

Delta Winds 2017

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Volume 30

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Editors

William Agopsowicz
Robert Bini

Division Dean

Languages, Library, and
Learning Resources
Joe Gonzales
Sheli Ayers

Layout Design

Christopher Almaguer

Founding Editor

(1991-1996)
Jane Dominik

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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 us to take over the reins of her project, which by then had become well-received in the English Department. We agreed under the condition that her biannual publication become an annual publication. We knew we could never keep up with Jane’s pace, but we figured that two of us could do half the work that she did. And even so, it would be a challenge.

Since that time, as co-editors, we have continued to identify student essays deserving of a wider reading audience. Thanks to a sabbatical leave in 2000, we were able to create an online version of *Delta Winds* to complement the print version. In doing so, we 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 our door, requesting to reprint *Delta Winds* essays in their textbooks. This fall, one of the publishers will print 75,000 copies of a textbook containing a *Delta Winds* essay. And that will mark the thirteenth republication of a *Delta Winds* essay by a nation-wide publisher.

Perhaps our most important contribution, though, is as stewards of the written words of these Delta College students. For it is the words that hold significance and have remained permanent. It is the words that have moved the readers to tears, to outbursts, to moments of recognition of self. In our classrooms, our students find *Delta Winds* essays written years earlier that reveal something of themselves in the present—essays that reveal enough for the readers to gain the strength to share their own opinions, personal experiences, fears, and doubts with their classmates and instructors. Through this process, we have connected with our student authors in ways that we had never anticipated when we took on the responsibility of the magazine.

In some instances, their printed words have outlived the authors. Sadly, over the years, we have learned of a number of student authors who have passed away due to illness or accident. But by continuing to read their essays, we hope to pay tribute to what they shared one day in an assignment for an English class.

Other student authors have become professionals in a range of fields. From the list of student authors, we know of lawyers, software engineers, entrepreneurs, web designers, police officers, nurses, and English teachers. Some of the student authors have even become our colleagues here at Delta College.

Each volume of the magazine would never have been published without the help of personnel in the print shop, the backing from the administration, the cooperation from the staff and faculty in the English Department, and, of course, the courage of the numerous students who cautiously submitted their personal creations. We have too many names to thank for their participation in this project.

As in 1991, we still produce 800 print copies and sell the magazine for \$2.00 in the bookstore. But, now, twenty-one years after we agreed to Jane Dominik's request, we sign off with this last volume under our editorship, fully confident that the magazine is in good hands. Now, it is our turn to pass the reins to the capable hands of two recently-hired full-time colleagues in the English Department—Kathleen McKilligan and Eric MacDonald. We wish them well in their tenure as editors of the magazine.

What we mistook for a departmental responsibility when we started as co-editors of the magazine became for us a labor of love. And like all loving relationships, the magazine nurtured and sustained us as we believe and hope that we have done in return.



Amber Feng was a Middle College High School student. Currently, she is attending UC Berkeley to pursue a Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration, which she hopes to use to further the progress of women's sports.

THE DANGERS OF FOSSIL FUELS

by Amber Feng

The Earth's atmosphere today is far from clean. Many types of pollution fill the air humans breathe. This problem is largely due to the fact that most countries have been excessively reliant on fossil fuels since the start of the Industrial Revolution. Fossil fuels are made of organic matter that has been compressed for thousands of years beneath the earth's surface. The process that forms fossil fuels is extensive and time-consuming. The amount of time it takes for fossil fuels to be produced makes these fuels exhaustible sources of energy, and at the speed with which the world is consuming them today, they will quickly be depleted.

This, however, is not the only problem with the world's excessive dependence on fossil fuels. The burning of these fuels releases many harmful gases, which are damaging to the health of humans. These emissions are not regulated tightly enough, as Neela Banerjee and Tony Barboza, writers for the *Los Angeles Times*, explain in "EPA to Propose Stricter Ozone Limit; A Tighter Standard Could Bring Cleaner Air to Millions. But Critics See a Threat to Jobs." Banerjee and Barboza state that the current limit for ground-level smog is 75 parts per billion, which is not low enough to protect people's health. No other legislation has been passed that would reform the limit and lower it to ensure better civilian health (par. 3). Banerjee and Barboza add that the opponents of a tighter standard, who are mainly "the oil industry, power companies and other industries, along with their mostly Republican

allies in Congress, contend that a tighter ozone standard would damage the economy and send manufacturing jobs overseas" (par. 6).

Opponents argue that the ozone standard is healthy as is, and a new law would only harm the economy and the world. There is also controversy over whether the burning of fossil fuels and the resulting release of greenhouse gases cause global warming. Despite the staunch opposition, there is overwhelmingly clear scientific evidence that global warming is affected by humans. Findings by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention should erase all doubts about the existence of global warming and climate change, however ("Climate Change Controversies"). Michael Mann identified the average temperatures

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from tree rings, coral reefs, and ice cores. Mann then compared the temperatures he re-

corded to the temperatures from 1000 AD to 1800 AD. His results are worth noting. The temperature of the northern hemisphere had been fairly constant from 1000-1900 AD (a 900-year period). Once the year passes 1900, however, the temperatures shoot up at an alarming rate ("Climate Change Controversies"). In just over 100 years, the temperature of the northern hemisphere has increased to almost three times what it was for the 900 years before. The Industrial Revolution began to spread across the world about fifty years earlier, and fossil fuels were burned with a new vigor, which resulted in the release of a significant amount of greenhouse gases. While correlation may



not mean causation, many other scientific studies have also linked greenhouse gases to global warming, and one would be hard-pressed to find reliable evidence to counter Mann's findings.

The damage burning fossil fuels can cause was not widely known until fairly recently. But most nations have become dependent upon these fuels. The three main fossil fuels are coal, petroleum, and gas. According to "History of Fossil Fuel Usage since the Industrial Revolution," fossil fuels have played a large role in the world's development. The world came to depend heavily on

fossil fuels after the Industrial Revolution began. The reserves

of fossil fuels were seemingly endless, and coal, unlike many other fuels, could be used in its natural form. These and many other advantages caused many countries to switch from agrarian fuels to fossil fuels, which elevated the popularity of fossil fuels to new heights (par. 2).

The controversy around fossil fuels is widespread. Coral Davenport, a writer for the *New York Times*, touches on the different ideas people have in "Obama Pursuing Climate Accord in Lieu of Treaty." Scientists warn that people are already experiencing the effects of human-induced

global warming: severe droughts, more wildfires, rising sea levels, and devastat-

ing tropical storms. These scientists contend that action needs to be taken quickly. However, as Davenport explains, many people "remain skeptical of the established science of human-caused global warming" (par. 5), and, as a result, are skeptical of the negative effects burning fossil fuels may have. These critics do not

believe that burning fossil fuels is a problem, at least environmentally. Davenport also explains that many efforts have been made to curb these emissions, but efforts such as the Kyoto Protocol did not have the intended consequences. A large number of people believe that not much can be done to mitigate the problems burning fossil fuels causes.

Banerjee and Barboza point out another side of the debate: some parties claim that if efforts are made to curb fossil fuel emissions, the American economy may be endangered. The people with this mindset

argue that "a tighter ozone standard would damage the economy and

send manufacturing jobs overseas. Even some nonpartisan experts such as former regulators worry that a deep cut to the ozone implemented too fast could hammer local economies" (par. 6). This only adds another dimension to the ongoing debate surrounding fossil fuels.

There are also many social implications of burning fossil fuels; particularly, the emissions from burning fossil fuels are detrimental to human health. "The Health Care Burden of Fossil Fuels" reveals the somewhat shocking number of health problems and illnesses caused by partic-

ulate pollution from fossil-fueled power plants in 2013. In fact, over 30,000

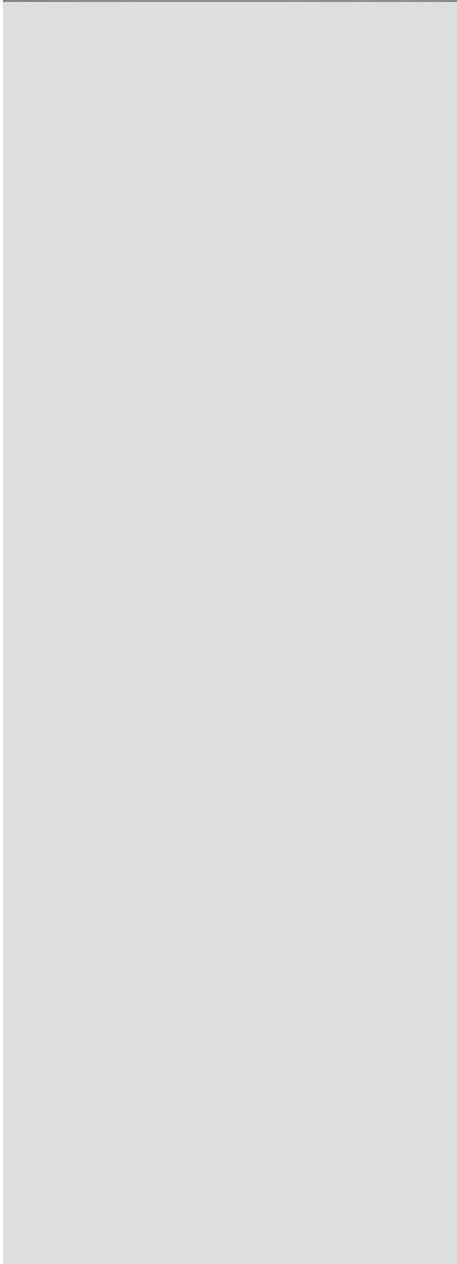
premature deaths in 2013 are believed to be caused by pollution from fossil-fueled power plants. Referred to as "the human cost of energy," diseases caused by the burning of fossil fuels directly affect each and every human being.

