

# DELTA WINDS

VOLUME 22 A Magazine of Student Essays 2009

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## Letter from the Editors

Reasons for publishing works by Delta College students vary. The authors see their names in print and share this significant accomplishment with family and friends. Editors of textbooks for national publications select *Delta Winds* essays and then develop material based on the content, style, and structure of the essays. Students in composition classes from Florida to Alaska then read and learn from these model essays. On the Delta College campus, *Delta Winds* essays have been used for instructional purposes in reading and composition courses covering a range of skill levels and content areas from critical thinking and literature courses to developmental writing courses. Recently, *The Delta Winds Reader* has been produced on campus as a textbook for students in developmental writing. In the reader, nearly 50 *Delta Winds* essays have been republished with visual organizers, vocabulary lists, and discussion topics to encourage Delta College students to connect to the readings and to then look within themselves. Through this reflective act, individuals learn from reading and learn to view life from another's experiences. And this, we believe, is another valuable reason for publishing works by Delta College students.

## BIOGRAPHY

*At thirty-four years of age and after a seventeen-year gap from the educational system, Lee Britton finds herself back in school. With over ten years experience in the mortgage industry and with the current mortgage meltdown, she has chosen to pursue a bachelor's degree in anything but real estate finance. Lee currently resides in Stockton, California, with her husband and three kids. English is her second language. Lee says that learning to speak English was necessary in order for her to live in this country. However, learning to write properly is vital to her success in this country.*



# IT HURT ME TO BE BEAUTIFUL

BY LEE BRITTON

Growing up in the late eighties, I recall being part of a group of young teens who liked to be cruel to others based on their appearance. If you didn't have the Guess® jeans or the Marithe Francois Girbaud® clothes, then you weren't worthy of my time. In retrospect, I don't recall how I became so cruel. I know it wasn't something I learned at home and I don't think it was gradual. It was more of an overnight transformation as a result of peer pressure and envy. All I can remember is that in the sixth and seventh grade at Herbert Hoover Middle School in San Francisco I was your average "dork." The majority of my friends were either nerds or the artsy type, and I was a member of the school orchestra. I was a mediocre musician and an average student. I wore Laura Ashley type dresses with the huge flower prints and floor-length skirts topped off with a lovely pair of red-rimmed

eyeglasses. I epitomized dorkdom. I was happy with my friends, my music, and my long skirts. However, I guess deep down I wanted more, so I allowed peer pressure to dictate what my happiness should be.

I allowed peer pressure to dictate the way I dressed, the way I fixed my hair and the way I applied my make-up. The peer pressure also dictated whom I ate lunch with and what school activities to be a part of. I had to keep up appearances, I had to look good, surround myself with people who looked good and do things that were considered acceptable by my new eighth-grade crowd. At the time I thought that in order to be happy I had to not only keep up my physical appearance but keep up appearances period; boy was I wrong. I was far from being happy.

I guess I succumbed to peer

pressure so I could experience popularity and be one of the beautiful people. Don't get me wrong. I liked my friends and who I was as a person. However, a big part of me was envious. I wanted people to pay attention to me, to admire what I was wearing and to admire my hair and not look at me as if I were a freak. I had an "anti-freak" cure. I would take a quick trip to San Francisco's Union Square with the girls and a drop-in around the corner to Woolworth's to pick up a can of Aqua-Net Hairspray along with a stick of Wet-n-Wild

eyeliner. My shopping trips became frequent. I started cutting class orchestra in particular. I mean the kids I knew in orchestra were

my old geeky unfashionable friends. Why bother? I stopped going to the Youth Philharmonic group that I participated in outside of school. I stopped going to my piano lessons. Who was going to see how hot I looked at my piano lessons? My eighty-something-year-old teacher? I think not! I had places to go to be seen and people to be seen with. I looked way too good to be wasted on dorks.

With my bangs sprayed to perfection to stand at least four inches high atop my head, my eyes carefully outlined and my carefully coordinated outfit, I was ready to hang

*I wore Laura Ashley type dresses with the huge flower prints and floor-length skirts topped off with a lovely pair of red-rimmed eyeglasses. I epitomized dorkdom.*

out. Lunch was as coordinated as the outfit. Back then there were only two options. Lunch was either purchased in the Beanery, a sort of school sponsored convenience store or in the cafeteria hot lunch line. We all met up at the Beanery Line to buy our bagels with cream cheese and bags of Doritos. The last thing I wanted to do was be seen in what was considered the free lunch line, also known as the "cafeteria hot school lunch for the geeks and the poor." I had to have money to spend or be ready with a good excuse

such as "I'm on a diet." The way I looked at it, it helped me either way. I was cool if I had money to spend, and if I didn't have money to spend I

was helping my figure by not eating.

As I drifted away from orchestra, I found my way onto the dance planning committee and the softball team. My new friends thought that it was hilarious seeing my old friends lug their huge instruments around as if the instruments were attached to their bodies. They made fun of them and the effort and care they showed in protecting their instruments. When they tired of making fun of them for their instruments, my new friends would tease my old friends about their clothes, shoes and hair. Most of the time I would





ignore the cruel comments, and sometimes (if I didn't personally know the kids being made fun of) I would join in. This behavior carried on when it came to the school dances as well. If a kid's clothes didn't look new or stylish, we would pick on the kid. We hurled insults and sometimes food. I admit that most of the time I felt bad for the kids being picked on. It didn't matter how I felt though. What mattered is that I wasn't the one being picked on, so I didn't dare speak against it or stop it. Are you kidding? It would've been social suicide. I worked too hard on not only my physical appearance but my social appearance as well.

Focus on my physical appearance was just a steppingstone to a world of trouble for me. The attention and the importance I placed on my outside, however fun it was in the beginning, led me to a world of hurt. I found that the more I focused on my appearance the more intense I became about it with the company I kept. I constantly needed more. I outgrew people my age and gravitated to older

people with more style, more money, and unfortunately, with more bad habits. I found that I was not skinny enough and my new friends had a way to help me with that. I was introduced to powder cocaine and a straw. My weight problem was now under control; I just didn't have the urge to eat anymore. I also developed a thirst for alcohol with my newfound weight control regimen. It seemed that with everything I tried, I would need to try something

**My new friends thought that it was hilarious seeing my old friends lug their huge instruments around as if the instruments were attached to their bodies.**

else in order to control or adjust my physical appearance. I spiraled out of control.

In retrospect I can say that I placed undue emphasis on physical appearance. My juvenile

frame of mind opened the door to a lifestyle that gave me everything except happiness. Focus on physical appearance and not substance is a waste of brain cells and an insult to one's intelligence. I find happiness in what I've accomplished as a person and as a parent. I have also found peace in that I strive to be remembered more for the person I am than for what my physical measurements are or may have been.

# Life with Henry

By Michelle Andretta

One of my most vivid memories of my father, Henry, is a short conversation we had when I was twelve years old.

I was sitting on the stinging cold concrete floor of the

garage listening to the radio

and watching him wash his treasured white El Camino in the cool morning air.

My favorite Jimi Hendrix song, "Fire," came on, and

in as sweet a voice as the awkward tomboy in me could muster, I chimed, "Dad-dy, I want guitar lessons." He didn't even stop buffing his rear hubcap when he shot back, "Your fingers aren't long enough." I watched him as he stood up, took a deep, frustrated breath, reached into the truck bed for his beer, and took a long swig from the brown bottle glittering in the morning sunlight. I thought to myself, my fingers may not be

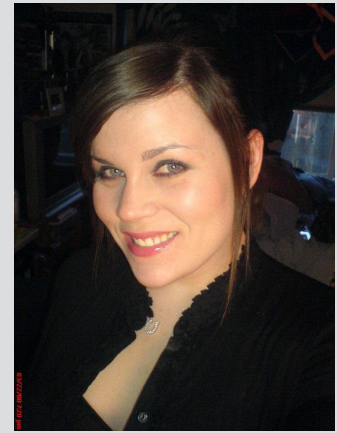
long enough to play guitar, but his were certainly long enough to wrap around that bottle.

At first glance, my dad doesn't seem like the most intimidating

**HE ALWAYS SEEMED BOTHERED THAT WE WERE THERE—LIKE WE WERE GETTING IN THE WAY OF WHATEVER ASININE PLANS HE HAD AT THE LOCAL BAR.**

guy in the world. Since the seventh grade, I've been taller than he—my 5'10" of velvety Nordic deliciousness inherited from my mom to his 5'5" of sinew and

calluses. Our mannerisms are similar, but I'm loose and limber whereas he is more rigid and intense. My brother jokes that if he were to tie our hands behind our backs, neither my dad nor I would be able to form complete sentences because both of us convey so much with our hands. Our physical features are completely different, but genetics has supplied us with some similarities.



*Michelle Andretta was born and raised in the Central Valley. When she's not blowing her eardrums out with her iPod, studying, or running herself ragged, she can be found near a coffeemaker, baking for her friends, watching bad cult cinema, or writing poetry. She dreams one day of getting paid to do absolutely nothing, but she's working on a degree in Biology just in case.*



One of my dad's most prominent attributes is his ability to talk a person's ear off about any subject that's thrown at him. A former chairperson of the local chamber of commerce, my dad is a master of persuasion. He could sell ice to Eskimos and ketchup Popsicles to women in white gloves. I remember scenes from my childhood. While he pressed the flesh at various civic functions, I'd stand placidly by his side, marveling with pride at how people gathered around him, captivated by his charming delivery.

Unfortunately, this gift for persuasion transferred to a gift for making excuses, hence the insult about my stubby fingers, which I later pointed out were inherited from him. His response was "I don't play guitar."

My dad and I have analogous personalities, but our outlooks on life couldn't be any more different. A charming public figure, but an intimidating private one, Dad always seemed to be selfishly wrapped up in himself. My parents divorced when I was 5, and my mom would drop my brother and me off at his house every other weekend. He always seemed bothered that we were there — like we were getting in the way of whatever asinine plans he had at the local bar. His irritation

exploded into terrifying tirades when my brother and I would do something wrong, sometimes even little things like not rinsing a glass in the sink or eating too fast. Even though I feigned adolescent ignorance, I knew it was the alcohol that made him act like that. I always felt like a burden, but I rarely spoke up about it. Some weekends were like nightmares. On Sundays, Mom

*I thought to myself, my fingers may not be long enough to play guitar, but his were certainly long enough to wrap around that bottle.*

would come pattering up the street in her blue Datsun to rescue me and take me back to my books and friends at home. I'd already be anxiously waiting on the front step with

my bags packed.

