

DELTA WINDS

VOLUME 24

A Magazine of Student Essays

2011

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Letter from the Editors

A Google search of “delta winds” can surprise even us. At a university in Nigeria, a vice-chancellor researches the evolution of higher education models throughout history. Sitting in his office, Dr. Is-haq Oloyede scans the Internet for a student’s perspective to add to his report. On the other side of the globe, just minutes from Stockton, California, in the town of Ripon, a writer of a church newsletter seeks information about a church member—a recent graduate from Delta College. What do these two dedicated researchers have in common? Both writers discovered Delta Winds. Both found the information they needed in essays by Delta College students.

In “Diversity Education Models and Implications for the South,” Dr. Oloyede states, “anyone who has passed through higher education is expected to be wise, to be skilled and to be competent.” He argues for diversity in higher education, especially in this age of globalization. In his paper, the vice-chancellor of the University of Ilorin refers to Dung Nguyen’s essay “True Purpose of College and Higher Education” from the 2000 volume of Delta Winds. He supports Nguyen’s view that without diversity and interaction, students lose their interest in learning. In Ripon, meanwhile, a church member locates Rosaline Smith’s published essay “Woman Like Me” in the 2008 volume of Delta Winds. The June 2008 “Caring and Sharing Newsletter” of the First Ripon Christian Reformed Church applauds recent graduates for their accomplishments and highlights Rosaline Smith’s interpretation of an Edwidge Danticat short story. The newsletter editor states, “We are proud of you, Rose, and pleased to share some excerpts from [your] essay.”

A vice-chancellor in Nigeria and an editor of a local church newsletter both found something worth noting. We are delighted that this magazine of student essays continues to attract individuals from various locales. We value their interest in the magazine, and we welcome you and others to find what you may be looking for in your reading of Delta Winds.

CHANGES IN LIFE

What is a “rite of passage”? The definition for “rite of passage” is a ritual or ceremony signifying an event in a person’s life indicative of a transition from one stage to another, as from adolescence to adulthood. Some religious groups or cultures consider baptisms, marriages, or even deaths as “rites of passages.”

Some even put their offspring to the test by sending them to the wilderness for survival.

We all have been through many changes in life. Some changes are insignificant; others are more memorable and may change us for the better or worse. I have been through many. My most memorable and significant ones are marriage, family, and divorce. So many changes in life in such a short time, yet all in mine.

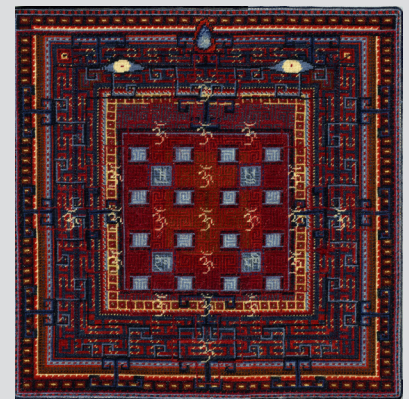
Marriage is something that I always knew I wanted. Isn’t it every girl’s dream to be married, have a happy family, and live a happy life like all the fairytales we grew up hearing? I was

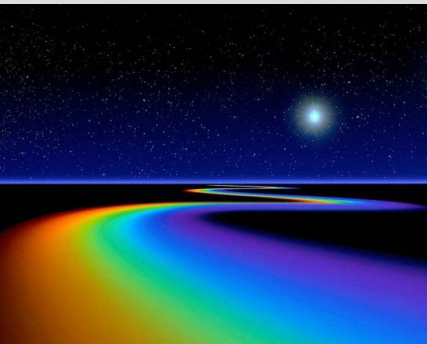
married at the young age of eighteen, a year after graduating from high school. Although many girls may not have been ready, I was. It is not uncommon in our community for girls to be married at a young age, some as young as fourteen. My mother was married at the age of sixteen. Being married signifies that I

A good daughter-in-law will love and respect her in-laws as she does her parents.

am a mature adult. Growing up in a family of ten children, I always had lots of responsibilities that helped prepare me for married life and motherhood. My mother always instilled in me the ways of a good wife, daughter-in-law, and mother. She told me that I would always rank beneath my husband, that I must respect his reputation, and that I could never make a fool of him. Without any complaints, a good wife will cook and clean for her husband. A good daughter-in-law will love and respect her in-laws as she does her parents. A good mother will raise her children with unending love, even if that means raising them alone.

The author of this essay wishes to remain anonymous.





There are many dos and don'ts in our culture. We pride ourselves in having huge extended families. Divorce is not an option before seeking out the counsel of the elders. Family members get together to try to salvage a marriage by finding who's at fault and asking both spouses to make compromises. When marriages cannot be salvaged, they are usually dissolved by the same elders who represented the bride and groom at the wedding.

It is our tradition to follow the husband's side of the family and the husband's beliefs, which means making sacrifices.

One of many I had to make was relocating from my place of security to a new city and state. Another one was having a new set of parents to care for and leaving behind my own. I was no longer my parents' daughter but my in-laws'. The one part I missed most was my independence. I became someone's wife, which means I was someone else's shadow. The ability to be on my own was gone.

Along with marriage came the wants of having a family. In our community

most families are large. My parents were the unfortunate ones. Both came from very small families. My father had two brothers, one of whom passed away as an infant soon after his own parents did. My mother has two brothers. Neither of my parents had sisters. Since both parents didn't have any "family," they wanted to give us what they missed out on. So I have six brothers and three

When marriages cannot be salvaged, they are usually dissolved by the same elders who represented the bride and groom at the wedding.

sisters. My husband also came from a large family of three brothers and four sisters.

Our family came quicker than we were ready for. On the second day of March 1997, ten months

after being married, my husband and I welcomed our firstborn into this world, a 6 pounds 11 ounces little girl, with a full head of black hair. Her dad named her Jade, a beautiful name for a beautiful baby. Although many wish for a son as a firstborn, we were happy to have our daughter. Having a daughter first means we would later have help with the babysitting. We were young, happy, naive, and blessed. We were carefree.

Life went from being

happy and blessed to even more happiness and more blessings. In the short span of thirteen years, our family was complete with six children, one daughter and five sons. Coming from a background where sons are valued more so than daughters, my husband was most fortunate. After all, he was the only son in his family with FIVE sons. Many envied us. Two cousins in particular always reminded my husband about how

lucky he was. They joked and asked if we would allow them to adopt one of our boys. Having this many sons means a secure future. We would be well taken care of in our old age and have many grandchildren.

Having a family and being a mother was the best feeling I could ever wish for. Of course, it wasn't always happy times. There were plenty of restless nights when the kids were sick and the many responsibilities increased more than ever. There was the everyday cooking and cleaning for a family of eight. That was a full-time job in itself. I also worked outside of the home from nine at night to six in the morning, when the family was sleeping, so that I could be there

My parents were the unfortunate ones. Both came from very small families.

for my children during the day. It was hard working the nightshift but it was a sacrifice I chose to make. Never did I think twice about finding a day job.

The payoff was huge and rewarding. I was able to see my children grow and attend school functions with them. I remember attending my son's play. He had never wanted to participate in any school performances, but the one time he did, he was

one of the main characters. I was so proud of him for leaving his comfort zone. I attended my daughter's orchestra performances. She played the violin beautifully. In

addition to school activities the boys also played soccer so we were always on the go. I didn't miss out on much when it came to my children. The one thing I did miss out on, but never realized until much later, was that I hardly ever had any time for myself or with my husband. Life was happening at such a fast pace I never had time to sit and ponder it.

With a growing family and the constant need to keep up with everyday responsibilities, my marriage was coming undone at the seams. I





couldn't just get a needle and thread and stitch it up. It happened so fast. I felt like a major league baseball pitcher purposely threw a fastball and smacked me right in the face! I never had a chance to prevent it. For so long I had been the one to tend to everyone's wounds and make things right and secure. I was the one to chase away the monsters in the closets, the one to do the mending of all the rips and tears. Now for the life of me, I could not save my own marriage. After my husband told me he was leaving me for another woman, I waited for a long agonizing five months of heartache and pain in hopes of saving my family, if not my marriage. Divorce was not an option. It was the one thing I never thought about, but knew I did not want. The whole process of divorce is never easy, but even worse when innocent children are involved. It is always so sad and heartbreaking to see a family split up, especially when it's your own.

Trying to be the good wife and daughter my mother raised me to be, I followed tradition and sought out the counsel of the elders. However, it seems no one was really willing to put

much effort into saving my marriage or family. The elders told me to wait for my husband's affair to pass. It was a one-way compromise—something I couldn't do anymore. I wasn't willing to put in more than what I had already. I was drained of life and energy. I had nothing left to keep me in this marriage anymore. On December 10, 2009, after he left for work, I packed up the entire house and kids and we left him,

It was hard working the nightshift but it was a sacrifice I chose to make.

along with an empty house filled with memories of good and bad times. Since that day, I have been ostracized for leaving my marriage, a marriage I knew could not continue.

Today I am a single mother of six young children between the ages of one and thirteen years old. Not only did I lose my marriage and husband, I also lost financial stability and gained the stress that comes with being an unemployed single parent. When making ends meet is not possible, I pay the most important bills and leave out what isn't priority. I am relying on my family for financial support and shelter and have to resort to state assistance for food stamps—something I never had to do before.

Again, what are “rites of passage”? They are the changes in my life. A “rite of passage,” I have been through many. Despite my last “rite of passage” with divorce, I would not redo anything. Things happen for a reason. I am a stronger person from this passage. I have learned from my past. I am happy with where I am

today. My life has taken me in a full circle. There was a time when I once relocated to a new town, leaving behind my parents. Today, with my divorce, I have relocated to my hometown, back to my parents. I am not a shadow anymore. I am my own person now. Changes in my life have kept me going.





Dominic Deiro, 20, was born and raised in Stockton, California. He is an avid golfer and San Francisco Giants fan, and he spends his free time working at the Stockton Golf and Country Club, playing sports, and hanging out with his friends. After finishing his prerequisites at San Joaquin Delta College, Dominic wishes to attend either UOP or San Diego State. With a major in communications and a minor in business, he plans to become a sports agent.