Robert Polack, a professor of social work,

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Shelly Wood, a researcher, and Kimyatta Smith, a graduate student, analyze how the United States has come to be so dependent on fossil fuels in “An Analysis of Fossil-Fuel Dependence in the United States with Implications for Community Social Work.” Pollack, Wood, and Smith explain the sectors of society that depend on fossil fuels, including transportation (both public and personal), the food industry, home heating, and, above all, energy production. These four groups cover most citizens’ lives, illuminating just how dependent people are on fossil fuels (par. 3). The authors state that “personal transportation also became highly dependent on petroleum during the post-WWII era. . . . [The] system is highly dependent on petroleum for fueling commercial and personal vehicles and in its construction and maintenance. The movement of goods and people is now heavily reliant on fossil fuels, with 96% of all transportation utilizing petroleum” (par. 5). The food industry is also dependent on fossil fuels, as “current food production requires 10 units of fossil-fuel-derived energy for every unit of food produced” (par. 6). Polack, Wood, and Smith describe the possible ramifications of being dependent on fossil fuels, stating that petroleum production has been steadily declining, but demand for petroleum has not: “Since the 1980s, and accelerating in recent years, world consumption has dramatically outpaced discovery, with about four barrels consumed for every barrel discovered during 2002; moreover, production is now declining in two thirds of oil-producing countries” (par. 12).

Unfortunately, the political environment surrounding fossil fuels is not as clear-cut. Most politicians are reluctant to ad-

There are also many social implications of burning fossil fuels; particularly, the emissions from burning fossil fuels are detrimental to human health.

Most politicians are reluctant to address the issue of fossil fuels and how they affect climate change.

dress the issue of fossil fuels and how they affect climate change. Banjeree and Barboza note that Republicans and Democrats are often split over the issue, which leads to a standstill in Congress over climate-change legislation. As a result, President Obama has tried to bypass Congress, but this only leads to more dissent from Republicans (par. 8). Davenport further clarifies the political mood surrounding climate change, explaining that “there is no chance that the currently gridlocked Senate will ratify a climate change treaty in the near future, especially in a political environment where many Republican lawmakers remain skeptical of the established science of human-caused global warming” (par. 5). As a result, most politicians are reluctant to even discuss climate change.

The fossil fuels used now are damaging to both the environment and to people’s health. Despite the ramifications of using fossil fuels, most of the world has become excessively dependent on them, which does not bode well for the future. There are many social implications in being so dependent on fossil fuels; the store of fossil fuels will not last forever, and the burning of fossil fuels has proven to be detrimental to both human health and the environment. The transition to renewable energy will not be immediate, but it must happen if we are to have a cleaner, better, and healthier world.



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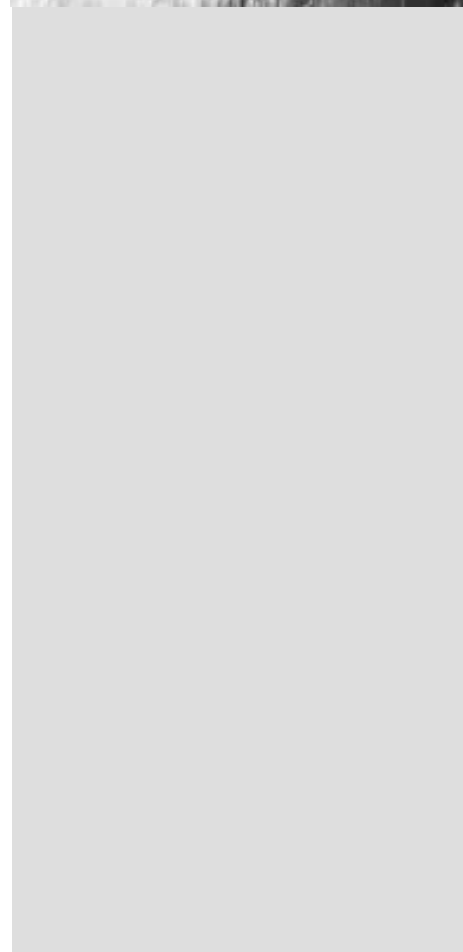
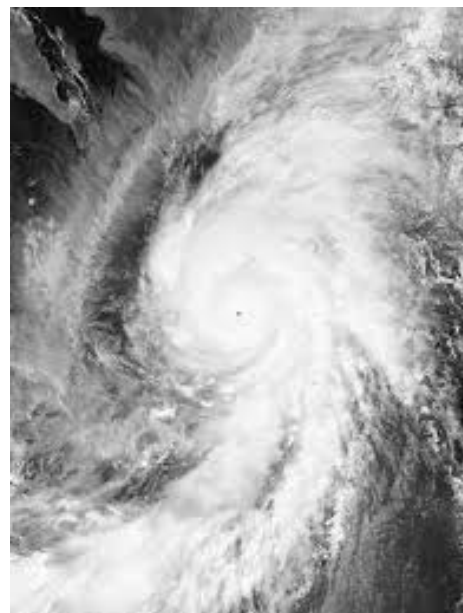
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Denisse Chacón is a lifelong learner intrigued by many subjects, including languages, politics, and science. Her love for learning led her to study French in Morocco and social movements in Mexico. In 2011, she received her bachelor's degree from Linfield College in Oregon. She then went on to teach English in Spain and Hungary. Upon her return to the U.S. she began studying science and is now pursuing a nursing career at Delta College.



A FOREIGNER IN RABAT:

An Analysis of Conformity in Moroccan Culture Using the Concepts of Ruggiero and Allport

by Denisse Chacón

Resting face down, I lay flat and completely naked on the tile floor as the tall dark woman (who was naked too) scrubbed my body from head to toe. I didn't speak Arabic or French, but she insisted on showing me the filth on the scrubber; I imagine she was imploring

me to bathe more often. The bathhouse environment did not suit my preconceived notions of what restrictive Moroccan life ought to be like. The decorative bathhouse, also known as a *hammam*, was an enormous, obscure, and steamy room occupied with women bathing and being bathed. In the U.S. it would be taboo to be entirely nude in a sauna and—god forbid!—to come into contact with a naked employee of the sauna. My experience taught me that, as an American, I am not exempt from living in a restrictive society. However, my familiarity with American culture disguised the restrictions I conformed to. Living as a foreigner in Rabat, Morocco, allowed me to appreciate the freedoms and restrictions I took for granted in the U.S. and exposed me to an unfamiliar way of living.

Upon my arrival, I found that my cultural ignorance resulted in numerous unforeseen occasions where I was scolded or laughed at for my inappropriate in-group behavior. In those dreaded incidents, I often wondered, how did Moroccans decide what correct behavior was and why did people

yield to these unwritten rules of behavior? Vincent Ruggiero's and Gordon Allport's concepts of perception, truth, and in-group loyalty offer us insight into the parameters of conformity and the reasons people conform.

Living as a foreigner in Rabat, Morocco, allowed me to appreciate the freedoms and restrictions I took for granted in the U.S. and exposed me to an unfamiliar way of living.

Perception can be defined as the lens we use to see and interpret the world (Ruggiero 33). Ruggiero explains that as chil-

dren, "We are told about the world before we see it. We imagine most things before we experience them. And those preconceptions . . . govern deeply the whole process of perception" (33). In other words, we acquire perception first and then experience the world according to our existing perception. When I arrived in Rabat, my host-parents warned me not to leave the house without a male companion and without "proper" apparel. Unaware of what great upheaval I would create, I chose to leave early one morning, alone, wearing jeans and my hijab. I yearned to wander the cobblestoned alleys of the medieval labyrinth that surrounded me. During

Unaware of what great upheaval I would create, I chose to leave early one morning, alone, wearing jeans and my hijab

the day, the narrow streets of the walled city grew heavily congested with businesses and food stands

occupying every inch of space available. I wanted to take a peaceful walk before the businesses opened, to admire the white walls, the arched wooden doors, and the leafed rooftops that pieced together the

medina. That day it became crystal clear that in Rabat it was absolutely forbidden for a woman to leave home alone wearing jeans

and a hijab; doing so was the

Convinced that her faith led to the ultimate path of Truth, she began by gifting Christian Bibles (which are illegal in Morocco) to our host relatives.

equivalent of a promiscuous whore leading virtuous men to sin. If perhaps I had not worn a hijab, I might have been dismissed as a tourist. Regardless, most Americans would agree that there was nothing wrong with wearing jeans; most Moroccans would argue the opposite. Ruggiero states, "To a greater or lesser extent, what we regard as our unique perspective bears the imprint of other people's ideas and beliefs" (34). Therefore, we do not form our own judgment; we adapt our thinking to the judgment already in place in the geographic location and era that we are born into.

Given the numerous perceptions among diverse cultures world-wide, how then do people find the correct and righteous path? Ruggiero answers this by stating, "It is foolish to look for guarantees of correctness—there are none" (66). One evening

during dinner, my devoted Christian roommate, Kaitlyn, decided it was her calling to evangelize our Moroccan family. Con-

If it is evident that perception is flawed and lifestyles are not entirely righteous, why then do people continue to conform to their culture?

vinced that her faith led to the ultimate path of Truth, she began by gifting Christian Bibles (which are illegal in Morocco) to our host relatives. Straightaway, I clarified I was not Christian and that Allah had my utmost respect; then I sat back as I witnessed the incredulous dialogue unfold. Kaitlyn boldly asserted, "The Holy Bible was written before the Quran; therefore, it shows us the correct way to follow God." Appalled, Issam (who refused to translate the statement to his father) assured Kaitlyn that "the Quran is the correct way because it includes the things the

Bible left out." It became evident that in both religions "[truth] was considered an understanding among the gods, or an idea

in the mind of God" (Ruggiero

32). Neither party could support claims with evidence. No one was knowledgeable about concrete historical dates or the spread of their religion. In this sense, religion provided an all-encompassing "security blanket" that contained pre-packaged opinions about morality (Ruggiero 35). People tend to assume that the religion of their predecessors is flawless. However, this can be misleading. "Because assuming stifles curiosity and guessing denies the importance of evidence, neither is likely to lead to knowledge" (Ruggiero 55). Consequently, it is hopeless and intellectually irresponsible to assume there is only one righteous way to live (Ruggiero 36).