The "fingers aren't long enough" comment has been my mantra since the moment it fell on my ears. My fingers may not be long enough to play like Jimi Hendrix, but that doesn't stop me from jumping around my room in my underwear and aviator sunglasses, flicking my tongue in the air like Gene Simmons, kicking out the jams and throwing the metal horns to the sky like a bonafide rock god. Who cares if I'm not very good at something? I'm comfortable knowing I'm going to give my all to everything I commit to, and if someone thinks my fingers aren't long enough I'm going to adapt and make it work. Dad and anyone else be damned.

As a teenager, I harbored a lot of anger toward my father because I felt like a little girl cheated out of a doting male role model. It's taken the last five years of my life, through personal reflection, therapy, and talking to my mom, to understand exactly what

happened in those younger years with my dad. As charismatic and endearing as he can be, there are still issues that he will probably never work out for himself. There's a piece of my heart that will always belong to my dad, but that doesn't mean I always have to like him.





*George Greaves is a re-entry student. He has been a local musician for over a decade and plans to attend UOP with the goal of becoming a music teacher.*

# MR. REYNOLDS' OPUS

by George Greaves

Most adolescents attend junior high school and hope to find their way through the two years of blather and lecture from teachers on their way to high school. It was my intention to get from beginning to end of junior high without detection from anyone in an authority position. My family life wasn't the typical post-nuclear family. Born to an abusive father who took pride in turning drinking into an Olympic sport and a mother who could have been voted "High Times" magazine's Woman of the Year, I had developed an exceptional talent for appearing invisible to adults. To amplify my insecurities and self-doubt, just as I was ready to step into the arena of junior high, my parents divorced and my mother moved my family to a small town in Oregon. I dreaded my first day at a

*He would always take a moment to ask about me. Up to that point in my life adults had just seemed to tolerate me as an annoyance.*

new school with no friends. However, my first day changed my thinking in ways I couldn't have imagined. Mr. Richard Reynolds taught my first class, Music Appreciation, and it was the only class I had any interest in at the time. Mr. Reynolds' amazing style of teaching would unlock my inhibitions and help me to cultivate my musical talent. Because of his ability to see his students as separate individuals, his commitment to hard work, and his patience, Mr. Reynolds will forever rank as one of my greatest mentors.

Most of the teachers I have encountered see their classroom of students as a collective brain or a single entity. Mr. Reynolds never approached his students in such a fashion. I remember the feeling of amazement I



had on the second day of class when I walked down the hall toward my class and saw Mr. Reynolds at his door greeting each student walking through the threshold. It was awkward to me the first few days, but soon I felt a sense of belonging when I attended his class. He would always take a moment to ask about me. Up to that point in my life adults had just seemed to tolerate me as an annoyance. Mr. Reynolds became so familiar with each of his students that he could tell when one needed a little extra attention. My family difficulties had stymied development in some areas. Mr. Reynolds appeared to notice my social deficits and encouraged me to open up and let others see my talent. I had enjoyed singing from an early age. To this day I walk around singing aloud without realizing it; I did back then as well. Mr. Reynolds was the music director for the school, and one day he heard me singing "Yesterday" by the Beatles. He suggested that I join his chorus class. Early on I was resistant, but he never pushed or told me to join like most of the adults in my life would have done; he just kept telling me I would be an asset to his choir. Since my first day of class he had been a constant, stable, and jovial figure in my life, so I let my guard down and joined the choir.

*Since my first day of class he had been a constant, stable, and jovial figure in my life, so I let my guard down and joined the choir.*

Once I joined Mr. Reynolds' musical group, I discovered his dedication to hard work and perseverance. He had the talent to get his students to open their eyes to new ideas and push themselves further than my fellow classmates thought possible. Mr. Reynolds loved to teach our group very challenging vocal harmony arrangements. These were arrangements advanced high school and college students were performing. As a unit we grew intensely motivated, and when Mr. Reynolds asked us to take on extra practice sessions after school, several parents began to complain that he was pushing their little kids at too young an age. The parents eventually backed down when they noticed none of the children in the group appeared to be under duress. In reality, Mr. Reynolds had instilled a passion and drive in each of us that set in motion several events to come. During my 8<sup>th</sup> grade year, our ten-person choir was invited to perform for the various social functions along the coast of Oregon. From a performance for the state governor to the opening act at the Portland Opera House, we were on the move. The pinnacle of our year was when our group was invited to compete in the Newport Jazz Choir Competition. This was incredible because up until we were invited it was only open to high school groups. But our



dedication and hard work paid off tenfold. We took third place out of 22 groups of performers. At that point in my life, Mr. Reynolds showed me what hard work could generate.

Looking back at my days with Mr. Reynolds, I can now begin to understand the insane level of patience he must have had. Taking junior high school children and molding them into fine-tuned instruments when their major focus at the time was Star Wars couldn't have been easy. Sculpting unformed minds to not only learn the musical pieces, but to also comprehend what the meaning was behind each piece of work

was time-consuming. Mr. Reynolds was definitely from the same school of thought as Carol Bly, who wrote "Growing up Expressive." She believed that children must be exposed to different forms of expression and given new questions and insights to stimulate their creative minds (Bly 42). I remember a time when Mr. Reynolds met with me separately from the group because I was having some difficulty with a tenor harmony part on a song called "Birdland," by Manhattan Transfer. He explained to me that the part I was singing was designed to imitate a large bird taking off and that it was an important piece of

*Taking junior high school children and molding them into fine-tuned instruments when their major focus at the time was Star Wars couldn't have been easy.*

the harmonics in my overall vocal part. He stayed after class and practiced it with me until I performed it correctly. While it took several extra sessions, when I finally nailed the part I was ecstatic, and judging by the look on his face, Mr. Reynolds was also.

After years of reflection, I can at last see the turning point in my personal development. Mr. Reynolds was the figure who appeared to me when I was a troubled youth. He taught me to look outside the narrow view society had established. He took time to ensure each of his pupils was on the right path to success without the constraints of time. His flair

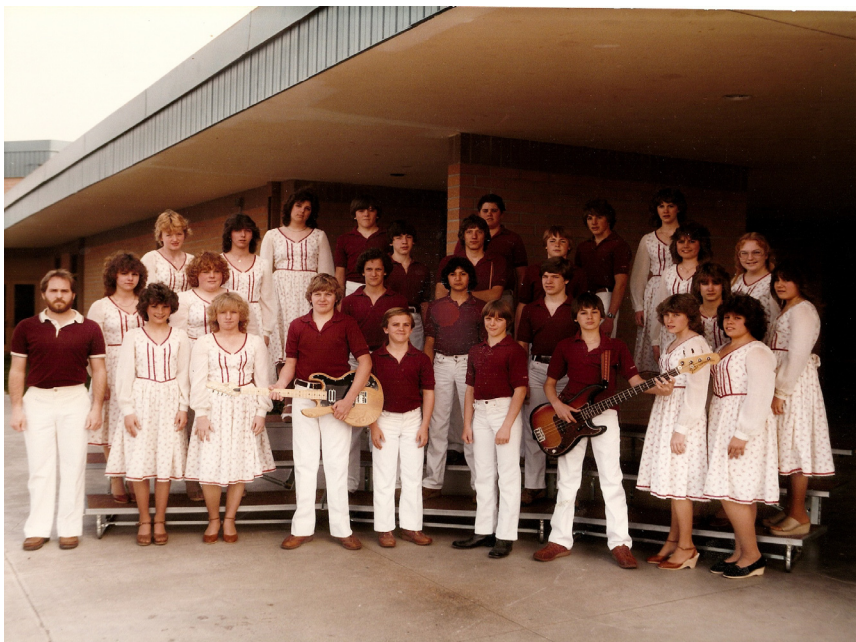
for empowering youth with the skills to allow the inner self to flourish was a tangible gift I could only hope to repay. Maybe it's the reason I find myself, over thirty years later, being drawn to the field of teaching. I hope to utilize Mr. Reynolds' teaching attitude along with my own personal philosophy, which is best summarized in Pay it Forward by C. Ryan Hyde: "Knowing it started from unremarkable circumstances should be a comfort to us all. Because it proves that you don't need much to change the entire world for the better. You can start with the most ordinary ingredients. You can start with the world you've got" (271). I

believe that, like Mr. Reynolds,  
I, too, can make a difference.

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*Heather James, a 37-year-old mother of four, lives with her family in the foothills in a town called Mokelumne Hill. In 2005 she was watching her children, amazed at how fast they were growing, and realized that some day her job as a mother would no longer be full time. She had no career path, so she decided to start working on her college education. She started attending classes at San Joaquin Delta College. Heather enjoys challenging her mind and is surprised to find herself actually loving school. She has not completely settled on what she wants to do yet, but she will probably transfer to a four-year college and pursue a career in science. "For the moment," she states, "I am having a blast!"*

# My Magical Garden

by Heather James

I live in Mokelumne Hill, a town that has not been touched by time much. We are nestled in the foothills along the banks of the Mokelumne River. The town sits just off Highway 49 and is scattered with an array of older homes. I live in the center of town, up on a hill, with wonderful views. I would like to invite you in to my most favorite place on earth, my magical garden.

Come up the ramp at 8225 Marlette Street and enter through the picketed gate, the one with seven pickets standing tall, one a little small; all are painted white to match their adorning arbor. You'll notice the aroma of jasmine as you pass under her cover. She will delight your senses with sweetness, but only briefly; she's quiet. Now come along, we have lots to see.

As we enter the garden let's look to the right; rose of Sharon lives here. Her white "silk paper" flowers have long since fallen off; she sleeps in wait for warmer days. Her neighbors are camellia and rhododendron; they have just begun to wake up from

winter's rest. Camellia's dark green, waxy leaves are a beautiful contrast against the pale yellow house. Wait, I see fuchsia peeking out from her swollen buds. It won't be long; she'll soon put on a marvelous show.

Follow me now to the herb garden, where many herbs once grew. Lavender and

*Follow me now to the herb garden, where many herbs once grew. Lavender and rosemary never rest. They are the only*

rosemary never rest. They are the only ones left now. As you can see, the earth has been turned up around them; it's soft and damp, ready for spring's seeds. I can smell

the earthworms and decaying leaves. Break a sprig off of rosemary and rub her bristles roughly between your fingers; do you smell it? So pungent is the aroma of this herb, slightly sweet with a touch of mint. I think I'll take some with me for the dinner I will prepare later, roast chicken.

Would you like some clippings of lavender? I have three varieties. The plants with the large, deep purple flowers

are traditional. The ones with smaller light lavender or white flowers are heirlooms. They all have tiny sage green leaves. Put some under your pillow tonight and you will rest peacefully, though be wary of your husband's pillow; it may make him frisky.