I HAVE A DREAM

by Dominic Deiro

Imagine being in high school all four years, making friends, joining clubs, playing sports, and bettering your education. What if that were ripped away from you in one second

because you were an illegal alien about to be deported?

I, along with many other Americans, believe

this type of

treatment to be inhumane.

In order to combat the issue of deporting young illegal aliens, Senator Dick Durbin and Senator Richard Lugar drew up the DREAM Act, which would allow illegal alien students who graduated from high school, who have good moral character, who arrived in the U.S. as minors, and who have been in the country for at least five years the opportunity to earn permanent residency if they complete two years in the military or two years in college. Even though proponents of the act drew many supporters in 2007,

with 52 senators voting in favor of it, they still could not break the filibuster, and thus the DREAM Act was not considered. However, in December of 2010, the act may come up for vote

again. If it were proposed in Congress today, I would vote for the DREAM act because it would increase the number of active duty

soldiers, it would raise the amount of money in circulation, and it would allow young individuals the opportunity to get an education and to further benefit the community.

After considering the pros and cons of the DREAM Act, I have decided that I should support this bill because it would increase the number of active duty soldiers in our various military branches. The DREAM Act states that illegal aliens who want to gain citizenship must either attend college or join the military for

My brother is in the National Guard, and when I asked him how he felt about having outsiders enlist in the army, he smiled....

two years. I believe many immigrants would sign up for the military since some of them are not good in school. They would rather take their chances in the military. Despite our active participation in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, our American military units are in need of people to serve. Essentially, if this act were to be passed, then our number of service personnel would increase, and our armed forces would be stronger and more unstoppable. My brother is in the National Guard, and when I asked him how he felt about having outsiders enlist in the army, he smiled and said the following: "All of us in the army feel like a big family, and we gladly accept anyone who is willing to join. If some people who want to be Americans want to join the army, we would all accept them without doubts or hesitations." If the people who are risking their lives for this country are willing to accept immigrants into their family, I think we should too. I believe that we should support the DREAM Act due to its potential to increase the number of active duty soldiers.

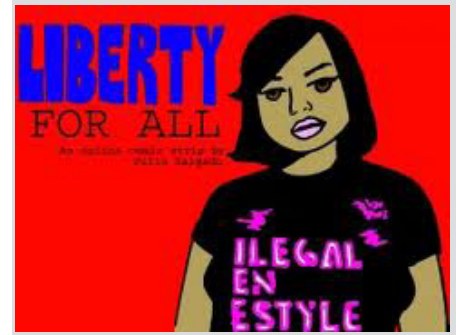
Besides increasing the number of participants in the armed forces, the DREAM Act would

improve the economy. If the illegal immigrants were granted U.S. citizenships, they would also become law-abiding taxpayers. Currently, in many of our cities and states, we have illegal immigrants working under poor conditions: they are paid low wages "under the table." This money is not taxed. Even though the workers eventually do spend their money to buy products, there could potentially be more money in our economy from taxes

I believe that America, its citizens, and those around the world would benefit from the DREAM Act.

on their wages. At my first job, I was paid under the table, and I was not taxed at all. Nowadays, however, with my current job, I am taxed every time I receive a paycheck, and I am often astonished at how much is taken out. America is in a depression, and there is no sign of us getting out. If the DREAM act were passed, wages would increase for those individuals who qualify. Essentially, not only would the DREAM Act open up more opportunities for individuals in continuing their education and finding jobs, but it could potentially provide the chance for us to boost the economy.

Lastly, the DREAM Act should be passed because it would allow young individuals the opportunity to get an education and





to further benefit the community. The act states that in order to become an American citizen, the individual must either join the military or enroll in a college. With those extra years of schooling, these individuals would increase their knowledge and would be in a position to benefit society. Throughout the history of America, there have been many immigrants who have made a strong

and long-lasting impact. Albert Einstein, who emigrated from Germany, was critical in World War II when he advised President

Roosevelt of a bomb the Nazis were developing. John Muir, who emigrated from Scotland, helped to create Yosemite National Park to benefit our environment. More personally, my mother, who worked at St. Joseph's Hospital, learned about an immigrant doctor from Iraq. She told me that he was one of the most skilled doctors at the hospital: "He was very attentive, always focused in surgery. I've seen him save more lives than any other doctor I have worked with." In all of these examples, the immigrants who had an opportunity to become American citizens were able to benefit society—giving back to the nation

that allowed them to work toward their goals. Under the DREAM Act, young immigrants would have the same chance.

I believe that America, its citizens, and those around the world would benefit from the DREAM Act. By increasing the number of active duty soldiers, improving the economy, and allowing young individuals the opportunity to get an

education, the DREAM Act builds on our forefathers' idea of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Increasing the number of individuals in our military

Lastly, the DREAM Act should be passed because it would allow young individuals the opportunity to get an education and to further benefit the community

not only strengthens our stance as an international power, but also builds on a sense of family and camaraderie. Taxes on paychecks would increase the amount of money in circulation and would aid the U.S. in its quest to get out of debt. Finally, more individuals would be granted the opportunity to get an education, which would allow them to further benefit the community. Overall, these three reasons promote strength and support for the DREAM Act. I believe that it should be passed so that everyone can be a part of the American Dream.

My Mother = Me

by Melissa Trindade

When did I become my mother? I used to ask myself this question at least once a day and until now I had no clear answer. I grew up in a single-family home, with everything run by a single mother. I didn't have

any siblings to talk to or play with nor did I have a father to run to when "Mommy said no." I only had my mother. In "I Love You, I Hate You, I Am You," Iris Krasnow grows up with a two-parent household, but still feels as if no

one cares about her. The essay depicts the rocky relationship with her mother all through her life until one day she realizes that she is, indeed, her mother. As with Krasnow, my childhood and teenage years were full of many storms involving my mother and me. And, just like Krasnow, I have come to an understanding of this time. Three particular storms shaped who I am and helped me to answer that nagging question: When did I become my mother?

They made me change everything about myself. They were the Goths, the freaks, the loners, whatever you choose to call them, but they were my friends.

When I was eleven years old, I was faced with my very first storm. I remember the fifth grade as the worst but the best year in school. Bringing bad grades home to my college-graduate-

of-a-mother started this particular storm. My mother always expected good grades and encouraged the drive a student needs to succeed. Up until this point I had made good grades. But, throughout my fifth grade year, my teachers and I began to notice I wasn't like the other students in my class. I couldn't read as well as they could, and I definitely couldn't write as well. My teachers began to notice me struggling on a daily basis. In the classroom, I would refrain from reading aloud or raising my hand to answer. It was then at eleven years old that I was diagnosed with dyslexia. My mother took the news hard. I swear she cried for days, maybe even weeks. But all my teachers assured her that "Kids can still learn with this disability; they just



Melissa Trindade, 21 years old, has lived in Tracy all of her life. Her single mother has been her strength and support throughout these years. Next fall Melissa hopes to transfer to Sacramento State University; eventually, she plans to become a middle school counselor. She hopes one day to have a published children's book on the New York Times Best Seller List.



learn differently.” That was when the clouds opened, and a tiny ray of sunlight shone down on my mother and me. All the fights over grades and all those hours of mother-daughter tutoring seemed irrelevant. My mother realized she hadn’t failed, and I realized that I wanted to become a better student. I felt that I did have the drive to succeed in school. I had that same drive that my mother had in her, the drive to graduate college, that same drive that she had impressed on me all those years.

The second storm occurred in the end of my eighth grade year. I was fourteen years old and, just like every other fresh teenager, I thought I knew everything I would ever need to know. I liked to believe that I was very independent but, looking back now, I know that I was totally crazy. My mother always tried to fit me into a cookie-cutter shape of what she thought a “perfect girl” was. I knew from early on I didn’t fit that mold, no matter how hard she attempted to squeeze me in. Much to her dismay, I rebelled and fell into a bad crowd at school, but I was comfortable in the crowd; that’s all that mattered to me. They made me change everything about myself. They were the Goths,

the freaks, the loners, whatever you choose to call them, but they were my friends. Breaking away from my mother’s idea of a “perfect girl” with pretty long hair, conservative clothes, popular with all of her girlfriends, I found myself cutting off all my hair, wearing all black clothes, and hating all those girlfriends I grew up with.

Growing up I always fought the currents of my mother’s guidance, only to come to the realization now that she was trying to help.

Fighting was a daily ordeal for my mother and me. Wake up in the morning, fight about what I look like; come home from school, fight about what I wasn’t grateful for; before bed time, fight about

all the friends I’d be on the phone with. Iris Krasnow recalls the nagging things that her mother did when she was a child. She then explains how, after creating her own family, she sees a lot of the same qualities in herself. The notion that her mother “was doing the best she could never occurred to [her].” Just like her mother, my mother would nag me about the “perfect girl” persona and the things that needed to be done her way. After one of my Goth friends committed suicide, I came to the conclusion that my mother wasn’t just nagging me. All the time I spent trying to rebel against my mother I couldn’t see that my mother was just trying to do the best for me.

When the clouds parted, I could see that my mother’s “perfect girl” mold was only there to guide me to learn to love myself. It was then that I appreciated my mother’s guidance. It was then that I wanted to be that “perfect girl” my mother always dreamed of having.

The last storm between us came in my junior year of high school. It was my seventeenth birthday when we received the news that someone really close to us had passed away in a horrible car accident. My whole world came crashing down, and I felt as if a part of me had died as well. The fourteen-year-old girl left behind a mother, a father, and an older sister. I realized that that could have been me or my mother. I came to terms with the fact that everyone’s days are numbered. Krasnow connects the love of family through her husband and herself. Her husband was an orphan and had no parents. As Krasnow writes, “At least I still have a mother.” I believed that my mother felt lucky to still have me in her life. Although I slumped into a deep depression after the young girl’s death, my mother and I grew closer. I think the ray of sunshine that shone down on us brought my mother and me

My mother became my best friend and in a sense my mother was truly one half of my being.

closer. My mother became my best friend and in a sense my mother was truly one half of my being.