If it is evident that perception is flawed and lifestyles are not entirely righteous, why then do people continue to conform to their culture? Prior to our arrival in Rabat, as Kaitlyn and I boarded the ferry, I

declared, "I will never submit to wearing a hijab!" While waiting in line, I noticed an old woman struggling to carry her belongings. After I had helped her, the grateful old woman insisted on gifting me with a hijab and teaching me how to wear it. Seeing I was clumsy, she gracefully arranged the colorful hijab over my hair. How could I refuse such a kind gesture? That's when it occurred to me that I was conforming, and the ferry had not even left the Port of Gibraltar. Ruggiero writes, "Loyalty and affection toward the people or things involved may distort our vision" (34). Furthermore, it is this distorted vision that paves the way for conformity. As I noticed that every woman on the ferry





wore a hijab, I decided I preferred to camouflage myself rather than to let my radiant red hair scream I was a foreigner. In Rabat, my host-family was my only connection to Moroccan life, and I grew attached to them even when I didn't agree or understand their ideas. Allport writes that a child "does

not wait for understanding before he develops fiercer in-group loyalties" (46). Though I was an adult, my dependence on my host-family and my fear of being scolded summoned me to conform. Allport states that a child "normally would be attached to his clan anyway, simply because it is an inescapable part of his life" (47). In the case of children who are reliant on their families in every sense, "[t]his attachment to one's being is basic to human life" (Allport 47). I was no different than a child when I arrived in Rabat since, in order to successfully adapt to the new setting, I needed my host-family.

My six-month journey in Rabat ended in the fall of 2011; however, the memories and lessons continue to follow me to this day. For one, I learned that the strangers who allowed me into their home were no different than I. The members of the Jamay family and I shared the same fears of being reprimanded and the same need to feel loved and accepted. The difference rested in our geographic locations, which were governed by different moral codes. A friend of mine put it simply: "If you travel to the land of purple and green people, you will find they are just like you." We are the same species; we may wear different colored lenses, but no view is superior or truer than the other. They are simply the lenses we were given by our parents, and we continue to see the world through these lenses. Although initially using ready-made lenses is practical and necessary to make life comprehensible, as we grow older, we are capable of

crafting our own lenses and making our own educated judgment. Being abroad enabled me to see beyond the scope of familiarity. It was my willingness to conform rather than my ability to question that allowed me to adapt successfully. In return, I gained a new perspective about

the inherent human drive to conform.

That's when it occurred to me that I was conforming, and the ferry had not even left the Port of Gibraltar.



Being abroad enabled me to see beyond the scope of familiarity.

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Positive Influence and Persistence:

A Film Review of *McFarland, USA*

by Elijah Martinez

Anger, persistence, determination, hope: these are some of the emotions experienced in the pursuit of a worthwhile goal. *McFarland, USA*, directed by Niki Caro, tells the story of a disgraced former football coach who teaches a band of Latino laborers how to push themselves beyond their presumed capacity, reaching for greater heights than they thought possible. The film highlights the positive influence of a white man on minority youths and the positive impact they and their families have on him. The film also celebrates the power of persistence and urges audiences to examine and reject stereotypes. This film was especially meaningful to me because of similarities between a character in the movie and a high school teacher who changed my life.

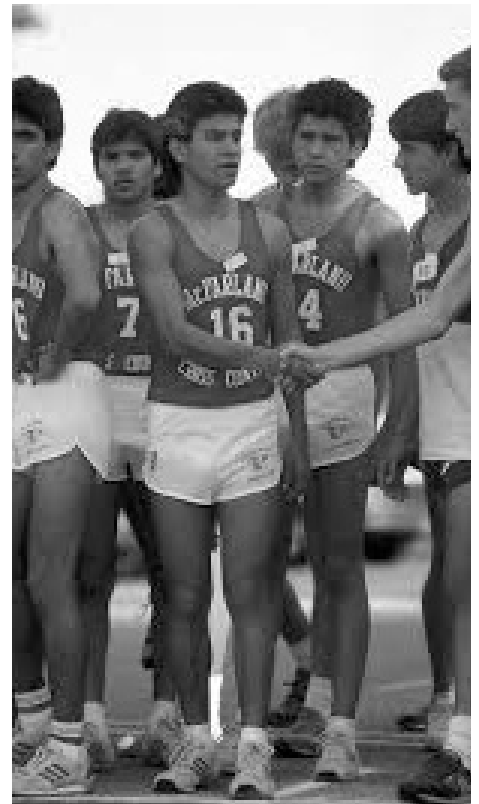
The theme of influence appears throughout this film. The film opens with a high school football game. During halftime, an inspirational speech delivered by Coach Jim White goes awry. While the speech conveys Jim's passion for competitive sport, it reveals the only difference between "anger" and "danger" is a "d." Leaders often lose influence when they lose control of their emotions. After his anger results in a teenager getting injured, Coach White finds his only option for employment is in one of the poorest cities in America. Once he brings his family to McFarland, Jim's character changes,

as his sympathy for others grows.

This sympathy expands gradually when he meets the members of his high school cross country team. Although he has no experience with cross country, he is assigned to be the coach. When Jim handpicks his team, he specifically chooses Danny Diaz, the slowest runner, on the basis that Danny will bring his faster brothers, and for this Danny is labeled as the anchor of the

McFarland, USA, directed by Niki Caro, tells the story of a disgraced former football coach who teaches a band of Latino laborers how to push themselves beyond their presumed capacity,

team. As Jim trains the young men, he begins to see students for who they are, individuals with families and issues. This is heavily emphasized when the Diaz brothers quit the team in order to help their father pick in the fields. Jim volunteers to help them pick so they will be able to make practice, and it is in the fields among them he realizes in just one day the hardships these young men endure every day. Coach White learns of the hardships of another athlete on the team—Thomas Valles. Valles is so distraught over his home-life with a drunken father that he ultimately contemplates suicide. Finding Thomas sitting on the edge of a bridge, Coach White connects with the young man, talking him out of jumping, and helping him channel his frustration through running. As the coach makes these bonds with each member of his team, he encourages them to consider that there is more to life than just picking in the fields, pointing them in the direction of college.





Throughout the film, the power of persistence is prevalent. Coach White is determined to see his team succeed through vigorous training for long hours. Although McFarland High does not win their first race, they do not lose hope; they adjust to their

environment, training by running up hills consistently. Early in the film, Johnny Samaniego, one of the runners on the cross country team, says to Coach White, “It’s not the size of the dog in the fight; it’s the size of the fight in the dog.” It is not until the very end of the movie that this quote is given full meaning when Danny Diaz, the slowest and heaviest runner of the team, shows an incredible display of perseverance by pushing himself to run faster, ultimately winning the race for his team.

Pervasive stereotyping can be found on many occasions throughout this film. On his family’s first night in McFarland, when they are exiting

a Mexican restaurant, Jim White observes a gathering of Latinos in their lowriders and, based on their vehicles and attire, makes the hasty conclusion that they must be thugs. Subsequent stereotypes include the Diaz family all working in the fields to make ends meet, their entire lives. Later, Thomas’s father discourages him from furthering his education stating, “No one ever needed a book in the fields,” implying that he will never be anything more than a picker, fulfilling the stereotype of uneducated Mexicans.

The film works to break down these stereotypes with characters such as Javi, who Jim assumes is a thug but who turns out to be a humble and peaceful man, trying to live an honest life. Javi also breaks down the misogynist label placed on many Mexican men by the vast extent of love he

shows for his girlfriend, even painting her portrait on the hood of his car. Mrs. Diaz is shown to be an exemplary mother who values her sons’ education and even teaches Jim White a lesson about the importance of family.

“It’s not the size of the dog in the fight; it’s the size of the fight in the dog.”

Thomas Valles’ father breaks from his stereotype by attending the state championship meet and embracing his son’s triumph there. At the end of the film, the final toppling of stereotypes is revealed when it is noted that every member of the McFarland cross country team attended college, becoming teachers, landowners, and accomplished individuals, even though not a single member of any of their families had previously completed the ninth grade.

As I watched this movie, I could easily relate to the morals taught and the issues presented, some of which mirrored those found in my family. Many of my ancestors crossed the Mexican border into the United States

illegally and became living embodiments of Latino stereotypes, settling across California in small towns similar to McFarland. These family members worked in the fields or became street thugs, driving lowriders and dressing in the attire portrayed in *McFarland, USA*. A vast majority of my aunts and uncles dropped out of middle school and high school, influenced by their parents, much like the father of Thomas Valles telling his son he would never need a book when working in the fields.

While a great majority of distant family lived and died in the fields or succumbed to gang violence, I had an experience somewhat similar to that of the runners. When I was thirteen, my family moved to Fresno for a short time. During my stay there, I met several cousins, all around my

age, who had dropped out of high school to work as landscapers. Their parents strongly encouraged me to do so as well, as they saw it as an easy lifestyle. I might have followed in their footsteps if not for

While a great majority of distant family lived and died in the fields or succumbed to gang violence, I had an experience somewhat similar to that of the runners.

the influence of a math teacher, who along with my mother encouraged me to believe that I could do more with my life than mow someone's lawn. Due to this teacher's influence, I was able to graduate from high school a year early and make a plan to attend Delta College and prepare for a career in the medical field. That teacher motivated me just as Coach White motivated his runners, pushing them to break the stereotypes and to go to college—to become more than just pickers in fields.

McFarland, USA is an inspirational film tracking the cross country team as they march to their goal of state championship. *McFarland, USA* paints a vivid image of the living conditions and stereotypes many poor Latino families endure, working endlessly just to make ends meet. Among the families of *McFarland*, I could see many of my distant relatives. They still live to this day engulfed in poverty. In the figure of Mrs. Diaz, I could see my own mother giving me the courage to persevere in school. And just as Jim White saw potential in his team and granted them the opportunity to prove that they were more than just pickers, my math teacher saw potential in me and helped me find the path to a brighter future



THROUGH THE KILL ZONE

by James Shahan



The “kill zone” is often referred to as the blast radius of an explosive device or the area of immediate danger during an attack. Typically, if a roadside bomb were to go off, the driver would put pedal to metal instead of stopping in place as small-arms fire would sometimes follow the explosion. To “get through the kill zone” usually means pushing through the dangerous part to get to safety.

I was half passed out and fully drunk, lying in the back seat of my Galant on the side of the road in a small parking lot in Brazoria County, Texas. In the four months I’d been back in country after my second trip to Iraq, I’d left the Army to try to save my marriage and spend time with my one-year-old daughter, whom I hadn’t seen since she was born. I had no job, no place of my own, damn near no money, no plan, nothing. What I did have was a wife who was set on divorcing me, a horrible drinking problem, and in-laws who were ready to kick me out of their house because of all the fighting between my wife and me. So far, I’d applied to wash dishes at a diner, to make hamburgers at a fast food place, and to be a pipefitter, which I had absolutely no idea how to do. I could drive and load an Abrams tank. I could place a lovely dime-size shot group with a rifle on a man-sized target at 300 meters with ease. I could coordinate attack air support or send reports up to colonels and generals. I couldn’t get my wife to love me anymore. I couldn’t stop wishing I’d died in Iraq with everyone else.

