

# DELTA WINDS

A Magazine of Student Essays

2018  
Volume 31





# 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 (not sure) 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 31) 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. In fact, due to the print shop’s eagerness to add some vividness to this publication, we have added some color photos to this volume and decided to use a paper selection that we hope readers find more aesthetically pleasing.

Enjoy,

Kathleen McKilligan and Eric MacDonald



## Silent Rage

Mario Martinez provides a heart wrenching narrative of a night filled with family, fear, and physical pain.



## Stuck Between Two Worlds

Alia Kawish shares her experiences and the many challenges of balancing life in both Afghanistan and The United States of America.



## The Forbidden Forgiving

Kyle Reinhart focuses on the complicated relationship between two characters in the novel *Desperation Passes*.



## The Reason I Love to Write

Michelle Bonner shares how writing has served as an outlet to many of the trials and tribulations she has experienced in her life.



## The Spirit Needs Exercise

Matthew Millsap provides a detailed account of his experience at an anger management meeting and what he learned about the connection between one's spirit and physical exercise.



## Cables and Chargers: What Really Connects Us As a Society

Dharak Vasavda examines the many effects of technology on himself and society as a whole.



## Perks of Being A Wallflower

Justin Castro compares personal experiences to those of Charlie, the main character in Perks of Being a Wallflower.



## Abuse in Love's Clothing

Sarah Cole illustrates how even two comic book characters' abusive relationship can inform us on the dangers of emotional abuse in the real world.

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## White Girl: A Black Girl's Story About Cultural Celebration

Stesha Acosta urges us to celebrate our differences.



## Chopin's Portrayal

Tatiana Garcia analyzes 3 of Kate Chopin's works to demonstrate how different women's experiences were in the 1800's.

# Silent Rage

By Mario Martinez

There is a thing called pain. We tolerate pain or hide it behind a façade, so we can pretend nobody sees it. When I was fifteen, I went to Texas as I did every summer. Staying with my grandmother and uncle meant liberty and no curfew, which to me translated to staying out late and hanging out with my childhood friends. However, this would be a bitter sweet summer and the most painful.

It was two weeks into my summer visit; it was Friday night and my friends had planned a special night with the girls we met earlier that day at the beach. Sadly, my friends came an hour too late; my uncle and a couple of his friends showed up and took me for a ride that I will never forget. The tangy putrid smell of stale beer and marijuana shrouded every inch of my uncle's body when he came to pick me up on that night. My protest fell on deaf ears as he put his heavy arm around my shoulders and whispered with his raspy voice, "Come on; let's go; we are going to have fun tonight."

It was a perfect summer night; the moon was big and florescent, and the stars were like glistening diamonds in the sky, but as we pulled up to our destination, it quickly turned dark and cold. The crunching sound of the tires rolling over gravel was muffled by the windows being closed all the way. We entered a half circle made up of car and truck head lamps, and just like that the longest ride of my life was over, and deep inside I knew that I had entered a situation I could not get out of.

As we got out of the car, my heart began to race, and the heat from my feet traveled to my head as a small crowd of people whistled and banged on their cars with their fist. My uncle knew about my fighting abilities, both by word of mouth and first-hand encounter. To make a quick dollar my uncle secretly arranged a cash fight with a father of another neighborhood. My uncle walked towards the middle of the half circle and shook hands with a huge man in a dark tank top and an afro. Words were said, and the huge man signaled to bring in the kid. The kid got out of a long shiny car and an unbelievable silhouette appeared. I was fifteen, five feet six inches tall, in very good shape, had a short fuse, and was not afraid of anyone that was close to my age or size. The guy was tall and had a small

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afro. He took off his shirt and his body looked like it had been chiseled by Michael Angelo himself. This guy had natural armor. His arms were long and muscular with his fist the size of coconuts; he looked at me with rage, anger, and hate. I looked to my uncle with disgust and told him there was no way I was going to win and that I was in for a world of pain. He replied with, "It's okay, just hit him on the mouth". He also knew that if I did not fight I could never go back to the neighborhood. I took a few deep breaths, tilted my head back, closed my eyes, and asked the man upstairs to keep me safe. Then it was time.

*"My protest fell on deaf ears as he put his heavy arm around my shoulders and whispered with his raspy voice, "Come on; let's go; we are going to have fun tonight."*

Three two-minute rounds of bare knuckles and no mouth piece were going to be bloody, painful, and brutal. If one was still standing after the three rounds, a three-minute overtime round would be added or continued until one of us was knocked out. The crowd got louder when we met in the middle, stared, and sized each other up. We nodded our heads and started to swing at each other. He landed a right hook on my left eye that made me lose my balance and immediately started to swell shut. His confidence quickly grew when he landed three more menacing punches to my face and another to my unprotected ribs; I went down to catch my breath. He was quick on his feet and even faster with his hands. The first two rounds he landed punches at will, and I felt every punch and elbow; I fell to the gravel two more times as I tried to clear the cobwebs and get my vision back. His cockiness got the better of him and he began to drop his hands as he threw his punches. I saw my opening when he threw a lazy jab. I stepped to the side slipping his punch. Then I cocked my arm back, tightened my fist, launched it, and landed a crushing blow to his neck. He was trying to catch his breath as I continued to land punishing blows to the head and body. He tried to walk away, but I stepped on his foot, causing him to stumble. I then returned a favor and landed a hard elbow to his mouth, causing his upper lip to rip as it got caught on his tooth. The three rounds came to an end, and we were both standing, bleeding, exhausted, and extremely tired.

After three brutal rounds, I had cuts on my mouth, my left eye was swollen shut, and the right one was on its way to closing. I staggered back to the car where I dropped to my knees and sat with

*"The tangy putrid smell of stale beer and marijuana shrouded every inch of my uncle's body when he came to pick me up on that night."*

my back resting on one of the wheels. I reached into the cheap Styrofoam cooler sitting next to me and used the icy water to rinse my bloody face and mouth. The clear water turned to a crimson puddle at my feet as I tried to ignore the pain. I did not want to fight anymore; I was done. However, my uncle reminded me that I still had three more minutes. I stumbled up to my feet as the blood continued to run from my mouth and nose. Once again, we met in the middle of the gravel pit.

*"I took a few deep breaths, tilted my head back, closed my eyes, and asked the man upstairs to keep me safe. Then it was time."*

5 For a couple of seconds, we slowly circled and looked at each other; our fists were up, cocked, and ready to strike at any sudden movement. I spat out the blood in my mouth, took a deep breath, and continued to fight. I sacrificed a heavy blow to my face, so I could land a huge right hook to his ribs. I saw the pain on his face as I landed it and just like that, his speed and power faded. He tried to recover by throwing a jab, but this only caused him more pain. I saw my opportunity: I swung with everything I had and landed a punishing right upper cut to his armpit. He hunched over in pain; I took one last menacing swing that landed perfectly on his chin that caused him to fall face first on the gravel. He tried to get up but stumbled and fell backwards. I slowly walked to him and said, "If you try to get up again, I will kick you in the face. I will hurt you bad." He moved, and I prepared to kick him. He then looked at me and waived his hand. He quit! It was over! He did not want anymore, nor did I. I slowly turned around and walked to the car with a bloody face and tears in my eyes. I was bleeding, exhausted, and I wanted nothing more than to go home and have my mom wrap her arms around me tightly and tell me that everything was going to be okay as she caressed the pain away. Everything I loved about my summers in Texas changed after this night, and I did not give a shit if I ever went back to visit. I hated my uncle. He made me nauseous, and I lost all respect for him. He failed me as an uncle and as a guardian. Greed and alcohol took precedence over my safety and welfare. I can see where it could be misconstrued as a triumphant event, but I lost more than I gained that night. Greed was the only winner.

# Stuck Between Two Worlds

by Alia Kawish

I was born and raised in Kabul, Afghanistan, a country that has been involved in continuous wars since 1979, when the Soviet Union invaded. Despite the war, I continued to go to school, completed my education, and earned my bachelor's degree from Kabul University. After graduation, I worked for nine years with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and with the United Nation High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) offices in Kabul as Deputy Head of Personnel Department and as Administrative Officer/ Field Assistant, respectively. I consider the last five years of my employment with the UNHCR the most fruitful years in my career because I was able to create small projects for the widows of war and provide them with small loans through the United Nations to support their children. I survived the wars and their horrifying trauma, witnessing the destruction and death of hundreds and even thousands of innocent civilians in front of my eyes, but the dramatic change in my own life did not occur not until the Taliban took control of Afghanistan.

On September 27, 1996, when the Taliban entered Kabul, my work was interrupted, and my daily routines stopped. The Taliban imposed strict rules upon women, including preventing us from working, attending school, or even going outside without a male from our families. Whenever I had to go out of my home, I was required to wear a "Burqa" or chadari, a garment that covers the woman from head to toe with the face concealed except for a screen the size of a fist to see through. I was living in fear under the Taliban's regime and was not happy under this condition because I did not have basic rights such as control over myself and my body. Therefore, I sought a place to go to have freedom. Finally, with help of a United Nations Human Rights' representative, our small family fled to the United States in April 2000, seeking liberty and safety.



*"I survived the wars and their horrifying trauma, witnessing the destruction and death of hundreds and even thousands of innocent civilians in front of my eyes, but the dramatic change in my own life did not occur not until the Taliban took control of Afghanistan."*

After resettlement in the United States, I felt at first safe and comfortable just like a baby bird hatched in a nest. I found most Americans to be caring, giving, and supportive, and many who treated me as a part of their family. I will be grateful for their kindness for the rest of my life. However, contrary to my previous assumption that America would be a completely unbiased free society, I soon realized that there are still people in the United States who stereotype and discriminate against others. Despite that, I continued to think positive and did not take prejudice personally until I experienced it first-hand.