Krasnow writes “I let my mother ‘be’ . . . I flow with the currents of the river instead of flailing against them.” I truly understand this idea because it fits so well with my mother and me. Growing up I always fought the currents of my mother’s guidance, only to come to the realization now that she was trying to help. When did I become my mother? Just as Krasnow discovers, I can see now that I always was. She has been half of my whole being all my life—through

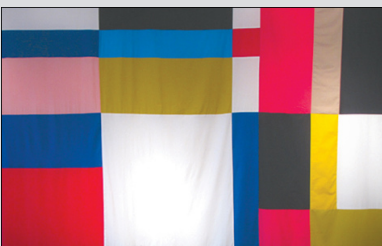
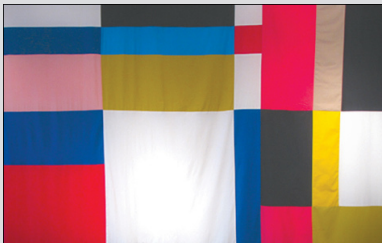
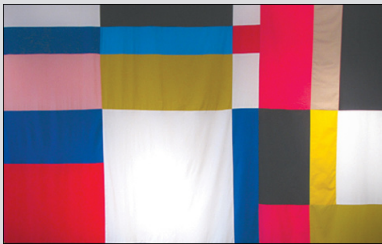
all the storms of academics, the mold of the “perfect girl.” She has been the one who answered my question on understanding the value of life. I like to believe that all daughters become their mothers in more ways than they take the time to realize. After getting through all the storms, I now, as an adult, get to feel the sunshine of my mother within myself.

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Kelley Pheng is 21 years old and is currently attending both Modesto Junior College and Delta College, while also working as a full-time employee. When she is not busy with school or work, she takes the time to travel to different cities in California working with different youth advocacy programs, helping young adults by facilitating workshops that pertain to personal identity, emotional sensitivity, and social issues. She has always had a strong passion for writing, especially poetry.



SMALL ASIAN WOMAN

by Kelley Pheng

December 15th, 2007:
I walked through the front door of what was to be known as my former home from that day on. I remember it being cold and dark inside, except for the light coming through the cracks of my parents' bedroom door. As I headed up the stairs,

I could only wonder what my mom was going to say about me finally moving out; I was expecting either a lot of crying and begging or an earful of her words of wisdom. However, when I entered the room, no such thing happened. I walked in to find my mom in the corner, sitting quietly on her recliner with a bottle of wine at her side; her eyes were red—bloodshot almost—and her skin tone was just as red as the wine that she had been drinking. This was the only moment that

I could remember my mother seeming so small, weak, and fragile. My only memories of her before then were always of a very strong woman.

Despite standing only 4 feet 10 inches, my mom was extremely intimidating; she had a very strong presence.

She was very emotional, passionate, and hard-headed; she was a perfectionist. These traits made her a very strict mother. Growing up, my siblings and I would often find ourselves in trouble over every little thing—how we dressed, how we ate, and which hobbies we had. Each time we were in trouble, she would lecture us, and many of these lectures included references to her life experiences. The fact that my mom would talk about herself irritated me, especially since she would

“When I was your age, I had to hunt for food in the jungle!”

always use the phrase “when I was your age.” It was a combination of the phrase and a story about her life that made me feel like she was trying to compare herself to me; this only made me feel inferior towards her. Whenever I wanted to play sports or video games, she would say, “You need to focus on your education. You don’t have time for other things like sports and hobbies.

When I was your age, I was fortunate enough to even attend school because

most kids lived on the streets!” She also liked to scold us about food. “You’re not done eating till you’ve eaten every grain of rice. You should feel lucky you get to eat so much. When I was your age, I had to hunt for food in the jungle!” Because I would be told these things almost every day, I would often ignore her; I felt as though she was trying to control my life. Though she would only preach to me for a few minutes, there were times when I had to sit through a lecture that was over an hour long.

The fact that my mom would talk about herself irritated me, especially since she would always use the phrase “when I was your age.”

When my mom made me sit and listen to her for long periods of time, I disregarded her then, too, but for some reason, I had a feeling that these stories were the most important of all, that maybe she wasn’t exaggerating just to make me feel bad about myself. Unlike the other times when I would get in trouble, during these sessions, she would actually cry, to the point

where she wouldn’t talk to me again until the next day. She told me that when communists took over Cambodia

after the Viet Nam War, they killed her biological parents and older sister when she was about eleven years old. The grandparents and thirteen aunts and uncles I had grown up with were her adoptive family. My mom also lost many children; my oldest sister passed away shortly after being born because she was malnourished. Before I was born, my mom had two abortions because she and my father were poor. It was only recently that I realized how fortunate my younger sister and I were because my mom



chose to give birth to us. When I asked her why she decided to keep us, she said, “I wanted to give you a chance at life.”

I considered my mom to be a nuisance because I felt like she was constantly bothering me, but as I grew older, I realized that maybe she was always telling the same stories because I apparently had not learned the lesson she was trying to teach. Now, when I look back to every lecture, I try to comprehend what she was communicating to me, and I try to understand why her life is so vital to how I should live my own life. When my mom would nag us about our education, it was because she was never able to get a college degree. When she came to America, she was busy working several jobs to support her family while my dad was obtaining his degree. My mom knew that without education, we would end up suffering like her, barely making enough to get by. I also realized that she often scolded us over food because she spent many years surviving in the jungles of Southeast Asia—she pretty much ate dirt and was constantly

starving. When my mom would talk about all of the family she lost, she wanted us to always remember the importance of family and to keep family connections alive because there would always come a day when they would no longer be there.

It is exactly for this reason that she almost lost her mind when I moved out. My mom spent many years alone after losing her family. And she only wanted me and my siblings to cherish the fact that we still had each other.

When I look back to that day in December, I can only think of everything that my mom has experienced in her lifetime. What years of war and struggle could not do to her, I did to her: I made her feel like giving up. She walked through miles of battlefields and jungles, treading carefully around mines, so that one day I might walk freely on the paved streets and sidewalks of America. Now, I have made it my mission to retell her stories to my little cousins, my little sister, and the students I teach; when I lecture them, I even find myself using her

phrase—“when I was your age....” I have come to understand that my mom was only hard on me because she wanted me to never take anything in my life for granted. She also wanted me to become a strong-willed person with strong family values; she wanted me to be like her, and I do want to be like her. Sometime

She walked through miles of battlefields and jungles, treading carefully around mines, so that one day I might walk freely on the paved streets and sidewalks of America.

in the future when I do have children, I want her stories to be passed on to them. I also want to raise my family the way she raised us. Even though I used to tell myself that I don't want to be anything like her, I now only wish that I can be at least half the person that she is today.





M. Sharon Conley was born in El Paso, Texas, to immigrant parents from Juarez, Mexico, in 1975. She was raised in Long Beach, California, where she lived until she was nineteen and joined the Navy. She served for twelve years working in communications and lived overseas for most of her time in service. She was married in 1998 to her best friend while living in Naples, Italy. Life got better for her when four years later a son was born while she was stationed in Yokosuka, Japan. She currently lives in Stockton with her husband and son. She enjoys snowboarding, photography, and traveling. Sharon is a dedicated wife, mother, and fulltime student. She is pursuing a degree in Speech Pathology and hopes to transfer to UOP soon.

THE BUSED IN KIDS

by *M. Sharon Conley*

Ruby Bridges is widely regarded as the first African American child to attend a white elementary school in the American South. She first attended William Frantz Elementary School in New Orleans, Louisiana, on November 14, 1960.

Though I cannot imagine the challenges Ruby Bridges endured, I

can relate to her fears of entering an unwelcoming environment. I was a kid bused in from the inner city of Long Beach to a suburban school. My ride to school was 30-40 minutes each way. Remembering the first day of high school is like reliving the nightmare where you walk to school naked. Yes, it was that bad. As bus #4 reached the front of the school, it was met by parents, faculty, and police officers. Some parents were there to protest our admission to the school. The police were there to insure our safety. I remember thinking this cannot be happening. It's

1990, and we are done with segregation. That day is my most memorable experience of discrimination. That day opened my eyes to the unfairness of stereotypes, the harm of ignorance, and the importance of resiliency.



Lakewood High School had been awarded a large grant, and as a stipulation to this grant the school was directed to

bus in kids from the inner city. The new program was focused on aerospace engineering. Its goal was to expose students to the aerospace field. This track offered internship positions with the aerospace giant Northrop Grumman and promised scholarships to students who did well. Without a doubt, this was a great opportunity for anyone. However, what I remember most are the negative stereotypes. There was fear that with our presence, crime, gangs, and graffiti would destroy the school. We were seen only as a problem—ten

buses of baby-making, ESL, underachieving gangsters. That experience opened my eyes to the expectations others had of me. The protesters had no idea that on bus #6 the valedictorian of 1994 was arriving. On those buses were future members of academic teams that would win high awards, teammates who would help take the school to the State Championship (more than once), and yes, a few gangsters. The parent protesters only knew that they did not want inner city kids bused into the school. They never stopped to consider the positive contributions we would make.

I am grateful that the opposition to our presence was always non-physical, but, regardless of the protesters' tactics, harm was still done. In my experience, it was not just the parents who wished we did not exist. Teachers, whose job it was to educate and mentor us, were ignorant of our potential. The harm they inflicted was in having a lack of positive expectations for us. Because of who we were, teachers failed to invest effort in teaching us. In one instance, a teacher sat all the minorities in the front of the class so that she

We were seen only as a problem—ten buses of baby-making, ESL, underachieving gangsters.

could keep a closer eye on us. In a literature class, the professor was often heard saying he was “not going to waste [his] time on those kids.” That ignorance could have very well prevented a quiet shy kid’s thirst for knowledge from being quenched. I wonder how many of us were given a little less just because of where we lived. The belief that the bused in kids were less capable because of upbringing, family structure, or appearance was unfair and hurtful.