I had no job, no place of my own, damn near no money, no plan, nothing.

This is not going to be a happy story.

I don’t know how it ends because my life hasn’t ended. It probably won’t have the character or plot development of a standard creative writing piece, but the people who’ve been through this before will understand this story, and that’s all that matters to me. I don’t know what you were doing between the ages of 19-23, but before my 19th birthday, I would see someone killed in front of me for the first time. Slightly after my 21st birthday, I knew someone who was captured, held prisoner, and later executed by people who only knew hate. When I was 23, I learned that one of my mentors, along with his truck crew, had been killed by a suicide bomber. I never cried so hard for so long.

Everyone always thinks when you come home from a war, you arrive to a hero’s welcome with city-wide parades and streamers and dancing in the streets. I came home from one war only to buttonhook right into another. I literally had no plan for the next day, let alone the rest of my life.

After my divorce paperwork was signed, sealed, and decreed, I had to make a life-changing decision: Do I stay in Texas with my daughter and try to create a new life on my own, or do I move back to California, where all my family, friends and support networks are? After a few drinks, followed by a few more drinks, I decided. What do you do when you’re 21 and 100% out of options? The same thing you did when you were 12 and out of options: you call dad. I road-tripped with my dad from Houston to Sacramento. Dad had spent some time in the 10th Special Forc-

es Group jumping out of planes at an altitude so high he had to wear an oxygen mask, so he knew how to relate. We rented a U-Haul truck and loaded it with what few possessions I owned. Before the ink could dry on my divorce paperwork, Texas and my daughter were in my rear view.

Upon arrival at my parents' house, I was greeted by some of my best friends, who knew exactly what I needed to perk my spirits up: to

consume my weight in liquor and smoke a field of marijuana.

That night I learned that the shot of Grand Marnier that comes with Cadillac margaritas was intended to be poured and mixed into the drink and not treated like a shot of whiskey to be thrown back before inhaling margaritas. According to legend, I got so high and drunk that I low-crawled to my buddies' 8-hose-bong, constructed from a 5-gallon water jug, and proceeded to low-crawl back to the couch, where I blacked out. I was hung over for three days. After much deep thought and soul searching in the bathroom, I decided I needed to pull my head out of the toilet and make something of my life.

I needed to live each day in honor of those I knew who had left this

world. I enrolled in community college with my GI Bill, and got a job as a security guard. Was I on my way to starting a Fortune 500 company? No. But it was a start—or so I thought.

I hated college. I thought it was full of self-absorbed children who cared nothing about the world they lived in or the people in it. I was angry at everything around me: guys sagging their pants far below the fourth point of contact, those jackasses who were always talking on speaker phone or playing loud music from their

phone, people who complained about their meaningless first world problems like their boyfriends not texting back fast enough or the free campus Wi-Fi wasn't good enough. Everything pissed me off. I quickly found myself getting off work in the morning, driving to class, getting blackout drunk in the parking lot, and riding that buzz all day. Sometimes I'd need a drink or four halfway into the school day just to make it to the end. I felt completely

and desperately alone. I felt like there was no one I could talk to who could relate to

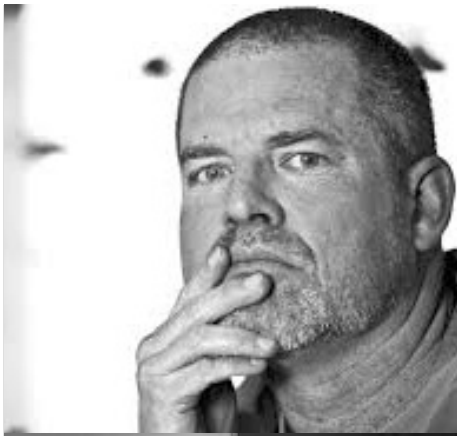
me on any issue that was slowly forming an ulcer in my soul, and I didn't want to burden my own family with my problems because I got myself into that mess, so I felt it was my duty to get myself out. I did what most of us (Veterans) do: suffer in silence. One fuzzy, whiskey-infused day, I saw a flyer on campus announcing "Veterans Club meeting today." It was being run by Kolin, who was a Special Needs counselor and former Abrams tank loader from my old unit in Texas. The first meeting consisted of me, Kolin, a Navy corpsman who spent most of his time with the Marine infantry, and

a few others. We pretty much spent the first meeting talking about how much we hated everyone else around us and regaling each other with glorious tales of taxpayer-funded intoxication during our service days. We'd all instantly found a home in the Veterans Club, and the first few meetings consisted of welcoming newcomers, telling jokes that would be banned from most major television networks, talking about our many physical and mental injuries, and which liquor paired well with what pill to help settle them. I was a Wild Turkey and Ibuprofen guy. I called that drink "A Good Mood."

After much deep thought and soul searching in the bathroom, I decided I needed to pull my head out of the toilet and make something of my life.

I hated college. I thought it was full of self-absorbed children who cared nothing about the world they lived in or the people in it.





I would later become the President of the American River College Veterans Club. I found other Veterans on campus and told them about the club. Finding other Veterans was simple: clean shaven, fit looking,

probably some kind of tactical backpack that was poorly designed to not look

tactical, and an easily identifiable t-shirt usually having something gun related on it. I was making flyers, putting fundraiser bbq's together, meeting other campus clubs, and sharing stories of struggle. I was using everything I'd learned from the Army and applying it to something I loved just as much as serving. If I hadn't joined that club, I probably would have dropped out of college entirely just because I wasn't mentally ready for the social transition.

Within a few months of working for Securitas, I was asked to work in its Critical Infrastructure branch. I went from standing in a Wells Fargo for \$9 an hour in West Sacramento to working an armed, confidential federal contract in Solano County for \$25 an hour. I was also blessed enough to have Veterans and former police officers as co-workers. Now I was surrounded with those who shared my contempt for most of modern, hipster society, and that made me childishly giddy. I was also being mentored in the profession I wanted to be in, law enforcement.

Since I was an armed security guard, I had to maintain licenses. This required me to spend money. This also required my co-workers to do the same. We had to spend a lot of money to maintain and renew our firearms permit, first aid certifications, etc. I attended all the mandatory training and concluded that it wasn't any-

thing only a rocket scientist could teach. After some Google searches and budgeting, I asked, "Why can't I do that? Why can't I teach this stuff?" And my training business was born. I was doing all the

I did what most of us (Veterans) do: suffer in silence.

training we needed in-house except for shooting. I was cheaper and easier than the competition because I was doing all the administrative and operational stuff out of my apartment. I got all my fancy NRA and Red Cross instructor certifications. I had been behind a trigger long enough to develop a firearms program that enabled an appropriate skillset progression.

Today, my business offers security license and concealed weapons training. I don't have employees, and I don't hire anyone. I run it with my friends, people I've trusted with my life for many years. I do partnership work with a group called Work For Warriors to provide free security training to Veterans, to help them get a foundation I didn't have. I share my struggles, hoping this gives them a better map than I had. I volunteer with the Boy Scouts shooting program. In my spare time I travel around California and compete in various shooting competitions and meet some truly enlightening human beings along the journey.

Roughly after my first year of being out of the Army and accomplishing all these things, I was still missing a piece of me. I missed being in the Army. I missed the people, I missed the challenges, and I missed being a Soldier. So I joined the National Guard in 2008 and spent most of the time making friends and developing myself as a person. I took what I was learning as a firearms instructor and recreational competitive shooter and used it to help my Soldiers be better shooters; then I took that experience and made my business better.

I used what I'd learned from my post-divorce life to help Soldiers who'd transitioned into the new civilian world after active duty. I took what I was learning in one aspect of my life and used it in others, which greatly increased my own qual-

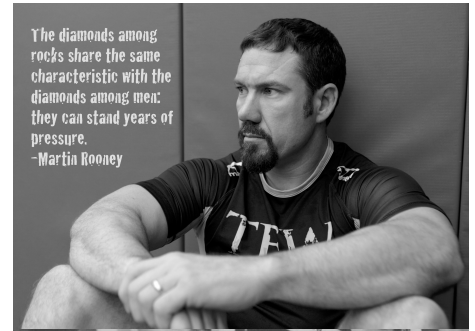
I was a Wild Turkey and Ibuprofen guy. I called that drink "A Good Mood."

ity of life. As of February of this year, I'd had enough playing Army. Now I'm out for good . . . again.

My ex-wife and I are much better as friends than as a married couple, and I just spent a week and a half with my daughter, who is now 10 years old and likes to get her clothes from a young girls' store called "Justice." The Army didn't teach me to deal with what happens when a 10-year-old daughter is thinking about what two-piece swimsuit she likes. Thankfully, she picked the one-piece. Did you know 10-year-old girls can text? I didn't know that but I know now.

I've been a police officer with the Department of Defense for six years now, filling roles such as active shooter response instructor and law enforcement physical fitness specialist. I do static entry control work as well as patrol. Is it the door-kicking, bad-guy-busting job I'd dreamed of? No. But it's a steady paycheck, and it offers me the chance at a good life. After ten years of mental bumps, bruises, and turmoil—after thinking I'd had a plan time and time again, only to watch it crumble time and time again—after all the bottles, all the girlfriends and all the girls that never lasted long enough to be a girlfriend, a good life is all I want now. I wouldn't say I've achieved that goal in its entirety, but at least I have pushed through the kill zone.

The Army didn't teach me to deal with what happens when a 10-year-old daughter is thinking about what two-piece swimsuit she likes.



LITERATURE'S ROLE IN PEACE

by Christian Echols



The topic of war has been discussed in literature to great effect. Various themes within this genre include the psychological impact of war and the soldiers' personal experiences from the front lines. In an effort to help prevent conflicts from emerging and to bring the world towards a uniform peace, some authors dedicate their lives to persuading readers that war should be avoided, if at all possible. Writers in peace literature are effective in conveying the negative impact of war on veterans, civilians, and nations alike.

