Delta Winds

SAN JOAQUIN **DELTA** COLLEGE

Letter from the Editors

In the fall of 1991, the first volume of Delta Winds appeared for sale for $2.00 in the bookstore of San Joaquin Delta College. Newly-hired English faculty member Jane Dominik created the magazine with the intent of publishing student essays that "merit a wider reading audience." Five years later, while standing in line for the commencement ceremonies, she asked Robert Bini and William Agopsowic to take over the reins of her project, which by then had become well-received in the English Department. They agreed under the condition that her biannual publication become an annual publication. They knew they could never keep up with Jane's pace, but they figured that two of them could do half the work that she did. And even so, it would be a challenge.

Over a year period, Bob and Will continued to identify student essays deserving of a wider reading audience. Thanks to a sabbatical leave in 2000, they were able to create an online version of Delta Winds to complement the print version. In doing so, they expanded the audience from those obtaining the locally distributed 800 print copies to an unlimited number of readers on the Internet. With that came easier distribution, and in time publishing houses were regularly knocking on their door, requesting to reprint Delta Winds essays in their textbooks.

It has been a real privilege to carry on the rich tradition that Jane, Bob, and Will have passed on to us. It has also been an honor to meet some of the students who comprise this current volume (number 34) of Delta Winds, and we know many readers will find their stories heartfelt and inspirational. We hope this magazine serves as a tribute to these gifted student writers, and we hope that their work will be shared in English courses not just here at Delta but at other institutions of higher education.

Each volume of the magazine would never have been published without the help of personnel in the print shop, the backing from the administration, the cooperation from the staff and faculty in the English Department, and, of course, the courage of the numerous students who cautiously submitted their personal creations. We would also like to thank Phil Hutcheon, Jeff Pressnell, and Sarah Antinora for encouraging their students to submit their essays for publication.

Enjoy,

Kathleen Gallup and Eric MacDonald

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One Puff Away

by Gianna Mora

Many teenagers in the United States today believe that vaping is what makes them fit into their social groups because it is the cool thing to do. E-cigarette use in teens has boomed over the last few years, which has evolved into a teen vaping epidemic. By vaping, an individual may believe that they are superior, tough, and highly looked at as a leader. Vaping is also super addicting, which is why many teens today are continuing to do it, as well as influence and encourage their friends to go along with the ongoing fad. Even though vaping may seem as if it is a pastime for many, the side effects are extremely dangerous. Many teens that are involved with this fad have reported very serious health problems, and it has even been reported that those teens who vape could potentially smoke cigarettes in their future, which could also lead to numerous amounts of health problems. All of these negative outcomes fall back onto the production and advertising of e-cigarettes. E-cigarette makers should be discontinued because of the addiction problem that comes with the product, the many health problems they have given teens across the country, as well as the influence they have on teens smoking cigarettes in their future with the notion that many higher authorities are fully against the product.

In all, vaping can cause numerous amounts of health problems, which include not just difficulty breathing and swallowing, but severe lung problems; thus, why e-cigarette businesses need to be discontinued. In a recent report, a teenage girl with no respiratory illnesses was experiencing lots of throat problems. Eventually, these symptoms progressed. The article, "Teens' vaping likely to cause extreme difficulty in breathing, swallowing," states: "A teenage girl with no hint of prior asthma or respiratory illness began to feel hoarseness in her throat and a feeling that she needed to clear her throat frequently. Within a few weeks, her hoarseness and throat-clearing worsened with early morning voice loss and feeling as if food were lodged in her throat. She started having trouble swallowing and began to avoid food altogether...the teen had admitted to using candy-and fruit-flavored e-cigarettes three to five times with her friends over the two months preceding her symptoms. The last time she vaped was two weeks before her unusual symptoms began." ("Teens' vaping likely," par. 4, 10). These side effects listed above are extremely harsh

and brutal to the body and will likely cause future damage. Just because great tasting e-cigarette flavors are tasty and addicting at the moment, does not mean that they are healthy for the body. It is dangerous to want to participate in such a fad that can do tremendous damage to one's body. In the teenage girl's case, it has been stated that "This teenager's use of e-cigarettes is the most plausible reason for this subacute epiglottitis diagnosis, a condition that can become life-threatening" ("Teens' vaping likely," par. 11). The epiglottis is the little flap in the back of one's throat that ensures that food does not get into the windpipe by closing it. Therefore, if there is a severe issue with the epiglottis, it could lead to serious problems because it could potentially stop airflow to the lungs, which could lead to suffocation. These symptoms and conditions are just a small

E-cigarette businesses need to be discontinued to prevent the potential addictive tendencies of vaping and to limit teenagers' chances of smoking cigarettes in the future. The vaping fad among teens is still increasing to this day. Because it is considered "cool" and is very addicting, the teens who do vape want to encourage their friends to vape as well. A study of Los Angeles County teenagers has proven this point: "Using interviews conducted with 3,000 high school students in Los Angeles County, researchers determined that one-third of sophomores had tried an e-cigarette at least once, and 5 percent said they vaped more than twice in the past month. When researchers circled back six months later, they found that 20 percent of the frequent e-cigarette users had picked up a frequent smoking habit, and 12 percent more had become occasional

The FDA knows how addictive and dangerous vaping can be, especially since it has the tendency of turning into smoking tobacco. That is why many are doing what they can to make a stand and contribute to the potential stopping of the e-cigarette business.

part of why e-cigarette companies need to be discontinued as they are causing too much harm to one's health. One of the main health problems from e-cigarettes are lung injuries: "According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2,668 people in the U.S. have been hospitalized for e-cigarette or vaping product use-associated lung injury, as of Jan. 14, 2020. The Children's National case report's authors say the increasing use of vaping products by teenagers highlights the potential for unknown health risks to continue to grow" ("Teens' vaping likely," par. 12). These hospitalization numbers solely from teens vaping are very high and are only getting higher. Especially with the Coronavirus currently spreading, these teens vaping are even at a higher risk of having a serious case of the virus because of the lung damage they are doing to themselves. E-cigarette businesses should not be continuing because there have only been negative results and side effects from them, so there should be no point in continuing a business that puts many lives at risk.

smokers" (Hoover, par. 3). The increase of teenagers vaping shows how addicting it can be, especially by being involved with peer pressure. They get so caught up in the moment of it, with the taste of it as well as the feeling it gives them. Soon, these teens might want to venture out into smoking cigarettes. It has been stated that "Researchers say it's not quite clear what factors are pushing those who vape to start smoking cigarettes. Some have argued that nicotine

in e-cigarettes leads those who vape to become addicted and seek out cigarettes, but there are many teens who vape nicotine-free solutions for their flavors..." (Hoover, par. 5). Teenagers' intentions of wanting to venture out into

smoking cigarettes will never be exactly proven because there are many different thoughts and motives. But overall, the intentions of wanting to progress to cigarette smoking in the future have drastically increased in teens. These intentions lead to the proof and assumptions of how e-cigarette sales need to be discontinued because it could make more and more teens, including other individuals, go along with the fad. It has been stated, "Over the summer, the FDA began a push to ban the sale of e-cigarettes to minors, arguing that they could entice young people to pick up smoking. The CDC's director, Tom Frieden, publicly raised concerns over the devices and their potential to make young people more susceptible to smoking 'The use of e-cigarettes in kids appears increasingly likely to result in an increased risk of using regular cigarettes,' he said at a press briefing in January. 'They are not harmless'" (Hoover, par. 7-8). The FDA knows how addictive and dangerous vaping can be, especially since it has the tendency of turning into smoking tobacco. That is why many are doing what they can to make a stand and contribute to the potential stopping of the e-cigarette business as discussed in the next paragraph.

Because vaping has become an unhealthy, widespread epidemic, national agencies and lawmakers are expressing how dangerous vaping is, and thus working on putting an end to the e-cigarette business. Many ultimately want the truth of the reasons why e-cigarette businesses are still in business after knowing of the dangers they pose. They see no point to their success, as well as why they are still producing a product that can cause such harm to individuals, especially teens at a young age. Lawmakers are currently pressing to get answers of what the main purpose of e-cigarettes are: "The e-cig makers are likely to face a series of tough questions from lawmakers who have been taking a hard look at various issues including

the companies' marketing practices, the possible health effects their products may pose to those who use them, and the role each company believes it should be playing in the ongoing effort to curb the nation's teen-vaping epidemic" ("LAWMAKERS PREPARE TO," par. 5). For this particular business to stop, it takes many institutions and individuals to speak up to help the lives of those around them, as well as other citizens. There are many people out there that do not want to see many teens, as well as other individuals who vape, suffer from many conditions. The FDA is doing what it can to impose national regulations on e-cigarette sales to try to prevent teen addiction to vaping, which could lead to an increase of healthier lives among teens. It has been stated that "The FDA also issued warning letters and fines to retailers caught selling e-cigarettes to anyone under age 18, as required by federal law. The FDA gave the makers of e-cigarettes 60 days to show they can keep the devices from minors. If an adequate plan is not implemented, the agency warned it may remove the products from the market" ("Editorial: FDA should," par. 2-3). The FDA is imposing these rules and regulations to try to improve the decline of teen vaping. By setting these standards, hopefully will help limit the amount of vaping by minors, which is illegal. With teens being part of the e-cigarette sales, the e-cigarette companies are likely to have a decline in unit sales, as well as lose money if these regulations work. The end conclusion would be the e-cigarette companies going out of business. Higher authorities need to continue to speak up and make a stand to make tight regulations to protect teenagers from this business. It could lead to many of these companies to suffer, but in the big picture, there is no point to make a product that will damage individuals

physically. If people do not constantly put tabs on these businesses, it has been stated that "... the industry will develop some bogus guidelines to string everyone along while still peddling its addictive products" ("Editorial: FDA

should," par. 4). The people in these e-cigarette industries know the harm that they are doing to many teens and individuals in the United States. The only reason they would make excuses and "guidelines" would be to keep them in business. They are still making money, and they would not want to see their businesses crumble and fall apart.