In 2011, three months from my hiring as a nurse at one of the county hospitals in California, I was recognized for Service Excellence based on patients' feedback. One day in August of that year, when I passed by my locker to place my lunch box and purse in it, my supervisor pulled my scarf from the back. While I looked back in a shocked state, I tried to greet her with a cheerful "Good morning," but I heard no response to my greeting. I wanted to make sure it was a joke, but she seemed very serious and very upset as she walked away. That day was the beginning of nightmares in my new life. I soon was under harassment on a daily basis, overloaded with work, left alone to care for two hallways with the workload for three nurses, forced to stay overtime without pay, and unable to request unpaid leave. I continued to work until for the second time I was subjected to discrimination against my religion for wearing a hijab during the Ramadan, a holy month observed by Muslims. The same supervisor assigned her assistant to reprimand me for no valid reason. One day the supervisor was accompanying me to another department to replace a nurse for her vacation; pointing to my scarf, she stated, "The children will be frightened to see this." While my position was Licensed Vocational Nurse (LVN), I was illegally assigned to replace a Registered Nurse, leaving me prone to lose my license. At the end of that inappropriate duty the head of the department sent an e-mail to my supervisor to recognize my excellent service and outstanding performance during my assignment in that department. I used my own judgment to serve within the scope of practice of a LVN, but every day when I was at work, my heart was pounding like a racing horse's. My chest was becoming tight, as if someone was pressing on it, and my hands were sweating. This condition sent me several times to the emergency room, but every time the personnel there checked my heart, they found no abnormality. Finally, the overwhelming stress from and continuous harassment by my supervisor forced me to stop working.

I ended up with severe depression and lost my job, lost my four-month-old baby in the womb, and finally lost my confidence. I became ill to the point that I was unable to help my own children. I was

not a happy mother and a loving wife anymore. I was a broken woman thinking of a dark future, where there was no hope and no place to work, missing my co-workers and dying to talk to them. I was living with the thought that I would not be able to survive. Through days dark as night and nights that were sleepless, I told myself, “you are no one,” “you are worthless,” “you have no future,” “who will ever give you a job?” and so on. I remember sitting in one spot on the couch every day for hours. I did not want to talk to anyone, did not eat, and could not go to sleep normally for months. I was going through the pain of losing my job, losing my career, and losing my faith in my new land of opportunity.

**“I am stuck between two worlds. As an American now, I have no safe haven in my native land; at the same time, as a Muslim in America, I have faced discrimination for my religious beliefs and attire.”**

Helpless and hopeless, I spent three subsequent years with my identity lost, living in the darkness created by my supervisor’s discrimination. After a long struggle, with the constant support of my family and in particular my husband, I was able to overcome this despair. My husband encouraged me to return to school to become a Registered Nurse. Since 2015, I have been attending Delta College, and I have completed all my pre-requisites to enroll in the RN program—so that I will be able one day soon to work legally at this level!

I came to the U. S. for my life and freedom, leaving behind everything I had ever known, to have fundamental human rights and to free myself from fear of injustice. While the Constitution of the United States guarantees the right to freedom of religion for all Americans, some people still continue to infringe this right, contrary to American values, yet they receive little or no punishment at all. I am stuck between two worlds. As an American now, I have no safe-haven in my native land; at the same time, as a Muslim in America, I have faced discrimination for my religious beliefs and attire. I am not so much angry about what happened to me personally as I am disappointed and concerned for my children, because stereotyping and discrimination are rooted in hatred, and manufacturing hatred destroys us as a nation. In contrast to the divisive messages that the U.S. President-elect has chosen to tweet out and talk about, I cite in closing the wisdom of DaShanne Stokes, an American sociologist: “Every year, prejudice and injustice destroy lives and hurt the future of our nation. Now is the time to create a better tomorrow. Now is the time for change” (Stokes).

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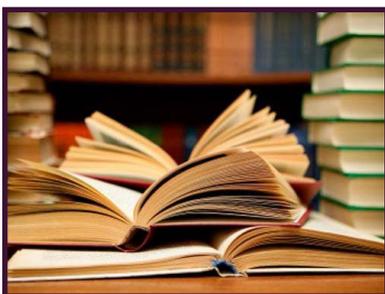
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# The Forbidden Forgiving

by Kyle Reinhart

Love can be a truly elusive emotion; it can shape us, mend us, sway us, break us, and in some cases, love can kill us. Yet we as humans all seek it, all desire it, and all cherish it once we have it in our grasp. Even when we allude to the doubt of its existence altogether, it is the fundamental right of our souls to experience love. Love, though, can exist in many forms and the appearance of love can exist where it should rightfully seem to have no place. Still, love, where it does flourish, has the ability to transcend insurmountable obstacles such as time, and time neither slows nor quickens for any man, a quality that love seems to overlook and challenge at every turn. Timing is a widely used excuse to pass by and ignore the possibility of love: being too focused on a career or school, a current or recent relationship or marriage, or just the trudges of life can make love seem very inopportune when it chooses to act. Some, though, are lucky enough to bear witness to love's persistence; even fewer take action upon its return, choosing to go through the motions of forgiveness and acceptance to wipe away the complications of the past and try again. In the novel *Desperation Passes* by Phil Hutcheon, the complications of love and its persistence are displayed through the interactions of Malcolm Wade and his returning love interest Angela Hardy as they make another attempt at a relationship in going through the phases of acceptance and forgiveness.

Throughout the novel, we see a very tense and satirical relationship between the two as they poke fun at each other about the complications and ultimate unraveling of their first relationship. Wade and Angela's first phone conversation is accompanied with a brief synopsis of their past where "Wade had failed to fully disengage from [his wife]...as a consequence squandering his brief glimmer of bliss



with Angela" (Hutcheon 5). Wade has come to terms with his inability to end his marriage to pursue a relationship with Angela and seems to cope with it by commenting on her actions in a way that diverts blame as seen when Angela suggests he find a more rewarding interest than simply watching football.

*"Love can be a truly elusive emotion; it can shape us, mend us, sway us, break us, and in some cases, love can kill us."*

He patronizes her and seems to blame her for his "falling in love with a heartless blonde who would rip [his] guts out and then disappear to the ends of the earth with a creep who beats her up" to which she replies sympathetically, though somewhat challenging: "Give me a break, Wade. It was just a black eye. And you put more emotional energy into watching baseball and football than you ever did into your relationships, ours included" (Hutcheon 6). The banter between the two in this conversation shows that although Wade is somewhat bitter, and Angela more unaffected, both have accepted that their first relationship was deterred by complications and have moved on from the past to allow the possibility of a rekindling. Furthermore, as Angela toys with Wade and the idea of moving back to California, he seems overcome with hope and desperation while clenching the phone and fighting off sporadic heart palpitations. Angela's insistence on coming back to California and Wade's subtle panic attacks display the emotions that these two characters still hold for each other and the hopes that they might maintain a relationship with another attempt.

Relationships can become infinitely complicated with the addition of a 3rd, and sometimes even a 4th party as is the case with Wade and Angela. In their first romance Wade was entangled in a marriage full of "many years of chronic mutual disappointment and intermittent suicidal/homicidal fantasies," which he regrettably could not muster the strength to end (Hutcheon 3). This ultimately

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*"Jealousy can be overpowering and tends to follow love like a younger sibling desperate for attention."*

led to Angela's departure and retreat to Connecticut where she spent time with Ronnie whom she had ended a relationship with to join Wade who could not return the honor. As their new relationship progresses, we see Wade's obvious distrust in Angela during Wade's visit to San Antonio; Angela waits to surprise Wade at his hotel room and after vomiting from too much scotch tries her hand at a drunken seduction:

She patted the bed, lay back, beckoned him near. "I shaved for you, too. Want to see?"

“Sure.” Wade’s loins stirred. Then his heart started thumping, too, reminded him to take a look before leaping, after passion, into the abyss. “As long as I’m not going to read Ronnie’s initials or anything down there somewhere.”

“He’s gone, Wade. How can I prove it to you?”

Wade took another sip, swirled, gave it some thought, swallowed, tried to be fair.

“Putting a bullet in him would probably be best” (Hutcheon185).

Here it is made clear that even though Wade had been the culprit in their previous failure from his inability to end his marriage with Brenda, he still holds Angela accountable for leaving him to be with Ronnie. Whether jokingly or not, Wade’s inherent distrust of Angela is seen in this instance and displays his inability to move beyond her return to Ronnie and his skepticism in her subsequent attempts to rekindle their relationship, even as she lay there beckoning him to bed with her.

