing help. She hopes to become a chef in a professional kitchen.

Kerat Bengar is majoring in Engineering Science and Physics. She is passionate about climate advocacy and eager to research ways to improve our environment through air and water pollution control. She hopes to become an environmental engineer.

Nezzle Mendez is a Visual Art major, interested on developing a career as a graphic designer. She is looking forward to visit France, Japan. and South Korea.

Lizzette Rivera is a Mexican international student who moved to the United States in 2017 unaware that her dream major in Gaming and Animation awaited her. This year, she earned an honorable mention for the Women in Animation scholarship and a position as student volunteer at the annual computer graphics conference, Siggraph.

Academic Mentors Academic Year 2023-2024:

Susan Altman is a Professor in the Visual, Performing & Media Arts Department. Professor Altman teaches studio courses in the department as well as the Portfolio and Studio Seminar courses, where art majors learn professional practices and prepare for their careers as artists.

Shannon Bertha- Angulo is an Institutional Research Analyst and part time professor teaching Human Sexuality and Contemporary Health Issues. Part of her role in Institutional Research is to provide opportunities to gather information about the experiences of students at the College and opportunities for their voices to be heard.

Terrence Corrigan teaches Modern Western Civilization, Modern African History and Dimensions of Prejudice, Holocaust and Genocide. He is the director of the Human Rights and Genocide Center at Middlesex College and the faculty adviser for History and Human Rights Club

Andrew Dzurisin III is An Assistant Professor of Sociology. He has been teaching at Middlesex since 2002. He has a BS from Stockton University and an MA from UMASS-Boston. His primary area of interest in Sociology is hate/antigovernment groups.

Cristóbal Espinoza-Wulach teaches History of the United States until and since the Civil War honors and traditional. He is a co-adviser of the Humanities Honor Society and co-director of the Honors program.

Joseph Lisnow graduated from Middlesex College in 2010 and continued to pursue his education at Montclair State University with a focus on writing, journalism, and rhetoric. He returned to Middlesex College in early 2014 to work as a tutor in the Writing Center and is now a tutor for special services. When he finds free time between work and growing out his hair, Joseph enjoys covering pro wrestling and mixed martial arts.

Sonal Pandey has over 15 years of experience teaching higher education (Rutgers University, Hannan University, Shanghai University, Middlesex College, Rowan College of Burlington County, Mercer County Community College). She brings extensive expertise in teaching economics/business/Statistics/management courses and developing course content. She is adept at utilizing various learning methods and tools to optimize the student experience.

Joseph Patrick Pascale: As the Learning Center Coordinator, Mr. Pascale manages tutoring and academic support programs at Middlesex College. He is a published author of both fiction and nonfiction writing. He is a co-adviser of the Humanities Honor Society.

Denise Rompilla: teaches Art History and Women's History at Middlesex College. She is the Co-Founder and Director of Counternarratives, a woman-led historical research firm focused on uncovering the hidden histories of women in the archives; and the Project Director for the Lost Souls Public Memorial of New Jersey.

Celia Winchester: teaches English Composition courses- honors and traditional- as well as Mythology and World Literature, and Queer Literature. They are the founder and adviser for the mindfulness and mental health awareness club

Healthy and Active Minds and are an advocate for the LGBTQ+ community on and off campus



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Hear from our members:

"I went to the first meeting where the one thing that immediately caught my attention was how supportive the group was, the essential feedback provided by both advisors, and how you can change the way you write when discussed in a writing circle...I felt my publication reached new heights. Overall, I think I am now better prepared in conducting research"

- Adithya Venkateswaran, Middlesex College graduate, transferred to Rutgers University

"Volunteering at the Writing Center has helped me improve not only my writing skills but my ability to collaborate with others. Typically, the writing process can be rather frustrating especially, when dwelling on it all alone. When you're writing, there's nothing like good feedback that can give you an extra push in the right direction. Additionally, working to get my writing published has been quite the experience, and I feel as if I've grown a whole lot throughout the process...Makes me think about all the other possibilities awaiting me in the future as I journey through college."

- Evy Guzman, Middlesex College graduate, transferred to Rutgers University

**Our writing circle meets twice a month to share thoughts, ideas and
inspirations. Send us an email.**

Cheers,

Joseph Pascale: jpascale@middlesexcc.edu

Cristóbal Espinoza: cespinoza@middlesexcc.edu