Although there are many negative outcomes from vaping, many suggest that vaping companies should not go out of business because with vaping, people have more control of how much they can take in compared to smoking, which leads to not suffering from the very terrible health problems. Vaping can also be a much healthier alternative for smoking, which is why many people have quit smoking. What is so bad about smoking is that there is no control over how the amounts of tobacco that is ingested will affect one's body. Vaping, on the other hand, is more controllable, meaning that individuals can ingest what they believe is a good amount for their bodies. This seems reasonable according to the article, "What Would be the Benefits of Vaping," where it states: "With regular tobacco cigarettes, you realize that you're acquiring a specific percentage of tobacco every time you inhale. Or, even worse, possibly you do not even understand how significantly tobacco is inside of each cigarette you smoke. One with the main benefits of vaping will be the capability to control the level of nicotine that you are ingesting. E-liquids are available in many different nicotine strengths, ranging all the way from 0 nicotine to 36 mgs of nicotine" ("What Would be," par. 13-14). When vaping, the individual has complete control over how much they take in. This means that as long as people and

where individuals do not know when to stop. This is why vaping is not the best because it could lead to people and teens harming themselves. But, it is ultimately their decision to do it, and they are also completely aware over how much nicotine they want and ingest. From the same article, it states: "Should you prefer to smoke without having the nicotine, it is possible to have that option. Should you love a powerful dose of nicotine, choose 36mgs. You can also experiment along with your e-liquid nicotine strength to land on the dose that is certainly just ideal for you" ("What Would be," par. 15). Vaping is one-hundred percent the individual's choice to make them feel better. So again, it is their responsibility to be smart with not consistently ingesting too much to where it can be harmful, like smoking. This is bad because individuals who vape get carried away, especially teens. Teens can get addicted very quickly, and it is hard for them to have a strong sense of self control. On the flip side, Many people are trying to quit smoking because they know that there are more uncontrollable problems with smoking than vaping. In the big picture, vaping is way healthier, safer, and more controllable than smoking. With those factors kept in mind, that is why many people are quitting smoking to do vaping instead. This seems to make sense. In the article, "3 Prospective Benefits to Vaping," it talks about how vaping has helped individuals quit smoking: "Most traditional smokers hate feeling short-winded and an unhealthy cough - just a few of many good factors to quit. Vaping side steps these undesirable side effects. Vaping provides a healthier path to 'kicking the habit.' Vaping comes using a big health advantage for cigarette smokers. Vaping can help you quit smoking. Choose your e-juice nicotine level. Then sit back

What is so bad about smoking is that there is no control over how the amounts of tobacco that is ingested will affect one's body. Vaping, on the other hand, is more controllable, meaning that an individual can ingest what they believe is a good amount for their body.

teens are vaping responsibly, there should not be an issue to having serious health problems. Individuals should be able to vape because they are doing it to their own will. This is still not ideal because vaping is so addicting to the point

and surround oneself using a healthier cloud of serenity" ("3 Prospective Benefits," par. 5). In all, vaping is way healthier than smoking because of how an individual can control the amounts of nicotine they take in. Smoking tobacco is way

more harmful than vaping nicotine. That is why more people are pursuing vaping. But, vaping is still not good because if not done responsibly, it can still cause great harm to any individual.

Overall, vaping is not necessary and relevant enough to still be a business. Vaping does more harm than good, and even though that is considered as healthier than smoking, it is still not good for individuals and their bodies. The biggest issue that has come with vaping has is its impact on teens. Many teens see vaping as a "cool trend" to up their social status, but health and safety should come first over a social status. Upping a social status to be considered as "cool" only affects a short period of time in life. Health, on the other hand, lasts an entire lifetime. It is not worth it to damage and put one's life at risk for a fad. Although vaping is not as dangerous as smoking tobacco, it still should not be done. Smoking should not even be done, as well any other harmful ingestions. This is why vaping is pointless, and the vaping industry should be stopped. Damaging a body from vaping is one puff away, thus why to improve the health of many Americans and American teens, e-cigarette companies should be discontinued.

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Love and Sex

by Jaiden Ha

Jaiden Ha is a recent Tokay High School graduate from the class of 2020. After going to Delta for one year, she will be transferring to a CSU to complete her undergraduate degree in English. Some of her favorite pastimes as an English major include reading and writing, and she hopes to turn those passions into a career.

It is universally understood that marriages in most European countries were treated as business arrangements for a very large portion of known and recorded history. This is reflected in a lot of British literature classics that were written throughout multiple centuries. Before the twenty-first century, most women were expected to give marital dowries and look for the most financially successful mate to finance a quintessential, luxurious lifestyle where they stayed home with the kids and the men went out to work. Love and sex were both very taboo concepts, but for very different reasons. Love was a luxury that one could only hope for after marriage, whereas male sexual gratification was simply expected after marriage. Any woman confessing to wanting sex just as much as a man was extremely unacceptable, as women were expected to set the moral standard and example for their families. In Geoffrey Chaucer's story collection The Canterbury Tales, written throughout the late fourteenth century in Middle English, all of the patriarchal ideologies enforced primarily by the church are satirized to indirectly challenge the social stigmas of love and sex in and out of wedlock, making it an iconic and immortal piece of British literature that was far ahead of its time.

One of the first few stories in The Canterbury Tales is "The Miller's Tale." In this story, a young eighteen-year old named Alison marries an old, useless carpenter who is insecure and inherently possessive:

> This carpenter had recently wedded a wife,
> Whom he loved more than his life;
> She was eighteen years of age.
> Jealous he was, and held her narrowly in confinement,
> For she was wild and young, and he was old
> And believed himself likely to be a cuckold. (3221-3226)

Right from the start this husband is characterized as a

jealous man with a fragile ego. He is easily threatened, and for good reason. Alison quickly has an affair with an attractive young man named Nicholas who begs her for his love. While normally affairs would be frowned upon in this time period (and arguably still in modern day times), Alison is still characterized as a likable woman who simply had to give all the love she had to offer. If that love did not go to her husband, then it would go to another man who would love her and sexually gratify her. This is a critical part of the story, for Chaucer has made his protagonist a confident and sexually-freed woman who does not feel any shame

young, beautiful woman becomes a power figure, whereas this pathetic parish clerk is painted as a weak, distasteful man. Considering that the church in England had much power during this time period, Chaucer's satirical characters such as Absolon were a clever way of challenging the church as it enforced its patriarchal gender expectations of love and sex. Never would a church condone affairs based off of lust, and never would a church wish to be associated with a parish clerk that attempted to seduce married women.

> **This is a critical part of the story, for Chaucer has made his protagonist a confident and sexually-freed woman who does not feel any shame in finding other sex partners when she does not love her husband or feel sexually gratified in her marriage.**

in finding other sex partners when she does not love her husband or feel sexually gratified in her marriage. Chaucer writes the following:

> This Nicholas began to cry for mercy,
> And spoke so fair, and pressed his suit so fast,
> That she granted him her love at the last,
> And swore her oath, by Saint Thomas of Kent,
> That she will be at his commandment,
> When she may well espy her opportunity. (3288-3293)

That's not the end of the story, either. Later on, a parish clerk named Absolon quickly falls in love with her as well and does everything he can to try and seduce her. Alison, however, "makes Absolon her fool, / And turns all his earnestness into a joke'" (3389-3390). Very quickly into the story, Alison becomes this powerful persona that wraps even parish clerks around her fingers. This

"The Miller's Tale" is not even the most radical piece in The Canterbury Tales, for that title justly belongs to "The Wife of Bath's Tale" and its prologue. In this tale, strangely enough, a separate narrator named Alyson tells her story as a woman who has been married five times since she was twelve years old. She begins her story in her prologue by justifying her multiple marriages in the eyes of the church, claiming that there was nothing unholy about remarrying after being widowed. In her exact words: "Where can you find, in any historical period, / That high God forbad marriage / By express word? I pray you, tell me. / Or where commanded he virginity?" (59-62). She also cleverly states that virgins cannot be born if women remained virgins, and it is a husband's job to please his wife in and out of sexual context. This is a very bold claim, considering that sex in this time period was only socially acceptable to converse about if one was attempting to have a family or if one was a man bragging about being sexually gratified by a woman. She poses a direct question about human anatomy, setting up hypothetical questions to lead to the conclusion that men were made to sexually gratify women, not vice versa. She asks, "Why else should men set in their books / That man shall pay to his wife her debt? / Now with what should he make his payment, / If he did not use his blessed
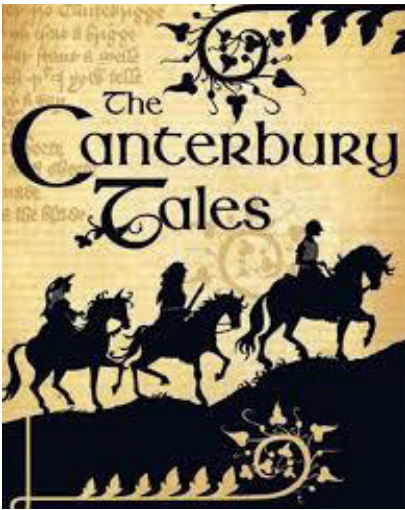
instrument?" (129-132). What is even more radical is that Alyson blatantly states that she did not love her first four husbands. She married them for money and is extremely unapologetic about it. In this time period, marriages were almost always business arrangements, but women still liked to believe that they were in love or had some semblance of it in their relationships. Not Alyson, albeit. No, Alyson says, "A wise woman will be constantly busy / To get their love, yes, when she has none./ But since I had them wholly in my hand, / And since they had me given all their land, / Why should I take care to please them, / Unless it were for my profit and my pleasure?" (209-214). Ironically, she also brags about being sexually gratified like she is a man having a casual conversation. She says, "I never loved in moderation, / But always followed my appetite, / Whether he were short, or tall, or black-haired, or blond; / I took no notice, provided that he pleased me, / How poor he was, nor also of what rank" (622-626). She was using every husband for money and sex, inheriting his land once he died of old age. The only exception was her most recent husband, the fifth one. He was a domestically abusive man, but he was the only one she ever loved. She unapologetically states, "And moreover he so well could deceive me, / When he would have my `pretty thing'; / That though he had beat me on every bone, / He could win back my love straightway" (509-512). Her fifth husband could sexually please her and pretended that he did not want love, which was appealing to Alyson because it broke the monotony. All of these quotations and concepts were extremely scandalous for this time period, but Chaucer writes about it like it was already socially acceptable. This satirical take on jabbing church-enforced misogyny was unprecedented and clever for Middle English literature, hence all of the immortal fame it has received since its publication. Alyson is an unapologetic woman that can separate love and sex with all of her husbands, and takes pride in having someone around to sexually satisfy her body.

The primary exception to the argument that Chaucer used The Canterbury Tales to challenge the stigmas around love and sex is "The Franklin's Tale." In this part of the collection, a noble night marries a nice lady. They are happily in love and face much tragedy together, but no matter what challenges they face, they ultimately find a happy ending. That is the main moral of the story: love can conquer all challenges. It is a drastic change in tone and attitude compared to "The Miller's Tale" and "The Wife of Bath's Tale." In the beginning Chaucer writes the following:

> That privately she agreed with him
> To take him for her husband and her lord,
> Of such lordship as men have over their wives.
> And to lead the more blissfully their lives,
> Of his free will he swore her as a knight
> That never in all his life he, day or night,
> Should take upon himself any mastery
> Against her will, nor show her jealousy,
> But obey her, and follow her will in everything,
> As any lover to his lady should,
> Except for the appearance of sovereignty,
> Which he would have to avoid bringing shame on his
> status (of knighthood). (741-752)

This delineates a complexity in writing. In some stories Chaucer creates a satire to normalize taboo concepts enforced by the church's misogynistic indoctrinations, and in other tales he immortalizes love and prizes it as a cure for all. However, simply because love is prized in one tale does not mean that the morals he enforces in his other tales should be undermined. In "The Miller's Tale," for example, it should not be assumed that because Alison did not love her husband that Chaucer is stating that all wives do not love their husbands. Rather, it is alright to not love the spouse that one has been forced to marry. It is alright to find love and sexual gratification in other places, even if "The Miller's Tale" has more of a comical tone when Absolon the parish clerk is included. Love and sex do not always go hand in hand in holy matrimony. "The Franklin's Tale" even enforces this idea by stating that sometimes marriages do thrive on love. Not every wife will become unfaithful, but love has to be reciprocal for it to conquer all.