**“This fear of his stems from his grueling marriage to Brenda, but also is a result of the failure of his first relationship with Angela and the broken heart he carried away from it.”**

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Jealousy can be overpowering and tends to follow love like a younger sibling desperate for attention. Wade’s jealousy of Ronnie over the time he feels was lost with Angela is unmistakably present in many of their conversations. After Marcus Foster’s funeral service, Wade receives a call from Angela mid-sob discussing a scholarship fund in Marcus’ name. As Angela takes her leave, Wade teases about Ronnie waiting on her to which she responds that Ronnie is gone and likely sleeping in his car; Wade imagines “his old rival homeless, carless, trying to get comfy on the crest of a ridge of stalagmites at the bottom of a frozen pothole. Sometimes it was hard to top the consolations of schadenfreude” (Hutcheon 226). This exchange of dialogue later in the novel shows the incumbent jealousy of Ronnie that Wade has, which ultimately stems from his distrust of Angela. We see a reinforcement of his jealousy and distrust a little later when Angela comes to Wade’s apartment and brings up the possibility of marriage. Wade admits that imagining Angela and Ronnie together causes him discomfort and the only help she could offer would be to tell him that Ronnie is “completely impotent and [she] loved him only for his beautiful mind” (Hutcheon 234). Angela replies with the suggestion that they simply start over which Wade pictures requiring them to “go to counseling, learn to communicate, volunteer together, collaborate on projects, have a baby. Eat shit for the rest of your life” (Hutcheon 234). Wade’s last thought – “Eat shit for the rest of your life” – reveals his ultimate fear of engaging in another relationship with Angela, or any woman for that matter. As much as he truly wants to be with Angela, he allows his fear to hold him back from moving forward with her again and chooses to take

their relationship in stride and resist being too proactive in moving forward. This fear of his stems from his grueling marriage to Brenda, but also is a result of the failure of his first relationship with Angela and the broken heart he carried away from it.

As the novel begins its resolution, Wade and Angela finally manage to seal the deal and enjoy a couple of post-coital burgers before a rest well deserved. In spite of his distrust, skepticism, and jealousy, it is made clear to us very early on in the novel exactly how Wade feels about Angela as he questions Allenby:

“... how is it that we manage to convince ourselves that there’s only one person, one singular soul, whose path we happen to cross by sheer blind stupid incomprehensible chance, that can make us happy? That without whom we’ll be utterly lost and miserable, our lives without a single shred of joy or meaning?” (Hutcheon 6)

It is beyond question that Wade holds very strong feelings for Angela, strong enough to provoke a married man to propose to another woman. Neither of them held any say in the love that arose between them, and the unfortunate timing of their meeting ultimately led them both astray. But through the process of forgiveness, acceptance, overcoming their past and the complications of love, Wade and Angela finally receive the Happy Ending they were both waiting for.

Wade and Angela’s interactions in *Desperation Passes*, though sparse, are deep, meaningful, and truly revealing of the hardships and tribulations faced internally by Wade, and often of those in many modern relationships. In each instance a new and enlightening side to Wade’s conflict of heart and mind is displayed in a broad spectrum of emotions and insecurities that plague his ability to act on his feelings for Angela. A truly loving and lasting relationship will often be claimed by those fortunate to have the experience as one of the most rewarding aspects of life, and as such will often come hand in hand with hard work through tests of faith and sincerity. Malcolm Wade and Angela Hardy serve as the perfect examples of how feelings of jealousy and mistrust through past experiences - when challenged with true effort, commitment, and a little courage - do not always serve as the telltale signs of the end of what could flourish into a relationship of lasting love.

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# The Reason I Love to Write

by Michelle Bonner

*My name is Michelle Bonner. I am a thirty-six-year-old proud mother of three, two girls ages 19 & 5 and one boy age 15. I was Born and raised in Berkeley California. My dad, kids, and I moved to Stockton about ten years ago to help my cousin with my sick Aunt. Unfortunately, they have both passed away. I love to write! My love for writing started at an early age and has gotten me and my family through some tough times. I've suffered from depression and anxiety all my life, and writing has been the best therapy for me. I made the decision to go back to college the summer of 2017 to get my degree in Early Childhood Education. I am very grateful to be in the position to follow my dreams. I hope to someday write my life story, and help people like me. Everything we go through in life, both good and bad, can be the push we need to succeed.*

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In the sixth grade, our teacher passed out pictures of different landmarks. I got Yosemite Valley. The assignment was to write a poem describing what our thoughts would be if we were standing in the picture. I remember sitting there gazing into the picture, allowing my emotions to take over. Then I began to write. "Yosemite. This place is nice, peaceful but quiet, large trees, green leaves, big rocks, I'm hot, no houses, no halls look out don't fall!" I sat there in my seat thinking, WOW that was liberating! I put every feeling I had about that picture down on paper. That was when my love for writing came to life.

What started as a simple class assignment in the sixth grade became my emotional outlet. After my mom passed away when I was nine, I became disconnected from the world around me. I spent two doleful years in counseling, forced to talk about the awful emotions that haunted my existence. No one understood why counseling wasn't helping. Drawing pictures did nothing for me; I didn't know how to draw out my emotions. I shared just enough to get through the sessions, not revealing my deepest feelings. I smiled sweetly, pretending the process was working, while inside I was screaming. I walked



*"I remember sitting there gazing into the picture, allowing my emotions to take over."*

around in silence at home and school only speaking when I had to. I allowed no one to see me cry. I even attempted to slit my wrist, which my family assumed was me searching for attention. Coming from a Baptist family, it was clear to me that suicide was a sin, and the sure-fire way to go to Hell. All I wanted was to stop feeling empty, and angry. I just wanted my mom back.

Writing became my best and only confidant. I could express how I longed for death to save me from my misery. I was free to write down any emotions I had, without anybody telling me that I wasn't allowed to feel that way. The more I wrote, the better I felt. When I created the poem "Suicidal Moments," I snapped out of my depression. The lines from that poem made me realize that my mom didn't want me to die with her. I recalled conversations we had about college, puberty, and eventually having boyfriends. I began laughing at the goofy things she would do, like playing with her false teeth or learning the latest dance moves. Despite the illness that ultimately killed her, my mom was so full of love and life.

The memories in my head began to fill notebooks. Tears fell from eyes like waterfalls as I wrote. Within months I was writing cheerful poems. At first, I was afraid to share my poems. I knew eventually I'd have to let my family in. Surprisingly, they loved my poems. My older sister convinced me to enter in sixth-grade graduation speech contest. The topic was Change. I figured "hey!" I know all about change. Hesitantly, I entered my speech into the contest. This contest was a big deal because only two students from each sixth-grade class would be picked. Three students from my class entered in the contest. It was nerve-wracking going up against two of the smartest kids in my class.

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*"All I wanted was to stop feeling empty, and angry. I just wanted my mom back."*

We waited for two weeks in anticipation to find out who the winners were. Imagine my surprise when the teacher announced the winners. I was one of the chosen two. It was surreal. I went straight home after school excited to deliver the incredible news to my dad, sister, and mom's best friend. They were all so proud of me, but not nearly as proud as I was of myself. I was going to tell everyone my story of how my mom's death was what changed my life forever. Writing gave me such freedom and courage when I felt voiceless and afraid. A lost soul, struggling to find her way through the darkness finally found the light,

**“Writing gave me such freedom and courage when I felt voiceless and afraid.”**

After having the opportunity to share my thoughts and innermost feelings with my peers and our parents, I wrote through every obstacle life threw my way. In seventh grade, my reading teacher introduced me to the works of Maya Angelou. The first book I read by Angelou was *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, her first autobiography. I was hooked! I decided the day I finished that book, that I wanted to become an author and poet just like Maya Angelou. I want to be able to open myself up to the world as she did. My teacher suggested I write Mrs. Angelou a letter, telling her how she became an inspiration to me. I was overjoyed when I received a letter back, informing me that I could do anything I put my mind to.

**“Writing became more than an outlet; writing became my lifeline.”**

15 Today in my family, I am the heroine for all things poetic. My mom’s best friend calls me anytime she wants to say something to a loved one and can’t quite find the words. I enjoy being able to put into words what others can’t. I often have writer’s block, but that doesn’t last too long. There is a calming sense of purpose behind that gift. Writing became more than an outlet; writing became my lifeline. I am certain that without it I wouldn’t be who I am today.

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# The Spirit Needs Exercise

by Matthew Millsap

I believe in the interconnectedness of the mind, body, and spirit. I didn't used to think I had a say in what my soul was up to. I didn't know my time at the gym or in the library wasn't always enough. You see, in times of weakness or uncertainty, I used to look outside myself for answers. I would look to external sources for reassurance. I would try to bolster my sense of security with nice things and hang on to the accolades of past accomplishments or recognition from others. But no matter how things looked on the outside, I would always feel fragile and hollow, like a glass Christmas ornament, hoping not to be dropped.

Not that long ago I became aware of a muscle I had been neglecting. I remember it like it was yesterday. It was a cool morning outside, and fog had not yet cleared, though the sun had already begun to warm my back as I made my way to the circle of chairs set up on the grass. I took my seat on a scratched and dented folding chair between two large and muscled men and pulled out my anger management workbook. We were in an anger management group, and yet, I didn't necessarily consider myself that much of a rage-a-holic, but at this point in time I was open to any kind of help. I looked around at the men next to me. They were twice my size physically, and at least three times my size in attitude. I had never felt so small. I should probably be going to the gym like they were, I thought, gazing down at my bony wrists and trembling fingers. The longer I looked, the more problems appeared. It suddenly occurred to me my utter lack of tattoos! I groaned and moved my eyes to the group.



Our group facilitator was an older man. He wore a veteran's hat and sat quietly amidst the men, almost invisible behind a cloud of cigarette smoke and noise. I watched him with great interest. How could he seem so calm? He was like a single gem on a ring of barbed wire. I wondered if he was offended or annoyed by the rambunctiousness. I know I was. Or perhaps I was just intimidated. If he was intimidated, he certainly didn't show it. He sat as calmly as a Yogi.

*"But no matter how things looked on the outside, I would always feel fragile and hollow, like a glass Christmas ornament, hoping not to be dropped."*

Suddenly, the man in the veteran's hat stubbed out his cigarette and spoke: "OKAY... Good morning gentleman. My name is Roy. Welcome to anger management."