My high school experience was not all bad. This is where I found my independence; this is where I found my strength. This is where many of us made the choice to be the exception to the rule. Many of the bused in kids, including me, had a decision to make. We could let second best be good enough, or we could prove that we were worth the effort. I chose to be resilient, not to be a victim. Not all teachers let their fears contaminate their hearts. I had an instructor who was brutally honest and explained my options. He said, “The world is expecting you to fit in a little box. This box is already picked out and furnished with all you will ever get in life. Are you willing to accept it—or,

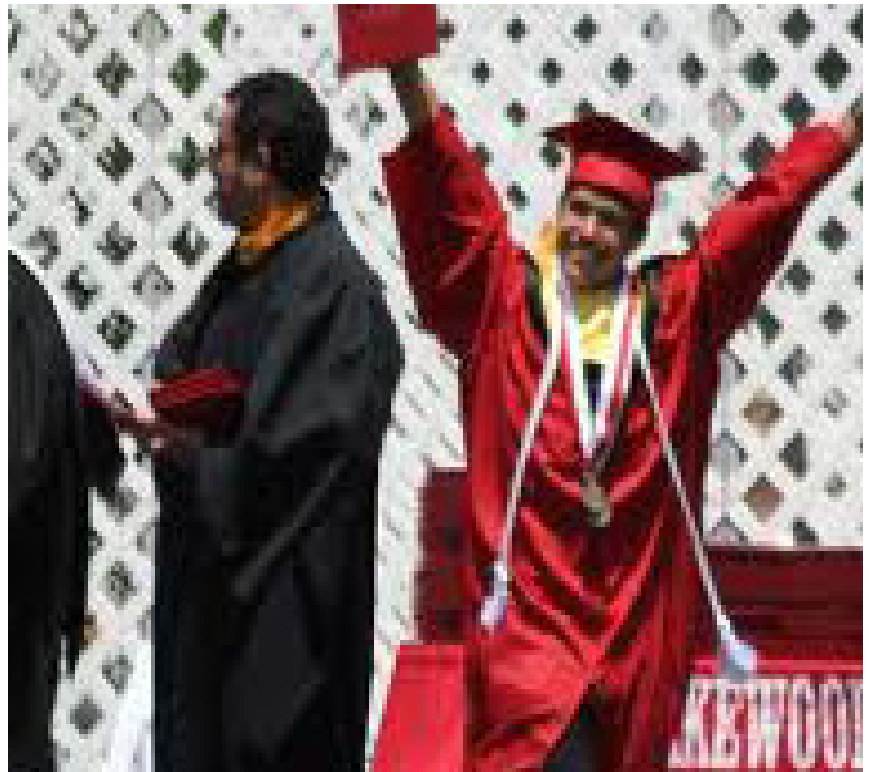


are you going to make your own box?" He was a true mentor. Many times, he would remind me of the perceptions I was fighting against and let me make my own choices. I decided if I was going to let the labels stick or forge my own identity.

In comparison to the sacrifices of civil rights leaders, my experience was nothing. I did not have to fear for my life, nor endure any physical pain, and for this I am thankful. But who says that harm is only done in those instances? There were people outside a

The protesters had no idea that on bus #6 the valedictorian of 1994 was arriving.

school yelling and picketing against children's rights to a better education. There were highly qualified teachers refusing to return to school because they unjustifiably feared for their safety. I lost out on a great opportunity through the aerospace technology program because of one teacher's belief that I would be a waste of time due to my race's tendency to get pregnant before finishing school. I wonder what could have happened if the bused in kids of 1990 were given as much as the local kids. How much more could we have accomplished?



THE KING DEAD ON THE THRONE: AN ANALYTICAL COMPARISON OF ELVIS PRESLEY'S AND KURT COBAIN'S LEGACIES AFTER DEATH

by Ally Sabedra

When remembering Elvis Presley, most people view him not with respectful admiration for his significant contributions to rock and roll; it is with humor and ridicule that the king of rock and roll is remembered. Since his tragically premature death on August 16, 1977, at the age of forty-two years old, Elvis' image has become a shell of what it was only twenty years earlier. When Elvis died, his successful career as a defining musician of the rock and roll movement dissolved, and a new legacy began: that of the overweight has-been who spent the last minutes of his life on the toilet. Unlike Elvis, other musicians who have faced a similar fate are raised to idyllic standards that, in most cases, exceed the accomplishments of their careers. One of these musicians is Kurt Cobain,

When Elvis died, . . . a new legacy began: that of the overweight has-been who spent the last minutes of his life on the toilet.

who tragically died at twenty-seven after a short but extremely successful career with the legendary grunge band Nirvana. Cobain's unfortunate death catapulted him into eternal stardom with other famous musicians like John Lennon, Jimi Hendrix, and Buddy Holly. In contrasting several significant differences between the lives and deaths of the two extraordinary musicians, one understands why in general Elvis' death has caused him to be viewed as comical while Kurt Cobain's death has elevated him to an untouchable status in rock and roll history.

Elvis Presley's and Kurt Cobain's careers were in two drastically different places at the times of their deaths. Until the end of the 1960s, Elvis' career success was relatively stable, whether he



Ally Sabedra is twenty-one years old and currently completing her general education at Delta. After spending two years volunteering as a teacher in Mexico, she is hoping to transfer to a university and graduate with a degree in linguistics. Ally is passionate about sign language, and is also planning on getting a degree in interpreting. With her degrees, she hopes to find work where she can help those in need and help to better the lives of others around the world.

was performing new music or making the thirty-one feature films of his career (Szatmary 51). Although he was well past his prime, which peaked around the time he left to serve in Germany, he continued to find success with random hit singles and hokey films that he would make almost until the end of the decade.

In 1968, frustrated by his lasting fame and his declining career, Elvis wished “he could do something else”

because he was “tired of being Elvis” (Szatmary 52). Around 1973, a change in Elvis’ stage persona and physical appearance became obvious to those who watched his Las Vegas performances. He became a “haggard, bloated performer” (Szatmary 53), nothing like the phenomenon he once was. Elvis was gaining a significant amount of weight, forgetting lyrics, and losing the characteristics that defined and created his legendary persona. Eventually, the prolonged substance abuse started taking its toll on his body with the 1974 diagnoses of hypertension, an impacted colon, and depression. When he died on August 16, 1977, the official cause was



cardiac arrhythmia. However a suicidal combination of prescription pills was found to be in his system. Some attribute his death to the depression caused by his dissolving image. When he died, Elvis had long passed his career peak. Everyone was fully aware of what he was musically capable of.

He had reached his top and then slowly declined, like any natural progression of life. After his death, no one was left to wonder what could have been if his life had not ended

early, because he did all he could do musically prior to his death, and he had become quite pathetic in his later years.

Kurt Cobain, on the other hand, was in the prime of his blossoming career when he died in his Washington home on April 5, 1994. Only six years prior to his death, the band Kurt Cobain fronted, Nirvana, was signed to their first record label, Subpop. After a few years and several changes with the band’s members, Nirvana was signed to Geffen Records, their home for the duration of their time together as a band. In the next four years, Cobain and his band released three record

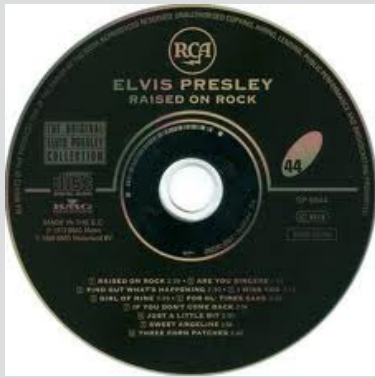
setting albums, including Nevermind, Insecticide, and In Utero. Nirvana became the founders and idols of the rising grunge sect of rock and roll. When Cobain died, his career as a solo artist and with his infamous band was still on the rise; he had not yet reached his full musical potential, and if he had, no indication existed that he or the band was on the downward slope. Because he died at the start of the peak of his rock and roll career, the world had not yet seen all that Cobain had to offer. Fans were left wondering what could have happened if he had not died. When left up to the imaginations of fans and supporters, an exaggeration of reality is always present. Cobain's reputation after his death precedes his life so greatly because no one is able to say exactly how high he could have gone had he not died, and as long as Cobain's fan continue to exist his reputation will continue to rise.

Not only were the careers of Elvis Presley and Kurt Cobain in different places when they died, but the circumstances of their deaths had tremendous effects on the way they would be viewed after they were gone. Elvis died after years of illnesses, including but not limited to hypertension, an enlarged colon, and a weak heart. Not only was he in and out of hospitals during his last years, but also

he was suffering from an "isolated," deep depression that forced him to "create his own world" and "retreat into himself" (Szatmary 53). Although his bathroom death was a shock to the public, that later became the punch line for most Elvis jokes. By this time, Elvis had withered away to the point of reclusion and depression, unfortunate circumstances that made Elvis' tragic death somewhat predictable, and although there were some conspiracy theories about Elvis faking his death, these rumors proved to be purely fictitious. The slow decline of one of America's icons followed by the predictability of his death made the events of Elvis' last days less drastic, which in turn gave people the opportunity to find humor, which eventually evolved to the ridicule associated with Elvis today.

Although Cobain's spiraling drug abuse and suicide attempt only five days prior to his actual death made the predictability somewhat similar to Elvis' death, Cobain's death in 1994 was under entirely different circumstances. Despite being at the peak of his career, Cobain was found dead in his home due to a shotgun wound to the head. He had three times the lethal dose of heroin in his system, and a suicide note lay next to him. Not only was Cobain's death much more shocking and dramatic than Elvis', but





after closer examination of the evidence at the site of Cobain's death, homicide was not completely ruled out. The controversial debate of how Cobain actually died created a craze of people making movies, writing books, and investigating what really happened in his Seattle home. The shock of his premature death combined with the drama of a possible homicide captivated the public and focused their attention on more serious, tragic aspects of his death. These early perspectives immediately following Elvis' and Cobain's deaths are what shape the views people will share of them in the future. In Elvis' case, the lasting perspective was humorous, pathetic, and ridiculous. With Cobain, as with numerous other musicians who died early, his death was tragically saddening and dramatic.