Chaucer, all the way back in the late fourteenth century and early fifteenth century, used literature as a way to normalize these taboo topics and misogynistic expectations of love and sex. His female characters were unapologetic about wanting to be loved and sexually gratified the same way that male characters are often unapologetic about wanting to be sexually gratified by women. This satirically raises awareness by making the audience question why these female characters were nothing like the modest women in that time period, and yet were treated and respected by other characters as if they were. He normalizes these radical ideas that women can want to have sex just as much as men, and if they wanted love then they could find it. He is directly stating that love and sex can be mutually exclusive in and out of wedlock. Love is an emotion. Sex is an action. They go hand in hand together in marriages or are entirely absent all together. For love was not always present in every marital dynamic, and sometimes the most abusive relationships were the best ones in the eyes of these female protagonists. Regardless, even if a married woman does not find love or sex in her marriage, Chaucer is stating that she should not feel ashamed of her body or marriage. Like when Alyson states that her fifth husband would beat her, but she loved him more than any other husband because he was youthful and essentially kept her on her feet. There is no secret recipe for a perfect marriage. Women can be just as flawed or selfish or greedy or promiscuous as men should they please. Not even the church could say otherwise, at least not according to Chaucer. He was a writer ahead of his time and unsurprisingly wrote one of the most renowned pieces of British literature from the period of Middle English.

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Palestine in the Eyes of Innocence

by Layla Salem

I walk through the Ben Gurion Airport in Tel Aviv, exploring the unfamiliar scene around me. My parents pull me along as I drag my red polka dot luggage behind me. I try to eavesdrop on people's conversations as we pass when I realize that they are speaking a language that's foreign to me. Arriving at customs, we wait in line, passports in hand, when I ask my dad, "Baba, why isn't anyone speaking Arabic if we're in Palestine?". My parents stare me down as if I had just yelled something blasphemous. My dad says, "No questions right now Layla. You can talk in the car later."

We get to the front of the line and my dad hands our passports to the man sitting behind the window of the cubicle. Being the curious child I am, I try to go up on my tiptoes to see into the window. I see the man open up each passport, say the name inside, look at us, and hand it back. "Maria Salem... Layla Salem... Layth Salem". The man looks at my dad and says, "and you are.. Nabil Salem?". As my dad nods his head yes, I hear the man say something in another language on his radio. A customs officer suddenly comes up from behind us and says to my dad, "Sir, you're going to have to come with me".

At the time, I was confused. Why would he be pulled aside and interrogated if he didn't do anything wrong? Now, I realize that this was not a consequence of his actions, but the product of merely being an Arab male with an Arabic name in Israel.

Considering my parents come from two polar opposite backgrounds, I have found it difficult to connect with my own ethnic culture. My mom is Hispanic, her ancestors coming from Cuba and Spain, and my dad is Middle Eastern, specifically Palestinian. He would tell us stories about living in Palestine, from picking the grape leaves in the village to visiting Al-Aqsa Mosque in the holy city of Jerusalem to riding his family's mule down the dirt roads of the town. Similarly to my extended Arab family, he has always had a strong sense of patriotism to Palestine, different from anyone I know. We have plaques, shirts, scarves, jewelry; all adorned with the iconic red, white, black and green Palestinian flag. I have never understood the reason for this deep-seated connection he had to his homeland, until I realized that it was because patriotism was one of the

only things keeping Palestine alive.

After leaving the airport, we drive past the border from Israel to Palestine. The second we cross the borderlines, I see the evident differences between the two lands. The streets in Israel are surrounded by towering street lights and buildings, having a similar ambience to America. In the streets of Palestine, we are surrounded by mountains and small villages. I watch as the people sitting outside their houses glance at our car as we drive by, while sitting in their plastic chairs formed in a circle, all smoking hookah and drinking coffee from tiny china cups.

During our month long visit in Palestine, we take a few trips that involve crossing into Israel. One day, my parents decide

to my little brother and me and says, "Stay quiet and no talking, okay?". Naturally, we nod our heads in agreement; nonetheless, I obliviously pondered why we were constantly told to keep quiet around the Israeli soldiers and officers. With each additional interaction with the soldiers, I subconsciously became more aware that these men opposed our very existence.

My dad rolls down his window and an Israeli soldier approaches him. As he begins to ask my dad several questions like "Where are you going?", "Where did you come from", and so on, I can feel the tension of the moment rising. I started out my day bursting with excitement, but now I could feel the increasingly dominating behavior of the men outside my car door. There were at least five soldiers within feet of our car carrying rifles. I had never been this close to a weapon and it was very unsettling. After a few minutes of questioning us and searching our car, we were allowed to pass the checkpoint and continue our trip. Even though they let us pass, the feeling of being surrounded by people who were potentially threatening to us was traumatizing.

I have never understood the reason for this deep-seated connection he had to his homeland, until I realized that it was because patriotism was one of the only things keeping Palestine alive.

that we should go to East Jerusalem, the home of the Dome of the Rock. I go to my closet and grab my long-sleeve black dress and a silky, light pink hijab to wear when we enter the mosque, illustrating my modesty. In a hurry, I follow my dad as he goes to the floor below us to check in with my uncle before we depart. Arriving outside, with the boiling Arabian sun piercing down on us, we jump into our compact, silver rental car as my mom cranks up the air conditioning. This was our daily routine, occasionally accompanied by a few of my cousins.

About an hour into the car ride, I see up ahead a checkpoint lined with soldiers strapped with bulging guns, worn for the purpose of intimidation. As we approach, my mom turns

My first trip to Palestine opened my eyes to the reality of what Palestinians have to endure everyday of their lives. Part of what used to be their homeland is now a place of fear and oppression in the occupied land deemed Israel. The passion and patriotism flourishes with every waking day within the Palestinian people, for the rest of the world refuses to fight with them. It is because of the proud Palestinians that their homeland continues to exist in defiance of those like the intruding Israeli soldiers I once feared at the checkpoint.

The Shifting Sands of Celebrity Fans

by Paige Felkins

Beatlemania was the term for the large amount of obsession that fans of The Beatles displayed in the 1960's. When The Beatles performed live, their shows were packed with screaming fans, and security guards were responsible for preventing them from climbing onto the stage, as many tried to do. The screams of the fans did not cease throughout the performances, and they often drowned out The Beatles' music. Having grown tired of performing in front of such a crazed audience, The Beatles stopped touring after only three years of being signed to a record label. This did not stop Beatlemania; however, and fans who claimed to idolize The Beatles ended up being responsible for the murder of John Lennon and the stabbing of George Harrison. The purpose of this essay is to evaluate the phenomenon of celebrity worship, which caused such harrowing scenes as described above. Though there are positive aspects of embracing celebrity culture, I believe that fascination with celebrities in our society is fundamentally negative.

One positive effect of celebrity obsession includes being a part of a celebrity's fanbase, because it helps people feel a sense of belonging. For example, Taylor Swift's loyal fans, who call themselves "Swifties," have lots of fun while engaging in activities that are specific to Taylor Swift's fanbase. These activities include constantly being on the lookout for hidden messages in Taylor Swift's latest music video or Instagram post, and dressing up to resemble Swift or to represent a theme in her newest album. Being a fan of a popular celebrity can make it easier for people to meet others who share the same interests as them. For example, by simply wearing merchandise from a celebrity that someone likes, they will probably receive comments from fans of the same celebrity and be able to start up a friendly conversation from there. This can be especially beneficial for those who often feel lonely. In fact, the desire for human interactions is a common cause for taking part in celebrity worship and can be satisfied through embracing celebrity culture.

Another benefit of idolizing celebrities is how famous people can bring awareness to issues like mental health when they speak out about the mental health issues that they have faced and how they have gotten over them.

Actress and musician Demi Lovato is one of these celebrities who is not afraid to share her stories regarding mental illness. Lovato has been in a documentary, written songs, and taken part in interviews where she discusses her struggles with depression, eating disorders, and substance abuse. Lovato purposefully does this because she knows that she can use her fame in order to get her message out to many people. Indeed, celebrities like Demi Lovato can help reduce the stigma of mental illnesses and open the minds of their fans to treat mental health seriously, rather than ignoring it. Fans may even apply the experiences of their favorite celebrities to their own lives in order to care for their mental health.

still factors to consider. One of these negative aspects is lower levels of self-esteem among the most devoted fans. In the book The Psychology of Celebrity, Ehrens states, "The celebrity worshipper may be unable to reach celebrities' beauty standards and might continue in a cognitive loop of poor body image and preoccupation with body alteration" (124-25). Many celebrities gain attention from their looks, and since obsessed fans tend to want to follow after their favorite celebrity, they feel that they have to change their own selves. This can result in eating disorders and struggles with self-confidence. The self-esteem of a highly obsessed fan will never reach its peak if they keep exaggerating the successes of their idols that they wish to emulate.

Not only does celebrity culture harm one's own self, but it also has the potential to harm others because obsession with celebrities can lead to unethical behaviors. One such behavior is stalking, which may put the celebrity that the stalker idolizes at risk, as well as the friends or enemies of that celebrity. An article from the BBC explains that "stalkers are by nature obsessive and the longer they do it the more entrenched their fixation becomes" (Bates and Low). As a

Though there are positive aspects of embracing celebrity culture, I believe that fascination with celebrities in our society is fundamentally negative.

A third positive aspect of celebrity worship is how celebrities can serve as good role models for the fans who look up to them. Actor Gary Sinise, most famous for his role as Lieutenant Dan in the movie Forrest Gump, has taken an active role in honoring and raising money for veterans, first responders, and their families through the Gary Sinise Foundation. As fans idolize celebrities like Gary Sinise who are kind and giving, they will be more likely to value and exhibit those same traits. In fact, it is good for children and young adults to have role models in their lives because it can help them find out what kind of person they want to be as they get older.

While our society's obsession with celebrities does have its benefits, the negative impacts of our celebrity culture are

stalker spends more time worshipping a celebrity, they will become more dangerous. Stalkers of celebrities may break into homes and physically harm famous people, as several have done before, but these behaviors take time to come to fruition and may stem from what once seemed like innocent admiration of a celebrity.