The group fell into silence. Arms crossed, some were smoking, some not, but all eyes fixed on Roy.

"You won't need your booklets today," he said, smiling. "I have a demonstration I want to share with you. Do I have any volunteers?" He scanned the group from left to right.

There was a defiant silence.

"Don't worry, I won't hurt you."

One of the biggest of the guys let out a chuckle. He stood up, a whole foot and a half taller than Roy, and placed his booklet on his chair and stepped into the center.

"Alright, great. Thank you," said Roy, looking up at him. "Maybe I should be more afraid of you hurting me!"

The group laughed. Roy was unperturbed. He spoke again. "What is your name?"

"Jeff," said the large volunteer with a little smirk.

"Hi Jeff. I'm Roy." They shook hands "Now Jeff, I want you to raise your arms out at your sides, like a scarecrow. Yes, like that. Now, I'm going to use these two fingers." He raised his hands and extended two fingers then turned from one end of the circle to the other to show us his fingers. "And I'm going to use them to try and pull your arms back down to your sides."

More laughter.

"You look like a strong guy," said Roy, pressing down onto the ridged biceps held over his head, "but I want you to do something for me first. I need you to think of something you don't like about yourself. Can you do that? Maybe... you don't like that you're always in trouble, or that you wish you were a better father or son maybe."

"I have something," said Jeff. "I guess... I don't like that I'm an alcoholic."

"Good. Yes. Now Jeff, I need you to say; 'I don't like myself because I am an alcoholic' ten times, out loud. Can you do that for me?"



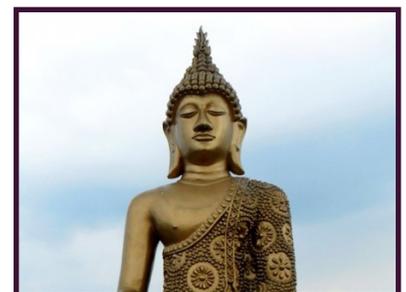
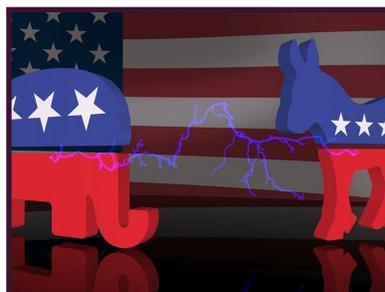
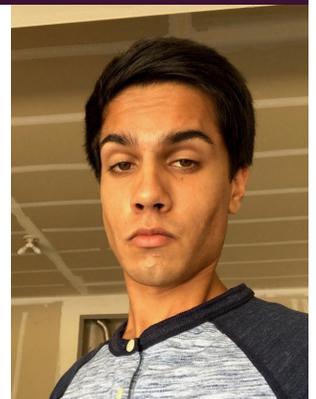
# Cables and Chargers: What Really Connects Us as a Society

by Dharak Vasavda

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I wake up and unplug my phone; I go to sleep and plug in my phone. Once again, the following day, I wake up and unplug my laptop. I go to sleep and plug in my laptop. This endless cycle of technology dependency is described by Nir Eyal in “Who’s Really Addicting You to Technology?” The Internet supports the entire world on its back. I should admit the fact that the internet also holds me on its back, likewise. The Internet has affected me in many ways: I use it for school, work, home, everything else in my life, as well as my very own career choice. From my own life to politics, social media, and the entire world, the internet is ubiquitous.

To begin, it would be important to mention that I was born into the “natives of technology” era. My daily productivity relies upon the use of technology and specifically the Internet; my previous college English course was partially online! From the moment I wake up, a series of tasks are done solely through the Internet: I check my messages, my email, as well as my calendar. Personally, this is



less of an addiction of mine but rather an addiction to my need for efficiency. The internet is also very useful to me in the sense it is used for all of my tasks. I can use it to create reminders and complete my homework from anywhere without too many physical resources. It has also saved me from failing a class, such as the time in high school where I forgot to print my essay before it was due; fortunately, I had saved the document to the cloud, so I scurried to the library to print the essay out and hand it in on time. Once again, the internet is a very handy tool which I wield daily for my overall preparedness.

*“From my own life to politics, social media, and the entire world, the internet is ubiquitous.”*

Another life-impacting change is my career choice based on the foundations of the Internet and its development. I am choosing to pursue Computer Science, so I can further better today's useful technology because the Internet and technology have both changed me drastically. I would like to bias the use of technology for the better as society has partially branded technology as a negative practice. The Internet can be used for positivity! Many professions, careers, as well have students use the Internet as a source for information, learning, and efficiency. Like many others in the field of Information Technology, I will help build the foundations of the Internet and improve the lives of others globally.

Social media is the nub of internet usage. It can be used as both a tool and a weapon; take, for example, how businesses will use social media to promote their products. On the contrary, terrorist groups will use social media to recruit more members to cause damage. I, personally, have a complex history with social media usage. I confess the fact that I did misuse social media in the past. I'd use it to procrastinate and typically would feel negative and almost worked up over things stated on social media! As Professor Antinora stated about social media with heartfelt emotion, “really, are there people like this out there in the world?” It was a difficult decision to make to disconnect from social media. Fortunately, it was one of the best decisions of my life. Lately, for the past two years since I've disconnected from much of my social media, I've found myself living in social media harmony. I use social media to keep in touch with family most often but friends on the light side – just enough contact to not distract me from my daily life. I also use it for marketing my ideas and business. Finding this harmony was much like how Siddhartha Gautama, later known as Buddha after enlightenment, found harmony with himself – through experiencing the pain of the bad. My use of social media in the past was detrimental to my health and life itself being as precious as it is. The double-edged sword of social media has pricked me with both of its sharp sides.

Throughout my position-based explanation of how the internet has changed me, I've taken both

negative and positive stances. To claim the neutral base, technology and the internet have been a part of my entire visible life. The rapid emergence of the internet occurred during my younger years and is ever-expanding since. I haven't lived my life without technology around me since I was born. This is a keystone for why I am not exactly sure how the internet has directly changed me. Fortunately, I've learned how to work with life both with the internet and without; this is because I toiled through the misery of social media misuse.

The internet is an integral part of my life as well as many others': I, much like those around me, use it for school, work, and daily productivity. Technology has been useful to its core and has impacted me severely. I've sailed the rough waters of the internet and have, so far in my very brief eighteen years of life, learned a lot through the thick and thin of it. The internet has changed me in numerous ways and after many years have now set my moral compass to positive use for it. From my bad trips with social media, to my happiness because I established contact with a distant relative, all the way to using the internet to simply complete my homework... the true question is "How hasn't the internet changed me?"

The internet not only affects me but has become the foundation of our planet. Schools, businesses, families, and the Government rely on the internet. Not only has it changed me, but it has changed everyone around me inevitably. Society's plateau is the internet. Life, for Generation Z, is unfathomable without the World Wide Web; most of our resources are based on the web. What exactly changed about society with the internet? How much do we use the internet? How do we use the internet? What is its influence upon the world? Based on research and observation, internet use has affected politics, societal connections, education, personal relations, and even the brain itself; it has possibly even altered our course of human evolution.

Pew Research Center, a highly reputable and virtually unbiased global research database focused on data-driven medical and scientific research, details that the internet affects the entire world, mostly centered upon young, well-educated and English speakers. The percentages are shocking as to how the influence of the internet upon society. Regarding data concerned about the population that owns a computer and uses the internet from Pew Research Center: 87% of the people in the United States, 73% in Russia, 76% in Chile, 50% in Mexico, and several other shocking percentages are given as well. People in the United States especially seem to use the internet a lot,

"From my bad trips with social media, to my happiness because I established contact with a distant relative, all the way to using the internet to simply complete my homework... the true question is 'How hasn't the internet changed me?'"

but both developed and underdeveloped countries have an average of around 50% of their population regularly using the internet. The fact of the matter is—a lot of people use the internet; specifically, around half of the world uses it. Our world is driven by technology, and without it, our rate of innovation, growth, and convenience would slow down exponentially.

Nearly half of the world seems to be regularly using computers and the internet, but what is the satisfaction and the impact of it? Pew Research Center also conducted surveys on the positivity and negativity of the use of the internet. According to such, “Internet has most positive influence on education, least positive on morality,” with a 64% positive influence upon Education and a 29% positive influence upon morality. Other divisions influenced by the internet include personal relationships, with a 53% positive influence, and politics, with a 36% positive impact. The percentages hint that, despite the oddly humdrum data, the world seems to use the internet a lot, and it seems to be due to its efficient and dynamic nature.

Take a look at the 2016 presidential election—or as many political pundits call it—the most interesting and memorable election in history. One of Hillary Clinton’s potential major setbacks from winning the presidential election was her concealment of emails, a product of the internet, and one of Donald Trump’s potential reasons for winning the presidential election was his fiery, ad hominem tweets using Twitter<sup>1</sup>, a 140-character based social media service—another product of the internet. Due to such circumstances, the internet provided plenty of room for “crazy” in this election and affected the election, politics, and the entire world. The New York Times, a respected left-sided news source, wrote about how his “Philthy, Mean, and Powerful” tweets allowed Trump to win the presidential race—he used Twitter to his advantage by acquiring a large fan base through his interesting tweets. One tweet from Donald J. Trump wrote, “I’m having a real hard time watching. Kim should sue her plastic surgeon!” The President-elect became out of hand ever since he wielded a smartphone. Pardon the digression; the point being, the internet affected America’s entire political history, almost making it seem as if it veered off course. Social media and the internet created a rippling effect, affecting the entire world based on our 2016 American presidential election alone.