Although their careers and the events and circumstances surrounding their deaths are significant, the post-mortem production of the musicians' talents can also play a role in affecting how they are remembered. Elvis' death was a long time coming, and his career was not at its best at the end of his life. But possibly even more important than these two factors are the lack of positive publicity and the lack of production of his talents after his death in shaping how he is viewed nowadays. Elvis did not have any new productions

of his merchandise available for the public. He did have songs that had previously been released come out in greatest hits compilations, but consumers continued to see the same products that had been released prior to his death, and not any new music, new movies, new books, or much of anything else immediately after his death to keep the public's mind off the unusually humorous circumstances of his passing. However, within the last six years, Elvis has made somewhat of a comeback, even more successful than that of his 1970's attempt. In 1991, when Graceland became a National Park and was open to the public, people came from far and wide to see where Elvis spent his last years. Even today Graceland continues to be a popular tourist location. In addition to this newfound success, Elvis' early hits have been remixed into anthems for today's youth. In 2004, Elvis' "A Little Less Conversation" became the theme song for the World Cup. Since then the public has seen even more Elvis' originals used in today's pop culture. The manipulation of Elvis' early success to fit the mold of the new generation's culture will help in redefining the star, and possibly erase some of the humorous connotation that has followed Elvis' name for the last few decades.

After Cobain's shocking death, on top of the continued production of

his music, there was an explosion of fans writing books and making movies defending their beliefs on Cobain's cause of death. Starting in 1994, the same year of his death, the books began to be published. Biographies, like Come as You Are: The Story of Nirvana and Heavier than Heaven: A Biography of Kurt Cobain, conspiracy theorizing books, such as Who Killed Kurt Cobain? and Love and Death: The Murder of Kurt Cobain, and even a publication of Cobain's personal journals flooded the market. Only a few years after his death, filmmakers created documentaries, like Kurt & Courtney. These films are still being made today with the 2006 release of Kurt Cobain: About a Son. Although no new music has been released under Cobain's name since his death, it has been suggested that Cobain's wife, Courtney Love, has used his compositions and lyrics for her own band, Hole. After Cobain died, Cobain's fans especially were, and still are, captivated by the fascination and intrigue surrounding his death. All the continually released media fuels that fascination. As long as Cobain and his tragic death continue to be a marketable amenity for the music industry, his legacy will continue to rise to unthinkable heights.

Elvis Presley is widely accepted as a pioneer in the

creation of the rock and roll movement. Simultaneously, he is remembered by many as the washed-up has-been who died on the toilet. In examining the lives and deaths of Elvis Presley and Kurt Cobain, one can understand why the king of rock and roll is remembered with ridicule and Kurt Cobain has been raised to idyllic standards. The status of the musicians' careers at the times of their deaths, the differing circumstances of their deaths, and the new media and publicity surrounding their deaths are all significant contributing factors in understanding the public's differing reception of these stars and the forming of their legacies. To quote Cobain's famous departing line on his suicide note, words he borrowed from a Neil Young song, "It's better to burn out than fade away." Elvis' slow fade out of the rock and roll industry in comparison to Cobain's cliff-hanger ending is an excellent example of the truth in Cobain's final words.

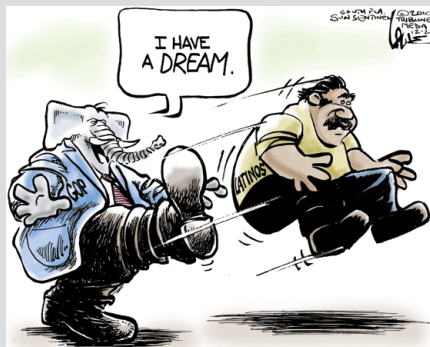
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The Proposal

by Darin Smith



America was built on the premise that all men are created equal and that this is the land of opportunity; yet many Americans fervently debate the topic of immigration as though it were a newly-formed problem plaguing our country. People opposed to immigration often base their views on the subject with prejudice and ignorance. Those in favor of immigration realize that immigration was, and

remains to be, how this country was formed. Politicians debate it and citizens argue it. Yet nothing ever seems to get resolved. The DREAM Act attempts to reform this country's current immigration policies by issuing citizenship to adolescent illegal immigrants. Although this proposal is meant to encourage bright young minds from other nations to embrace citizenship in the United States, the proposal brings with it some inherent problems that may prove

detrimental to America.

The DREAM Act, in essence, provides amnesty for illegal immigrants who not only have entered the United States illegally, but have managed to evade federal authorities for deportation. There are policies presently in place for obtaining

This ideology could potentially open a Pandora's Box of illegal activity, all in the name of a better life.

legal status in America and, though cumbersome and lengthy, the policies are designed to protect this nation

from potentially dangerous individuals. In "Politics Interrupts a Dream," Ruben Navarrette states that the DREAM Act would "allow the United States to keep precisely the kind of individuals that other countries would love to have." But it is hard to believe that this country is looking for individuals who are willing to participate in illegal activities and to defy this country's federal laws to get what they desire. This ideology could potentially open a Pandora's

Box of illegal activity, all in the name of a better life. Although a noble concept, the DREAM Act seems to imply that by participating in an illegal act, an immigrant can obtain legal status. Furthermore, this newly acquired status could be used to secure green cards for the millions of illegal immigrant parents who brought their children into the country illegally in the first place. If this were to occur, the current immigration laws would become useless, putting the United States in a potentially vulnerable position.

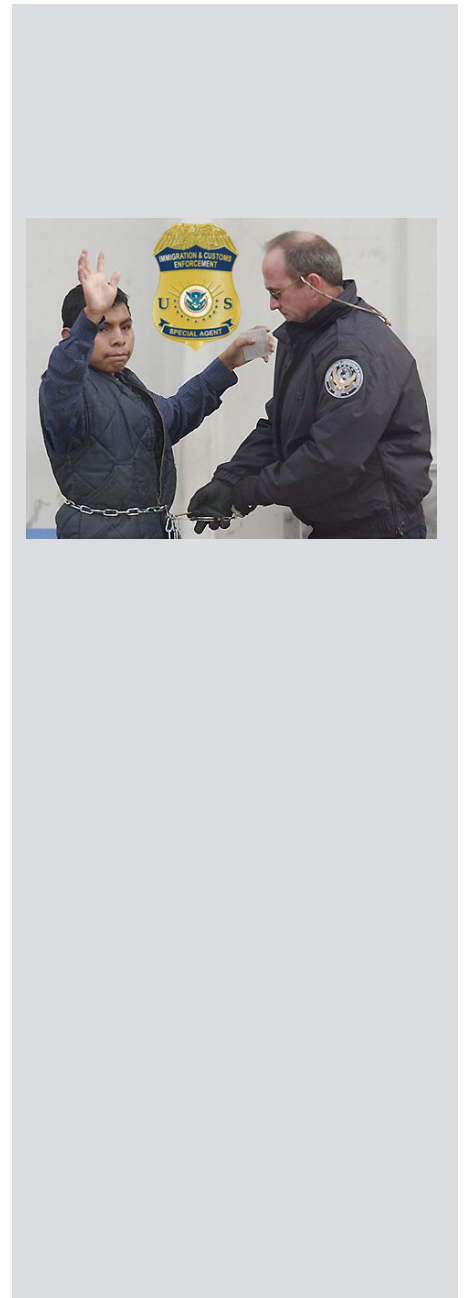
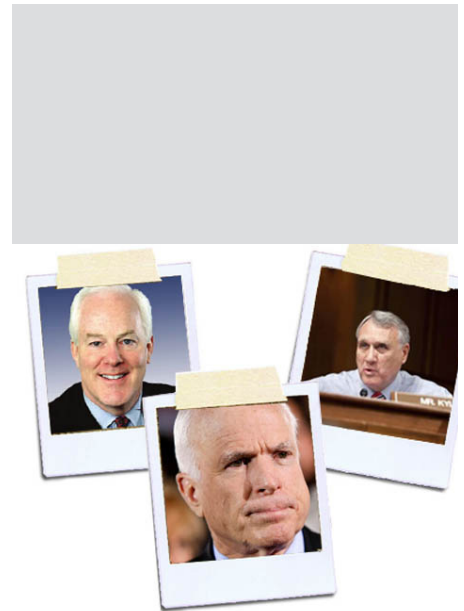
The DREAM Act has the potential to encourage future illegal immigration on an unprecedented scale. Numerous immigrants enter the United States illegally each year with a hope for a better life. These immigrants either refuse to or are unwilling to obtain legal status, and they forgo the required steps to do so. The DREAM Act gives immigrants even more incentive not only to continue illegal immigration but to look at the legal means of entry as an unnecessary avenue. It becomes apparent that offering adolescent foreigners the prospect of citizenship through illegal means would produce a rise

in illegal immigration that could potentially harm more immigrants than it would help. Traveling to America illegally is a potentially deadly venture for an adult, let alone a child. The harsh conditions that illegal immigrants subject themselves to in order to reach the United States are fraught with dangers that most Americans cannot comprehend. Many face the risk of death every year. By

The proposed DREAM Act would also provide unjust tuition favors that law-abiding foreigners and out-of-state students are denied.

giving a reward for becoming an illegal immigrant, the DREAM Act is essentially encouraging this potentially deadly pursuit. A more effective use of immigration reform might be to offer incentives to those who wish to immigrate to America legally instead of to reward those who break the law.