One more negative aspect of celebrity worship is how preoccupation with celebrities may cause fans to pay less attention to their own lives. "Fans who pay attention to their favorite celebrities, but not themselves, tend to result in a state of ambiguity regarding their life goals, careers, and beliefs" (Willard 23). Fans who are obsessed with certain celebrities may spend so much time keeping track of the latest news about them that they experience a loss of

identity. Sadly, what was once something to look forward to in their own lives becomes less important than their devotion to the life of a celebrity.

While evaluating both the positive and negative aspects of celebrity obsession in society, it can be seen that the negative effects outweigh the bad. First of all, the positive impacts of celebrity culture are by no means guaranteed. Not all celebrities are going to be good role models for their fans, and not all of them will raise awareness for important issues in our society. The fans of a certain celebrity are not always friendly towards each other, either. Secondly, the risks of engaging in celebrity worship are very serious, and they undermine the efforts of some of the celebrities who do try to serve as positive role models or speak out about mental health. While popular figures like Taylor Swift or Selena Gomez address eating disorders and depression, their fans might be struggling with those issues at the same time because they praise celebrities so highly. Extreme celebrity worship has made celebrities susceptible to being robbed, attacked, or even possibly murdered, as some celebrities are simultaneously trying to inspire their fans to be kind people. In actuality, people do not need a celebrity to bring them any of the benefits that I explained earlier because they can find people to connect with, look up to, and learn from right in their own community. These people can include friends, family members, peers, teachers, and other mentors. Instead of devoting one's life to somebody who they will most likely never meet, people should form healthy and meaningful relationships with those around them. In this way, the dangerous risks of celebrity obsession can be avoided, and our society can finally come together, just as the poor Beatles, whose fascinated fans cost them so dearly, sang in 1969.

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The Life of Cards

by Sean Fahrenbruch

I have always held a personal philosophy of our lives being made into whatever we want them to be. Life is not about your past or where you have been, but rather where you go from there. There can be as many resets as you need with every step we take in the direction we desire to go and nowhere else. The social movement currently going on has caused me to reflect on my own experiences with life concerning this philosophy. Is life a matter of the cards we are dealt or does it end up being a result of the life we live? I do believe the cards we are dealt drastically influence the way we look, feel, and interact with the world around us. Though, no matter what we are given we need to be the one to decide where our life goes.

I first realized this in my high school career. Three years in and my journey had been below par. The almost physical need to be liked and to belong to others morphed me into a person I never was, but only because this was the path I chose to take. A place of belonging and popularity is a natural desire for any high schooler and I was no different. The trends come and go; the same as the opinions of the people I was dying to impress. Trying to conform to an unrealistic reality put my mind through the blender. Mental battles are a war raging inside of every single one of us. The person next to us could be going through war internally and we would have no idea. As we walk through life, cards are dealt to us every day whether it's a new obstacle, new friends, new step-ping stones, or a new downfall. These are not our lives. Life starts moving when we play with our cards.

The constant need to fulfill me with other opinions led me to one of the darkest stages of my life. Mentally, I was on autopilot with each day getting darker than the last. As a young teenager, I was oblivious to my struggle and had no idea how to cope with the internal pressure.
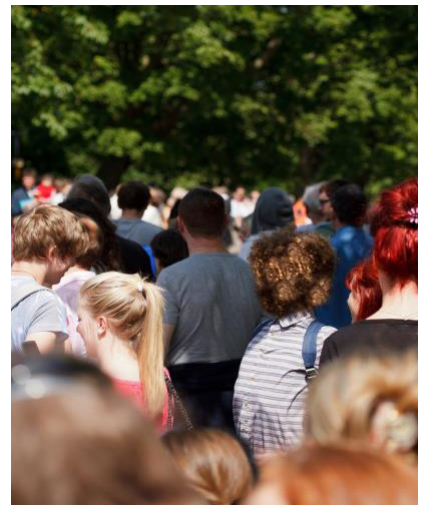
It drove me to a point of self-harm. I used to sit in my room with lines on my arms from side to side. Tears would roll down my face and I never understood all the noise between my ears. From an outside perspective, it would seem there was no reason for an internal breakdown. Despite the life I had been dealt, I had led myself to a dark place. I cried myself to sleep for nights on end never being able to understand the demise of my mind had been the result of my own doing. Some new cards I picked up in life flipped on me and I could not bear the outcome. Healing came in the form of rewiring my brain. Luckily, my parents got involved before I could go too far. They desperately wanted to help me and took me to a therapist which I had no choice but to agree.

of growth in plants, we too need to manage the things we let into our lives, rid-ding ourselves of people or situations as best we can that hold us back. With time I was able to reconstruct the way my mind thought about everything around me from the grass on the ground and the people I sat next to in class. I began to realize everyone is trying to figure out where they go from here. Each day provided me a new opportunity for me to look for the good in the bad. I had to begin to think about how to find it, though. When I was faced with someone being rude, I would remind myself, "If only they knew half the battles I've been through. I'm sure they've had some of their own." Every person in the world has either gone through something or they are

Mental battles are a war raging inside of every single one of us. The person next to us could be going through war internally and we would have no idea.

At my young age, I thought the idea of therapy was such a drastic approach to deal with my situation. Even with my mind as twisted as it got, I felt an overwhelming amount of embarrassment reaching out for help. I went into this place to reluctantly seek help as I was in denial, but I still walked into the office willingly. This did not feel like a place where I belonged. The session went on for over an hour but I can only re-member one thing she said to me, "Our minds are like a cornfield where we have ma-de a path. Every day we take this path and it becomes easier to use over time as we mow down the field. Sometimes we need to create a new path. We need to rewire our brains to think a different way." I never went back to therapy, but this one piece of ad-vice stuck with me for the next several months. In my journal, I would write everything I was going through, and one day I remember specifically writing how happy I wish I was. As I continued to write, the advice from therapy came to my mind. The idea see-med to simply float directly onto the page in front of me. I had it. what if I lived the life I wanted to? A life of looking on the brighter side of things instead of pointing out the negative. I decided I want to grow. Whenever something is to grow in any way, shape, or form, two things are required - time and water. The same goes for the growth of our minds. Water being the main source

currently going through it. I began to understand everyone has an opportunity to go somewhere new.

The lives we live are either a sulking existence or a thriving world at the hands of our own time and effort. No matter the cards, when there is a will there is a way. At the end of the day, we have an opportunity to reflect and see where we go from there. Some things take time and it's okay to be patient with ourselves too. I believe life is precious and we only get one; therefore, I refuse to let the world try to run my life for me and tell me what to do. This life belongs to me so I call the shots. Sometimes it feels as if we are trying to forge our way, but we keep getting shut out. On these occasions, we need to take a different route in the same direction.

Overcoming Trauma

by Alicia C. Nevarez

June 29, 2015, 10:35 am. A gentle knock as I crack open the bathroom door to let my pops know, "I'm going to breakfast, I'll be back soon and I'll bring you back something." No response, just loud running bath water. I knew it! My spirit knew already, I could feel it in the days leading up to this. He had been ill due to his alcoholism. I could see the abuse he had done to his body, mind and spirit. I had felt like he was my kindred spirit for my entire life and I knew this day was upon us. I let myself in, the curtain closed…"dad"? I drew back the curtain and there he was, under water. I pull the plug in the bathtub and touch his face, stiff with a bloody nose. The bathwater was still warm. I instantly lose it. It was like an out of body experience. You see, he wasn't just my dad. He wore many hats. He was my very best friend, my mentor, my guide through life, my sounding board and my hero. Like Jiminy Cricket to Pinocchio, he was my voice of reason. He taught me how important learning is, how precious time is and how it's better to listen. His position in my life was complex. He played many roles which made this exceptionally painful and hard to digest.

He and I lived in a small apartment complex, we all knew each other like the neighbors on Seinfeld. My neighbor called 911, the other called my mom. I laid face up like a starfish sobbing in the courtyard. Time goes on. Still I can't cope with daily living. I was heartbroken with an empty home. I am tormented with unhealthy thoughts and ideas. I feel overwhelmed with sorrow and always on the verge of tears. I felt like (what seems) one emotion for years after. Sad, totally sad. No desire to carry on. I felt like an open sore, always in pain.

Thinking, how can I get my happiness back? I had felt like the relationship with my dad was a major source of contentment in my life and with him being gone I felt incomplete. I felt deficient and like a fragment of a person. Throughout this time, I had exhausted all resources in coping, moving on, and getting the "old me" back. All were ineffective. I tried dressing up the outside in hopes that the insides will match up. Spending thousands of dollars enhancing my physical appearance in hopes that it would fulfill my inner spiritual void. To think of that sounds silly. Enhance the physical to fulfill the spiritual? Yeah that makes

no sense, but I was desperate for happiness. I made the decision to travel more. Something I really enjoyed doing and experiencing. Desiring to re-meet the old, happy me. So, I went to Thailand for a month. They call it the land of smiles. Now, how could I not feel better in the land of smiles?

I went for a month, with one bag of essentials. Learning a new culture, and new heritage. I meditated in many temples and got reconnected spiritually. Desperate to find fulfillment, I listened and learned. They were the happiest, kindest people I have ever met. Coming from a world where happiness seemed to be derived from finances, and status; I was in a paradoxical universe in Thailand. The country is poor, but the people are happy. I trusted their smiles. I was slowly feeling whole. Not so broken anymore. Did the Thai people harness the secret? Their lifestyle felt like leisure. I took on Thailand, in search of my smile. I had lost it years ago and sincerely wanted it back. But I had noticed that even in moments that I felt great joys, it was different. Over the weeks of travel throughout the country, I've made new friends. I swam in the corral, I ate street food, I went to "ladyboy" shows, I visited the monks, I stayed in the cities, I laid on the beaches, and I relaxed in the countryside.

One of my favorite memories in Thailand was learning about "San phra phrom." It translates to "Homes for the gods". They are decorated, tiny temples with very intricately detailed craftwork; and elaborately enhanced. They are shrines, beautiful and taken very seriously amongst the Thai people. They reminded me of when I was in grade school and had to make the Mission San Juan Bautista out of everyday stuff around the house; Like that, but way better! They are placed outside of every building. Much too small for a human, they are the perfect size for a spirit.

They are prayed at for good fortune, health and abundance and even love or romance. In Thailand, good or back luck is not coincidental. However, you can't come empty handed. People offer trinkets, fruits, but the universal and most common yet entirely appropriate offering is red soda. I visited quite a few "Homes for the gods" and prayed amongst the mass.