Let's follow the mossy brick path around to the top of the garden. Be careful: The worn golden bricks

get slick on the incline.

There is a small cove above the vegetable garden, surrounded

by English ivy,

where we can pause on an old bench. Let's first marvel at the views from here across the rooftops of town. We can see the peak of Butte Mountain from across the river. The Catholic church's steeple, pure white, pokes its way through the kiwi-green landscape.

There is the Hotel Leger; it has stood on Main Street since 1851, and comes with loads of haunting lore. On a clear night you can see the lights of the town of Jackson, from eight miles across the river. I feel as though I am at the top of the world when I stand here looking out across the landscape.

I want us to sit here for a while on this old rickety bench, worn grey from the elements; it's cold and damp. Close your eyes with me and take in the sounds around us. I hear the steady hum of the clothes dryer

from the old red schoolhouse next door. The jays are having a squabble in the barren lilac tree. Their noisy squawks drown out the other birds that are trying to sing. Be quiet, jays! Hmm, maybe the calico garden cat will chase them away. Oh, there is a familiar song: the robin with his regal red breast has called to his friends across the garden.

Robin's song is the sound of spring to my ears.

*The jays are having a squabble in the barren lilac tree. Their noisy squawks drown out the other birds that are trying to sing. Be quiet, jays!*

Let's move on.

There is still more to see.

Old rock walls set down one hundred years

ago still line the flowerbeds offering many places to hide for sneaky garden creatures.

If you watch carefully, you may catch site of an alligator lizard scurrying under a rock. But these are also great hiding places for magical creatures — fairies and gnomes that have lived here in the imaginations of children. I'll tell you a quick story:

When I first found this house for sale and fell head over heels in love with it, I contacted a friend who has lived in this town for many years and her family for many generations before her. When I told her of my intentions to purchase the property she became overly excited, childlike and giddy. She told me that the family who built the house (in 1905) were relatives of hers. She stated that she had not been to this house for many years but that she had always held



a special place in her heart for the garden here. When she was a child (40 or so years ago), she spent many hours playing in the garden with mystical creatures of enchantment: engaging in games of hide and seek, hiding along the rock wall or ducking under the ivy. She then told me that this was a magical place and fairies really did live here.

I myself have not witnessed any “Lilliputians,” but I cannot argue the enchanted feelings that overcome me whenever I spend time here. I welcome you here to watch and wait. I would love to hear your story. Now let’s get back to the tour.

Straight ahead, in front of the yellow potters-shed where crepe myrtle stands tall is my favorite tree of all. Right now he is adorned with colorful glowing bulbs – lights on a string to provide some warmth, enough to melt the frost and protect the treasures within. He should not stand here, not at 1200 foot elevation, but we are in the banana belt. That is where a warm air current travels constantly through the foothills, exactly at this location. The current is one-mile wide and allows Mokelumne Hill to be the only place in the Sierra where citrus trees thrive.

Yes, my favorite tree is the lemon tree. Through brilliant green leaves and spiky thorns, bright yellow treasures can be found. Watch your hand as you reach in for your pick. His thorns are no joke, not

to be messed with. They are about an inch and a half long, and coming at you from all directions, they are hard and fierce. When you pick your lemon, hold it in your hand for a while. Feel the thick, smooth rind; roll the lemon between your hands with slight pressure and it will release some oil. Smell the oil; it is bitter and acidic, good for getting red wine stains out of wood. My lips begin to pucker at the anticipation of biting into its sour flesh. I think I’ll take a few lemons with me for later, and mix with sugar, water, and ice for a mid-winter’s treat.

Box hedge, potato plant and azalea mark the edge of the garden. Together they create a living wall in varied hues of greens and browns. At the end of the wall leans wisteria. He is old and cragged. Long, skinny, naked vines entwine the lattice covering, like lovers frozen in time. Seed pods hang from the brambles. Reach up and grab one; they truly feel as though they are made from velvet. Soft, fuzzy olive green pods in teardrop shape hold the next generation in wait.

The tour is now complete though never over. This ever-changing garden brings new delights with each changing season. Spring puts on a wonderful show of surprise and color. Autumn reaps a plentiful harvest. I hope you will come back again and again. I feel blessed to belong to this amazing place and love to share its joy.

# Television— The Breakthrough Invention

by Matt Fernandes

It has been said that one great television show can change the world. With the ever-growing American culture, I believe this statement to be true. The television is a gateway into worlds we may never see, a portal to endless journeys and struggles we may never experience. Since the invention of the television, the minds of human beings have been transformed into something beyond exceptional. Television shows can possess educational value and can be entertaining, but most important can offer a guiding voice to those who watch and listen.

If you were to ask the average person “Do you watch the news? Are you following the presidential campaign?” most would answer yes. But these campaign updates comprise only a small percentage of the educational lessons television has to offer. Those viewers with the luxury of a satellite can witness the teachings of “Survivor Man,” a television show on the Discovery Channel that depicts a man traveling around the world finding ways to live off the land. Personally, I think

this show is great. In a way, “Survivor Man” has been able to teach us that we can live without a cell phone to call for help. Everything we need is right in front of us, even if it does mean having to swallow the occasional bug. “Survivor Man” is just one of the shows that the Discovery Channel has to offer. A show called “Myth Busters,” well, busts myths. By using scientific experiments, these people tackle some of the most outrageous stories we have heard growing up, from combining the ever-dangerous “Pepsi and pop rocks poison” to the famous “Yawns are contagious.” Although what these myth-busters are solving may seem a little childish, some hypotheses that they do test are fascinating. One in particular interesting finding was that plants do seem to flourish when classical music is played. The Discovery Channel is just one channel out of hundreds that has proven to be a great source of education.

To the average American, television is a way to escape. There is a very high percentage of people who relax by

*Matt Fernandes was born on September 12, 1989, in Stockton, California. He graduated from Lincoln High School and is now in his second semester at Delta College. After finishing his general ed, he plans on transferring to NYU or a UC to pursue a career as a film director and writer.*





reclining in the armchair and watching their favorite show, which sometimes deals with humor. Nothing beats a great laugh. One show that achieves this is "Late Night with Conan O'Brien." There are four parts to this show. O'Brien will begin with a very funny monologue. This can be about, and usually is about, the daily news, such as the Super Bowl. He then moves into skits that are not only hysterical but also commendable.

Because "Late Night" is a network show, foul language is banned, but that's ok because O'Brien and his writers are

unique. They don't need to swear to get the joke out. They have an exceptional sense of humor. The third part of the show is interviewing celebrity guests. I enjoy this segment because I learn things about people that I would not normally have known. The final part of this great show is the musical guest. Many bands have made their first television debut on this show and have since become great musicians. In a way, television has become that connection everybody wants. It's a way of getting heard.

Arguing that television is educational and entertaining has been overused. The most important quality of television has been overlooked, the ability to change a person's thinking strategy. To categorize everything on television into

either Good or Bad is wrong. To inspire hope into the viewer is a gift. The ability to help others visualize a positive concept or idea is a blessing. A show that comes to mind is "The Oprah Winfrey Show." Many people watch Oprah because she has the ability to help us grow as a people. Instead of pointing out the faults and problems and condemning us for them, she provides ways to help

*The television is a gateway into worlds we may never see, a portal to endless journeys and struggles we may never experience.*

us fix them. Numerous doctors and authors on her show lend credibility to what she is saying. As a result of Oprah's efforts, the viewer can

be changed from seeing the glass half empty to the glass half full. "The Oprah Winfrey Show" has shaped the way we see life. Other shows that have been known to do this are young children's shows, such as "Barney" and "Sesame Street." Just as a book can teach us morals and lessons, so can television. Just as a film or book has the potential to inspire, so does television.

In conclusion, the television is a great technological achievement that has the characteristics of a person. Some shows are funny, powerful and inspiring; others are just not worth watching. Although television has a bad reputation, it really is a wonderful tool, bringing into our living room a whole other world.



# The Illusion of Science

by Sherry Connell

In "The Scientific Mystique," sociologist Dorothy Nelkin deftly scrutinizes the dubious treatment of science in the press. Through numerous and colorful examples from a variety of media resources, she paints a vivid picture of the harmful interplay taking place among scheming media correspondents, increasingly exalted scientists, and the unsuspecting public. In addition, Nelkin discusses some of the possible repercussions of promoting the image of science as an inaccessible and inexplicable manifestation and scientists as "remote but superior wizards" (808) in what has become common practice among journalists and scientists alike. Far from maximizing our effective use of empirical discoveries, this blatant misrepresentation of the scientific profession can only contribute to a universal stifling of

scientific advancement and a vast diminution in the public's understanding and appreciation of this significant field of study.

*Nelkin's thought-provoking essay maintains a fairly moderate and reasonable tone throughout, though a certain note of bitterness is detectable at times, particularly in her relating of the descriptions given to female scientists by the media*

Nelkin shows no hesitation in making the purpose of her essay known and her claim is explicitly stated with the entire second paragraph, culminating with her assertion that "far

from enhancing public understanding, such media images create a distance between scientists and the public that, paradoxically, obscures the importance of science and its critical effect on our daily lives" (808). Nelkin reasserts this main point with her final paragraph, writing that "science remains idealized as an esoteric activity. . . . But by neglecting the substance of science, ignoring the process of research, and avoiding questions of scientific responsibility, the press ultimately contributes to the



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obfuscation of science” (820).

Although Nelkin remains adamant in her stance against the artificial aggrandizement of science, she fails to provide any real means of rectifying the perceived dilemma, presenting her audience instead with a purely positional argument. To strengthen this argument, Nelkin relies primarily on direct quotations, paraphrasing, and headlines from various published reports, including reference to Time magazine’s hasty assertion that “males might be naturally abler than females” (814) and U.S. News and World Report’s eager statement proclaiming that “the U.S. has had 26 Nobel winners in science, more than double the number won by second place Britain” (808). Nelkin also provides evidence in the form of historical reference, most notably in a section describing the media’s portrayal of female Nobel Prize winners in the sixties, seventies, and eighties (810).

Nelkin’s thought-provoking essay maintains a fairly moderate and reasonable tone throughout, though a certain note of bitterness is detectable at times, particularly in her relating of the descriptions given to female scientists by the media, which “described Maria Mayer, who shared the physics prize in 1963 for

her theoretical work on the structure of the nucleus, as a ‘tiny, shy, touchingly devoted wife and mother’” (810) and again with her note that Maria was shown in Science Digest “not at the blackboard, but at her kitchen stove” (810). Despite her obvious dismay over the current state of affairs, Nelkin skillfully infuses her writing with a small degree of ironic humor, mainly evident in her selection of certain media headlines and quotations,

*Nelkin continues her argument with a probing look at a pervasive abuse by the press of scientific theories used to support controversial positions in the area of sociobiology*

including “Biology Loses her Virginity” (819), a Boston Globe reporter’s warning that the “American dynasty may falter in the future because the prizes . . . were for work done

in the 1970s” (808), and again with a quotation describing the work of one scientist: “Only an Einstein could say what it means” (809). Nelkin’s use of tone, her clear determination in revealing the truth behind the public’s perception of science, and her passionate criticism of fraudulent practices all contribute to the distinct persona emanating from the work.