The proposed DREAM Act would also provide unjust tuition favors that law-abiding foreigners and out-of-state students are denied. Currently, if a legal citizen from one state wishes to attend a public college in another, the student is required to pay a much higher rate of tuition than the student who resides in the state in which the college is located; this goes for foreign students as well. For an





illegal immigrant, this problem is simply overcome by illegally entering the country and receiving taxpayer-funded tuition assistance. The injustice lies in that individuals who are law abiding are punished with higher tuition rates

while illegal activities such as illegal entry into America are rewarded. Currently,

ten states already provide in-state tuition rates for illegal immigrants so long as they avoid law enforcement and remain in the state in violation of federal immigration laws. Legal foreigners and out-of-state students, however, are not as fortunate. They must pay full out-of-state tuition to attend these same schools. It seems as though a uniform tuition rate across the board might be a better alternative for encouraging continued education.

Immigration to America is vital to this country's success and survival. The calloused hands and sore

backs of immigrants built this country, but laws exist in this country for a reason, and that is to protect American interests. If America is willing to reward those who break our laws, then why were the laws developed in the first place?

If America is willing to reward those who break our laws, then why were the laws developed in the first place?

The DREAM Act provides amnesty for illegal behavior, encourages future illegal immigration, and makes

tuition unfair to everyone. A better alternative is out there, and if politicians would work together, a solution that benefits everyone would be found. If voting on the DREAM Act today were an option, my choice would be "no."

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THE TRUEST GIFT

by Robin Hazelwood

It is so easy to get caught up in individual events that you don't fully recognize the results of life's constant changes. Every once in a while, though, you're lucky enough to get just the right perspective to really appreciate the collective effect of life's ebb and flow, and a moment like that is truly a present to be savored. The most touching Christmas gift I've ever received was seeing the measure of my children's maturity and thoughtfulness lit with the glow of classic Christmas lights.

Not so long ago our family dynamic was at times tumultuous. Our home was prone to spontaneously become a war zone, in which the main combatants were my daughter and I. She was liable to rebel against me at any turn, arguing sometimes just for the pure sake of argument. "I hate you" rang often and

loud. I, in turn, fought to maintain control of just about everything that happened in our home in an attempt to establish my authority. Neither of us ever willingly gave up any ground

Our home was prone to spontaneously become a war zone, in which the main combatants were my daughter and I.

to the other, and both fought frantically, loudly and shrilly to have the last word in any "discussion." A major bone of contention for her was the favoritism she felt was shown to her brother, 6 1/2 years younger. This was not only grist for her mill but a gigantic wedge between the two of them. My son was an embedded observer of the hostilities, his voice unheard in the chaos. My husband was by turns referee and mediator, always stuck in the middle, always the lynchpin keeping it all together.

Mercifully, there were respites in the chaos, during which laughter reigned and adventures were undertaken with genuine



Robin Hazelwood was born and raised in Northern California. She enjoys spending time with family and friends, boating on the Delta, and losing hours in a good book. A mother of two who is awaiting the arrival of her first grandchild, she is attending Delta College to earn her Associate of Science degree in computer science while working full-time for Lodi Unified School District.



camaraderie. One thing that brought us together was touring our neighborhood and critiquing all of the Christmas light displays each year. We all prized the homes accentuated with tasteful, color-coordinated light displays and graceful decorations set to maximize the beauty of the season and of the homes themselves. We would shudder over garish places decorated with apparently unrestrained zeal, where colors collided without rhyme or reason and cartoon-like figurines vied for dominion over riotous landscapes. In the end, all of the exhibits from either end of our perceived spectrum were appreciated for their warmth and creativity, and we were all happy for the companionship we'd shared.



Our own home was never a contestant in this unofficial Christmas pageant, unfortunately. When it came time to decorate for the holidays, I narrowed my focus to concentrate on interior decoration in keeping with some strange, unwritten gender-based chore allotment schedule, leaving any outside beautification to my husband's discretion. My husband wasn't inspired: we lacked the tools he would need to light the whole house and he wasn't keen

on taking steps to remedy the situation. The kids and I would occasionally throw out a mild complaint, but the situation remained unchanged. It would not have been out of character for me to buy the extension ladder we lacked and instigate the execution of a lighting scheme, but understanding the



enormity of the task for even the most enthusiastic of magicians, I resisted the urge to push my husband to perform this bit of holiday magic.

As the Christmas season approached this year, however, I decided that I would widen my own focus and light our house up for the holidays. I returned from the Delta Reflections parade in the mood to start decking halls and discovered that elves, in the form of our kids, had been busily at work in our absence. Our daughter, her husband and our son worked together as a unified, autonomous team and surprised us with a fully and beautifully lighted house. Our daughter, in close collaboration with her brother, originated the plan. Our son, no longer a spectator, not only assisted our son-in-law with the installation process but also set the stage for the entire production, ensuring that we were totally unaware of any plan. Completely

without my prior knowledge, much less my direction, perfectly placed strands of beautiful red lights delineated the eaves of our home. I was stunned by the bright red lights whose crisp, clean outline gracefully accentuated our home. Classy, not garish, simple, not fussy, the lights were just right and entirely in keeping with our shared preferences. A rare snowfall graced us that night, and I found myself the next morning standing outside in the frigid, pre-dawn darkness staring in wonder at the lights glowing brightly against our snow-enshrouded house.

The lights themselves were the intended gift, but more important, they represented the newly evolved face of our family, so drastically different than it once was. Time apart and separate spaces have brought us all closer together. My daughter now has her own home

I decided that I would widen my own focus and light our house up for the holidays.

nearby, and we've learned that we have quite a lot in common. These days she and I share opinions, interests and confidences. My son and daughter spend so much time together that they seem to have created their own unspoken language and have become quite the comedy duo, playing off of each other to provide the entertainment for family get-togethers. Our house now is filled with laughter instead of harsh words,

and nobody is allowed to merely observe. My husband isn't called upon to referee these days, although he is still prone to assist whoever seems to be taking the brunt of the teasing. It's so tempting to block an unflattering past and see only the gratifying present-day that we've been enjoying the journey towards this jovial place without realizing the full distance we've traveled. And that realization is the truest gift.





TREATING MEMBERS OF THE DISABLED POPULATION AS OUR EQUALS

by Kelly Sydow

Kelly Sydow graduated with two Associate's Degrees from Delta College in the summer of 2010. "I'm in that weird state of limbo where I have so many different interests and things I want to pursue, but I don't know exactly what's next for me." Although she enjoys the type of work where she can help others, her first passion in life is writing. She writes frequently on her website, "The Search for Simplicity," and is exploring opportunities in freelance. Already a published poet, she is also working on completing her first novel and hopes to see her name on the New York Times Best Seller List one day.

Kelly is entering her fourth year working in human services, specifically with developmentally disabled adults. "I'm truly delighted that Delta Winds chose to publish my essay, as I feel it exposes a chronic problem in today's society. I hope those who read it will take something significant away from it and do what they can to promote equality across the board. It doesn't matter what your race, gender, sexual orientation or *disability* is--we are all people."

About two years ago, I was just another lost soul with empty pockets, scouring the newspaper for any hope of possible employment. I had no direction in school and no idea for a career.

After weeks of countless interviews and submitting applications with no responses, I came across the following ad:

"Do you enjoy helping people? Do you want to make a difference in your community? Then apply at OpenDoor Services, an adult day program servicing the developmentally disabled adults of San Joaquin County.

"You can make a difference."

I had never worked with disabled people before. It sounded challenging and interesting. I was at a crossroads in my life, so I figured I'd give it a shot. Within a week, I got the job. Within two months

I changed my major to sociology, and within a year and a half, I found a new job that offered more responsibility and opportunities, but still focused on working with

People with disabilities face a constant battle in being taken advantage of, sadly even by people they trust.

adults with disabilities. Amazingly, I found my niche. I found a job I love. I now work as a Community Support Coordinator, providing

supported living services to many of the developmentally disabled adults in the San Joaquin County.

Working with disabled adults has taught me a variety of things. I have learned to truly value my life, to avoid taking things for granted, and perhaps most important, that all people—just because they may not look like the rest of us or act like the rest of us—have extraordinary potential. I have seen people with manic depression rise to the occasion to support their family, I have seen a team of adults with

varying physical and mental disabilities take home gold medals from the Special Olympics, and I have seen abused, violent and misguided individuals learn compassion, understanding, and the value of friendship. Yet I have also seen an ugly side: the way many members of the general public treat people with disabilities.

It is important to understand the immense presence of people with disabilities.

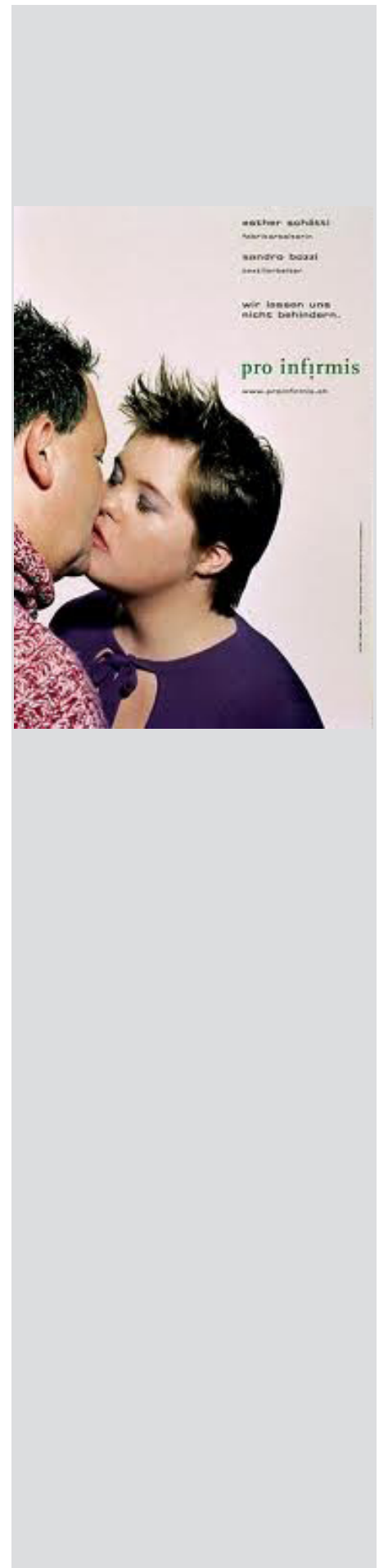
It is quite possible the average person will meet people with disabilities and not even know it; after all, not all disabilities are physical. Mental disabilities can include a wide variety of possible factors, from learning problems, depression, anxiety, schizophrenia, or varying degrees of intellectual disabilities...there are hundreds, if not thousands. The US Census 2000 reported that nearly 49 million people over the age of five in the United States have disabilities (Stern). That translates to just under 20%, or one in five. So the odds of an average American encountering a person with disabilities are fairly high.