My prayers were different there. I prayed for a better perspective on life. I had noticed that my traumas negatively affected my outlook on life. I needed a change. That is when I developed an intimate relationship with me! I found out that I don't need great amounts of money or material success to make myself happy and fulfilled, I found out that it is no one's responsibility to make me happy or to complete me. I was misled by my illusions that my father was my only source of happiness, although he played a major role in my structure. I am in fact a fully whole person on my own. I also found out that I will in fact never be the same happy Alicia that I was before. Like when a baby bird gets pushed from a nest, they are not taught to fly. Their instinct takes over and they're off on their own, expected to work it all out with what they know. I felt like a baby bird, I have been transformed through pain, love, forgiveness, adventure, and spirituality. I have gleefully accepted the new happy, joyous and free Alicia. In desperate search for the old me, I found the new me. I have found happiness and fulfillment through prayer and meditation.

By remaining teachable I went through a serious transformation, reveling in the growing pains throughout life. Letting go of material possessions, to gain an abundance of serenity. Khap khun ka- "Thank you." As Socrates said, "The secret to happiness, you see, is not found in seeking more, but in developing the capacity to enjoy less."

Treat Coworkers Like a Good Neighbor

by Danny Seang

I am 30 years old, born and raised in Long Beach, California. I have an associate's degree in occupational science Surgical Technology and worked as a surgical technologist since 2014. I traveled for work and landed an assignment at Dameron Hospital, where I ultimately made the decision to relocate to Stockton at the end of 2018. I am pursuing a career in Nursing thanks to all of the great RN's I've met throughout my career who've inspired me and pushed me to go back to school. Helping people and the community is my calling, and I hope that students and future students who share the same passion seek out and pursue a career in healthcare to better themselves as well as to give back to the community.

Thank you for being a good neighbor, and for reading my essay submission!

- Danny S.

I believe in treating my coworkers like a good neighbor. I greet them when I clock in for the morning, see them as I pass through the hallway during lunch hour, and wave bye to them when I clock out. Just like my neighbors at home, I wave to them in the morning, chit chat in the afternoon, and wave them goodnight in the evening. Having a good neighbor comes with some great perks; I've borrowed my good neighbor's lawn mower on many occasions in exchange for helping mow his front lawn afterwards which also makes me a good neighbor. Whenever I ask my coworkers, who are Nurses and Techs, for some help related to a patient or a surgical case, they usually come through for me like a good neighbor. Just like a good neighbor, I always return the favor.

I've worked in the Surgery Department as a surgical tech for more than six years; in those years, I've worked in eight

different hospitals and out-patient surgery centers. I applied the same good neighbor rule everywhere I went. How'd that turn out for me, you say? Let's just say my lawn was always well trimmed and the edges neat. When I was new to the field fresh out of tech school, I only had my coworkers to turn to when I desperately needed advice or help. I was that annoying neighbor who always asked to borrow things; the zero-experience coworker who is always asking for help. Eventually I gained my experience, learned my trade, and became thy good neighbor.

It was during my second year as a surgical tech that I

neighbor coworkers started seeing me more as a good neighbor rather than an annoying one. I was able to give back to them what they had given me since I started out as a new employee.

I remember back a few years ago, while working at a trauma hospital in Visalia, California, I was assigned to be a preceptor to not one but two surgical tech students. Oh boy, were they terrified! One look at the sheer terror in their eyes made me remember how it felt going from a practice simulation lab to a real operating room. Everything I learned in school went straight out the window on my first day of clinicals. Mistakes were made, embarrassment ensued. Just like most internships, we were put to work with no pay and given little to no respect. I can imagine at that moment my students were feeling the same way I did when I first started out! I wanted my students to feel confident about what they've learned in school and apply that experience to the real world; a positive experience so that they may also give future students a experience. It is in what I believe that treating your coworkers and colleagues like a good

I was that annoying neighbor who always asked to borrow things; the zero-experience coworker who is always asking for help. Eventually I gained my experience, learned my trade, and became thy good neighbor.

started to realize I was starting to become a good neighbor. I became a jack of all trades and learned every surgical procedure our Operating Room had to offer. I became a resource for everything related to surgery; medical equipment, medical devices, sterile techniques, specialty procedures, et cetera! I even became a preceptor for tech students and mentor for new hire employees. I started to truly feel confident in my skillset and enjoyed every moment of work saving lives. One morning, in an empty locker room (or so I thought) I randomly shouted, "Man, I love my job!" . . . "Nobody cares!" shouted one of my coworkers in the bathroom adjacent to my locker. I burst into laughter, and as he flushed the toilet and walked out, laughed and said, "Nah I love my job too, just don't let the charge nurse know that or else she'll give you more work to do!" Over the coming months, my confidence grew and then suddenly, my good

neighbor will have a positive effect in the workplace.

Fast forward to the present time, I can say with confidence that my belief in being a good neighbor truly paid off.

One of the tech students became a full-time employee and a preceptor to prospective tech students at the trauma hospital I worked at. The other tech student worked a couple of years at an outpatient surgery center and later became a Surgical
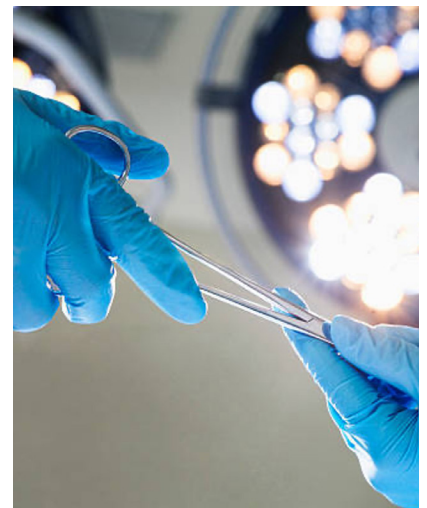
Technology program instructor at the local junior college. Their success can be attributed to the many positive experiences I've had working with coworkers that practiced being a good neighbor. I lent the students my hypothetical lawn mower when they needed it, and now they've lent theirs out to their neighbors as well. What a wonderful neighborhood we've created! I hope that in the future, no matter where my career takes me, my belief in being a good neighbor will carry on in the healthcare field and beyond.

Family Secrets

by Lilia Banuelos

All families are different. There are some families in which their members are very close, they have good communication, parents are loving, supporting, and understanding of their children and children show respect and love for their parents. On the contrary, there are families where the relationship among their members is not the best. There is a lack of communication, parents are not responsible for their children, and children show no respect and love for their parents. But what happens when a family seems to be exemplary but in reality, it is not? In the novel, *Everything I Never Told You*, the author Celeste Ng refers to a particular family, The Lees. Apparently, the Lee family seems to be a loving family, where parents show care for their children, and children seem to be happy. Everything appears to be normal in this family until a tragic event happens that will reveal the real personality of each family member, as well as closely guarded secrets. The author recounts a series of events related to racial identity and stereotypes attributed to the Lee family. Some of the main characters of the story, James, Marylin, and Lydia have faced prejudice in their lives due to different stereotypes placed on them.

First of all, James the father of the family has dealt with stereotypes since he was a child due to his racial identity. Although he was born in America, his parents came to the country illegally from China. This situation influenced James' behavior to such an extent that he decided to keep his past secret. On *Everything I Never Told You* Celeste Ng mentions that James made hard decisions related to his identity.

> In the fifth grade, he had stopped speaking Chinese to his parents, afraid of tinting his English with an accent; long before that, he had stopped speaking to his parents at school at all. He was afraid to tell Marylin these things, afraid that once he admitted them, she would see him as he had always seen himself: a scrawny outcast, feeding on scraps, reciting his lines and trying to pass. An impostor (Ng 48).

James had struggled with the stereotypes of being the son of Chinese immigrants, so he became a lonely, insecure, and self-conscious child, he felt ashamed of his origin and of his parents. Therefore, he decided to change the circumstances that he was living in, and he stopped speaking the language of his parents and in the same way,

he began to distance himself from them. In the book called *Learning to Be Chinese American : Community, Education, and Ethnic Identity* his author Liang Du talks about the stereotypes that the Chinese community faces specially children at school. "Charles: See, in my school there, like remember I said there is like no Asian people there? That's like people, like, there is just different people there. When they look at you, they see you in a different way. Like not... you are not black or white" (Du 79). The Chinese community in the 70s was a victim of bias and stigma. Children in schools were treated as strange beings. When James was an adult he wanted to leave all those bad experiences in

faced discrimination due to her gender, in that time women were relegated to specific professions as being teachers, secretaries, or nurses. According to the story,

> When she arrived at the laboratory, though, she found herself the only girl in a room of fifteen men. The instructor tut-tutted and said, "Miss Walker, you'd better tie up those golden locks." "Can I light the burner for you?" someone else would say. "Let me open that jar for you" (Ng 26).

Marylin realized that all her classmates did not see her as an equal, and this situation made her feel uncomfortable. In agreement with Steele, "On the basis of negative

Connecting the story of James with the story of Anatole, similarities are observed as both characters wanted to change their racial identity, but by doing so they remained the same, only the conditions that they faced changed.

the past. In other words, he wanted to change his life. In the same way, in *Whistling Vivaldi* Claude M. Steele refers to the story of Anatole Broyard who, like James, had to deal with contingencies of his racial identity. The author mentions "But Broyard's story of passing, frustrates this tendency. Nothing of his essence, biological or cultural, changed when he passed into the white world. He was the same person. What differed were the conditions he faced" (67). Connecting the story of James with the story of Anatole, similarities are observed as both characters wanted to change their racial identity, but by doing so they remained the same, only the conditions that they faced changed. James remained a lonely person, he was dedicated only to his family and his profession.

Second, Marylin is the mother of the Lee family. She grew up under the care of her single mother, who always looked for her daughter to have a comfortable life with a husband and be dedicated to the role of housewife. However, Marylin had a different plan for her own life; she wanted to be an independent woman and her dream was to become a doctor. Differing from her mother's wishes she was determined to achieve her goal. She was an excellent student and made it to college. There, Marylin

stereotypes of women's math ability, simply taking a difficult math test puts a woman at risk of stigmatization, of being seen as limited at math because she is a woman" (Steele 33). Connecting this statement with the situation that Marylin was living in at that time, the negative stereotypes attributed to a woman who wanted to achieve a professional career put her like a target of stigmatization. This situation created a barrier that kept Marylin away from achieving her goals.

Third, Lydia, the middle daughter, who was only 16 years old, faced complicated situations that she kept in secret. When Lydia was a child, she experienced the abandonment

of her mother, that situation marked Lydia for life. She felt guilty that her mother had left home and promised herself that if her mother came back; she would do whatever her mother asked her to do. And so it was, Marylin returned home one

day. Celeste Ng refers to this passage in this way, "To Lydia, her mother's return was nothing short of a miracle. She had made a promise and her mother had heard it and come home. She would keep her word" (Ng 146). From this moment on, Lydia's life changed completely, she just wanted to please her mother. Marylin had returned without having fulfilled her dream of being a doctor and when she saw her daughter again she knew that Lydia would fulfill her dream, that she could not achieve.