One of the writers that comes to mind whenever the concept of world peace is discussed

is Maxine Hong Kingston, who was born on October

One of the writers that comes to mind whenever the concept of world peace is discussed is Maxine Hong Kingston, who was born . . . in Stockton, California.

ber 27, 1940, to Chinese immigrants living in Stockton, California. Kingston lived during World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War. Anthony Fonseca explains that "both [Kingston and her husband] were active in Vietnam War protests and in efforts to protect free speech." Kingston continues to be passionate against war, even to the present day. Kingston does not rely specifically on any particular genre, which allows her to be flexible in her writing. In "Reading Back, Looking Forward: A Retrospective Interview with Maxine Hong Kingston," Kingston says, "I am experimenting with genre. . . . I've written a couple of non-fiction books but I haven't done the fiction, so let's try that genre" (141). Kingston likes to change from genre to genre in order to not only write something new in various forms, but also appeal to readers

who are interested in different genres.

Additionally, Kingston prefers to try to gain a new understanding of the world around her. In *The Fifth Book of Peace*, she thinks, "How should I reply to all these [veterans] in person? I have to look in their eyes and faces. . . . I have to give them something" (248). She decides to organize a writing workshop. This is new territory for her, but she does this in order to find new ways to communicate her opinion that war should cease. Kingston enthusiastically takes on the challenge of advocating for world peace by writing about it. She can share her opinions and argu-

ments to support the notion that war is the bane of humanity's existence.

In "Maxine (Ting Ting) Hong Kingston," Fonseca explains, Kingston feels "she could address her fears of war in her prose, that she could prevent the bombing by finding the 'Three Lost Books of Peace.'" Kingston uses her writing as a tool to express her concerns about the world and its conflicts, and even though she does not find the lost books, she decides to write her own. Doing so allows Kingston to shape her own interpretation of how peace can be achieved through writing and dialogue.

One of the most basic, yet effective means of gaining knowledge about war is through the stories. Combatants and non-combatants who were in Vietnam during the war saw first-hand how terrifying the conflict could be. In *The Fifth Book of Peace*, Kingston recalls a Vietnam veteran's war experi-

ence: "On his first day in Viet Nam, under attack, this vet, Anthony, shot and killed a Vietnamese, probably [Viet Cong], who turned out to be a sixteen-year-old girl. . . The officer called him a killer, a murderer" (276). This veteran killed a potential enemy combatant who turned out to be a young teenaged girl, someone a reasonable person

would not normally expect to be a soldier

fighting in combat. Then, he was called a murderer for doing his duty as a soldier. Vietnam veteran Roman "Hopper" Martinez reads to those attending one of the writing workshops the tale of his unit finding the remains of a downed helicopter: "I [was] overwhelmed to find out that the smells that had me salivating [were] coming from my cooked buddies. . . I had . . . body parts come off in my hands; like pulling a drum-stick off of a roasted turkey" (qtd. in Kingston, 327-328). These veterans are forever traumatized by such horrific events.

War experiences have also affected those who were not in the military, but were in or near the combat zones. Richard Tregakis, in *Vietnam Diary*, recalls flying as a war correspondent on an air mission against a ground target: "I remember thinking that at last the [air mission was] over and we would be heading back home. But we no sooner got over the ridge top and into the next val-

ley than we [were] turning again" (144). Trega-

kis wanted the mission to end so he and his pilot could be finally out of danger, but the pilot continued to do runs on the ground target in a seemingly endless loop. Civilians were in the fray as well, and their accounts show how terrified they could be when caught in the crossfire. A journalist who was on the "kill" list of the Communists is Thai Nguyen Strom. In "The Fall of Saigon: Part One of Three. A Per-

sonal Story," she recalls, "A friend of mine, Hue, had stopped by the day before, looking tense. She told me she had arranged . . . for me and my children to be airlifted out of Vietnam . . . and I [could] tell not one soul about that" (par. 2). Strom writes about the life-changing decision she had to make during the last days of the

Vietnam War, where she was presented with the option of either leaving to escape from the imminent Communist takeover or staying with her family members who could not leave. Such decisions are the lasting legacies of the Vietnam War.

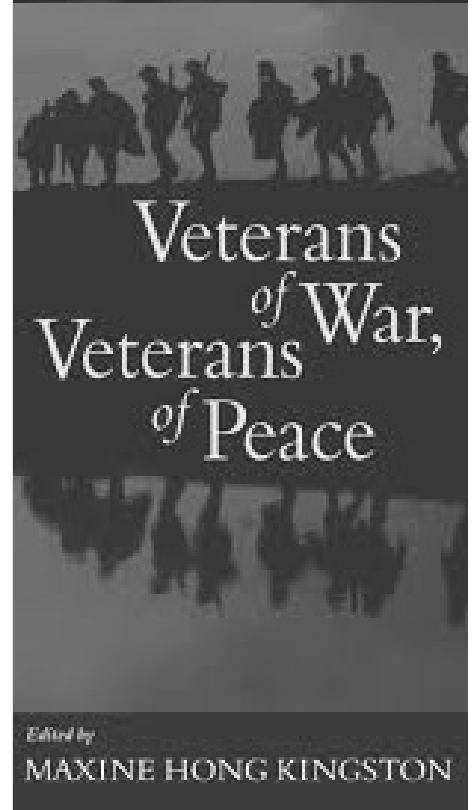
Authors such as Kingston write about helping and supporting veterans in their struggle to return to civilian life. Kingston states that "Two of my brothers were in the Viet Nam War, one of them in-country. I admit that one motive for starting these workshops is, I want to give my brothers some ways to get over Viet Nam" (292). Kingston feels that she should help her two brothers cope with their experiences by using one of her talents: writing. Hass states that many veterans were "keenly aware of their outcast social position as survivors of a deeply unpopular war. They [wanted] a national monument to help them reclaim a modicum of recognition and social standing" (10). These Vietnam War veterans, after the danger of fighting,

returned to a society that scorned their actions, thereby making it even more difficult to integrate into civilian life. The challenge to return to a normal life also highlighted the need to remember, via a national monument, the sacrifices made during this turbulent time in American history.

Kristin Ann Hass, in *Carried to the Wall*, details how hard it was to give remembrance to a war that bitterly divided the

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United States: “The deeply controversial nature of the war, its unpopularity, and the reality that its loss created an enormous void of meaning that compounded the difficult work of memorializing” (9). Hass discusses the difficult effort to build what would later be the Vietnam Veterans’ Memorial.

The memorializing of the Vietnam War for Americans is difficult not only for the male veterans but also for the female veterans. In *The Fifth Book of Peace*, Kingston recalls how the women veterans showed up at one of her writing workshops and argued for their recognition as Vietnam War veterans: “sixty-three women were killed in the line of duty in Viet Nam. . . . And their names are not on the Wall. . . . It feels like . . . our efforts, our contributions, our sacrifices as civilian women don’t count” (317). These women felt their contributions should be remembered and honored just like the men’s. They tried to shatter the traditional thinking that only men fight wars when, in reality, women are involved as well.

Despite all the literature detailing the negative impact of war, there are some who argue that literature is ineffective in convincing the world at large to avoid war. Opponents could argue that peace literature has not helped in preventing any new wars and that war is not detrimental to humanity but a natural occurrence. Some critics point out that there are soldiers who are not affected by killing in combat. They do it out of a sense of duty. For example, in Clebe McClary and Diane Barkerbook’s *Living Proof: The Exciting Story of Vietnam Hero Lt. Clebe McClary*, the authors recall, “At base area we presented [the artillery battalion] an enemy weapon or flag as a reward and treated them to a

steak dinner at Da Nang” (64). McClary and Barkerbook seem to be viewing war as a routine operation; nowhere do they give any indication of remorse or question whether the act of killing the enemy conflicts with their ideals.

The memorializing of the Vietnam War for Americans is difficult not only for the male veterans but also for the female veterans.

Another counterargument against the solely horrific consequences of war is that war generates revenue for any company that is providing weaponry and ammunition to the armed forces. McClary and Barkerbook state, “The cost of war in terms of money is astounding. We easily used [one] million [dollars]’ worth of ammunition in one night with artillery and air support” (64). This hints at the bigger picture of warfare in general: war can be very expensive to wage. Any government would have to allocate a certain amount of its budget to sustain military operations abroad. Funding is needed to obtain weapons and ammunition from businesses in the arms industry. In the end, the arms industry profits from any war.

One journalist points out that war can be glorified to the point where it is not seen as harmful. In “When Honoring the Warrior Sanctions War,” Jason Espada writes, “Whereas before we had soldiers vilified for their actions—today there is no criticism of them at all” (7). Espada argues that currently the servicemen and women of the armed forces are not receiving any sort of criticism regarding their actions in war. War often results in heinous and horrific acts being committed in

. . . war generates revenue for any company that is providing weaponry and ammunition to the armed forces.

the confusion and chaos of determining who are enemy combatants and who are innocent civilians. The act of war brings up the question of the morality of fighting in general.

Ultimately, there are people who dismiss the veterans' tales of war. In *The Fifth Book of Peace*, Wayne Karlin, a Vietnam War veteran who served as a helicopter gunner, says, "America does not want to hear from its veterans. The literary market does not want [veteran literature]. . . . The level of denial in Americans—the publishers are not interested, the readers are not interested" (qtd. in Kingston, 354). Karlin states the reality that there are people, for whatever personal reason, who do not want to read about, listen to, or concern themselves with the topics of war or peace. All of this information leaves it up to the reader to decide what he or she believes is the right path to choose when it comes to war and peace.

In the end, all of the literature pertaining to war has a powerful effect on the reader. It divides people who believe that war is necessary from those who believe that violence should never be resorted to in order to solve a dispute on any level. However, peace literature does open up the debate: how conflict arises, what can be done to circumvent it, and what lessons can be learned for future disputes. I believe that the works of Kingston and other authors play a crucial role in sending a worldwide message that peace is something to strive for.