“There is a tendency to patronize people with disabilities; you can

People with disabilities make up nearly 20% of the US population.

either be treated like a child or like an idiot,” Lawrence Carter-Long, Network Coordinator for the Disabilities Network of New York City, stated in an interview with Penn & Teller (“Handicapped Parking”). Carter-Long suffers from cerebral palsy and knows firsthand the struggles people with disabilities face on a daily basis. In a world

that already poses many environmental challenges, why would anyone want to demean or insult people with disabilities in regular human interaction? For example, in New York City, there are nearly 13,000 cabs for a city with nearly 20 million people, yet only 29 of those cabs are handicap accessible (“Handicapped Parking”). If we take the Census’ conclusion of one in five people having disabilities, we can accurately suggest that while NYC has roughly four million people with varying degrees of disabilities, the city has only 29 cabs accessible to those with physical limitations. That’s just one example of the many communicational, environmental, and physical barriers that people with disabilities already struggle with. Carol Eustice cites other experiences that people with disabilities may miss out on, including competitive sports, road





trips, rough-housing with their children, and traveling. If I could make people's lives a little easier or a little more pleasant just by being nice to them, why wouldn't I? It's a fact: People with disabilities struggle in a world designed for able-bodied people.

People with disabilities have more than physical and environmental barriers to deal with. A recent government study—the first of its kind—revealed that “people with disabilities are 50 percent more likely to be the victims of violent crimes” (Frieden). The same study reported that strangers victimized 24% of non-disabled women, but that number jumped to 34% for their disabled counterparts. The study did not discuss the “why” factor, but it would be obvious to most. I see this even in the work I do. People with disabilities face a constant battle in being taken advantage of, sadly even by people they trust. I've heard many stories about people with disabilities having money, jewelry, or other personal items taken from them by people who provide them with various services.

Though less severe, another form of mistreatment among those with disabilities has

much more of an immediate impact. This is the use of the malicious label “retard” and other terms to describe people with disabilities. It can happen anywhere: on bus rides, in line at the grocery store and in restaurants. What I am talking about is not

**The man
looked at me
and continued,
“Can't you
just take your
retards out of
here and go
outside?”**

just confined to a word but to a number of things that I know people with disabilities have found offensive. This includes mocking people with disabilities, talking in a

“baby voice,” or talking to them as if they cannot understand basic concepts or forms of communication, such as the retail salesperson who asks a DD adult, “Hiiiiii there. Can...I... HELP...you?”

White House Chief of Staff Rahm Emanuel recently found himself in hot water after using the derogatory phrase “f-ing retarded” to describe liberal activists in a closed door strategy session in 2009. The controversy resulted in his public apology to Tim Shriver, head of the Special Olympics and advocate for all people with disabilities. Not even two months later, on the Tonight Show with Jay Leno, President Obama laughed that his poor bowling score was “like Special Olympics, or something” (“Emanuel

Meets with Shriver After 'F-ing Retarded' Comment"). It is this kind of language and behavior that sets back our progress towards achieving equality and respect for people with disabilities. To hear this kind of speech from two people so highly regarded is disappointing.

When I was an instructor at OpenDoors, I was responsible for taking a group of three to four adults at a time out in public for various activities. We would go to the

library, compare prices at stores, and participate in sporting events through the Special Olympics. One time we were at a local Burger King. My group of adults, all men at the time, got in line with me, and I assisted the ones who needed help ordering off the menu. A tall man with his two small children stood behind us, growing increasingly frustrated at the length of time it took for my group to order. As my group and I walked away, I heard him say to the cashier, "I bet it pisses you off getting a bunch of slow retards in here!" I bit my tongue, but sat down with my guys, waiting for our food. As we ate our lunch, the same man sat in disgust across the room, eyeing us every

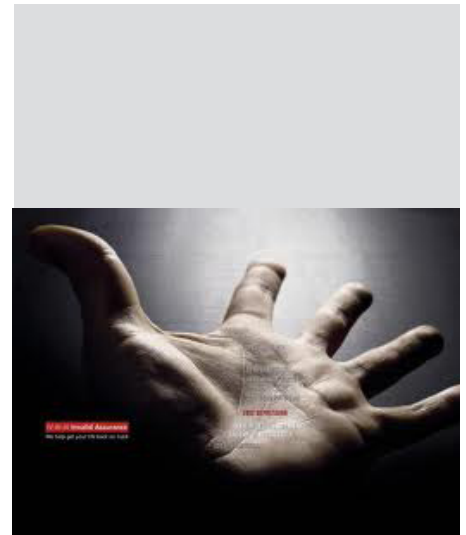
All etiquette involving communicating and interacting with people with disabilities revolves around respect and courtesy.

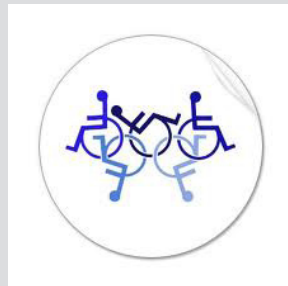
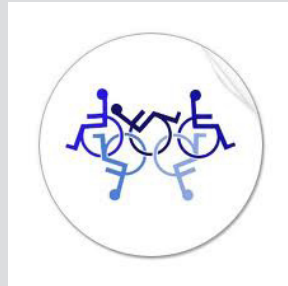
few moments. He eventually had the audacity to approach our table and say, "You know, I bring my kids here for a nice fun lunch, and first I have to wait for all five of you to make a simple order, then I have to watch them eat like this...." He motioned to Michael, a forty-something with

Down syndrome. People with Down syndrome are some of the most lively, compassionate people I've ever met, but characteristically they have a large, protruding tongue, which affects the way

they eat. Even I had to get used to it at first. The man looked at me and continued, "Can't you just take your retards out of here and go outside?"

It sounds like something the average person would never dare to say. However, this is an accurate representation of the many vulgar things people with disabilities inevitably hear. Michael looked at the man and offered the most sincere apology as he packed his lunch. I told him to stop packing up and told the man that these people, these human beings, had as much right to eat here as he did, and we would not be going anywhere. He took his kids and left.





One would imagine an argument against treating people with disabilities as equals would be non-existent. In fact, finding research about people who will openly discuss their opposition to treating people with disabilities as equals, as I have found, is incredibly difficult. Discrimination, intolerance, and ignorant disrespect are all silent problems that infiltrate our society. All I can do to stop them is to explain what I have heard and seen.

Other misconceptions seem to foster these problems of discrimination, intolerance, and disrespect. These are a few of the common myths that continue to exist today.

“I don’t know any people with disabilities.” It doesn’t matter. As stated previously, with nearly 20% of all Americans falling under the “disabled” category, chances are most people will know people with disabilities. And if one does not know people with disabilities, what harm is there in educating oneself about the proper way to treat people with disabilities? We should educate ourselves and our children, encouraging all to have tolerance and respect for all people.

“People with disabilities are

I have seen people with manic depression rise to the occasion to support their family.

less productive members of society and are therefore not equals.” Au contraire! Some of history’s most notable and productive figures have had disabilities. Franklin D. Roosevelt’s legs were paralyzed from polio, Harriet Tubman had epilepsy, Stevie Wonder and Ray Charles, both blind, became extremely talented

musicians. Famous aviator Howard Hughes and naturalist Charles

Darwin both had obsessive-compulsive disorder. Albert Einstein, believe it or not, had a learning disability (“Famous People with Disabilities”)! To demean people by suggesting they are not capable of doing great things because of a disability is ignorant.

And then there is the played-out argument: “Why does everyone think just because people have disabilities, we have to go out of our way to treat them ‘extra’ special?” Nobody has to bend over backwards for a disabled person. If that is the assumption one draws from reading this, then my point is being overlooked. It is about treating people as human beings with feelings. Oftentimes, treating someone “special” because he/she has a disability just makes the disability that much more obvious, and can be misconstrued as

patronizing.

It does not take a lot to learn the right way to address, treat and assist those with disabilities. In the Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP), a section entitled “Communicating With and About People with Disabilities” offers insightful tips, phrases, and guidelines for communicating and interacting with people with disabilities. The introduction makes a powerful and true statement: “Individuals are sometimes concerned that they will say the wrong thing, so they say nothing at all—thus further segregating people with disabilities.” The page suggests discarding group designations, such as “the blind,” “the retarded” or “the disabled,” as they do not “reflect the individuality, equality or dignity of people with disabilities. Further, words like ‘normal person’ imply that the person with a disability isn’t normal, whereas ‘person without a disability’ is descriptive but not negative” (“Communicating With and About People with Disabilities”).

This helpful site goes on to provide the reader with an in-depth chart that focuses on affirmative phrases as opposed to negative phrases, such as saying “person with Cerebral Palsy” versus “CP victim.” It

further suggests appropriate phrases and actions and discusses what is okay in regards to communicating with people of various sectors (i.e. deaf, physically disabled, blind, etc.). Rather than listing off the 60 or so tips, I have selected what I believe to be the most universal.

All etiquette involving communicating and interacting with people with disabilities revolves around respect and courtesy. There is no handbook for this, no need to memorize a list of what-to-dos for any possible situation. The right way to treat people with disabilities is to treat them the way all people would want to be treated. (Remember the Golden Rule?) When addressing a person with a disability, keep these in mind: Always look people in the eye when speaking to them. Staring is different; it’s rude. But looking away as to not draw attention to an obvious physical disability actually makes it more obvious. A normal tone of voice is acceptable and expected. “If you offer assistance, wait until the offer is accepted. Be patient, supportive and flexible. Take the time to make sure you understand the person and equally as important, that he/she understands you.” Perhaps the most helpful information ODEP offers is to simply relax, listen to the individual, offer but never insist,



Albert Einstein, believe it or not, had a learning disability.



and treat the individual with dignity, respect and courtesy (“Communicating With and About People with Disabilities”).