> It was a sign, Marylin decided. For her, it was too late. But it wasn't too late for Lydia. Marylin would not be like her own mother, shunting her daughter toward a husband and house, a life spent safely behind a deadbolt. (Ng 147).

Marylin did not want to make the same mistake as her mother did, she wanted to help and guide her daughter, she did not want Lydia to find a husband and stay at home, she wanted to encourage her daughter to be someone important. Unfortunately, Marylin did not realize that she was making the same mistake as her mother, as she was imposing her own goals on Lydia. Marylin did not ask her daughter's opinion, she did not know if Lydia really wanted to be a doctor. On the other hand, Lydia couldn't refuse to please her mother because of the promise she had made in her childhood. But Lydia was no longer a child, she was sixteen years old, and knew deep down that she didn't want to be a doctor, so she decided to lie. In *Deception and Lying* the authors Diana, M. Casey explains that "A lie, whether oral or written, is simply an untruthful statement. Typically, the person who tells the lie intends the other person to believe the false information is true. Lies are usually meant to preserve a secret, maintain a reputation, protect another's feelings, or avoid punishment" (Casey). In reference to this statement Lydia began to lie to her parents about what was really going on in her life. She wanted her parents to believe that she was an intelligent, studious, and sociable girl, but this was all a lie. Lydia tried with her lies not to disappoint her parents, especially her mother who had placed all her expectations on Lydia. In *Everything I Never Told You* Celeste Ng mentions "Lydia has never really had friends, but their parents have never known. If the father says, 'Lydia how's Pam doing?' 'Oh, she's great, she just made the pep squad,' and Nath doesn't contradict her" (Ng 16). When Lydia's parents asked her about her friends,

she lied to them and said that everything was fine with her friends, which was false, and her brother Nath did nothing to deny his sister. In *Blindspot*, Banaji and Greenwald refer to different types of lies. Lydia told her parents "white lies" because she responded to her parents' questions with noble motivation, without the intention of hurting them. The authors explain that "They reveal only your desire to avoid boring, burdening, or hurting the person who asked the question" (Banaji, Greenwald 22). Despite the fact that Lydia was no longer a child, she wanted to keep her promise, and the only way to do it was to keep her truth secret, a truth that her mother should not know.

In conclusion, in the novel *Everything I Never Told You*, Celeste Ng shows us that although families appear exemplary and loving, there are actually many secrets kept. The Lee family faced complicated situations due to stereotypes and prejudices of their time. That is why we should always have good communication between the members of a family. This will help us to face together the situations that arise and to be able to get ahead of them. That is the lesson learned from this interesting novel.

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The Root of Racism

by Paola Aguila

In recent discussions of racism, a controversial issue has been whether racism is fueled by fear. On the one hand, some argue that racism is rooted in hubristic pride. From this perspective, human feelings of superiority reduce sensitivity and amplify their overwhelmingly negative biases toward others. On the other hand, however, others argue that the human race is inherently alert to anything it perceives as an imminent threat, thereby explicitly displaying racial animosity toward others. In the words of Charles R. Lawrence III, one of the view's main proponents, "We are all frightened to some degree of things and people we do not know, but racism involves a particularly invidious form of fear of the other" (par. 37). According to this view, the psychological roots of racial prejudice suggest that fear of the unknown and harboring racial ideology are linked. In sum, then, the issue is whether to acknowledge and overcome fear-driven, ethnic biases in society by crossing racial boundaries or ignore the damage done to our moral obligation for societal inclusion.

My own view is that although it is human nature to be wary of potential threats, fear derived from preconceived ideas is what ultimately drives racial sentiment towards people of different races. Though I concede that pride is socially oriented and can exacerbate prejudice, I still maintain that racism stems from our innate "fight-or-flight" defense mechanism and our inherent competitive nature. For example, many parents fear for their children because the majority of their peers may be black, and it is probable that this apprehension is possibly due to a fear of blackness. Although some might object that fear amplifies racism, I would reply that negative stereotypes associated with certain races originate from one's internalized racial fears. The issue is important as it compels us to think about racism in its most raw and basic level. Racial fears hinder the willingness of races to express empathy, compassion, and feelings of shared humanity with other races. Society tends to cement racial stereotypes in people's minds by feeding off their fear. As a result, these deep-rooted fears cause people to degrade and dehumanize other races. Minority-related derogatory stereotypes trigger innate fear in many whites. In John Howard Griffin's autobiography, *Black Like Me*, Griffin portrays a black man in the South and thus suffers a lot of degradation and dehumanization

by the fearful white population. The white community had preconceptions about the black community. Griffin states that the white community "saw the Negro as a different species" and "something akin to an animal" (90). To the whites, the blacks were beneath the "human race," so they treated them as savage animals that lacked human capabilities. They allowed their latent fears to dictate their views on the black race. Additionally, the black race is seen as animals that are sexually driven. While in a car with a white male, Griffin is bombarded with false racial ideals of the black race and its sexual activities: "'Well, you people don't seem to have the inhibitions we have. We're all basically Puritans. I understand Negroes do a lot more things—different kinds of sex—than we do'" (88-89). Since blacks are seen as inferior and less a human, the whites assumed they lacked any morals or values. To the white community, blacks were a walking threat, a living manifestation of white fears, fantasies, and phobias. The white community's fear and racial prejudice impede them from realizing the mutual interests and humanity shared with the black community. Similarly, the article "Forbidden Conversations: On Race, Privacy, and Community (A Continuing Conversation with John Ely on Racism and Democracy)," by Charles R. Lawrence III, argues that fear derived from racial sentiments diverts the community from multiracial urban environments. Many families who harbor

because they help support the racial views and beliefs they have internalized. Many families with this internalized fear are distorted by the preconceived ideas of the predominant race at urban public schools. As Lawrence states, many of these white families have internalized several stereotypes about African Americans rooted in racist ideology: "that black people are lazy, dirty, savage, impulsive, oversexed, or any number of other scary things" (par. 37). To some extent, these internalized prejudicial fears have been a contributing factor to the segregation of races in schools. Truly, the preconceived ideas stated in Griffin's autobiography and Lawrence's article demonstrate how racial anxieties and assumptions prevent society from treating other races as equal human beings.

The vast number of distressing images that inhabit America's history and culture trigger negative feelings, biased beliefs, and strong opinions about non-whites. Oftentimes, society depicts marginalized groups in a negative light and fails to acknowledge their unique culture and history. This usually leads to the exploitation and dehumanization of non-white races. In the story "Pantaloon in Black," by William Faulkner, Rider typifies the black male that the white community feared; his humanity is overshadowed by his self-destructive behavior. Rider's inner conflict and loss of personal autonomy cause him to act out

Although some might object that fear amplifies racism, I would reply that negative stereotypes associated with certain races originate from one's internalized racial fears.

racial fears are accountable for the racial separation of public schools. According to Lawrence, white parents are concerned for their child's safety if they send them to urban public schools. Likewise, seeing as the majority of the populations of these public schools are minorities, they worry about their child's racial isolation. Lawrence states, "They are afraid, afraid not just for their child's academic opportunities, but of the black children who would be his classmates and of those children's black parents" (par. 38). Clearly, these families are quick to form their own conclusions based on the prejudicial ideals they've grown up with. In this instant, appearances matter, at least in part,

violently, which prompts him to kill Birdsong, a white man. As a result, Rider is later lynched for his crime and, while the sheriff recounts the events that led up to his death, Rider is referred to as "the prisoner." Rider is stripped of his identity as a human being; he is now just another nameless black man. The sheriff says, "It didn't take long; they found the prisoner on the following day, hanging from the bell rope in a negro schoolhouse about two miles from the sawmill" (252). The act of dehumanizing Rider for his crime, shows how blacks were viewed as impulsive beings not worthy of being named. Unfortunately, the white community saw Rider through the lens of what it feared and heard about the

black race, stripping him of his identity. Moreover, the film "Skin Deep: Nina Jablonksi's Theory of Race" demonstrates the historical belief system regarding dark-skinned people that has had massive influence on racial fears. Light-skinned Europeans believed that "dark skin was synonymous with evil forces and lack of morality" (00:05:58 - 00:06:28). In contrast, these Europeans saw themselves and their skins as virtuous and noble. Since Europeans upheld negative assumptions about dark-skinned people, they classified and categorized them as the inferior race. Certainly, this idea is parallel to Griffin's statement that "the lighter the skin the more trustworthy the Negro" (8). This idea that whites are superior to dark-skinned people solely because of the color of their skin has been an ongoing belief rooted in early history and modern culture. Faulkner and Jablonksi prove that these profoundly ingrained social beliefs of racism and white supremacy are a manifestation of racial prejudice stemming from innate fears.

Racial fears prompt a variety of defensive moves to secure one's own safety. These moves include outward display of racial animosity and derogatory remarks. Many people act in a negative and exaggerated manner in order to ensure their own health and survival. In the video "Banished," Marco Williams discusses the unethical, racial cleansing of a substantial amount of black communities. Black communities were coerced and terrorized into fleeing for a crime they didn't commit. Many black men were lynched for the death of white citizens without a fair trial. According to Williams, "The terror was substantial, and they did not have time, in many cases, to sell their land. And after they left, a

lot of them were too afraid to come back to try and negotiate any sale of land. So basically, the land is lost" (00:02:38 - 00:03:07). The white communities' racial fears and preconceived ideas prompted them to falsely accuse the black race of killing

white citizens. Unfortunately, these racial cleansings cost many black families their lives and livelihood, thus forcing them to start life anew. The idea that the white masses attempted to get rid of the black community is also seen in Griffin's *Black Like Me*, when a white male confesses to Griffin, pretending to be a black male, that the only way to keep him out of their "schools and cafés is to make life so hard for you that you'll get the hell out before equality comes" (100-101). Similar to "Banished," the white race in *Black Like Me* harbors the same prejudice and wants to cleanse the black race from its community out of fear.

Likewise, in the article "Racism Causes Police Brutality," Salim Muwakkil explains how fear fuels racial bias, which, in turn, prompts racial profiling. During times of racial and economic tension, police officers are constantly called upon to suppress increasing animosity. Oftentimes, however, police officers target minorities on the basis of assumed behavior associated with their racial group. Muwakkil claims that society provides justification for the killing of black suspects and gives white police officers immunity from any punishment. According to Muwakkil, Joseph Gould, Jorge Guillen, Aswan Kewshawn Watson, and Aaron White are a few of the many black and Hispanic men that were "suffocated," "shot," or "beaten" by white policemen who suspected them of crimes they didn't commit (par. 4-8). Unfortunately, the white policemen are influenced by the distorting lens of prejudice, rather than individual suspicion. The lives of these men were taken away solely due to the negative stereotypes that the color of their skin implied. Muwakkil argues that the increased police brutality illustrates the growing concern regarding black crime in the general community. Muwakkil states, "James Cooper, an 19-year-old, was shot by Officer Michael Marlow during a traffic stop in Charlotte, North Carolina. The white officer tells investigators he fired because he thought Cooper was reaching for a gun. No gun is found, but Marlow is not charged" (par. 8). Officer Michael Marlow cost an innocent young man his life because his racial fear caused him to believe that Cooper was a legitimate threat to him. Both Williams and Muwakkil support the idea that the white community and police officers have resorted to violence and deadly forces to deal with individuals or races they consider dangerous because of their fear-driven racial biases.