Data describing the number of computers used, internet usage, surveys of preference, as well as the 2016 presidential election all conjoin to show the way the world is affected by the internet; consequently, there should be evidence as to why and how people feel such ways, scientifically speaking. The Neuroscience behind how the brain functions when a human uses the internet is captivating. The Huffington Post, a well-established international news website which also summarizes scientific articles into summaries for the layman, details the way in which the brain changes when one is exposed to the internet using Nicholas Carr’s work. Carr, a notable journalist who publishes detailed articles about business and technology, is recognized for his book involving the study of how the brain is affected by the internet—*The Shallows: How the Internet is Changing our Brains*. Although a highly

<sup>1</sup> I, the author, vow to be as unbiased as possible and not hold any political stance or preference. All facts and evidence are contributed for the sole purpose of providing background for my original argument—the internet and its effect upon society

expansive piece, The Huffington Post simplifies Carr's book for the layman while interviewing him, claiming that there is a lack of depth in our society and millennials are more forgetful than seniors. Carr, in his interview with The Huffington Post, states, "If you're constantly distracted and taking in new information, you're essentially pushing information into and out of your conscious mind. You're not attending to it in a way that is necessary for the rich consolidation of memory." In this statement, Carr claims while using the internet over a long period, the subject's memory and attentiveness begin to dissipate. This is due to the fast-paced nature of the internet and technology on its own. Since the subject is not allowing for the information to soak into his/her conscious mind, attentiveness and memory seem to have a more rapid half-life. Another argument Carr, in the same interview, states about how the internet affects consumers: "I think there are some indications that this kind of culture of constant distraction and interruption undermines not only the attentiveness that leads to deep thoughts but also the attentiveness that leads to deep connections with other people." The message Carr is trying to convey here is that people who use the internet tend to lack a deeper-level social connection with others. There is a lack of feeling and interaction between people due to the internet and specifically social media. This can be seen blatantly in our present society alone—just take a stroll on any college campus and you will see, often times, more than half of the students around facing down at their phones. Even if the students are engulfed by a large group of friends around them, they will still be rapidly pounding their thumbs into their smartphones. Nicholas Carr's experiments and observations seem nearly irrefutable, and his work has only been strengthened by more researchers and scientists.

**"Ultimately, the evidence is clear-cut as to the fact that using the internet does change the brain neuro-scientifically."**

Gary W. Small, M.D., Teena D. Moody, Ph.D., Prabha Siddarth, Ph.D., and Susan Y. Bookheimer, Ph.D., all grouped together as scientists to research cerebral activities during an internet search. 24 subjects, age 55-76 years, were asked to perform either a novel internet task or to read text from the internet while being observed under functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI). The results of the experiment: the above tasks activated brain regions such as controlling memory, reading, language, and visual abilities, with the magnitude of activation being the same in each case. Additionally, regions controlling decision-making, complex reasoning, and vision were all activated in the brain. What makes this observational and cross-sectional study so fascinating is the number of regions and voxels—the sections (or blocks) which "light up" on the fMRI. Ultimately, the evidence is clear-cut as to the fact that using the internet does change the brain neuro-scientifically.

Conclusively, all the evidence is conspicuous and truly shows how the internet impacts society. From my own life to politics, social media, and the entire world, the internet is ubiquitous. Radio-emitting devices are omnipresent upon our society and it'll be nearly impossible to walk into any business and not see a computer in sight. My day's routine will probably be in disharmony if I were to lack access to the internet, and I assume, evidentially based on the state of our society right now, many others would feel the same way. The 2016 presidential election was a complete train wreck, and plenty of that was due to social media. Nicholas Carr did extensive research on how the internet affects society which rounded down to the two reasonable assertions that our society lacks deeper connections and our attention spans are decreasing. If I were to give an example of how the internet is currently being used in one tweet from our former presidential nominee: "Delete your account." (HillaryClinton).

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# Perks of Being a Wallflower

By Justin Castro

*My name is Justin Castro. I have been diagnosed with Type 1 Diabetes and High Blood pressure. I was born and raised in the Philippines. I came to the United States when I was 5 years old, as I went to school I did not know any English. I've stayed in Stockton for many years. As I grew up in America, I would always play video games. My favorite place to live in would be London, England. Growing up at another country was a lot of stressed because of a new life and new people. Growing up in America I've met some great friends that I still know today. Things I have accomplished in life is overcoming my depression, finished High School, completing 60 units of transfer units and will be transferring to San Francisco State, being able to overcome fear going to school, and winning an award for "Outstanding Student 2017", and having one of my personal essays getting published at Delta Winds. I've accomplished many things in life as there is too many to count and I'm glad that I've accomplish many in my life. As, I was going to college I was undecided about who I wanted to become and it was scary, but as I took a guidance class I was inspired by a counselor at Delta named Stacey Robles Bagnasco as she taught me so many things about careers and finding myself. I was inspired by Dr. Bagnasco, so I decided to major in Psychology to become like her as she shows passion and encouragement to her teachings as a guidance counselor. Ever since I graduated high school I started working at cafes making drinks for customers and today, I still work at a cafe. I love working at cafes because of the environment and hoping one day that I will become a manager at cafe.*

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Wallflowers are those who are socially awkward; yet they are a part of the social sphere surrounding them. In the movie, *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*, the protagonist, Charlie, who is in high school, has trouble finding out who he really is, which is typical of any adolescent. Charlie also suffers from depression. His depression sometimes forces him into an unconscious state where he has flashbacks of his childhood, memories which he is trying to repress. He escapes from the mandibles of depression by listening to music and writing letters. Many of the obstacles that I have faced in life are similar to Charlie's. I, as a wallflower, can empathize with Charlie's social awkwardness and dark, repressed memories.



In the Philippines, I was bullied by everyone. I was made fun of because I was really skinny; I was called “fag,” and I was called many other names. Happiness was absent in the Philippines, but sorrow and shame were always present. Shame and sorrow became my friends when my cousins raped me. Just like the heat and the humidity of the Philippines, which touches and engulfs anything and anyone it comes across, they touched my skin without my consent. I did not tell my parents. I didn’t tell anyone—because my cousins threatened me. The images of the horrible event stayed with me through the years. Many emotions and questions came to me.

*“Many of the obstacles that I have faced in life are similar to Charlie’s. I, as a wallflower, can empathize with Charlie’s social awkwardness and dark, repressed memories.”*

Despite those horrible experiences, I realized I was attracted to boys, and I didn’t deny it. I started to accept that it was okay to have sex with them. I wanted more sexual experiences. I wanted to answer the question, “Is this how life is supposed to be?” I was young and fragile, but kept living on. Still, like Charlie, I would always have flashbacks about being molested.

The horrendous events of my childhood remained with me and have molded my identity today. I ask myself, “Why did they do it? Did they want my innocence?” I never had the courage to tell anybody because I thought I would get judged by everyone, particularly my parents. My parents are very religious, and they loathe the LGBT+ community. It sickens me. I thought that if I was too open with my parents, if I told them I was gay, that I would get a beating. I was never the most loved in my family; as the youngest I was dismissed by everyone. My family didn’t seem to care about my feelings. It was easier to conceal my emotions to them and everyone else. It was clear to me that I wasn’t needed in my family or in my school. I grew up alone.

As I finished middle school and high school was just around the corner, I thought that everything would be better, but horror welcomed me again. The musk of testosterone emanated from the locker room while the presence of fear could be found among the scrawny students. I was one of them. My fear was not from my physical appearance; my fear and insecurity were tied to my sexuality. I was supposed to assimilate with an army of Kim-Kardashian-lusting, rage-filled and vain teenage boys. But I didn’t. Every day I would be welcomed with the word “fag”, as I walked into my gym class. or my fragile body would be slammed against the cold locker wall. I thought that living in the 21st century, living in 2010, living in California would make me immune to the hate from the anti-gay community. I have managed many domineering jerks during my time in America. I was pushed and harassed on account of my sexuality. Each time I would stroll into my gym class, I would be pushed into the lockers.

I was never the most loved. When we chose groups in my Physical Education class, I would be the last one to be picked on the grounds that nobody cared for me and for my sexuality. I did whatever it took not to go to class since I knew it would be a similar schedule, that I would get harassed and ridiculed. I was discouraged. I had been harmed so much that I couldn't deal with it any longer.

*"I thought that if I was too open with my parents, if I told them I was gay, that I would get a beating."*

In *The Perks of Being A Wallflower*, Charlie was dealing with depression and loneliness, just as I was. The movie made an impact on me because of the similarities to Charlie's life. I could imagine what Charlie was going through. When I heard that my friend committed suicide, I was shattered. I never expected my friend to be suicidal. The way I dealt with depression and loneliness was listening to Demi Lovato. She would always write songs that spoke to me. Throughout the years in high school, I listened to her. I never listened to anyone else except her. She brought joy to me and guided me in life. Music genuinely addresses us, and artists manage battles for us. For example, Demi Lovato managed her bipolar illness and dietary issues at a young age. I was socially ungainly and would stammer when speaking. I never comprehended that music could influence me. From my vantage point, the most important melody that she wrote was called "Nightingale" because it spoke to my life, and how I required somebody there to hold me. A nightingale is somebody to manage you through the fights that we confront in life. This song really affected me. I admire Demi. I admire individuals who have experienced such difficult battles in life and yet afterwards they wind up happy. The song "Nightingale" was written for a dear companion who passed away. It has the mildest tune, and Lovato's singing is exceptionally passionate.