Nelkin’s essay on the mystification of scientific practices is clear in its endeavor to inform the public of a critical issue. Her thoughtful yet accessible writing style makes for ideal reading material even for those not especially well versed in scientific writings.

The author provides definitions of jargon associated with her topic: "Sociobiology is a field devoted to the systematic study of the biological basis of social behavior" (813). She follows this up with a brief background on the subject. This fact, coupled with the author's aim towards a certain level of public disillusionment over science and the men and women who make it their life's study, suggests that Nelkin's intended audience probably does not consist of those individuals typically prone to reading scientific journals. Nor does this essay resemble the mindless media fodder against which this social commentary is specifically attacking. Nelkin's formal and precise use of diction and syntax is, however, particularly well suited for a critical and scholarly audience. Nelkin's argument is directed specifically to all those concerned with refocusing media attention away from the celebrity status of science and redirecting that attention to the method of research and the vital objectives of scientific exploration, thereby reserving a small measure of accountability in our scientists.

As previously noted, Nelkin states her claim early in the essay, presenting her concerns over the exploitive nature of the relationship between media and the sciences, particularly over the "distanced and lofty image . . . useful for a community seeking public funds with limited public accountability" (808). Nelkin

strategically proceeds in the development of her essay by organizing her body of evidence into three distinct parts, each brimming with aptly chosen evidence and examples. The first part delves into the heart of the issue with a striking depiction of the unwarranted, and ultimately counterproductive, fame associated with contemporary science. Examples of the media's comparison of the Nobel Prize with Olympic medals and their emphasis on "the honor, the glory, and the supreme achievement of the prize" (Nelkin 808) more aptly brings to mind a competitive sporting event, rather than a breakthrough in cell research. Nelkin does note one major difference between Nobel awards and sports journalism in that "coverage of sports stars often includes analyses of their training, their techniques" (809), whereas writings on scientific research make no such attempt towards enlightenment, but instead promote an obscure and perplexing image of science in the public eye. The media, according to Nelkin, portrays scientists as superior beings, both unapproachable and incomprehensible, with the notable exception of female scientists, who "must have the ability to . . . be feminine, motherly, and to achieve as well" (811).

Nelkin continues her argument with a probing look at a pervasive abuse by the press of scientific theories used to support



controversial positions in the area of sociobiology, noting that “reports on sociobiology have been less concerned with substance than with purported applications” (813). In their rush to apply broad scientific theories as absolute truths, media giants have managed to legitimize rape as “genetically programmed into male behavior,” selfishness as “built into our genes to insure . . . individual reproduction” (Nelkin 813) and seemingly everything in between.

The third part of Nelkin’s essay focuses on the implicit purity frequently associated with science. Despite a distinct rise in instances of fraud, “journalists often report deviant behavior in a manner that further idealizes science as a pure and dispassionate profession” (816). She explains that deception in the field of science is often classified as an anomaly and that the media maintains the illusion that “corruption in science was an unusual event” (Nelkin 817). Because “science rests on the presumption or honesty in a quest for truth” (Nelkin 819), there is a perceived moral superiority connected with the field. This reality, along with the constant fear of “diverting the scientist from his valuable research mission” (Nelkin 819), has helped to ensure that science is never brought under full scrutiny. Finally, Nelkin concludes her essay by restating her original claim, reemphasizing the media’s role in perpetuating “the distance between science and the

citizen” (820).

Dorothy Nelkin’s essay convincingly calls into question the unscrupulous motives and self-promoting tactics utilized by the media, and even scientists, to maintain an illusion of science as magical and mystifying. Her resourceful selection of specific quotations and headlines from an ample variety of news reports effectively supports her allegations of the media’s role in supporting the false image of the divine scientist. Nelkin’s unflinching look at our present management of scientific affairs compels the audience to consider the potential consequences of such irresponsible actions and sheds much needed light on a subject too long kept in the dark.

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# *The New Kid: The Karate Kid*

*by Mitch Heinze*

Once again, I was the new kid in school, and that all too familiar, lonely feeling, in the pit of my stomach was back with a vengeance. It was never fun being the new kid in school, but arriving to my first class well after the school day had begun gave me that extra added feeling of awkwardness. As a ten-year-old, I realized every single one of my perceived imperfections was amplified, and I was well aware of the thoughts that were boiling in the heads of my fellow fifth graders. Surely, they were sizing me up, pinpointing weaknesses for future torment. Yes, indeed, this script had already been written. I had read the book and I had seen the movie.

My family moved a lot when I was a boy since my dad was in the military. At this time in my life, my dad had retired from the military, but I guess he couldn't shake the moving bug. He had two hearts, one for the state of Nebraska and one for his home-state of California. This time we would

make our home in the rural town of Sebastopol, California. It would end up being one of my most memorable times as a child, but it started out a little rocky.

It was the first day of school, and I was standing at the head of class. All the other students had arrived on time and they were already seated. I stood at attention as I prepared to receive a proper introduction by my new teacher. I can't quite remember what she had to say, but I am sure she pointed out the obvious, and, by the looks on the faces of my soon-to-be fellow students, it went something like this; "Here is our new student. His name is Mitch, but feel free to call him 'itch.' As you can tell, he is very shy, so I am sure he won't mind if you make him cry. You'll notice his midwest sense of fashion does not really fit in with our cool California dispositions, so feel free to point out his flaws, because it's easy to see, he follows no fashion laws."



*Mitch Heinze was born in Honolulu, Hawaii, a bouncing baby boy, and bounced to Illinois, then to Nebraska, then to California, back to Nebraska, then back to California. After marrying his high school sweetheart, he enrolled at The Academy of Art University and graduated in 1986 with a certificate in Illustration. He is the proud father of one daughter, two boys, one granddaughter, and another grandchild who is well on his way. He is presently making a transition into the gallery world, and in the future hopes to receive his bachelor's degree and go on to teach, either at the high school or college level. Additional future goals include returning to his childhood roots and bouncing his way into the office of an editor of a large publishing firm, with a children's book manuscript in one hand and a few sketched-out visuals in the other, and verbally leaping into a book-publishing contract.*



Okay, I'm sure she said none of those things, but as far as I was concerned, she might as well have. By the time she was done, I had planted those thoughts into the piercing, giggling, staring heads of my fellow students. In addition to all the flaws pointed out by my teacher's introduction, I was all too aware of my shortcomings, which had been pointed out so keenly by previous childhood hospitalities.

My flaws started at the top of my head. While most boys enjoyed the flowing locks that came with the styling of the late sixties, I sported a finely-groomed, out-of-date crew cut in the military fashion. My hair closely cropped to my scalp gave my oversized ears ample room to meander freely on the sides of my head; they just loved the open space, frolicking in the breeze. They took advantage of the freedom to make a grand showing at all times. This feature was consistently honored by all with joyful delight.

The humor of others was not limited to my physical features. No, my peers loved to point out that my shirt was too well-cut and lacked that "groovy feel." My pants were always the highlight of

my wardrobe. For whatever reason, I always maintained a pant leg that was just a few inches too short. For this, I was appointed the unofficial title of "Weatherman." I was always asked "Hey, when's the flood?" At first I didn't understand the question, but I later came to the understanding that my pants held the answer, and the answer was a flood is

imminent, and I was the only one well-prepared for such a disaster.

*My hair closely cropped to my scalp gave my oversized ears ample room to meander freely on the sides of my head; they just loved the open space, frolicking in the breeze.*

All my youthful flaws thrown together sent out the signal "easy pickin's." And I knew by experience that there were

always kids at every new school who employed an easy pickin's radar, and that radar was always in full working order. As I walked sheepishly to my seat, I could feel that radar homed in on me. As soon as I sat down, I began counting the minutes until I would be set free to the safety of my home. Before I could become settled in at my desk, it was time for recess. I would have been pleased to stay put, in the relative safety of my seat, but, that was not an option. We were all told to remove ourselves to the outdoors.

As I walked outside, I momentarily forgot that I

was the outcast. This new elementary school was in a rural setting, and trees were prevalent all around. This setting helped to create a sense of comfort. There was even a boy who came up to me and befriended me. We walked and talked and ended up at the outermost section of the playground, looking out at the trees that were on the other side of the schoolyard fence.

With our backs to the school, and well out of the range from any adult authority, I stood there talking to my new friend, gazing out into the trees. I was oblivious to my immediate surroundings, especially to the surroundings immediately behind me, because racing full speed at my unsuspecting backside was a boy whose easy pickin's radar was screaming at full alert. I must have had a bulls-eye on my back, or at the least a sign that read, "I'm shy, I don't mind if you make me cry, so go ahead and give it a try." Before I knew what was happening, he jumped in full stride onto my backside. My reaction was reflexive. I simply bent forward, and he went flying over my shoulders and landed a few feet in front of me. He rolled around a bit,

and when he got up off the ground, he looked surprised and shaken.

After gathering himself, he exclaimed, in a loud astonished and slightly embarrassed voice, "Why... I didn't know you knew karate!"

*I was oblivious to my immediate surroundings, especially to the surroundings immediately behind me, because racing full speed at my unsuspecting backside was a boy whose easy pickin's radar was screaming at full alert.*

I, of course, didn't know karate. But, I just looked at him and shrugged my shoulders and stared at him while he walked away with a sheepish look on his face. I didn't find it

necessary to tell him that the only black belt I owned was the one he just bestowed upon me. But, suddenly, within the space of a few moments, my ears shrank a few inches and were reconciled to relative obscurity on the sides of my head. My checkered, short-sleeved shirt became retro and was the latest in fifth grade chic. My pants, though, were still the portent of future Biblical torrents, but, at least now I knew nobody would inquire about the forecast for any impending precipitation. Because, hey..... I'm the Karate Kid, right?





Paula Thomson is a reentry student at Delta College pursuing a nursing degree. She is married to her husband of thirty-one years, Jack, is the mother of four sons, John, Mike, Scott, and Travis, and is the grandmother of Becca and John Michael. Her goals include getting a BSN degree and a master's degree, and returning to Delta College to teach nursing classes. In her spare time, she enjoys cooking and any outdoor activity such as jogging, swimming, hiking, camping, and biking.