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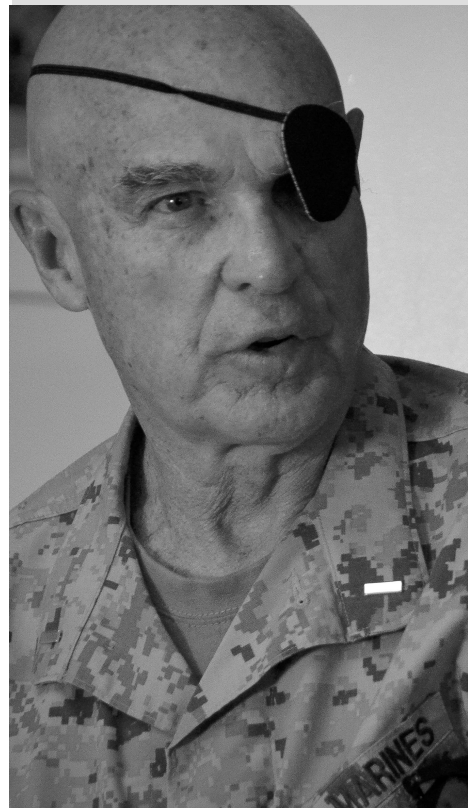
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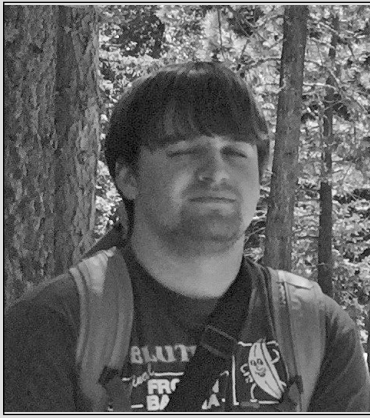
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Trellin McCoy was born and raised in Stockton California. Being an only child most of his life, he found it was easy to slip into boredom. And film became his major remedy. After he watched *Jurassic Park*, he wanted to pursue a career in paleontology. But after viewing the behind the scenes of the film, he realized the film-making business seemed much more entertaining and lucrative. Trellin hopes to transfer to USC to pursue a career in film.

MAKING A SHORT FILM

by Trellin McCoy

When I brainstorm, I like to spitball all of my ideas onto a piece of scrap paper. The first items involve plot and potential titles. Next, I create characters and list their names, background, characteristics, and motivations. Lastly, I jot down random ideas concerning themes, symbols, certain sequences, or plot twists.

Writing the script is the next step towards creating a film. Each time I approach a line, I ask, "Is that how this character would respond?" Once I finish the first draft, I fix errors and analyze my story. Sometimes I come across a scene that does not contribute to the overarching story, and then I have to decide whether to eradicate the whole scene or add depth to it. I want to create a story of high quality.

Creating a storyboard is the next stage in making a film. For this step, I draw up multiple comic book doodles that give me a visual aid of how I will compose the shots when shooting. I am pretty much limited to stick figures with my drawing ability, so I like to write what type of shot I will use under the picture. This is an important tool for reference when I start shooting.

After all that, I begin filming. As the director, I help actors with their lines and demonstrate the purpose of the film.

The editing process is my favorite part. It is a relaxing and gratifying period after the stress from shooting. Transitions are the key to piecing a film together. They create

a free-flowing motion as you move from scene to scene. If you fail at making solid transitions, a film can be quite jarring. For my first film project, I came up with the idea of breaking up the film into a set of chapters and cutting to a black title card to transition to the next chapter of the story. Director Quentin Tarantino uses this method quite often in his films. While he usually has dialogue playing in the background, I used music. For the sequence involving a getaway driver, the song for the title card was "Oh Yeah" from *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* because

whenever I hear that song I automatically associate it with a nice sleek car. Music is a tricky thing to integrate because permission from the creator of the song or record company is needed. It can be heartbreaking finding the perfect song for a scene and being denied permission. By now all the hard work and stress is over, and I can focus on distribution.

The final step in making a film project a reality is seeking distribution. It is beneficial to identify my target audience before I start shooting the film. One way to gain recognition for one's film is to submit to film contests. I am not saying to go out and bet all of your marbles on getting into Sundance Film Festival. The smart way to gain recognition is to start with a local festival and then work up from there. Posting film projects online is also a significant way to achieve recognition.

My first film was an assignment for a video production class I was taking while in high

school. I came up with the idea of making a heist film focused on heisting a heist. Basically one criminal defects and creates his own crew, who plan to steal from the other group while they are mid-heist. During that project, I learned that working with a group can have many drawbacks.

We were given only two weeks and it was the last two weeks of school. On top of that everybody was studying for finals and getting ready for college. The big problem my group faced was creative differences during production. We debated over the script and tone. My friends felt like making a slapstick comedy, and I wanted to create a more serious dark comedy. Because of this I had to settle for a lot of things that I felt were unnecessary or unoriginal. Another issue we faced were time conflicts. Most of the time in pre-production we constantly bickered. None of us could agree on a solid concept for the film, and that resulted in an uneven film.

Since I was working with close friends I did not need to pay any actors. But organization is key for this section of the process. We laid out specific times, dates, and locations. Making a short film without a solid plan can be disastrous. Unfortunately, the group I was working with thought a lot of the elements in my script would be too difficult to shoot, and they wanted it to be a silly film.

I gave in and let them pen the script they wanted, but when it came time to shoot, they still had not completed the script. And it was filled with awkward dialogue. So we threw out most of the script and relied heavily on improvisation, which worked fairly well since we had been really close friends for years. One member of our group, however, for the life of him

couldn't say a line without looking into the camera or cracking a smile. I made sure that we set a day aside for reshoots. For this particular project we ended up having to reshoot the whole climax because one of my friends deleted the footage, naturally.

When the film was completed, I submitted it to only a local festival for my school district because of my teacher's recommendation. If I had full creative control over the project, I could have prevented a multitude of the flaws in the final product and would have been more inclined to submit it to various film festivals. I am limited to mostly festivals and the internet since big theaters do not showcase independent short films.

There are many steps in creating a legitimate short film. The beginning process includes brainstorming, script writing, and creating storyboards. Next I start rolling until I have a product I am satisfied with. Once I have all the footage, I piece it all together and decide what to incorporate into the film. Lastly, I must seek distribution. Even though I was not particularly satisfied with my groups' end product, it served as a great learning experience. My biggest piece of advice to anyone trying to create a film is to make sure that all of your coworkers are on board. Filmmaking is a collaborative effort. No one person can do everything on one film, which is why it is so important to have partners who comprehend the overall vision.

Making a short film without a solid plan can be disastrous.

So we threw out most of the script and relied heavily on improvisation, which worked fairly well since we had been really close friends for years.





COMPLEX CHARACTERS AND CRUEL CHILDREN IN INTERMISSION AND BROKEN

by Nicole Gaspar

Intermission (2003) and *Broken* (2012), independent films produced in the United Kingdom, feature compellingly complex main characters. *Intermission*, directed by John Crowley, involves many different characters whose stories all turn out to be interconnected by the end of the movie. *Broken*, directed by Rufus Norris, is about a young girl nicknamed Skunk and her family's dramatic relationship with their troubled neighbors, the Oswalds and the Buckleys. The major characters in the two films are not just all good or all bad, but are portrayed with depth and moral ambiguity. These films also refreshingly show that not all children in movies have to represent purity. Both films have a heavy focus on the harsh realities of life while still preserving a version of the happy ending that most movie viewers have come to expect.

Several characters in each movie are portrayed as morally ambiguous. In *Intermission*, we are first shown the main couple, John and Deirdre. When John indicates that he needs a break from their relationship, Deirdre begins dating wealthy bank manager Sam, who leaves his wife of fourteen years to be with Deirdre. When John hears this news, he shows up at Deirdre's house, screaming that she is a whore and a horrible person, even though he was the one who wanted a break. He even kidnaps and attempts to rob Sam while an

accomplice holds Deirdre hostage. However, in sharp contrast to this reprehensible behavior, near the end of the movie, John ends up saving Deirdre's life, then approaching her at a bar, telling her he loves her and wants to be with her for the rest of his life. Despite everything John has done, such as endangering her life and seemingly going nowhere, she recognizes the sincerity of his love for her and accepts him back, just as the audience somehow is rooting for.

In *Broken*, the event that sets the film in motion is Mr. Oswald's beating up mental-challenged Rick Buckley after Oswald's daughter made a false rape allegation against Rick. Mr. Oswald is shown throughout the movie to have a hair-trigger temper, screaming at his three daughters and going so far as to beat up not only Rick but also the teacher of his middle daughter, Susan, over rape allegations Susan has made. However, we are later shown a much softer and more caring version of Mr. Oswald. He cries over Susan's apparent death after a miscarriage, and he summons the police after he discovers Skunk having a diabetic seizure in the Buckleys' home. Mr. Oswald's call saves Skunk's life. In *Broken*, Mr. Oswald saves a life just as John intervened to save Deirdre's in *Intermission*. In these two films, it seems to be a given that no one can be categorized as completely

Several characters in each movie are portrayed as morally ambiguous.

He even kidnaps and attempts to rob Sam while an accomplice holds Deirdre hostage.

good or bad, and that everyone is capable of anything. Even the initially least sympathetic characters emerge as saviors.

Children in movies are often portrayed as intrinsically good and innocent human beings. However, the children in these two movies are not portrayed as innocent at all. In *Inter-*

mission, a young boy named Philip throws a rock

at a passing bus, causing a horrible crash. The bus driver, Mick, ends up losing his job. Philip speeds off on his bike, suggesting he has no motive for causing such a catastrophe aside from for his own entertainment. When Mick spots the boy riding a bike later in the movie, Mick chases Philip down until Mick once again crashes. And the front of his car is teetering on the bank of a canal. No one else is there to witness the event but Philip, and Mick desperately pleads for his help. Philip jumps on the bumper and steadies the car, seemingly saving a grateful and perhaps even forgiving Mick—until Philip maliciously hops off and lets Mick crash into the canal below. Unlike the morally ambiguous adults depicted in the film, there is no saving grace for Philip; he comes into the movie only to cause chaos before escaping.

The children in *Broken* are quite vulgar by themselves, making crude jokes about sexuality and recklessly exploring sex as they become adolescents. Skunk makes angry comments about her father's intimacy with her nanny, showing she knows much about adult relationships for her age. This awareness is also apparent in ten-year-old Saskia—the youngest Oswald daughter—who bullies Skunk at school and is shown drinking and smoking cigarettes at a party.