The scary but true reality is that any person could become disabled at any time. Many mental disabilities occur later in life, and no one knows when he/she will fall down a stair, get in a car accident, or have a baby with a genetic disorder. Of course I would never wish any of that upon anyone, but the point is to know that it’s possible. “If I were a person with a disability, how would I expect others to treat me?” Change arises with education, awareness and support. We need to be educated in the right way to be tolerant, respectful and courteous to those with disabilities, and we need to pass these lessons along to our future generations. We need to be aware that people with disabilities are treated unfairly and subjected to demeaning comments every day, and when we see it happen we need to stand up and set the example for the right way. And last, we need to show our support to people with disabilities by embracing them as productive and contributing members of our society.

People with disabilities

make up nearly 20% of the US population, a number that has been steady over the years (Stern). Now more than ever, it is time for everyone to come together and promote equality and the fair treatment of people with disabilities. In my experience, seeing people with disabilities being mistreated or becoming the victims of words with heavy negative connotations does

The scary but true reality is that any person could become disabled at any time.

really affect them. It chips away at their self-esteem. Who is anyone to make other human beings question their importance,

their place in this world or even their status as “normal”? What is normal? I would highly encourage anyone to spend a day volunteering at a Special Olympics, blind center or disabled adult day program. In doing so, one would see what I am so fortunate to observe every day; people with the kindest hearts overcoming amazing obstacles and offering friendship to nearly anyone who is willing take it. When people are able to have had that experience and see the receptiveness that occurs when people with disabilities are treated no different than anyone else in the world, I would expect them to wonder, “how could anyone ever treat people with disabilities any differently?”

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WHERE DOES IT END?

by Rebecca Goldsmith



Rebecca Goldsmith is a 24-year-old student, employee and musician. As a full time student, she works hard to get good grades, while balancing work and recreation (wait, what recreation?). Her current goal is to obtain a degree in biological science, specifically registered nursing, to start. She is an employee at a rehabilitation facility that specializes in aquatic physical therapy. She loves working with people and enjoys the rewarding role she plays in their recovery. She finds time between study sessions for writing music, singing and playing guitar. She has been heavily involved in performing arts and the open mic circuit in Stockton and the Bay Area, and is currently using her talents and gifts to serve her home church REACH Worship Center.

The story begins with a uniform and ends with a uniform. I don't know about other females, but for me, there is just something about a man in a uniform. Maybe it's because it's a virtual ingredients label that states that the man inside is made of: responsibility, reliability, and stability, or maybe it's just that the cut makes his shoulders seem broader, and no matter how tall he is to begin with, a uniform adds about five inches to any guy's height. Whatever the case is, I'd bury myself alive before turning one down for at least one date. This is why when my sister called to ask me if I would be willing to go on a blind date with a U.S. Marine for the 150th annual Marine Corps Ball, I promptly said, "Yes!"

What the heck was I going to wear to this thing? I knew the right person to ask would be my grandma. She knew everything about

I knew the right person to ask would be my grandma. She knew everything about social etiquette.

social etiquette. Over the phone, I could practically hear her die and go up to heaven when I told her where I was going (I think she has a thing for uniforms too). She said she would help me, and over the next few weeks we deliberated on accessories and contrasted fabric textures and colors of dresses. My grandma and I have always gotten along magnificently and we agreed on everything. Having her help me get ready for the date added immensely to the overall excitement of the occasion for me—until an unimaginably awful complication nearly turned the experience upside down.

When hell broke loose it was Christmas day. My family gets together every year for a big afternoon dinner, a few glasses of wine, and way too much dessert. That year was no exception. After we had eaten our fill, everyone found nooks around the house and settled down to carry on

quiet conversations. I was working on a puzzle at a table on one end of the family room when my grandma approached the table and pretended to begin working on the puzzle with me. I had no idea she had a bone to pick with me. A few moments passed before she made her hand into a fist on the table and turned toward me with a look that almost burned my eyelashes off. She hissed, "SHHHAME ON YOU!" I responded with a half crazed look on my face that said, "Grandma?" She continued, "Why didn't you tell me your date was black!" I was completely confused, until a little lemming in my brain flicked on a neon light that read, "Oh, Grandma's prejudiced." She was livid. My grandma is a force to be reckoned with when she's mad, and because of that I had never talked back to her, not once, until that day. The word "So!" flew out of my mouth before I could stop it. That was it. She erupted, "Shame on you! I can't believe you; you make me so angry! If I had known I never would have helped!" As she attempted to verbally dismember me, my heart started pounding, and my senses rose to a

Eventually because of the Dust Bowl of the 1930s, her family migrated to Stockton. They left everything else they ever knew to start a new life, but they kept their racial bias.

heightened state. I instantly knew where every other person in the room was, what they were doing, and whether or not they could hear us. I could practically hear their food digesting, but unbelievably, no one was even aware of what

was transpiring between my grandma and me.

Initially, I really was going to hit her. All within the span of about two and a half seconds the consequences of each plausible sequence of events that could result,

based upon my calculated response, flashed through my mind. I was outraged that this woman I had seen as a modern archetype for all things "woman" was acting so heartlessly. Sure, I knew my grandma had this thing for telling elaborate racial jokes from time to time, but she's the same woman who took me to Sunday school and helped me learn the song "Jesus Loves the Little Children." There's a line in that song that says "red and yellow, black and white they are precious in his sight." "What kind of hypocritical mess is this?" I thought. The tension between us was so thick as my mind raced. How could I be standing face to face,





FIGHT RACISM

in such stark opposition, with my own grandmother? Time seemed to stop as I desperately grasped at anything. I began a mental journey, tracing back my family history to try to make sense of all this.

My grandmother, who is my father's mother, was originally from Texas. She grew up during times of intense discrimination against blacks. She was raised in a white family, right in the middle of it. Eventually because of the Dust Bowl of the 1930s, her family migrated to Stockton. They left everything else they ever knew to start a new life, but they kept their racial bias. In contrast to my grandma, my mother's Caucasian father grew up in Mississippi, where oppression of blacks was also very prevalent, but he rose above racial segregation. After his mother died when he was two, he was sent to be raised by a black woman. She raised him like her own son, and he learned that love appreciates all colors. When he was seventeen, he took a stand against the foul treatment of blacks by his white family. Strongly disagreeing with their bigotry, he eventually moved away to California.

**She hissed,
"SHHHAME ON
YOU! . . . Why
didn't you tell
me your date
was black!"**

In fifty-three years he's only gone back once. These two very different stories were joined in matrimony when my parents tied the knot in 1981. But the saga of conflict over race and segregation continued when my parents fought intensely about where we kids would attend school. My dad favored the then all-white schools that he had gone to, while my mom fought for us to break the mold of my father's side of the family by attending integrated schools. My mom won, and as a result I was bathed in a melting pot of color and culture. I was even amongst a minority of whites at the schools I attended. With all of this in mind, I quickly decided on an appropriate response to my grandmother's racial assault.

The beauty of the division within my family is that it has provided me the opportunity to make a conscious decision about race. In my mind's eye it's as easy as choosing between good and evil, or between love and hate. I choose love. There is something about the uniformity of love that speaks to an ingredients label of its own. It states that people of every race, color, and ethnic group

deserve to be respected, understood, and treated equally. My family may be divided on the subject of race but I, however, would not fall. I looked at her squarely and said, “You know, Grandma. I don’t share your

opinion. I am not racist.” Right then, she shut up, and after an awkward silence, she drifted away from the table to rub elbows with other members of the family.

I don’t know if she became quiet because she had just given up on me or because I had held up a mirror to her face, a mirror that reflected her as more than my grandmother. She was my racist grandma.

The confrontation between my grandma and me forced me to face the reality that my grandma holds tightly to a bitterness that I cannot relate to. This racism is a poison that has contaminated her and other members of my family, too. Despite this I cannot help but continue to love them. Barack Obama described the same paradoxical feelings in his speech “A More Perfect Union.” He addressed the issues that arose because of his continued friendship with

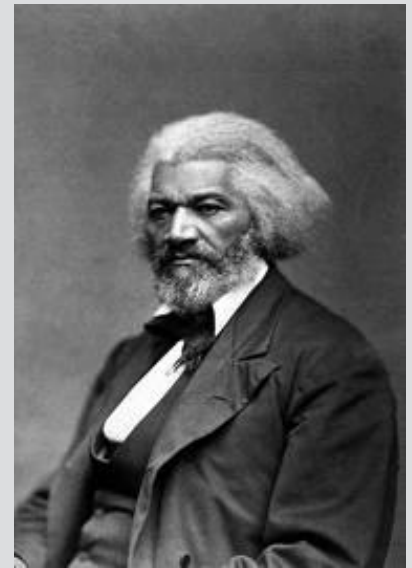
his former pastor Reverend Wright, who had made some very controversial racial comments. Mr. Obama stated, “I can no more disown him than I can my white grandmother—a woman who helped raise

The confrontation between my grandma and me forced me to face the reality that my grandma holds tightly to a bitterness that I cannot relate to.

me, a woman who sacrificed again and again for me, a woman who loves me as much as anything in this world, but a woman who once confessed her fear of black

men as they passed by her on the street, and who on more than one occasion has uttered racial or ethnic stereotypes that made me cringe.”

I didn’t let my grandmother’s prejudice stop me from going to that dance with Corporal Larry Bailey. I’ll never forget how handsome he was in his dress uniform or how I felt as we floated around the ballroom that night. I eventually found a way to patch things up with my grandma. I’ll always love her, despite her racial bias, but if I accomplish nothing else in this life, I will die happy knowing that racial discrimination in my family ends with me.



Notes