# A Battle Worth Fighting: Gender Inequality

by Paula Thomson

Imagine, if you would, what could be successfully accomplished if women, given the same opportunities as men, would consolidate their efforts, energy, and resources to achieve common goals and to face challenges in America? Collaboration and healthy competition in the workplace would increase productivity ten-fold, child raising and managing the household responsibilities would be a shared duty, and society would radiate goodwill for all. In this idealistic world, people would live in tranquility where cooperation among men and women would be commonplace. This could be a societal template for the future generations to follow. However, throughout the history of America, the oppression that women have endured has had an adverse effect that puts boundaries on every aspect of humanity.

*However, throughout the history of America, the oppression that women have endured has had an adverse effect that puts boundaries on every aspect of humanity.*

Rather than embracing women as worthy of equal opportunities in life, some men have approached the women's movement as a threat as they erect impenetrable barriers to change. The imbalance of power and limits to opportunities squelch women's contribution to society; many women possess undiscovered talent, intelligent foresight, and a plethora of ideas. The 1900s witnessed an uprising from women who fought a tough battle to gain ground on discrimination by men. With the momentum for the advancement of women's rights going full speed ahead, I believe the struggle for equality is moving in a positive direction with changes in the family, in the workplace, and in society.

The definition of the word "right" is descended "from the Middle English word, riht,



meaning the power or privilege to which one is justly entitled” (Merriam-Webster). For the women who have stood on the front line of this conflict, they are only requesting “the privilege to which they are justly entitled” (Merriam-Webster).

With multiculturalism in America, the role of women in the family varies from household to household. In Maxine Hong Kingston’s

memoir, The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts, she learns firsthand through talk-stories told by her mother and behaviors that are modeled by men in her family that inequality exists if you were born a Chinese girl. In

one of Kingston’s fantastical stories, the baron states, “girls are maggots in the rice.” “It is more profitable to raise geese than daughters” (43). Often she experiences times when her Great-Uncle would only invite the boys in her family to go on outings while buying them candy and new toys (47). This unsettling climate that Kingston and her sisters live in as children casts a dark cloud on the preferential cultural favoritism that exists.

The Latin American culture that I was raised in socializes women to work at home, to raise children, to care for the

house, to cook, and to take full responsibility of the home. As the oldest daughter, I was taught to shoulder most of the work in the home. Memories of my brothers not helping with chores around the house caused feelings of resentment and anger that would rise up but went unanswered as, ultimately, I was held fully accountable. My approach and strategy changed with my four sons, to whom I teach that it is not acceptable for one or two

*Memories of my brothers not helping with chores around the house caused feelings of resentment and anger that would rise up but went unanswered as, ultimately, I was held fully accountable.*

people to carry the heavy load of responsibilities. Teaching them to be independent in both outdoor as well as indoor tasks is a goal that I set out to accomplish. The difference between my childhood home and my home now is that my

husband and sons share in the tasks around the house. For me an important factor in childrearing is to end this cycle that women in my culture have come to accept as normal.

In Gloria Steinem’s article “What It Would Be Like if Women Win,” she predicts that in her utopian world “... for the American child’s classic problem – too much mother, too little father – that would be cured by an equalization of parental responsibility” (par. 10). Furthermore, she suggests, “there will be free access to good jobs – and decent pay for the bad ones women have





been performing all along, including housework" (par. 4). Steinem proposes that "men will have to give up ruling-class privileges, but in return they will no longer be the only ones to support the family, get drafted, bear the strain of power and responsibility" (par. 6). So in a perfect world, the children will have equal access to both parents with the workload evenly distributed.

Likewise the oppression that women face in the workplace includes a gender imbalance in wages and upper-level positions.

Kingston writes in her memoirs about a boss who was planning a banquet at a restaurant accused of discrimination by CORE and the NAACP. When she refuses to type the invitations, she is fired from the job (49). The unfair action of her boss strengthens Kingston's stance in her fight against cultural injustices and prejudices that victimized others.

When I started working in a clerical position at a health insurance office, I was shocked at the biased advantages that men had over women. Although the men were given different job titles, some of them received higher wages while performing the same job as women. In addition when affirmative action became the new trend in America, several men in our office were hired

due to their African-American or Asian affiliations and not because of the skills that the position required. Until I witnessed these discriminatory actions, which had a profound effect on me, I had a gross misconception of the necessity and the purpose of the women's rights movement.

Conversely, there is a claim that progress that has been made in gender equality has not been fully disclosed and publicized. According to John Leo's article, "Our Addiction to

Bad News (Minority and Women's Leaders Ignore Accomplishments)," he criticizes minority and women's leaders for withholding the positive changes that have taken place. Responding to a 1995 report from the Glass Ceiling Commission, he states, "to bolster female support for affirmative action, the

commission was determined to highlight some allegedly impenetrable barrier placed before white women" (par. 8). Moreover, he expounds that:

"The trouble is that women are rapidly running out of barriers. In a single generation, women have gone from low-level, sex-typed jobs to a point where they account for roughly 40 percent of medical and law students, executives, administrators, managers and Ph.D. candidates". (par. 9)

Leo assesses that "we pay a

*Likewise the oppression that women face in the workplace includes a gender imbalance in wages and upper-level positions.*

high price for this strategic negativism. Progress is made to seem hopeless" (par. 5). His perspective on the public's purported lack of awareness of the advancements made in minority and women's equality merits consideration and open-mindedness.

In addition the progression of the women's movement can

be credited to the bold and courageous women of the early 1900s who blazed the trail for women today. Steinem explains that "after the Nineteenth Amendment legalizing women's suffrage... the women's rights movement moved into a period of

dormancy. However, by the 1960s, women were again beginning to question their status in American society" (par 1). The reawakening was a result of the convergence of women's voices. In Anna Quindlen's article "Everyday Equality; Each of Us Rose on the Shoulders of Women Who Had Come Before Us. Move Up, Reach Down: That Was the Motto of Those Worth Knowing," she admits:

"As a teenager, [she] was outspoken and outraged...

[who] got on the equality bandwagon because [she] was a young woman with a streak of ambition a mile wide, and without a change in the atmosphere [she] thought [she] was going to wind up living a life that would make [her] crazy" (par. 2).

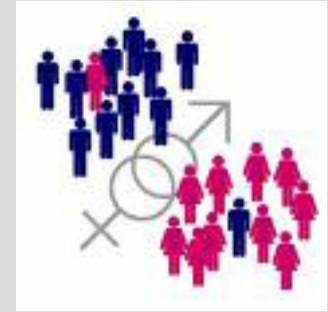
In 1970 Quindlen illustrates the power of unification for

change when she writes that "...46 women at [NEWSWEEK] magazine charge it with workplace discrimination; today NEWSWEEK publishes an annual issue on women's leadership" (par. 8). She claims that in the "fight for equality" women were not trying

to replace men but to make adjustments that need to be made (par. 6). Quindlen states, "...the battle was really against waste, the waste of talent, the waste to society, the waste of women who had certain gifts and goals and had to suppress both" (par. 6).

Overheated with frustration about Chinese cultural limitations, Kingston erupts. She confronts her mother in the following way: "[My American teachers] tell me I'm smart...I can get to colleges...I could be

*The dream towards gender equality could not have been realized if not for the efforts of the 1900s women, who pioneered the first paramount movement, and writers like Quindlen, Steinem, and Kingston, whose voices articulate what women have not been able to verbalize*



a scientist or a mathematician if I want...not everybody thinks I'm nothing..." (201). In an effort to promote her individualism, she stages her uprising against gender discrimination as she describes that "[she] went away to college – Berkeley in the sixties – and [she] studied, and [she] marched to change the work" (47).

In conclusion women's voices are converging as one as they are demanding respect in the form of equal rights for women. The dream towards gender equality could not have been realized if not for the efforts of the 1900s women, who pioneered the first paramount movement, and writers like Quindlen, Steinem, and Kingston, whose voices articulate what women have not been able to verbalize, whose voices reach out to bring awareness for all to hear. If women solidify their stance with keen vision, tireless determination, and celebratory moments while moving towards their goal, they will continue to be a force to be reckoned with for those people who refuse to bend with the winds that proclaim "equal rights for women." At the same time if people remove the barriers that have placed limitations on women, work could be carried out harmoniously, expeditiously, and efficiently to achieve common goals and to overcome difficult challenges. America faces these challenges. Together the possibility of an equal partnership between men

and women can materialize, creating a positive change in the family, in the workplace, and in society.

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# A CHAIN OF EVENTS

BY NISA SHINAGAWA

“ROLL CALL!” Mr. Allen yelled out to get the class’s attention. Mr. Allen was my very eccentric photography teacher who had a habit of calling roll EVERYDAY and saying everyone’s name in a silly way. For instance, “Nisa Badalisa” is what he usually called me.

As Mr. Allen proceeded to call roll, I continued preparation for our photography show, which was coming up within the next couple weeks. I began diligently working on a frame for one of my photos. KNOCK, KNOCK, KNOCK—I heard a sound at the door.

“Is Nisa Shinagawa here?”

“Yes, she’s actually right there,” Mr. Allen said pointing in my direction.

“What now?” I thought to myself.

“Hi, could you grab your things? This may take a while.” The short, stout woman had this carrot-colored hair I couldn’t help, but stare at.

As we left the classroom, Mr. Allen said, “See you tomorrow!” He always seemed so happy to see me.

Stepping outside I felt a wave of heat come over me. My back began to sweat from my backpack. It was April, and it’d been in the 90’s for some time. It was going to be a hot summer.

“The reason I’m pulling you out of class is because we have the drug dogs here today and it seems they picked your car out. There’s no reason to worry; you’re not in trouble; they just need to search your car,” she said to me with a smile.

“Oh, it’s no problem at all. I have nothing to hide. It’s just funny this happens to me the first day I decide to park in the front parking lot in a while,” I said laughing. I had used the parking lot in the back of the school near the track and baseball field since November.

“Are you missing anything in class today?” she asked me in a kind voice.



*Nisa Shinagawa is 18 years old and attending her second year at Delta College. She hopes to finish general education along with pre-requisites for CSU nursing programs. Although reading and writing was not her strong point growing up, she has always loved it. She enjoys running, listening to music, and being with her family.*



“Nothing I can’t do later. We’re getting ready for the photography show,” I told her as we walked briskly to the parking lot.

When we came to the parking lot, I saw a woman in a forest green polo shirt walking a golden retriever around a white Toyota Chevy. My car wasn’t the only one being searched. As I walked closer to my car, I noticed two other students standing next to their cars.

“You too?” I asked with a little laugh, and then I saw the assistant principal, Ms. Belle. She was wearing a fanny pack, penny loafers, and high gray socks with a skirt that went just past her knees. I couldn’t hold my smile back.