For Charlie, he too was passionate. He was efficient with his work and spent hours being creative and reading. It was his passion because he wanted to be a writer one day. During Charlie's freshmen year, he met two kindly strangers who were seniors and who took him on a wild ride to experience life and to accept the consequences. Throughout my high school years I was bullied and never had any friends to hang out with. I would always eat my lunch in the bathroom because I was ashamed of myself. I did not accept my sexuality and my life. I was a victim of a sexual abuse that changed my life and who I was.

*"The musk of testosterone emanated from the locker room while the presence of fear could be found among the scrawny students."*

It never became clear to me why I was socially awkward or why I pushed everyone away. After I came to the United States, I had to go through many battles on my own. Charlie's parents were worried about Charlie, but my parents were never once concerned about me. I was full of confusion and felt worthless. At one point in Charlie's life, he wanted to end his life because he didn't have any friends. He felt lost and unaccepted, that life had beaten him and there was no hope. I never wanted my life to be like this. I never wanted to lose one of my good friends, and I never wanted to struggle alone with everything else that WAS torturing me. At one point, I started to cut myself. I cut myself many times. It felt good to hurt my own body.

*"The day finally arrived. I put a gun to my head. So much torment was circulating in my mind while I held the gun against my head."*

I never thought anyone would care, since I never had anybody to hear me out. I was separated from everyone else and nobody knew where I was; it seemed no one even minded that I was alive. I harmed my body over and over. Ultimately, though, I wanted to end my life. The day finally arrived. I put a gun to my head. So much torment was circulating in my mind while I held the gun against my head. But something prevented me from surrendering my life. I didn't recognize what it was, yet I trusted that it was my companion. I never specify his name. But when I generally ponder him, it brings me bliss. I wanted to end my life, such as Charlie wanted to, but something stopped me from doing the most selfish thing. I look back to those days and have learned from my mistakes. If I had ended my life back then, I would have never lived to see what the future holds. My life is similar to Charlie's. He, too, did not take his life. No matter what pain we go through, it will get better in the end as long as someone hears our pain. I have always wanted to meet Charlie in person, not just a character in a book or a movie. I wanted to tell him that I was going through the same struggles he was dealing with. Most people use this life as an excuse. But I was consumed and yet prevailed. As I'm telling my story, it has become easier to write it than to talk about it.

# Abuse In Love's Clothing

by Sarah Cole

*Sarah Cole, 19, is currently in her second year at Delta College working on her general education courses before transferring to study architecture. Although in love with Victorian and Gothic buildings, Sarah's true passion is writing and hopes to one day publish her own novels. An avid fan of comic books, she is thrilled that Delta Winds has chosen to publish her essay debating the life of her favorite super villain.*



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DC Comics has created dozens of popular characters, but it would not be outrageous to assume that the Joker and Harley Quinn are their most interesting, not to mention twisted, couple. These two seem to have risen even higher in popularity after the release of the film *Suicide Squad*, which brought Harley Quinn over from the realm of comic books and TV shows into theaters for the first time. This allowed a much larger audience to see her relationship with the Joker, and lead to an unfortunate backlash of people romanticizing and even wishing for a "love" like theirs. The Joker and Harley's relationship is abusive, both physically and verbally, and should not be viewed as a relationship goal. One article sums up their relationship perfectly by saying that "Right off the bat her relationship with the Joker was abusive. She is portrayed as a woman who gets beat on and tormented by her boyfriend, yet she comes back to him every time and blames herself for the abuse" (Lopez). All this information is easily accessible, yet people continue to deny it and glamorize their psychotic relationship.



First off, the Joker tricked the then sane Quinn into a sense of security and love, only to torture her the moment he escaped prison. This is evident in the following quotation: "In 2011's Suicide Squad comic series, Harley Quinn got a new, expanded origin story in which The Joker tosses the psychiatrist, struggling against him, into a vat of acid, which died her skin white and also made her insane" (Dockterman). She was previously a successful psychiatrist known as Harleen Quinzel, but the Joker seduced her and destroyed nearly everything she used to be. Although Quinn had fallen in love with the Joker, she was still sane and tried to escape from him when he made his intentions of pushing her into the vat of acid clear. She did not give consent to this horrendous act, and once she was free from the vat, the Joker took complete advantage of her new insanity and manipulated her. This is not the only instance when then Joker has tricked Harley. He constantly lies and hurts her in order to keep her in his control. This article states that "The Joker was abusive toward lovelorn Quinn: hitting her or throwing her out of buildings, all while playing sadistic mind games with her...He beat her and cast her out before wooing her back. At one point she explained, 'Don't get me wrong, my Puddin's a little rough, but he loves me, really'" (Dockterman). The Joker has hurt and deceived her so many times that he has made Quinn feel codependent. She continues to come back to him, no matter what he did to her, all while staying under his leash. The Joker recognizes that she loves him and uses this advantage to treat her however he pleases. He has even deceived Quinn in her alternate, but very similar, backstory as well. It is explained that "Eventually, through the sessions, he manipulates her feelings to the point where she is the one lying on the psychiatrist's couch, telling him her problems and symbolically handing over her position of power to him" (Austin). Through his lies, he earns Harley's

*"He constantly lies and hurts her in order to keep her in his control."*

sympathy and claims to care about her. Quinn thinks that she has seen a side of him that no one else has, when in actuality he has used the same sob story on many others in order to get what he wants. In the end, the Joker does not treat Harley like a human being, but instead like a pet that he can control with pretty lies and hard punches.

In this psychotic relationship, the Joker's lies are actually quite mild in comparison to the physical abuse that Quinn suffers from on a daily basis. A good example of this rough treatment is in the following quotation: "In both comics, The Joker hurts Harley for the crimes of loving him and trying to be his partner-in-crime; her attempt at helping him to kill Batman, for example, ends with her being pushed out of a window" (Austin). The Joker not only abuses Harley when she displeases him, but also when she was simply trying to help him accomplish his life goal to kill Batman. He refuses her love and help, and instead tries to kill her. This is not the only time he has tried to kill his number one

fan, and it is far from the most violent. Harley Quinn's own comic book series came out in 1999, and "It paired her with supervillain Poison Ivy after the Joker fired Harley – both from his criminal enterprise and literally into the sky in a rocket that crash landed in a city park" (Spata). The Joker was intending

**"In the end, the Joker does not treat Harley like a human being, but instead like a pet that he can control with pretty lies and hard punches."**

for Quinn to die in the crash, so that he would be able to truly focus on taking over Gotham. If it had not been for Poison Ivy both rescuing and nursing Quinn back to health, Harley would have most likely died underneath all the rubble. There have also been several times when Quinn decides she has had enough of the Joker's abusive actions and attempts to escape, only for him to beat her down and touch her without consent. This is demonstrated in the following quotation: "Meanwhile the Joker is trying to kiss her and saying really demeaning and terrorizing things like, 'This is what you want,' 'I had you back sweetie, amongst other things,' and 'I know you want this,' as he punches her" (qtd in Espinosa). The Joker does not care about Harley's permission, and actually seems happiest when he is taking her by force. He not only enjoys beating Quinn, but likes to make her think that she is worthless without him, so that she will stay around and continue to do whatever pleases him. He acts as if Harley is a doll that he can break and discard whenever he wishes; a fact that should scare the audience, not arouse them.

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If this is not enough to convince audiences that their relationship is twisted and unhealthy, the fact that Harley Quinn herself has recognized several times that her "puddin" is not good for her should sway their opinions, even if she ran back to him at the last minute. One article states that "In one episode, shocked that the Joker would abandon her for a mission to blow up Gotham, Quinn aimed a machine gun at him. He taunted her, 'You don't have the guts,' at which point she pulled the trigger. It turned out that the gun was only loaded with a sign reading, 'Rat tat tat,' but her willingness to kill her abuser, apparently was a turn on for the Joker, and the two reunited" (Dockterman). Even though Quinn returned to him in the end, her brief moment of clarity shows that she is aware, on some level that the Joker does not truly care about her, and that there is only so much that she is willing to take from him before she defends herself. Harley was not just trying to scare him; she thought it was a real gun. Neither she nor the Joker realized that it was one of his prop guns that got mixed in with the real ones. The fact that she believed the machine gun was actually loaded, and was more than willing to kill him is a big step forward in her struggle to be independent. Quinn did relapse into her state of codependency when she ran back into his outstretched arms, but her attempt at murdering him is a huge improvement from the Harley that let him push her out a window without even trying to fight back. However, this is a baby step in comparison to the progress Quinn has made in her latest comic

book series. In this new series, Harley has moved on from her abusive relationship, and now only spends time with those who treat her with respect. When Joker comes back to try and control her as he did before, “She bites his bottom lip and rips it off his face! She beats him to a pulp and tells him, ‘If I ever see you again, or you do anything to me or my family or my friends, I’ll end you.’ Joker is left defeated on the floor” (qtd in Espinosa). Quinn not only stands up to her abuser, but she walks away, leaving him a bloody mess on the asylum floor. She does not feel bad about nearly killing him, and does not let him abuse her as he did in the past. Harley has gone from thinking that the abuse was always her fault, to realizing that she never did anything wrong. She now understands that the Joker used her, and she refuses to let anyone treat her like that again.