Two more young girls on scooters in recurring scenes

do little to forward the plot, appearing every so often only to hurl bags of poop at passersby, just for fun—and, as with Philip in *Intermission*, without even a hint of

remorse or retribution.

Both of these movies show that life can be tough, and the endings aren't perfect, but the characters work through their problems in spite of them. In *Intermission*, fired bus driver Mick is bound to a wheelchair after the car accident plunges

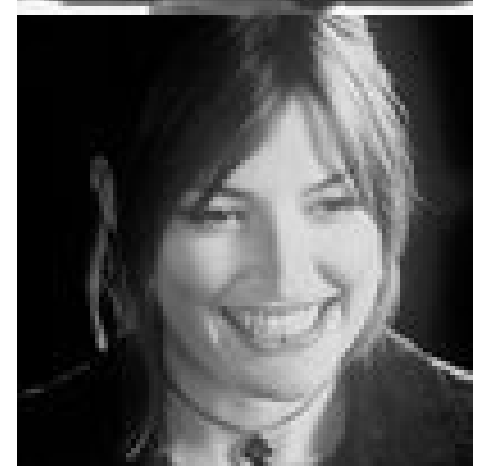
him into a canal, yet in the aftermath of this personal tragedy, he is shown wildly celebrating with others after winning a race with another wheelchair bound man in a bar. In another twist, previously passive filmmaker Ben picks up a gun and shoots a would-be murderer, saving an injured detective's life. Ben replays the scene over and over, obviously disturbed after being forced into a life or death situation, but the detective covers it up and assures Ben that he did the right thing and everything will be all right—for him, less so for the detective, now bound to a colostomy bag for the rest of his life.

The ending in *Broken* is also not ideal by any means, but ultimately a measure of happiness is achieved. Rick Buckley's family in particular shows the difficulty of living with severe mental illness and the toll it takes on the parents raising their child. After Rick's mother starts screaming at him, Rick accidentally pushes her down the stairs and breaks her neck. He then wounds his father, who has discovered the corpse. Bereft of his caretaking parents, Rick is unable to cope with Skunk's seizure and ends up killing himself after having a mental breakdown.

Skunk has type 1 diabetes, and the movie goes so far as to show her injecting the needles in painful close-ups. Several scenes

show how her disease inconveniences her. She has to be home at a certain time to take her insulin, or the results could be fatal, as they nearly are before Mr. Oswald intervenes. At the film's visionary end, when Skunk

In *Broken*, Mr. Oswald saves a life just as John intervened to save Deirdre's in *Intermission*.





is in the church facing the afterlife, deciding whether to die or to continue to live and to reunite with her father, it is not at all easy to tell whether Skunk will choose life or death.

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To conclude, *Intermission* and *Broken* realistically depict adults who are multifaceted and cannot be categorized with black and white thinking. No major character in either film is completely good or completely bad, and the films emphasize the gray area that can be explored when it comes to our morality. In these films the harsh living conditions and problems, such as diabetes and mental illness, faced by the middle class in the United Kingdom are not hidden

away but are instead thrust into our faces.

Even children deal with these complex and harsh issues from a young age in these films—just as they do in real life.

Even children deal with these complex and harsh issues from a young age in these films—just as they do in real life.

In the class where I saw these films, a question was directed to me: Could I forgive a partner who treated me as abusively as Deirdre was treated by John? Could I forgive someone like Mr. Oswald—who punches first, asks questions later? The answers to these questions would depend on the exact situation. While mulling over these questions, I realized that the complex characterizations in both *Intermission* and *Broken* raised questions I hadn't considered before.

How Depression Affects Romantic Relationships

by Alia Asdaq Kawish

According to the “Women and Depression Fact Sheet” of the National Alliance on Mental Illness, depression is a mental illness that affects nearly fifteen million Americans. One in ten adults experience depression each day (1). Although depression affects “mood, sleep patterns, appetite, motivation, and even the will to live,” there has not been much information as to how depression affects relationships (Rosen and Amador 3-4). In this paper, first I will present my research findings from various printed sources on how depression affects romantic relationships. Then, I will discuss the results of an interview I conducted relevant to this topic. Finally, I will connect the research with my own experiences with depression and the strategies that my husband used to help me cope with it and to preserve our marriage.

In *When Someone You Love Is Depressed: How to Help Your Loved One Without Losing Yourself*, Rosen and Amador describe depression as a devastating mental illness that affects not only the depressed person but also his or her relationship (3-4). Ac-

people for a short period of time. The researchers then asked the strangers to express their feelings while they were in contact with depressed people. The strangers reported feeling down and complained about the attitude of the depressed people. Researchers concluded that “depression clearly can affect those who live with a depressed person” (Rosen and Amador 6). The researchers then asked the strangers to express their feelings while they were in contact with depressed people. The researchers report that “this finding is bad news for depressed people because close, supportive relationships are essential to their recovery from depression” (Rosen and Amador 5).

Then the authors suggest eight guidelines to couples with suggestions on how to interact with each other effectively and to reduce tension in their relationship. These guidelines include learning about depression, having realistic expectations, giving unqualified support, keeping a routine, expressing feelings, not taking depression personally, asking for help, and working as a team (Rosen and Amador 9). The authors explain each of these guidelines in detail. For example, trying not to take the

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The researchers report that “this finding is bad news for depressed people because close, supportive relationships are essential to their recovery from depression” (Rosen and Amador 5). . . . trying not to take the depression personally helps the supportive partner blame the depression rather than the partner. . . . depression personally helps the supportive

According to the authors, someone who is married to a depressed individual is nine times more at risk of getting a divorce than a person who is married to someone who is not depressed (4). In one study, a group of strangers were exposed to depressed

Alia Asdaq Kawish was born and raised in Kabul, Afghanistan, where she completed her education and earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in English Literature in 1990 from Kabul University. She resettled in the United States during the year 2000 and lived for a year in Tucson, Arizona. Since 2001, she has been living in Tracy, California, with her husband and four children. She received her Licensed Vocational Nurse (LVN) training at San Joaquin Delta College in Stockton, California, in the year 2007. After working as a nurse for five years, she returned to Delta College to complete the remaining prerequisite courses for the Associate Degree Nursing (ADN) program to become a Registered Nurse. Her long term goal is to obtain her master’s degree in nursing. She writes the following: “In the fall of 2016 semester, I had the pleasure of taking English 1A with Dr. Phil Hutcheon, who not only has taught me to become a better writer but also encouraged me to express my feelings through writing. I will always be grateful for his excellent teachings.”



part of the depression rather than intentional” (52-53).

In another book, *When Depression Hurts Your Relationship: How to Regain Intimacy and Reconnect with Your Partner When You're Depressed*, psychologist Shannon Kolakowski describes how depression interferes with partner relationships by fostering self-doubt, criticism, and hostility. The author offers some helpful suggestions on how to improve these relationships.

According to Kolakowski, self-doubt is an inner feeling that tells the depressed person that he or she is imperfect, worthless, and failing (29). She states, “people with low self-esteem tend to perceive their relationship as more fragile and tend to expect their partners to have a lower estimation of them” (28). She shows that the way couples see life, negatively or positively, will have a direct impact on their relationship. Kolakowski suggests that the best way to have a healthy relationship is to replace self-doubt with self-compassion: “self-compassion means being able to have more empathy, concern, and genuine care for [self]” (30). Kolakowski adds that taking an action as small as washing the car or doing some household cleaning can reduce the sense of self-doubt and can foster self-compassion. The author believes that as people build and gain self-confidence, “[they] will see those positive feelings about [themselves] mirrored in the love [they] are able to give to and receive from [their] partner” (30).

Criticism of others, including the partner, is another aspect of depression that Kolakowski cites: “Depression tends to make negative things appear large and loom-

ing while minimizing or diminishing the good things in life” (30). The author shares an example of one of her clients who says that when she feels depressed, any little mess her husband makes, such as leaving soiled dishes or clothes, strikes her as “so inconsiderate” and makes her irritated. However, when she is not feeling depressed, she concentrates more on her husband's positive traits. This passage indicates that a depressed feeling makes people prone to blame and criticize others more often. Kolakowski suggests that positive traits of a partner help overcome the issue of criticism. For example, one should make a list of five to seven positive qualities about the partner and keep adding to it. Another way of counteracting criticism is identifying ways to show appreciation, such as making a partner laugh (Kolakowski 30).

The author also points out that depression in the form of hostility makes a person “prone to being combative” (39). She explains that when partners continue criticizing each other, it creates the ground for “a power struggle to emerge,” which leads to the argument of “I'm right, you are wrong, and I'm going to prove to you that I'm right” (390). As a result, partners “start to see each other as foes, as opposed to being on the same team,” and this environment of hostility will lead couples to feel disconnected (Kolakowski 39). The best way to avoid hostility is to “get on the same team, and celebrate the victories” (40). Kolakowski also suggests using statements such as “I want to be on the same team” or “It is not worth it to hurt each other” (40). This book shows that as much as depression can hurt a relationship, adopting a positive attitude can strengthen a relationship. A positive atti-

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. . . when she feels depressed, any little mess her husband makes, such as leaving soiled dishes or clothes, strikes her as “so inconsiderate”

tude can fight against depression.

In researching depression and romantic relationships, I also conducted a personal interview with

a woman who "In my culture, the husband typically does not express love with empty words. . . ." reported feelings of depres-

sion due to her son's diagnosis of type one diabetes mellitus. Since she wished to remain anonymous, I will refer her as Mary Smith. For the interview, I asked questions adapted, with a few modifications, from a book called *When Depression Hurts Your Relationship* (Kolakowski 25).

First, I wanted to know how life stressors can cause distress and depression. When asked about the current stressor in her life, Mrs. Smith stated, "My stressor is my son because he is struggling with his health condition." Next, I asked, "What behavior of your husband was helpful in reducing

your depressed mode and why?" She answered, "My husband is very supportive

I have felt the negative impact of depression firsthand in both my personal and married life.

of me whenever I feel emotional; he never reacts in a negative way. Sometimes he surprises me with gifts. For example, last month he gave me a new purse." Finally, I wanted to know how Mrs. Smith and her husband cope with the situation to maintain a healthy romantic relationship. I asked, "What word or phrase of your partner makes you feel loved and happy?" Mrs. Smith smiled and said, "In my culture, the husband typically does not express love with empty words. Instead, when I feel stressed and emotional, my husband gives

me a massage or takes me out for a romantic lunch or dinner."