“Nisa? Is that your Scion TC?” she asked me.

“Yes, it is,” I replied as the woman in the green polo walked towards my car and me.

“Alright, you’ve heard of the dogs before, correct?” the woman in green asked.

“Yes,” I answered.

“Well, basically what I do is train the dogs to detect certain odors: illicit drugs, alcohol, or gun powder. Just because the dog detected something with

your car does not mean you are in trouble. Any residual odors from you or someone who sat in your car can be detected by the dogs. The dogs are very friendly; they don’t bark or express aggression when they detect something; they just lay down as you see the dog doing now. Now, can you tell me any reason why the dog might have detected your car?” she said in a very formal manner.

“I have no clue. I don’t drink or smoke, and I’m pretty sure no one who’s been in my car has either,” I replied without hesitation.

“JUST BECAUSE THE DOG DETECTED SOMETHING WITH YOUR CAR DOES NOT MEAN YOU ARE IN TROUBLE.”

“Okay, now what we’re going to have to do is check your car. Would you mind unlocking it for me?” the woman asked politely in the still very formal tone.

“Sure thing,” I said as I pressed the unlock button on my key. The rear and headlights flashed twice to signal the car was unlocked.

The woman in green began by opening the passenger side door and sitting in my car.

“I wanted to get one of these cars. Do they drive good?” she asked me in a more casual manner.

“They drive great and are good on gas. I love my car,” I said loosening up, thanks to the lack of formality in her voice.

"That's why we chose this row to search. I saw your car and thought 'Oh let's do that row,'" she said laughing.

I stood next to Ms. Belle with the sun beating down on us. "I just want to go back to class. There's nothing in there," I thought to myself as I watched the woman continue searching under my seat and floor mats. Then I realized my glove box was still locked.

"OHMYGOD! MYKNIFE!" My parents gave me a knife to keep in the car when I drove around by myself for protection. A flow of panic came over me, and I turned to Ms. Belle.

"Umm...my glove box is locked. Do you want me to unlock it?" I asked trying to mask my nervousness.

"Yes, please," she replied.

Still looking at her, I nervously said, "I actually forgot I have a knife in there..."

"Oh no no no. Go ahead and unlock the glove box and give it to me. Oh no, knives aren't allowed on campus," she said in a concerned voice.

"I know, I totally forgot about it. It's been in there since last summer," I lied. I didn't actually forget it was in there. I just didn't think I'd ever get in trouble for it.

I unlocked the glove box and gave the knife to Ms. Belle. We waited for the woman in green to finish searching my car and then walked to Ms. Belle's office in the counselor building.

"Hi," I said to the secretary. I was used to seeing her when I needed to get my guest passes and dance forms approved. Her short, curly blonde hair and her sweet smile were always welcoming, but not this time.

STILL LOOKING AT HER,  
I NERVOUSLY SAID, "I  
ACTUALLY FORGOT  
I HAVE A KNIFE IN  
THERE..."

Ms. Belle's office was the last place I wanted to be. Before that point I'd never been into a principal's office in my life. It smelled like a

dentist's office, and the walls were so well insulated that every little creak of my chair and the sound of Ms. Belle tapping away at the keys of the keyboard filled the tiny ten by ten office.

"Alright, Nisa. Here's what's going to happen. The rules are very clear and there's no getting around them whether it was an accident or not. The rules clearly state that any knives found on campus are cause for five day suspension, and if it's longer than two inches then I'm supposed to put you up for expulsion, which I highly doubt will happen considering your wonderful record, so just let me measure the blade really fast," she said reaching in her drawer for a ruler.





Tears were streaming from my eyes. I was crying so hard I found it hard to catch my breath.

"Here you go," Ms. Belle said as she handed me a few tissues from the box on her desk.

"What about the photography show? I have an anatomy test tomorrow. I'm going to fall so far behind." My mind was going a thousand miles per hour.

"Oh no, it's much longer than two inches. I have to go make a quick photocopy of this to keep on file. I'll be right back."

My eyes were so full of tears everything became blurry. I gasped trying to breathe and calm down before Ms. Belle came back into the room. Licking my lips, I could taste the salt from my tears. I wiped my eyes.

"Okay, Nisa. I just have to make a quick phone call. Were you planning on going to the prom and the senior trip?" Ms. Belle sat down at her desk again.

"Yes...I.. already.. paid...for.. Disneyland," I forced each word out, trying to calm my breathing.

"You may not be able to go," she said with a sad look on her face. I cried even harder.

"Would you like to call your parents and let them know what is going on?" she asked gesturing to the phone on her desk.

"Sure," I said wiping my nose with a tissue and grabbing the phone. I entered the numbers to my mom's cellphone.

"Fernisa Sison, how may I help you?" she answered as she normally would.

"Mom, the drug dogs smelled my car today, and I forgot I had my knife in the glove compartment, so I'm suspended for 5 days," I said trying to control my sobs.

"WHAT?" Mom asked me with a heightened level of concern in her voice.

"Do you want to talk to Ms. Belle?" I couldn't talk anymore without crying too hard. Mom's voice cracked after I told her what had happened. She was crying.

When Ms. Belle got off the phone with my mom, she said, "Your teachers will be notified and any missing assignments will be sent to the office for someone to pick up for you. You are not allowed within 100 feet of any Lincoln School District campus until your five days are up. I will talk to Mr. Allen about the photography show, and I'm sure you guys

"WHAT ABOUT THE PHOTOGRAPHY SHOW? I HAVE AN ANATOMY TEST TOMORROW. I'M GOING TO FALL SO FAR BEHIND." MY MIND WAS GOING A THOUSAND MILES PER HOUR.



can work something out.”

I knew she was trying to comfort me, but nothing could take away the pain I felt at that moment. I felt a knot twisting in my stomach.

When mom finally got to school her eyes were red from crying, and she asked me, “Are you okay, baby?”

“No, of course not,” I snapped a little from all the pent up sadness and frustration.

“I understand, baby,” she tried to comfort me.

Leaving all the formalities behind, mom and I left the office and walked towards the parking lot. I wanted to turn in my Unit Booklet to Mr. Moreno, my anatomy teacher, before I left.

When I walked into the classroom full of my peers, most of them began to stare at me. I told Mr. Moreno I needed to turn in my Unit Booklet. His expression went from his kind, ear-to-ear smile to a concerned parenting expression.

“What’s wrong? What happened?” he immediately asked me. I just shook my head. I couldn’t talk without gasping for air from all of my crying.

“Let’s go outside,” he said guiding me to the door. Mom was outside the classroom waiting for me.

“So what happened?” he said with a genuinely caring look.

“Well, her dad and I gave her a knife to keep with her when she drives alone because she’s a small girl and we worry about her. We wanted her to have some protection. Well, she totally forgot the knife was locked in her glove compartment and today the drug dogs smelled her car and it had to be searched. She’s suspended for five days.”

“Oh I’m so sorry. It’s just a little mistake. Don’t worry about a thing. If you need me to write a letter to the principal for you I will. You are a great student.” He gave me a hug. I needed it. His words were so comforting. I never knew he thought so highly of me before.

“Thank you,” I said. Mom and I started walking towards our cars. I comforted her. She seemed like she needed it more than I did. She was so upset.

“I’ll meet you at home, baby.” Mom had the same sad look on her face.

“Okay,” I replied with teardrops rolling down my cheeks.

I sat in my car and started the engine. I turned on the radio to drown out the sound of my crying.

“Every little things gonna be alright,” Bob Marley sang to me.



# Before the Wall Came Tumbling Down

by Layne Silva

*Layne Silva would like to include this statement: "For over a year and a half now along with being a student, I have had the privilege working with those that are homeless for different reasons. Some have just chosen this path in life, while others are trying to hide these windows of their soul; causing more problems than they can bear, trying to carry these burdens on their own. I have found out for myself, and others there are days it's as if these walls crumble down, and at other times they come down one brick or barbed wire at a time. Whatever the case maybe, these walls must come down."*

In 1965, when the Vietnam War was escalating the Vietnam War, I joined the United States Army with hopes of becoming a real soldier, jumping out of planes and fighting for my country, only to be told I wasn't big or old enough. Here I was, 17 years old, but I still needed my parents' permission to go to war, and being only 119 pounds, I was informed I was too light to jump out of airplanes. They'd say, "Littlebit, if you jump out of an airplane you're so small you'll hit the tail; you just better stay on the ground where you belong."

When basic and advanced training were over, many soldiers I had just spent months with headed off to war. I'll never forget the look on my friends' faces and in their eyes when they got orders for Vietnam. I really can't recall how many went out in the next week, but it was in the hundreds. As for myself, I was on my way to Germany, and I'm sure it was because of my

age. After a couple of days in Frankfurt, I was given orders to Berlin, where I'd be residing the next two years.

Shortly after arriving there, I met a demolition expert called Spinner, who had just finished his second tour in Vietnam. He would get drunk and talk to me about his duties there. He was a small guy like me, and he said they used us small guys as Tunnel Rats. He described in detail what it was like finding these tunnels and clearing them out. It wasn't anything nice, that's for sure. He'd always end it with, "That's what you'll end up doing if you go there, because you're so small." The crazy thing was he would say he wanted to go back. It was like it was in his blood, or as I reflect on it now, maybe it was a death wish. It must have been a terrible thing to have to kill another man. But more horrifying than that was he had to kill women and children also because he couldn't recognize who his enemy was.

Grateful that I wasn't following Spinner into those Viet Cong tunnels, I became a wrecker operator in Berlin, and it was my job to go through Check Point Charlie by myself. It would be comparable to going into Mexico or Canada, but past some of the meanest looking and most heavily armed guards ever, in towers and on foot checking every inch of my vehicles. It didn't matter if they were from the British, French, or American sector. Whether I was leaving or coming back, this was very serious business because East Germany was a communist country controlled by the Soviets, and at this time they were very powerful. After a while of being on the job, like anything else in life, it became pretty much second nature. No matter how many dirty looks they gave me, or how mean they looked, I just did my job.

One image has stuck in my mind through the years: as I would be traveling down the autobahn, men and women were working in the fields side by side. Back in those days women didn't work in the fields here in the Central Valley (at least I had never seen it when I was growing up), but that is not what really got to me. What moved me was that these people would drop on their knees and clasp their hands into a praying gesture as I drove by. It felt as if someone were reaching down inside of me, ripping my heart out, which left me feeling powerless in being unable to help them.

I just don't have the words to describe how I felt as I had to drive past them, when I wished I had a big bus to load them all up and take them home with me to freedom.