This idea that Harley can live without her “Mistah J” has become so important to her character that it even made a brief appearance in *Suicide Squad*. While it is nothing compared to her progress in the comics, the audience does get a small glimpse that Quinn can take care of herself. In the film, “Harley actually begins to discover and enjoy her independence from the Joker, even if for most of the film she’s secretly waiting for him to come rescue her from indentured heroism” (Yamato). In comparison to the old television shows and graphic novels, the movie sugarcoats the Joker and Harley’s relationship. There were too many characters, and not enough film time for all of the details to be worked into the script. Be that as it may, Quinn does show some character development towards the end of the film. Does she still love her “puddin,” and want to be with him? Yes, but she does not fall apart without him around, and there is even a suggestion that she and her fellow squad member, Deadshot, might become romantically involved. She proves to herself, and the other characters that she can manage just fine without the Joker. Although this is far from her level of independence in the comic books, it is refreshing to see that they allowed Harley some amount of growth, even if it is small. It helps to drive home the fact that she eventually realizes that her relationship with the Joker is unhealthy, and how she manages to move on.

Despite all this, there are still those who think that the Joker and Harley truly love each other and have an ideal relationship. It is true that the Joker has told Quinn that he loves her time and time again. It is also plain to see that he is physically attracted to her. The Joker shows his love like any other gentleman would; he is extremely possessive of her. What better way is there to show affection to one’s partner than by controlling all their actions, and demanding to know where they are at all times? It shows that they care. He also shows Quinn that he loves her by eliminating any and all competition. In one of the graphic novels, one of the Joker’s former goons named Monty made the mistake of

“He acts as if Harley is a doll that he can break and discard whenever he wishes; a fact that should scare the audience, not arouse them.”

hiring Harley Quinn as a stripper in his night club. Enraged, the Joker drags Monty backstage where he then proceeds to skin the man alive. He then forces Monty onto the night club's stage, and leaves him there to die in front of everyone so that no one will make the same mistake of trying to take his Harley from him. What girl would not be charmed by all the hard work he went through to show how he truly feels? Not to mention, most women find jealousy to be both attractive and quite flattering. The

**"What better way is there to show affection to one's partner than by controlling all their actions, and demanding to know where they are at all times?"**

Joker also did something very similar in the film *Suicide Squad*. In the movie, the Joker was discussing business with a mob boss, who could not stop gazing at Harley who was dancing in the adjacent room. The man then went as far as to say that the Joker was extremely lucky to have her. Infuriated, the Joker brings Quinn over and asks if the man is attracted to her and would like to have her for himself. Seeing his mistake, he tries to quickly back out of the situation, but when he says no it offends Harley. The Joker then shoots the man in the head, for having the gall to ogle Harley in the first place and then for insulting her. Although violent, this action is really sweet. Not only is he defending her honor, but he is eliminating someone who viewed her as just a piece of meat. Women like men that can defend them, and the fact he stopped this clearly dangerous man from getting anywhere near her is a sign of his love and devotion. The Joker loves Harley so much that he refuses to let anyone else play a large role in her life. He wants Quinn all to himself, and is not only willing to kill those who stand in his way, but ready to torture her until she sees that they truly belong together. Surely everyone would want someone that devoted to them.

There is also the matter of how he is constantly beating her, but no one ever said love was pretty or easy. Harley Quinn can be a bit over the top sometimes, and with all the hard work he does during the day, it is understandable that he would just want some peace and quiet. Sometimes people need more than words to teach them how to behave. After all, who would want to hear lame jokes about Batman after blowing a multimillion dollar deal? Anyone else that was in the same position as the Joker would have hit her as well. This does not mean he loves her any less; he just has to remind her who is really in charge of Gotham city. Sure it may hurt now, but she will be more than grateful when she gets it right the next time the situation arises. Not to mention, the more he tries to hurt or kill her, it simply lets Harley know how much of an impact she has on him. It clarifies how important she is to him, should she start to forget. The fact that he strapped her in a rocket so that he could focus on taking over Gotham proves how much she was distracting him. The Joker felt something for her, and it was

**“Any person who is sick enough to take pleasure from inflicting pain on another human being is not worth the time of day.”**

weakening him. He was willing to kill her to stop it. Her love was worth the effort to steal a rocket, trap her inside, and launch it far away. Most people will go their whole life without having someone care for them so much. Any mother and father would be ecstatic at the idea that their child found someone who can truly appreciate them for the wonder that they are, and view them as a treasure. They would probably not love the fact that their child is being beaten up by this boyfriend or girlfriend, but after a little explanation of how it is for true love, the parents would come to understand. They were young and crazy once. They know that their kid will just need some time to experiment with different things. It is not as if their child is in over their head, or in any real danger. In retrospect, what are bruises and broken bones when compared to true love? Many people often discuss how sacrifices and compromises must be made when it comes to love and relationships. Who in their right mind would chose to be alone when they could have someone care about them in exchange for their personal freedom? After all, what are respect and dignity compared to a relationship? Why would anyone want to stand up for themselves when they can have someone by their side? What is self-worth compared to the feeling of being considered the “It” couple by fellow friends and peers?

This type of logic only makes sense to those who have been trained to feel like this with the help of both mental and physical abuse. Anyone in their right mind would recognize that a relationship like the one described above is not sane or healthy. A person who is willing to strike their partner does not truly love them, despite what they might try to say. Respect and dignity are worth so much more than having the image of being a perfect couple. Any person who is sick enough to take pleasure from inflicting pain on another human being is not worth the time of day. They do not truly care about their partner. The only thing they love is having total control over another’s entire life, and being able to take their rage out on a helpless victim who will not raise a finger in their own defense. Think about

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**“Domestic violence is a real issue, and it is simply irresponsible to publicize it as anything other than dangerous and unhealthy.”**

this form of assault outside of the context of a relationship. If a man was caught beating up a random person they found on the street, no one would hesitate to arrest him for his actions. The same approach should be used when discussing domestic violence. The victim in the relationship might think that everything is going just fine, but with the help of intervention they can begin to see the abuse

for what it is. They might not have even recognized that they needed help in the first place. These situations are incredibly dangerous, and should not be glamorized or viewed as a fantasy.

The Joker tore Harley Quinn's life apart. He lied to her, drove her insane, and used her as his own personal punching bag when things did not go his way. He is a horrible psychopath who should not be looked at as the ideal/perfect boyfriend. If someone were to describe the qualities of the Joker that they liked and how they want someone like that for themselves, more than likely their loved ones would become worried and try to get them help. It simply is not right to wish for a relationship with a man who dreams about killing off his lovers after he decides that they are no longer useful. Domestic violence is a real issue, and it is simply irresponsible to publicize it as anything other than dangerous and unhealthy. This is not a good example to set for children, and could lead to future generations having a horrible concept of romantic relationships. Harley Quinn remained a victim of the Joker's abuse for years, but eventually she realized the truth and saved herself. Domestic abuse is not something that people should joke about or idolize. It is a disservice to Harley's struggle for independence, and real victims everywhere.

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# White Girl: A Black Girl's Story About Cultural Celebration

by Stesha Acosta

*Stesha Acosta was born and raised in Oakland, CA and attended school in the neighboring town of Alameda. She is a proud mother of four wonderful children. After spending five years in finance as a licensed banker and S.A.F.E. registered mortgage broker, she decided to go back to school to pursue a degree in nursing. She is now a pre-nursing student at San Joaquin Delta College and looks forward to graduating with her ADN.*



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Growing up as a black girl in East Oakland, California was an interesting experience. I am sure you are wondering, “what exactly does that mean?” Perhaps I should say growing up as a black girl in East Oakland, California was an interesting experience for me. I grew up in a working-middle class, predominantly black neighborhood in East Oakland, meanwhile I attended a predominantly white school in Alameda, California. I didn’t realize it then, but early on I was learning to balance my cultural identity. In Alameda, I was the black girl with the different name and interesting braids who “spoke so well.” In Oakland, my nickname was “white girl” because apparently I “talked like a white girl,” whatever that means. My experience of growing up between two culturally different environments set the foundation of importance in balancing my culture, not abandoning it. It is important to absorb and learn the differences around us without losing our individuality so we can be the difference that someone else learns.



I recall my first day of school in kindergarten. My mother and I arrived late after having taken a “shortcut” that caused us to be about ten minutes behind schedule. As soon as I walked into the classroom, I was excited and started making friends. As a four-year-old, I didn’t realize that I was 1 of only 3 black kids in my class. What was more interesting to me, was the amount of questions coming from those who looked differently than me. “How long did it take your mom to do your hair?” one girl asked. My hair was styled in neat, curly box braids. “How’d you get it like that?” I didn’t know how to answer this question. I hadn’t realized my hair was so different. “What kind of a name is Stesha?” one kid asked. “Are you black or white or both?” another girl asked. “My mom and dad are black,” I replied. “But your skin is as light as mine,” she said as she held her arm next to mine to compare our skin tones. I had a lot of questions for my mother because I was confused. We hadn’t spoken much about race and cultural differences in my household. My mom told me that everyone is different and some aren’t used to seeing those who aren’t just like them. She also explained, in a way a four-year-old could understand, that I should use other people’s questions to let them get to know who I am as opposed to being embarrassed that I am different. That is what I did and I carried this lesson with me throughout my life.

*“In Oakland, my nickname was ‘white girl’ because apparently I ‘talked like a white girl,’ whatever that means.”*

As a small child, I didn’t really play outside until I was in the 4th grade. One of my Alameda school friends, Jamila, had moved into my neighborhood. It was nice to see a familiar face and as we started to play outside, we met other kids in the neighborhood. Jamila, who is still my best friend today, like me had been going to school in Alameda since kindergarten. When we met some of the other kids, the reaction we received was, “why y’all talk like that?” We were both a bit baffled. It wasn’t like we were speaking a different language, “why do we talk like what?” Jamila asked. “Like some white girls,” one kid replied, “Yeah, like some valley girls.” We realized that what we had in common is we both went to the same, predominantly white school nearly our entire 9-and-a-half-year-old lives. Did that make us strikingly different? We both began to hear the term “white washed” a lot. Taking the advice my mother

had given me in kindergarten, I didn't allow my differences to embarrass me. I didn't need to act differently when I went to school or when I was at home in my neighborhood. I absorbed the culture around me both at school and at home. I believe this allowed for me to relate to people of diverse backgrounds which has helped me build successful relationships despite ethnic differences.