Overall, human beings are inherently precautious toward any legitimate threats or dangers. Our "fight-or-flight" defense mechanism is what ultimately prompts racial animosity. Additionally, our cultural experiences influence our views regarding race or the instances when those perceptions influence our behavior. *Black Like Me* and "Forbidden Conversations: On Race, Privacy, and Community (A Continuing Conversation with John Ely on Racism and Democracy)" demonstrate how stereotypical race ideologies prevent individuals from treating marginalized groups as human beings capable of sharing mutual interests and carrying similar burdens. Moreover, "Pantaloon in Black" and "Skin Deep: Nina Jablonski's Theory of Race" demonstrate that racial fears originate in cultural and historical beliefs about minority groups. Lastly, "Banished" and "Racism Causes Police Brutality" demonstrate that racial sentiments cause people to react to threats and maintain their safety and survival. All in all, fear evidently amplifies one's prejudicial and biased views of other races because they are influenced by their environment and the things they have heard. In the end, human beings are inherently fearful, so being aware of these latent fears could skew our views on different races. In general, then, it is our moral duty to strive for societal inclusion and transcend the fear-fueled, racial biases in society by crossing racial divisions.

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Little Privileges Everywhere

by Samantha Montanez

Motherhood is not something to be taken lightly, under any circumstance, as it is difficult and life changing for everyone. The concept of race, however, adds to the equation of motherhood, as it also adds to the experience of being a woman. The novel "Little Fires Everywhere" and the show adaptation, create different scenarios and experiences in altering the narrative around Mia in making her black, and the way that she contrasts Elena as a privileged white mother. Adding the aspect of race into the conversation, whereas in the book Mia and Pearl's race is ambiguous, highlights not only the white privilege of Elena and Mrs. McCullough, but also illuminates the different experiences of characters of color such as Bebe and Mia as mothers.

The concept of white privilege is marked by the idea that white people are granted a certain degree of privilege for not being a person of color, and thus not dealing with the daily biases that come with it. This privilege manifests itself in many ways in daily life such as being able to "walk into a store and find that the main displays of shampoo and pantyhose were catered toward your hair type and skin tone. Being able to turn on the television and see people of your race widely represented. Being able to move through life without being racially profiled or unfairly stereotyped" (Collins). What white privilege exudes is a completely different life experience and world than what people of color experience. The stark contrast of characters such as Mia, Pearl, and Bebe to characters such as Elena, Mrs. McCullough, and the Richardson kids that benefit from their whiteness, even if it is done unknowingly, is illustrated in the show wonderfully, and effectively in the novel despite Mia and Pearls racial ambiguity. It is not to say that white privilege is always used cunningly, as mentioned it is subtle and oftentimes happens unknowingly, but not knowing that whiteness has granted one certain privilege, is a privilege in itself.

"Little Fires Everywhere", both the show and the novel, touch on the topic of race however in relation to Mia and Pearl, the show depicts many different scenarios than the book does, all stemming from their race. Mia tells Elena that she had to lie to her on her rent application because in her experience, not many people had been willing to
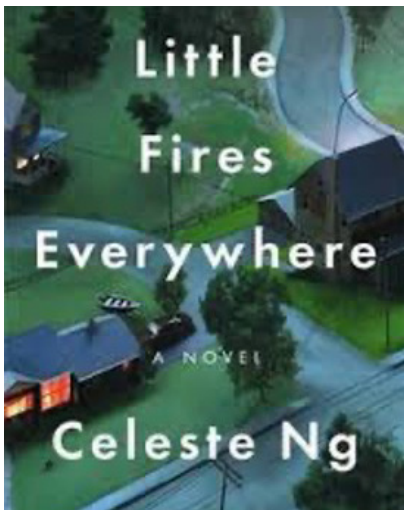
rent to a single black mother. Due to racist stereotypes that already exist around single black mothers, the ambiguity of Mia's race in the novel could not convey the same type of experiences to the same degree that the show does where Mia is black. The tensions and awkwardness of Elena hiring Mia as a housekeeper are also heightened in the show when her race is explicitly black and creates an extremely uncomfortable dynamic between the two. The audience can visually see it is difficult for the two to see each other as friends or even equals, when Mia makes Elena's family's dinner to pay her rent. Mia and Elena are polar opposites in multiple ways, but in contrasting them as black and white mothers shows how different their lives are and the way that race contributes to it. As a wealthy white woman who rents out her inherited starter house for a vacation fund, Elena would have never dealt with the same kind of discrimination or barriers that Mia would have had to, especially after becoming a mother.

do charity work for Pearl by giving her hand-me-downs and old magazines. This is similar to the thought process of her mother in renting out the Winslow house at low prices to "feel that she was doing good with it" (Ng, 12) perhaps as a way to alleviate some guilt of her privilege through looking at the house as a form of charity. In both the show and the novel Lexie's boyfriend is black which kind of works for her in the sense of the "I'm not racist I have a black friend" trope, though the show brings up a great point of him finally asking her "Why can't you see me as a black guy?". In the novel, she makes a remark about Shaker, saying, "I mean, we're lucky. No one sees race here" (Ng, 42) and conveniently mentions her black boyfriend followed by, "Skin color doesn't say anything about who you are" (Ng, 43). This is an example of how her whiteness has impacted her view of the world, to the point that she thinks that not recognizing skin color is a good thing, which is an attempt at masking racial microaggressions, and believes that skin color does not mean anything about a person. The experiences, discriminations, and hardships that people of color endure throughout their lives is not within her bubble because she has never had to deal with any of it, and it is much easier to pretend that it doesn't happen than acknowledge it as fact or acknowledge her privilege.

This is the difference in the kind of morals and lessons that

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Elena does seem to be blinded by her privilege as well, and a lot of it seems to manifest in her daughter Lexie. Lexie, in both the show and the novel, is completely blinded by her white privilege under the guise of "not seeing race" and is insensitive to the fact that race does affect people. She makes many insensitive comments to Pearl in the show regarding her race, such as asking her if she is "mixed" and to just ask her mom about her father whom she has never met, because Pearl's race was fascinating to her. In the novel, the kind of privilege and insensitivity Lexie has over Pearl is mainly related to financials, in that she felt she could

Mia and Elena as mothers, could give to their children in that Lexie only knows her privilege and Pearl's upbringing allowed her broader experiences. The show depicts this when Pearl wants to be put in a higher-level math class, and the counselor profiles her by assuming that she won't do well in it, despite her having already taken the class at a different school. The racial profiling aside, the way that Mia and Elena handle the situation says everything about them as mothers. Mia takes the tough love approach telling Pearl that she needs to stick up for herself like how she has raised her to do, and Elena takes matters into her own

RECOGNIZE YOUR OWN WHITE PRIVLEGE Have the uncomfortable talk with family/friends MAKE CHANGE!

hands and talks to the counselor to resolve the issue herself, despite Pearl not even being her own daughter. This illustrates the kind of privilege and entitlement that Elena has as a white woman, and the approach Mia takes shows how she is preparing Pearl for a world that is not going to accommodate her as a black woman. This works for Elena and for her children because no one would ever assume that her children were less capable than the rest because of their skin color or income, which is why the concept of teaching them to handle their own situations is not as relevant to her.

One of the biggest hall marks of benefit from whiteness illustrated in the story was the custody battle for May Ling, or Mirabelle, Bebe Chow's child. The logistics of who should rightfully care for the baby, her own mother or the people who had been caring for her since her mother was unable, is rightfully up for debate. However, the debate seems to be lost in the idea that those that come from a place of privilege view Mrs. McCullough as the better parent for May Ling because of her family's financial stability, as well as the lack of acknowledgment of May Ling's Chinese background being of importance. What is important to acknowledge here is that financial stability along with Mrs. McCullough's whiteness is a privilege in itself allotted by history that has built a certain life for her. It is safe to assume that Mrs. McCullough has never experienced discrimination or been thought less of because of her whiteness, but rather has benefited from it her entire life. This also translates to her situation of being able to just "max out the Visa" (Ng, 114) at Babies R Us at a moment's notice to adopt May Ling. Bebe Chow on the other hand, as a Chinese immigrant with little options, after leaving her stable job in San Francisco to move to Cleveland to buy a house with May Ling's father, was abandoned shortly after becoming pregnant and left with little options. She could not find a job that would hire her because her English was not good enough, she could not find anyone to watch her baby, and with her money and options running out she decided to give her baby a chance and left her at a fire station.

When it is automatically assumed that she is an unfit or terrible mother because she had abandoned her baby, what is never taken into consideration for Bebe was if she was doing what she could as a mother for her child, or that it was the hardest decision she could possibly make. Privilege is assuming that she didn't want her child, or that she shouldn't have had a baby if she couldn't take care of it, or any other snide assumptions that those that have never had to worry about if their baby would have food, could make. Privilege is not knowing or asking her story, and assuming that the rich white family will give her own child a better life because of their money, or that because Bebe is an immigrant single mother, she is not deserving of her own child. Interestingly, the show does not give Bebe's story a proper background in the same way that the novel does, but instead only shows her struggling to feed May Ling and eventually dropping her off at the fire station. Their experiences contrast as mothers because of the lack of resources and opportunities Bebe had as an immigrant mother, and Mrs. McCullough as a wealthy white woman who was seen as a better fit than May Ling's own mother because of her privileges.

"Little Fires Everywhere" in both the show and the novel depict how race affects the experience of women as mothers as depicted through Mrs. McCullough, Bebe, Elena, and Mia as well as the way the ways that it affects their children. The show specifically changes the narrative of the story by adding different aspects of race into the conversation by making Mia's character black.

Straight Outta Stockton

by Terrence Uia-Leuta

On September 4th, 2019, ABC 10 published an article written by Michael Anthony Adams that tells the story of Efrain Padilla, a Stockton ex-gang member who experienced this dangerous and destructive lifestyle from an early age. Padilla explains "Where we grew up from, it felt like we didn't really have a purpose. We were just meant to be in the ghetto, do what we had to do, live that life, and that was it. There was no 'getting out,' there were no 'other options" (Adams). To him, gangs were the only outlet where he could feel accepted and as though his life had meaning. Anyone who's seen movies like Boyz n the Hood or Martin Scorsese's Mean Streets is familiar with how prevalent gang violence can be amongst low socioeconomic communities and neighborhoods. Unfortunately for some people, they don't have to experience these tragedies through popular media because they already experience it in real life on a day-to-day basis. Gang-related crime can have a devastatingly tragic impact on communities on a very frightening and personal scale. It is important that communities do their part to assess, suppress, intervene, and prevent gang activity by creating programs, working closely with law enforcement, and promoting positive behavior among vulnerable youth. However, to understand how to combat gang criminality, it's important to understand what it is, how it's caused, who causes it, and how it affects a community.