Another sight proved to be even more memorable. One day Specialist Radcliff, a friend of mine in armory division, said, "Hey, Layne, I have the keys to the basement across the road below us and you'll never guess what's down there. Do you want to go check it out?" I'd been with him down in another area close by, shooting machine guns, and it was a blast, so I agreed to go along, not having a clue what I was getting myself into. As he led me down inside a dark gloomy dungeon, nothing was very visible — that was until he turned on the main light. I couldn't believe what I was seeing while he was telling me how Hitler had ordered people to be hanged on the walls by bolts and chains and then torched. My God, how could anyone do this! It was as if I could almost hear their screaming and see them jerking, trying to pull themselves free, but to no avail as they sank to their death. I can still see their silhouettes, which have left such a vivid memory in my mind. Going through Check Point Charlie was no joke, but after that day, I started questioning if I would ever return or if I would be a charred silhouette in someone else's mind in the future.

These were some very frightening times for me as





a young man. I was on a lot of alerts during that time in Berlin, but it was one dark night that stood out. In 1967 as a colonel's driver it was my duty to chauffeur him everywhere, and one night something different was in the air, like a thick mysterious cloud, and even though it couldn't be seen, we knew it was there. The Russian Army called us out! That night after leaving headquarters we went and changed vehicles, fully geared up and headed to the front lines. The Wall! War! Could this really be the U.S. and Russia? They started it, but when we pulled our tanks out of the ground where they were hidden, Russia had a change of mind. Yeah, I know; I was there. Can I prove it? I wear the medal. I have it on my DD214 (military records) that I was in combat. A one-day war! Most Russians never knew it at the time, and as a matter of fact most Americans never even knew it either. If you try to find it on the Internet now, you can't, but if you try again in five years, the records will have been declassified.

I look back at my military experience. After giving our government three years of my life, at twenty years old, I couldn't vote in the upcoming elections. Here I was a father of one with another on the way. I had a chest full of medals, and I couldn't vote and I couldn't even have a legal beer because I wasn't old enough. In 1968, I came back to another world! Had I changed? Oh I'm sure I had and in more ways than I choose to talk about here. But since that time I have learned that many of us joined the ranks of our military here in the The Land of the Brave, The Land of the Free, and for the most part never really understood what we were getting ourselves into until it was too late. Now, in 2008, I often find myself in college classrooms with students who don't get it. They are more concerned about getting high than about learning history. When I make a reference to Check Point Charlie and not one other student in the room knows what I'm talking about, it makes me wish they could have seen with their own eyes what I saw in Berlin. Maybe then they would understand.

# Lighting My Candle

by Anthony Tuttle

Think of the most self-rewarding activity one could possibly do. Is it achieving a life-long dream? Completing the nearly impossible task of following a new year's resolution? Or is it something simpler, like helping a child with his or her homework, or giving a homeless person a warm meal? The answer depends on one's values in life, but for the most part, it's safe to say that the more correct answer would be the simpler activities. Last May, I was presented with an opportunity: an opportunity that would change my life forever. That opportunity was to travel to New Orleans on a leadership field trip to a conference and implement a service project that would benefit the community. After having attended the conference, I have drawn a conclusion about the values of life: the most important thing

anyone can and should do during a lifetime is community service.

When Hurricane Katrina ripped through New Orleans in August 2005 as a Category 4 hurricane, citizens became

**Once a year, the MCNC holds a conference at a different location where Middle and Early College High Schools from around the country collaborate and focus on an issue facing society.**

homeless and in the aftermath, it seemed like nobody was doing anything to help. At some point, many people across

the nation began to lose hope in the city, until community activists stepped up to the plate. When community service participants began their work to rebuild the once spectacular city, other people began to take notice. Some citizens across the country even took the necessary step to financially and physically help the victims by rebuilding and funding projects to rejuvenate the city. Activities like these have sparked numerous community service organizations to

*Anthony Tuttle is a 16-year-old Delta College student who has lived in Stockton for 11 years. He was born in Stockton in 1992 and moved to Sedona, Arizona, in 1994, only to return in 1999. He is a junior at Middle College High School at Delta College and loves the program so far. Anthony enjoys reading, listening to music, and going on the occasional "Sunday Drive." He plans on attending CSU Stanislaus and majoring in accounting or attending University of Nevada, Las Vegas, and majoring in civil engineering with a focus on transportation engineering.*





develop across the nation. One such organization that has become interested in the cause is the Middle College National Consortium.

Once a year, the MCNC holds a conference at a different location where Middle and Early College High Schools from around the country collaborate and focus on an issue facing society. For 2008, it was decided that the conference would be held in New Orleans and the theme would be

“Lighting Your Candle through Community Service.” When

I was told that I could apply to become a participant in the consortium, I immediately filled out the application. A month later, I

was notified that I had been selected as one of the eight students from my school that would go. Our team of students held several meetings and communicated with other schools around the country throughout the following months and in May, we were on our way to New Orleans.

When the first meeting with all of the participating schools was held, we found out just what kind of service activity we would be doing: we were going to restore the plants and habitat surrounding a community church. At first, I thought to myself, “I came all

the way to New Orleans just to plant shrubs?” Of course, once we finished the project several days later, my perspective had changed dramatically. Not only had we made the church look appealing again, but I discovered just how rewarding community service is. As we were planting, citizens who lived in the area continued to stop by and admire what we were doing. That feeling, for lack of a better term, is just awesome.

During our stay in New Orleans, not only did we plant shrubs at the church, but we toured parts of the city that were still in despair. Even though Katrina had happened nearly 3 years earlier, the number of areas that were still in anguish

was upsetting. The areas we traveled to included the Lower and Upper 9<sup>th</sup> Wards: the areas hit hardest by Hurricane Katrina. Houses were still gutted, FEMA trailers were abandoned, and the foundations of where houses once stood were scattered in various lots. Just seeing the devastation that still existed even after three years was overwhelming. On our last day of our stay in New Orleans, we had a final closing meeting where everyone discussed how they benefitted from completing the service activities. Just listening to everyone else speak made me

realize how much I enjoy doing community service and how I want it to be a part of me for the rest of my life.

Since the journey to New Orleans, I have joined my high school's Key Club, an organization in which high school students perform service activities in their local communities, and I've been enjoying every minute of it. Words cannot describe that

feeling of accomplishment you get when you help someone else. If you've never participated in a community service activity or program, go do something! Volunteering at Delta's Child Development center or even an animal shelter is a good way to get started. Just like I stated earlier, it's the simple things that matter.





*Chrissy Damasco is 29 years old and lives in Tracy, California. She moved here from Minneapolis, Minnesota, a little bit more than a year ago to get married. She has worked in many fields from being a flight attendant to human resources and has found that she loves working with people. Her mission at Delta is to get a general A.A. and then to move on to business school at Berkeley or Stanislaus. She has two dogs, Bailey and Dani, who take up a lot of her patience, but she loves them just the same. She enjoys football, watching movies and reading books. She would like to dedicate her essay to her grandparents, who have a very special place in her heart, and to her family, who she misses every day!*

# The Porcelain Guardian

by Chrissy Damasco

Each morning when I make my bed I am never finished until my porcelain cat is lying on top of the comforter. It was a gift from my grandmother on my last birthday, but it has been in my life for all of my memory.

It is a white, glazed, life-size cat with kind blue eyes and delicate eyelashes. It has always been beautiful to me. Even though the years have caused the porcelain to gently crack in a few places, I still see it in its original form.

This cat sat on my grandparents' bed for all of my life. It was not expensive, but it was consistently there. My grandparents lived in St. Paul, Minnesota, three hours away from my childhood home.

So when holidays came, we would always stay with them. Each morning that we stayed with them, I would wake up and go into my grandparents'

room to try to wake them. But they were always up first! The bed would be made and on top of the duvet would be the cat, smiling at me as if to say, "And better luck tomorrow."

It seemed that he and I had an unspoken friendship.

*The bed would be made and on top of the duvet would be the cat, smiling at me as if to say, "And better luck tomorrow."*

Then as I grew up, I stopped trying to sneak into my grandparents' room to wake them. I started to forget about the porcelain cat that was

always perched on the end of their bed. Right before high school, my family moved to the Twin Cities, and we no longer needed to stay at my grandparents' home. Soon I no longer had any reason to enter into my grandparents' bedroom at all.

Several years passed by, when one day before my wedding, my grandmother asked me what it is that I would like to



have from them when they pass away. I was floored at the question! I did not want to think about them not being around, nor did I want to stake claim to any of their possessions. So I told her. That is when she said that she wanted me to have her

wedding china. I was touched and honored, but with the mention of the word china, my mind drifted back to the memory of the porcelain cat, which always held guard at the foot

of the bed. I turned to my grandmother and asked her about it. She informed me that he was right there, just as he always had been. Then she went on to tell me about how as a child, she would catch me talking and petting it as if it were real. She then told me that each night she placed it on the dresser and it reminded her of me, and that was the last we spoke of it.

On my last birthday, I went back to Minnesota to see my family. During my visit, my grandmother placed a delicately wrapped gift in my hands. As I gingerly opened the wrapping, I found that inside was the porcelain cat,

*I was touched and honored, but with the mention of the word china, my mind drifted back to the memory of the porcelain cat, which always held guard at the foot of the bed.*

looking just as I had remembered it. I brought it home with me, and now it lives each day at the foot of my bed, watching over me and my husband, just as it watched over my

grandparents for the past sixty years. It may not be worth much, but each morning and evening, I am reminded about the history of my family and of the innocence of my childhood. It is my most important possession because it holds all the secrets, heritage, and memories and will continue to hold them as I pass it down to the family that I someday will have.



Hannah M. Vollbrecht, a lifelong long learner and explorer, has three degrees from Delta College and knows with every breath of her being that they will all assist her somehow in life's incredible journey. She has high hopes that one day people will pick up a book written by her at a yard sale, second hand thrift shop, or maybe even at a fancy bookstore. One of the most valuable things she has ever learned: Writers write other than being an aunt, her favorite thing .... Her favorite thing in the world is getting to spend time with the two children she is a nanny for. Russell and Julia have taught her more about love in one year than anyone could learn in a lifetime. She feels she is the most blessed woman alive. She is proud to be an American and gives special thanks to all the veterans this great country has seen, especially her Dad.

# Awake in the Dream

by Hannah M. Vollbrecht

It was the summer of 1997. I had spent eight days in Ft. Walton Beach, Florida, at a church camp. Every day we received at least five hours of free time to lounge in the sun and play in the clear waves or on the sparkling white beaches. Every moment one thing was for certain: we were trying to discover who God wanted us to be. We returned home washed by the blood, saved, changed, and filled with the Holy Spirit. The pigment of our skin colors had turned to dark brown, and the smell of sunscreen and tanning oil lingered for days. It was quite refreshing to leave Alabama to have those eight days of freedom from a town that was lined with cotton fields.