*"Abandoning my culture would have left me empty—and it is much harder to go any further when running on empty."*

My high school was vastly different from the K-8 school I had been attending. Encinal was so diverse, it was hard to believe that it was just blocks away from the predominantly white school I had been attending. There were students from 89 different countries—that was not a typo—there was a sign that read "Students from 89 different countries" proudly displayed in our school's office. When I say Encinal was diverse, I am not just speaking of black, white, Chinese, and Mexican students. There were Nigerian, Eritrean, Ethiopian, German, Austrian, Chinese, Pacific Islander, Mexican, Dominican, Cuban, and as you can tell from the above number of 89 countries—the list goes on. Going to such a culturally diverse school where differences were celebrated solidified my mother's words from years ago. Our school had "Unity fair" where we displayed our different ethnic backgrounds through educational assemblies, food, clothing, and dance. Instead of students abandoning their cultures, even students who immigrated from other countries were encouraged to share and educate others on their culture. We learned from each other's differences and learned to successfully develop relationships with each other instead of focusing on erasing what made us so beautifully different.

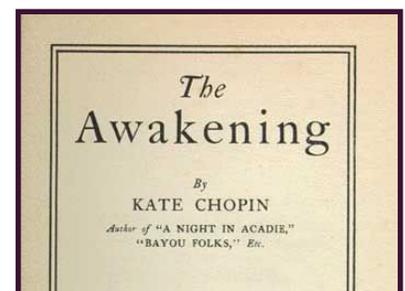
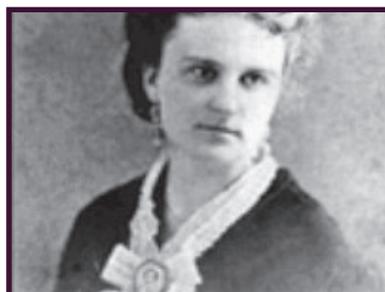
Growing up in East Oakland was much different for me given my early introduction to diverse cultural backgrounds. I attribute my success, both personal and professional, to the early lesson of absorbing the differences of others while celebrating my own. Abandoning my culture would have left me empty—and it is much harder to go any further when running on empty. Retaining my own culture while embracing others allowed me to become well-rounded. It is not impossible to embrace a different culture without abandoning our own cultures. Cultural abandonment is a detriment to our success. Success is partially about what we can bring to the table. What are we bringing to the table if we are choosing to leave a substantial portion of ourselves behind? If being "well spoken", having braids, "talking white", and being named Stesha opens a dialogue of cultural differences, I prefer to shine light on the topic rather than cast a shadow on what makes me unique.

# Chopin's Portrayal

by Tatiana Garcia

Authors have been known to write their stories influenced by their personal experiences and beliefs. Take Kate Chopin for example and her works "The Story of an Hour," "The Storm," and *The Awakening* are known to explicitly express Chopin's beliefs and experiences of marriage and women's sexuality. Chopin's writing was her only way to stand up against an 'only men' type of society in a time when women were viewed more as a property than people with rights and thoughts; Chopin, from the perspective of a woman, wrote to condemn society as it was. Seeing as it was odd for someone, especially a woman, to step out of 'normality' Chopin was viewed as an agitator in her time. In her works of "The Story of an Hour," "The Storm," and *The Awakening* Chopin was set to go against the grain of her society; she attempts to show her society that women were not content in the tiny position given to them.

Chopin's novel *The Awakening* brought out what labeled her as an agitator in her time, the 1890's. The novel is about Edna Pontellier, an unhappy woman, who falls in love with Robert Lebrun, who was not her husband, only to have an affair with another man, Alcee Arobin. In the novel, Chopin includes her own displeasure concerning the obligations a marriage entailed. Chopin writes, "Another time she would have gone in at his [her husband's] request...not with any sense of...obedience to his compelling wishes, but unthinkingly, as we walk, move, sit, stand, go through the daily treadmill of life which has been portioned out to us" (Chopin). Chopin uses the third person view of Edna, to refer to herself and all the women of that time. She uses Edna as a proxy to describe the way society thought married women were expected to respond towards their husbands but also how it was for women to reject such expectations. To many of that society, the idea of a woman doing the unexpected or being influenced to do the unexpected was abhorred. In addition, her short story, "The Story of an Hour,"



she depicted marriage as a constraint in a woman's life rather than what most in that era would call a blessing. Chopin's character Mrs. Mallard viewed her marriage as a form of duty, where her life did not belong to herself but to her husband: "But she saw beyond that bitter moment a long procession of years to come that would belong to her absolutely...There would be no one to live for during those coming years; she would live for herself" (Chopin 227). Chopin wrote Mrs. Mallard's character to feel relief and a sense of freedom as opposed to grief after hearing of her husband's death. With her writing, Chopin denounces the normalcy and expectations that married women had in her time.

*"Seeing as it was odd for someone, especially a woman, to step out of 'normality' Chopin was viewed as an agitator in her time."*

An ongoing theme in Chopin's writing was sexual freedom among her female protagonists. Sex in Chopin's writing, meant different things for her characters. In *The Awakening*, Edna's character faces her sexual affair without grief but it becomes the start of something new in her life. "There was a dull pang of regret because it was not the kiss of love which had inflamed her, because it was not love which had held this cup of life to her lips" (Chopin). To Edna the affair opens up a whole new world for her; one where she realizes that her life does not belong to anyone: "I am no longer one of Mr. Pontellier's possessions to dispose of or not. I give myself where I choose" (Chopin). In the short story "The Storm," Chopin paints the encounter as a natural part of life; there are no consequences had and the characters' affairs do not ruin their marriages. To the characters in "The Storm" sex is used to release pent up emotions; the character Calixta fears for the safety of her son and husband instead she is assisted in dissolving that feeling by her past lover: "As she glanced up at him the fear in her liquid blue eyes had given place to drowsy gleam that unconsciously betrayed a sensuous desire" (Chopin 315). Chopin believed a woman should be able to venture into her own relationships without being criticized. As stated by Stein Allen in his literary criticism of "The Storm," "Though the story cannot by the very nature of its subject do other than seem to invite judgement of some sort about the behavior of its principles, it simultaneously subverts the legitimacy of any judgement that one might impose, be it positive, negative or tentative, and posits instead implicitly...of reality to the human need..." Allen felt that Chopin's story is open to be judged by those who believe affairs are unhealthy or disruptive. The story also has the potential to rebuke any say of judgement because in the end no one was punished. The fact that Chopin did not even try to submit this story for publication depicts how out of the norm Chopin was among her peers, *The Awakening* had created an abundance of remarks about her and adding to the fire would not help. However, this piece could have been more for herself than to stand up against social norms.

*"She uses Edna as a proxy to describe the way society thought married women were expected to respond towards their husbands but also how it was for women to reject such expectations."*

It is true that many authors take their own personal experiences into their writings and the same goes for Chopin herself. Chopin was raised in a fatherless household, her father having died in a railroad accident similar to Mrs. Mallard's husband in "The Story of an Hour," and during her time many girls her age were viewed more as properties and offerings for financial stability with future husbands. More than likely, Chopin's writing of "The Story of an Hour" was her feelings of how she would have felt if her father had not died, his death giving her more leniency than any woman in that era had. Just like Mrs. Mallard, Chopin possibly "carried herself unwittingly like a goddess of Victory" (Chopin 228) for a short time in her life until her marriage at the age of nineteen where the freedom she experienced soon became absent and she felt what other women had been feeling their entire lives and like Mrs. Mallard, she could not adjust. *The Awakening* and "The Storm" both deal with affairs; Edna's affair does not end smoothly whereas Calixta's affair brings relief. Similar to her female characters, Chopin had her own affair with a married man named Albert Sampite and it was her experience with Sampite that assisted in giving Chopin material to write Edna's extramarital activities. Emily Toth expressed in her book, *Kate Chopin*, that "her [Chopin's] relationship with Albert Sampite was...what shaped what she wrote about women and men, and love and lust and forbidden desires" (Toth 169). Toth also states that Sampite's name can be abbreviated as Alcee, a name given by Chopin to characters with whom her female characters have had sexual encounters. In *The Awakening*, the only person who Edna had sex with is Alcee Arobin, despite the fact that she loved Robert; the same goes for Calixta in "The Storm," she has an affair with Alcee Laballiere and then happily welcomed her husband and son home from the storm.

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*"To Edna the affair opens up a whole new world for her; one where she realizes that her life does not belong to anyone."*

Chopin was a woman who was familiar with both social and sexual freedom in a time when women had to be obedient and pure. Her society viewed her as a rebel influencer to women because of her stories, which gave women fictional freedom and rights to situations which were rarely given to women of that era. Her desire for women wanting to live for themselves in a male-biased marriage was represented in her writing "The Story of an Hour," and her belief that a woman could find love or take

part in a sexual relationship outside of their marriage shocked many in her writing of *The Awakening*. Her experiences helped assist in her writing, and through her writing she helped portray the constant rejection women were receiving from their society.



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