In order to better understand a problem, a personal and local perspective helps one understand the gravity of gang-related crime. Stockton, California is infamously known to be one of the most dangerous cities to live in California in 2020 (Steinberg), with a history of gang violence that has been around since the late 1980s. Stockton has an Estimated Gang Risk Index of 24.5 (Gang Statistics for Stockton, California). It also has a documented record of 70 gangs, with 30 currently active (Adams), and is home to loosely criminal organizations such as the Westside Bloods, La Gran Familia, and the Hmong Nation Society. Gangs are typically cited as the cause of Stockton's most violent problems while accounting for half of the homicides experienced by the city. Despite having low crime in recent years, the prospect of violent gang-related crime in Stockton is still a prevalent issue that affects young individuals, leading them down a path of self-destruction. To put it simply, Stockton

has a gang problem that results in the city being drenched in violent and drug-related crimes that need to be taken care of.

Knowing exactly what is gang-related crime/violence and the practical characteristics are essential to fighting the issue. Federal law currently defines our gang problem as "(1) an association of three or more individuals; (2) whose members collectively identify themselves by adopting a group identity... (3) the association's purpose, in part, is to engage in criminal activity and the association uses violence or intimidation

smaller cities and rural counties, whose gang problems are relatively more recent, are more likely to report equal proportions of juvenile and adult gang members." Basically, at-risk male members of society who are part of an ethnic minority are the ones who are more susceptible to gang activity. If they are located in a large city or suburban county, they will most likely be an adult. Whereas if they are located in smaller cities or rural counties, they will most likely be an underage minor. These members will partake in a group identity that occupies a territory that they protect and use to engage in detrimental illegal. This results in violent murders, illegal weapons sold out onto streets, and hard-working people being taken advantage of while creating a dangerous and fear-driven environment for many. Even though what these gangsters are doing is morally, ethically, and legally wrong on all obvious levels, one has to understand that the individuals making these choices are doing it for a reason. These people aren't just doing it because they are inherently evil, they're doing it out of

Despite having low crime in recent years, the prospect of violent gang-related crime in Stockton is still a prevalent issue that affects young individuals, leading them down a path of self-destruction.

to further its criminal objectives..." ('About Violent Gangs'). Gangs typically occupy a specific region or territory of a community, which they 'claim' as their own. They engage in illegal activities including, but not limited to, extortion, guns/drug trafficking, assault, and robbery. At-risk minorities, particularly that of the Latino/Hispanic ethnicity, are typically the ones more involved with gang activity. Recent law enforcement statistics show that gang members tend to be 46 percent Hispanic/Latino, 35 percent African-American/black, more than 11 percent white, 7 percent part of another race/ethnicity (National Youth Gang Survey Analysis). Also, gang members tend to be predominantly male rather than female. What's interesting about these statistics is that there appears to be a converse relationship among gang member age and area type. The website states that "Larger cities and suburban counties, which typically have long-standing gang problems, are more likely to report more adult gang members than juvenile gang members. Conversely,

personal, complex reasons. Some individuals join because they have friends/siblings that are already involved in gangs. Others may join out of social pressure from their peers. Finally, some may join as a means to make money to support their families because the American Dream, to them, is nothing but that: a dream. There are a multitude of risk factors that draw individuals, particularly at-risk youth, to such a lifestyle; these risk factors include social/family disorganization, academic failure, deviant attitudes, and low socioeconomic status (Bilchik). To elaborate, these at-risk youth experience families who suffer from both social dysfunction and poor financial stability. These kids come from broken homes where they barely have a relationship with their biological parents, either because the parents are too busy or are neglectful and abusive towards their children. However, home isn't the only place that pushes these kids out onto the streets and into the jailhouses. School can be an unwelcoming place for at-risk youth as

these kids may experience lack of school commitment, no personal attachment to their teachers, and a lack of academic support and high expectations. Then, you have social factors like peer pressure and antisocial/delinquent behavior. Furthermore, think back to the story of Efrain Padilla. In the ABC 10 article, Gary Benevides, a supervisor in the Stockton City Police Department's gang unit, stated that "...it's critical that at a young age, youth want to feel accepted. If they're not getting praised, and if they're not getting acceptance inside the home, they're often going to seek it somewhere else." Padilla shares this same sentiment, stating that "When the gangs come around, you're going to find a spot there. They're going to make you feel like you belong" (Adams). To put it simply, these individuals have personal issues that make them feel neglected and without purpose, so they try to seek those things in social and monetary status in a quick, easy, and thrilling way. And being a gangster is such a quick, easy, and thrilling thing to be.

Even though these individuals may find success in their early days of being a gangster, it doesn't always last long. In a study by Amanda B. Gilman and other associates, they were studying the effects of gang membership involvement at an adolescent stage. They found that adolescent involvement with gangs can result in poor functioning of risk-taking and illegal behavior, educational and occupational attainment, and physical and mental health in adulthood (Gilman et al., 942). People who engage in gang activity will experience personal detrimental effects such as PTSD, drug/alcohol abuse, and poor education. To add on, adult ex-gang members tend to have a hard time finding jobs. Without proper education at both the high school and the college level, not many people will want to hire them. The fact that these people are also ex-convicts with federal crimes on their record doesn't exactly make things easier either. Then, they also have to worry about the dangerous implications of leaving behind that lifestyle. All gangs have a code of ethics with a major emphasis on loyalty. Leaving a gang may provoke hostility from former associates. Essentially, gang involvement can have detrimental effects in the long run on the personal livelihood of an individual. Ex-gang members who may try to improve their lives later on will have a much harder time getting by in life.

Admittedly, it can be daunting to reach out to such dangerous criminals, particularly when living here in Stockton where even a simple dispute over car signals can get you killed. Researchers like Chi Meng Chu and their associates were studying the types of dangerous personalities and attributes that are commonly found among gangsters. They found that "It is evident that the gang-affiliated youth offenders possessed more criminal attitudes than the non-gang-affiliated youth offenders. Specifically, the former appear to be more entitled, have more pro-violence attitudes, and were more partial toward antisocial associates than the non-gang affiliated youth offenders" (Chu et al., 295). What this tells people is that youth gang offenders tend to have more violent and entitled personalities in contrast to their non-gang-related counterparts. These types of individuals can be scary and more frightening for individuals to have to deal with directly. Nonetheless, this shouldn't deter people from trying their best to combat this issue and extend a hand out to these troubled individuals.
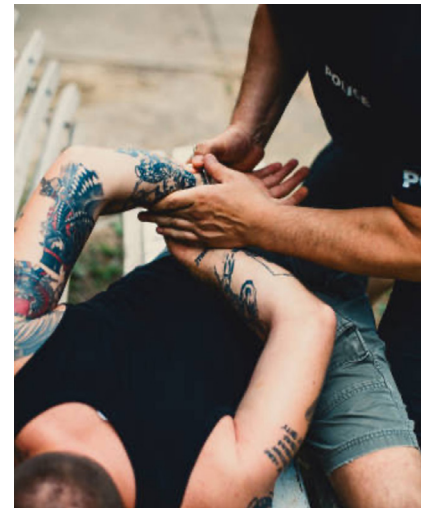
Unfortunately, real life doesn't have a Batman or Spider-Man to help fight and protect the average and innocent civilian from the danger that is organized/gang-related crime. However, not all hope is lost. Real life has people like the person reading this, their neighbor, their teacher, and their local law enforcement. In an article from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention: Journal of Juvenile Justice, researchers Jill D. Sharkey and Ashley M. Mayworm put together a comprehensive guide as to how communities can help at-risk youth stay out of gang activity. The broad solutions they cite that could help overall youth include, promoting future aspirations for life, discussing the negative impact of gangs, moving to different schools/communities, and making sure that youths grow up/hang out in a safe environment (Sharkey and Mayworm,

68-70). However, solutions don't just stop there. For one of the community-based solutions, they explained that "Keeping youths busy through extracurricular activities (e.g., sports teams, clubs, organizations) is commonly viewed as a community-based protective factor for youths," (72). Basically, the community can come together to create outreach programs and extracurricular activities that help create a more positive outlet for troubled individuals to express themselves. Stockton currently has the Operation Peacekeeper program which works to provide outreach workers who work with high at-risk individuals more likely to commit/be victimized by violent crime. These workers go out to where violent crimes have been committed and reach out to the friends and families of victims and perpetrators. They also recommend that schools can help these kids by changing "…teacher's attitude toward gang members, show respect, treat same as others." Mayworm and Sharkey explain that "…poor student-teacher relationships predict students' risky behavior. Similarly, bonding with teachers has been found to act as a buffer against the negative influences of associating with deviant peers…" (73-74). Sharkey and Mayworm provide three recommendations as to how law enforcement can do their part to support at-risk youth, but only two appear to be the most relevant: end harassment of youths and improve the relationships between law enforcement and youths. They explain that "The largest theme regarding law enforcement was the need for law enforcement to stop harassing youths and leave them alone," and many youths in the article explain that it is important for law enforcement to work on their relationship with the youth "…by changing both sides' perceptions of each other.." (75). Out of all the solutions put forth, this particular theme with law enforcement remains to be the most relevant of the bunch. With all that's currently going on regarding our country's current civil unrest issue and the Black Lives Matter movement, it is vital now more than ever that law enforcement improve how they handle things around low socioeconomic neighborhoods. It is essential that both law enforcement and the community do their part together in combating the issue surrounding gang-related crime, and the recommendations put forth by Sharkey and Mayworm are solutions as to how they can do that.

To reiterate the point, gang-related crime can have a devastatingly tragic impact on communities on a very frightening and personal scale. Many disenfranchised communities suffer from the prevailing issue of gang-related crime. Gangs will establish and 'claim' a territory that they will use and abuse to perform illegal activities, such as extortion, violent assault, and trafficking of guns, drugs, and sex. They create a socially, systemically, and financially unsafe environment for disillusioned kids while setting a bad example for them by giving a false sense of purpose and meaning. These kids could grow up to have personal problems such as low education, poor mental and physical health, and a hard time finding jobs. It is important that communities do their part to assess, suppress, intervene, and prevent gang activity by creating programs, working closely with law enforcement, and promoting positive behavior among vulnerable youth. Communities can work with local government to provide therapeutic, work, and volunteer services that help improve the lives and roles of at-risk individuals in their communities.

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