It was the first Wednesday night back in our small town of Mt. Hope, Alabama, and we had a gathering at our church

for the cleansed children to give their testimony of how they had been wandering lambs and of how the good Lord had rescued them once again. We all sat at the very front of the church crossed

**It was in one of those many moments my mother saw a woman lean across the church pew, tap another woman on the shoulder, and ask in disgust, "Who is that mixed girl sittin' so close to LeeAnn?"**

legged and crowded together, anticipating the moment the microphone would make its way around to our lips so we could each breathe the words of salvation. It was

in one of those many moments my mother saw a woman lean across the church pew, tap another woman on the shoulder, and ask in disgust, "Who is that mixed girl sittin' so close to LeeAnn?" To my mother's surprise, the woman was asking about me. When we got home that night my mother told me the story with hilarity in her voice, "You are never going to believe this! Someone thought you were mixed!"

In our sweet southern town “mixed” was considered to be a normal word people used to describe a person that was “mixed” with white and black. I may be a few different ethnicities and may tan extremely well in the heat of Florida, but I am not mixed and I am not black. I didn’t find it amusing at all. But on second thought, why would it have mattered if I were mixed? I had only moved to the South from the beautiful golden state of California a year earlier. I was a California girl living

in a racially suppressed state, surrounded by racially suppressed people. Why hadn’t they heard the news of the amazing Dr. King? The news that said, “I Have a Dream.” It was the news that had changed California for the better, for the greater good of humanity. Why hadn’t Dr. King’s prayer reached out to the southern states when he said, “One day right there in Alabama little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls as sisters and brothers.”

As a young girl, I can remember getting the chills when I heard Dr. King’s voice on the tape recorder in my middle school class. “I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed:

***It was the voice of Dr. King that lit a fire in the souls of many that would heat the endurance of ‘unsuccessfully keeping the Negro ‘in his place.’”***

‘We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.’” I didn’t fully understand what he meant, but the tone of his voice made every single hair stand straight up across my body. Every time he said the words “Dream” and “Rise,” the certainty of power that would come of these words became reality. He was giving the words a new meaning. He was using them to provoke change. He was speaking to me with his mighty voice through the speakers. “I have a dream that

one day every valley shall be exalted, and every hill and mountain shall be made low, the rough places will be made plain, and the crooked places will be made straight; ‘and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together.’” He was changing me.

“Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.” I say his name with strength in my voice. I wonder how it could be said otherwise. No person could say it with weakness under their breath to accidentally portray him as a simple man, when he is a great man and far beyond commendable. I think of what Dr. King has done for me and for this nation. Even the ignorant people who covered their ears when he spoke now listen. Undeniable greatness is associated with Dr. King.



It's a kind of greatness that comes not just from a man who preached the messages of equality, freedom, and prosperity, but from a mighty man who lived their teachings and loved for their teachings. It was the name that ended with "King" to remind us after we said it how admirable and powerful he was born to be, a person whose very destiny was marked with change.

In college I read something by a psychologist named Peter Loewenberg that stuck with me through time. He stated, "It has become apparent in recent years that centuries of denigration and humiliation have been unsuccessful in keeping the Negro 'in his place'" (72a). I believe that this so called "place" the negro was being unsuccessfully kept was in the place of being kept quiet, the place where freedom was an impossibility and a far off dream. It took a man who wouldn't be kept quiet. It took a man who would dream the impossible and spread the word of equality throughout his country. It was the voice of Dr. King that lit a fire in the souls of many that would heat the endurance of "unsuccessfully keeping the Negro 'in his place.'" It was strength in the words from a man who spoke with boldness saying, "Now is the time to make real the promises of democracy. Now is the time to rise from the dark and desolate valley of segregation to the

sunlit path of racial justice. Now is the time to lift out nation from the quick sands of racial injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood." Because of you, Dr. King, I stand firmly on the rock of brotherhood. He says, "I have a dream." And I say, "I will stand on your solid rock with you. I will be an advocate of your beliefs as long as I shall live."

**I was a California girl living in a racially suppressed state, surrounded by racially suppressed people.**

When I was in my twenties, the dream of Dr.

King had become more alive in me than ever. I received a job as a nanny for a black family. The idea of a white woman being a nanny to two black children was quite unrealistic in ways to some people. It wasn't that it was shocking but out of the ordinary. It was something that they had rarely encountered throughout the dream that they were taught. But I was taught Dr. King's dream. I had embraced it and cherished it, and that alone had allowed me to fall in love with the children I took care of. If I had not embraced the message Dr. King had lived for, having the children in my life would have been simply an opportunity of unimaginable fulfillment passed by. If I had not embraced Dr. King's message, I would have seen the rare job opportunity in an obscured vision with eyesight that only saw in black and white. In college I read a book by a man named Vincent Ryan Ruggiero. He said, "Time and place are defined by specific

circumstances, understandings, beliefs, and customs, all of which limit your experience and influence your thought patterns" (5). I thank God, as Dr. King would have, that I was born in a time and a place as this: where I didn't have to be influenced

by a generation eager to "keep the Negro 'in his place.'"

When I think of the powerful Dr. King now, I whisper, "Thank you.

Thank you

for changing the world so my heart could be in love with these babies. Thank you for deciding to not keep quiet, for changing the hearts of this nation, and for making it possible for them to have a life of equality and a chance for prosperity. Thank you that I lived the aftermath of your dream. Thank you that my very soul is color blind. Thank you, Dr. King, thank you."

I often wonder how better the world would be if we still had Dr. King in it. The day he was assassinated the world lost an advocate of peace. I was not alive on the horrific day he was taken from us, but somehow somehow, I know I was born

with a deep wound from it—a cry that is buried deep and shut up in a box way down where passion resides. But he left me with a dream, a mighty, powerful, solid dream that would forever change my life and shape my heart. He left

me with the ability to make more dreams of my own and with the fight to make them succeed. "Thank you, Dr. King. Thank you."

**He was giving the words a new meaning. He was using them to provoke change. He was speaking to me with his mighty voice through the speakers.**

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# Dancin' wit' My Momma

by **Bella Quintanilla**

My grandmother ran around the house getting everything ready. She looked like a chicken that just had its head cut off by the farmer and was now running around for the remainder of its little life. She may be our grandmother, but she's momma to my brother and me. Her short curly wig stayed in perfect place amongst all the chaos. I wondered if it was permanently attached like my Barbie's hair. Her flawless crayon brown skin glowed brighter than the stars out in the countryside at night, and her potato shaped body moved around as lightly as if she weighed a fraction of an atom. She turned to Ronnie and me, the soft silky features removed from her face; instead we got the Medusa's scorn. I was surprised we didn't turn into stone! "Yawl go-on in da room now!" she yelled, with that peanut-butter-thick southern tone, words pushing and running into each other like a collision, begging to come out. We looked on with amusement and mischief in our eyes before heading to my room. I was about eleven or twelve and my brother a year younger.

My momma was always getting into an uproar when my grandfather came to visit; they had been separated for years, but that didn't stop him from coming to see us. My brother and I waited and

listened for his truck to pull up; we could never miss it, especially since we could hear it coming from the freeway. The truck sounded like a death rattle, but who knew death could make someone feel excited to hear it come? The time we sat there felt like we just waited through an ice age. Finally, I heard death pulling up in the driveway. I gasped and looked at my brother. Whenever I saw the sun kissed color of his skin I felt warm; the long pepper black hair my mom always put in a ponytail made him look like my sister instead of my brother. His facial expression reminded me of the look I had when my grandmother told me my dentist appointment was cancelled: pure joy.

Click, click, click; the noise of my grandfather's cowboy boots seemed to match the clock of my life ticking away as Father Time collected the seconds. My breathing slowed as if I was waiting for the last bit of air to escape from my lungs. I jolted out of my room as I heard the doorknob turn; I was a sprinter leaving my block and heading for the finish line. "Papa!" I shouted, running for his open arms. In that moment we were a picture from Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel: Adam and God. There was my grandfather, "God," reaching out his loving arms to me, and

I was “Adam” reaching back and yearning for the touch, but unlike the painting there was no suspended space between our bodies keeping us from each other; in his embrace I was complete. I closed my eyes and took in his scent. He always smelled like cigarettes and whiskey, unlike my grandmother who smelled like peppermint and brandy. Letting go, I looked up into his rough face. His face was more like worn leather: smooth, but rough, and yet takes years to wear down. With his thin, branch-like frame I am surprised he could pick me up into his lap. I felt the prickly porcupine stubble of papa’s beard on my young cheek.

Before my grandmother could tell me to go back into my room, I turned around sadly and walked the last mile back to my cell. My brother and I decided to wait until they were “full” (meaning drunk) before we would head back out to the living room. Thirty minutes later I heard laughs drifting into my room echoing in my ear; the sea nymphs were beckoning me yonder. We crawled down on the floor towards the living room; we were soldiers going through the trenches, ready to attack. I peeked my head around the corner to see what our “enemy” was doing, and I smiled when I saw them.

There was momma, papa, and their friends dancing, their bodies moving and swaying as if they had invented how the wind moves; I was watching a tribe doing a magical dance only they knew. Suddenly, my grandmother looked right at me and said, “Com’ on and dance wit’ yo momma.” I just looked at her frozen, with

complete confusion, my expression saying she really just told me Jesus was going to cook dinner. “Well, baby, let momma see what you got,” she called. Should I go and embarrass myself in front of this tribe and attempt to do their sacred dance? Should I dance wit’ my momma? I moved to the middle of the living room and stared at the natives as they waited for me to imitate their ritual. Then I started to move, and let me just say jello in a bowl could dance better than me. My grandmother chuckled and said, “Oh shit, now that ain’t how you ‘pose to mov’.” I watched her; as I closed my eyes and let my body listen to the music, Johnny Taylor howling that blues in the background. “I’m sending you a kiss baby, put it where you wanna and you don’t need a candy man and you’ll always have a friend.”

My arms moved away from my body while my legs tried to keep up, as my feet lifted up and coordinated the circus. I was dancing wit’ my momma and smiling the last real smile known to mankind. It’s genuine, loving, and hard, a reflection of my grandmother. We danced until the rooster sang. I was so happy that night I know I made love jealous. The memory pops up every time I hear someone sing the blues, especially that good ol’ Johnny Taylor. To me it wasn’t just partying with my drunken relatives. It was a gathering of old and new, an embodiment and physical act of love, but most importantly of all it was a dance wit’ my momma.