She continued, "He is there for me when I need him" (Smith).

The answers provided by Mrs. Smith demonstrate that her romantic relation-

ship could have been impacted in a negative way by her son's health condition, but the support of her spouse helps her to cope with the situation and keeps her relation-

ship healthy and balanced. Mrs. Smith explained that

when she is under stress and reacts emotionally, her husband sees it as a temporary symptom of "caregiver fatigue," resulting from chronic caring of an ill child. This state leads to anxiety and depression. Mrs. Smith added that her husband calls her even when he is at work to check on her and to give her emotional support to prevent her from becoming overwhelmed. Even though depression can hurt others, the contribution of love from family and friends can help the depressed person to cope with the situation and to minimize its negative impact.

From a personal point of view, I suffered from mild depression three years ago af-

ter suffering a miscarriage and after being subjected to religious discrimination at my workplace. Moreover, I have felt the negative impact of depression firsthand in both my personal and married life. However, with the help and support of my family, especially my husband, I have been able to overcome the adverse effects of depression. My husband suggested that I return to school. And he encouraged me to perform physical exercise and to be more involved with my community.

When I went back to school, my husband recommended not taking more than six

units at a time to prevent additional stress. Being in school not only kept me busy, which spared me from frequent negative thoughts, but also helped me to rebuild





my confidence and self-esteem. For example, I did very well in school compared to other students, which increased my sense of accomplishment and decreased my self-doubt. Physical exercise helped me with my memory, increased my energy level, and enhanced my sleep. Finally, community involvement, such as volunteering at my children's school and at my mosque, helped me to socialize with people and thus gain a sense of hope. Instead of blaming me for my depression and turning away from me, my husband helped me to cope with the problems I was facing. In doing so, I found my way back to a more positive approach. Researching the topic of this paper also provided me with more guidelines and new tips on how to promote a positive mindset.

Sources clearly indicate that depression has a devastating impact on intimate relationships. At the same time, each of these sources has contributed in giving helpful suggestions and guidelines to help couples improve their relationships. The main finding is that even though depression hurts relationships, the support and love of family members, especially a spouse, can help to keep the relationship focused on positive rather than negative attitudes.

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LEARNING TO READ

by Elliott Wayne Rinehart

As a child, I had dyslexia, which made it hard for me to learn. When I was ten, my mother hired a tutor named Mrs. Pam, who for the next two years taught me how to read and write. Twice a week my mother would drive me to her house for lessons. I would

When I first started taking lessons, I would learn one letter per class...

often cry on the way because I hated to learn. But Mrs. Pam had a drawer in which she kept prizes, which I could earn by doing my homework. That drawer was my only motivation to do my homework. By the end of the first year, she had so well engrained in me that learning is good that I didn't care as much for the drawer as I did for the lessons. I learned to associate homework with reward, which made me look forward to class.

When I first started taking lessons, I would learn one letter per class. That meant it took me thirteen weeks to learn the alphabet. After the alphabet, I took on the next challenges: a sentence, then a paragraph, then a three-paragraph essay. To learn all that took me two years! At the start, I didn't care to ever learn to read; all I wanted from life was to be left alone so I could play Legos. But at the end of the two years, all I wanted from life was to read. If I could have, I would have done nothing but learn.

Since my days with Mrs. Pam, I have loved to learn. Even before I learned to read, I would listen to books. Not just kids' books. I would listen to history books and the classics. I listened to *The Chronicles of Narnia* by C.S Lewis four times before I learned to read. I also listened to the whole series of books by Susan Wise Bauer called *The Story of the World*. I stayed

up late at night just to grasp that last bit of knowledge of the world before falling asleep, dreaming of the Mongols or some moment in history. When I moved on from Mrs. Pam's teaching, I was able to

read at college level and write at my grade level. Because of my love of knowledge, the association of rewards with reading continued to affect me throughout high school. But reading took the limelight, while writing was left in the dirt.

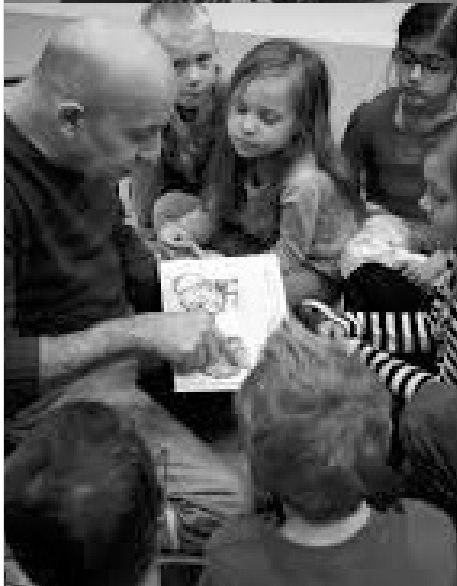
I didn't put much thought into my writing until last year when I took a political science class at Delta College. I learned that I could voice my opinion with well-written essays. I learned that writing could be rewarding, too, if I would just write about what I cared about and did my best. Recently a teacher of mine had me read an essay entitled "Grit," which sheds some light

...all I wanted from life was to be left alone so I could play Legos.

on my life. Angela Duckworth, the author, believes "Grit" is what makes people able to persevere. My childhood tutor taught me "Grit," and that is what makes me complete this assignment. If you actually want to change and learn how to learn, then read up on "Grit."

Now, because of Mrs. Pam and my love of knowledge, I am able to read more difficult writing by authors such as Voltaire, Theodore Roosevelt, Jane Austen, and my favorite, Charles Dickens. With works by these authors under my belt, you would think that I would be a better writer, but no, I am not. I hope to become a better writer one day. To help accomplish that goal, I am enrolled in a college English course at Delta College. One day I hope





to be in a place with my writing ability where I can write a book—even teach an English class.

Since my childhood, my ambitions have changed as well as my inhibitions. For instance, now I actually have a plan for the future. One day I hope to be a missionary. I plan on

My childhood tutor taught me "Grit," and that is what makes me complete this assignment.

going to various places in the world—perhaps India this spring, Tanzania in a few years, and many more places around the world. If I had not been tutored when I was younger and learned to read and write, where would I be? I still have inhibitions to overcome such as writer's block. One day with "Grit," sheer will, and my love of knowledge, I know that I will be able to overcome that as well. Because of my ability to read and write, I have a hope for the future; that is why I am who I am today. The ability to read and write has changed me and has defined who I am.

LATINOS FACING DISCRIMINATION:

A Review of *Becoming Dr. Q*

by Jose Francisco Espinoza

Becoming Dr. Q: My Journey from Migrant Farm Worker to Brain Surgeon is an inspiring autobiography about Alfredo Quiñones, who went from the fields of the Central Valley to the world's finest medical institutions. I was especially interested to learn that Dr. Quiñones was once a student at Delta College. I also was able to relate to some of his experiences with discrimination.

In his book, Alfredo Quiñones describes all of the struggles he had to go through before reaching his goal. As a young immigrant, the eventual

Dr. Q found work in the fields of Mendota, California, where he continually felt discrimination from the owner and even from

the owner's son, closer to his own generation. Quiñones writes about the first time he met the son: "Saying nothing, the kid stared back at me in revulsion. No, his look was one of disdain. Even derision" (Quiñones 73). There were times when the son would make Quiñones feel like he wasn't even there, as if he wasn't worthy to be in the presence of the son, who "walked by and looked my way yet didn't show any sign that he had registered the presence of another human ment, but he tried to not let it affect him

in a negative way. Indeed, he says that it helped shape him into

the man he is in the emergency room today, by providing a model of behavior to avoid: "The treatment of migrant workers also stayed with me as a reminder to

acknowledge the contributions of everyone at the hospital, clinic, or lab—from orderlies and janitors to nurses and technicians, on up to doctors and administrators. Everyone has a name, a face, a voice" (Quiñones 74).

Quiñones soon moved out of Mendota and into a small house in Stockton, California. He enrolled in classes at San Joaquin Delta College and worked during the nights cleaning ship tankers where, as he says, "two co-workers seemed to go out of their way to make me feel beneath them"

(Quiñones 85). One co-worker was even more discriminatory than the other: "he didn't hold back from making derogatory references to the

fact that I was from south of the border, labeling me a wetback and embellishing the term with other stereotypical adjectives like stupid, lazy, and dirty" (Quiñones 85). The discrimination didn't stop there, however; Quiñones would continue to encounter this type of treatment, even at some of the nation's top institutions.

After two years at Delta College, Quiñones left to continue his studies at UC Berkeley, where discrimination again greeted

him. He was still in his first year at Berkeley when one day he was invited for a coffee

with a few classmates and the Teacher's Assistant (TA) from his anthropology class. At this gathering, the students discussed their backgrounds, and when Quiñones

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He enrolled in classes at San Joaquin Delta College and worked during the nights cleaning ship tankers. . . .





said that he was from Mexico, the TA responded, “You can’t be from Mexico. You’re too smart to be from Mexico” (Quiñones 113). More than just offending Quiñones and adding to his insecurity, the TA’s remark also insulted Mexican people as a whole. According to the TA’s logic, all Mexican people are dumb just because we are Mexican. Quiñones even received insults from people he didn’t know personally. His girlfriend worked at a pool as a lifeguard where

“a co-worker went on a rant, mocking her for dating someone who was a greasy Mexican. The words dirty and lazy came up too” (Quiñones 117). In spite of the discrimination he faced there, Quiñones graduated from UC Berkeley. He was then admitted into Harvard Medical School, where once again, he encountered discrimination from the start. At a study group session one evening, a fellow medical student said to him, “Come on, Alfredo, you know that the only reason you got into Harvard is because of quotas” (Quiñones 147).

These were just a few of the many examples of discrimination and negativity that followed Quiñones throughout his difficult journey, but he managed to move past all of the obstacles bigoted Americans put in his path and to achieve his goal of becoming a brain surgeon. His account of his experiences reminded me of some situations I have encountered. My first connection to Quiñones was based on the fact that I am also an immigrant. Unlike most of my friends, I am not first generation Mexican American. I was born in Mexico and lived there for four years before migrating with my family to the United States. Unlike most people who come from Mexico, I was lucky enough to have not had such a difficult start.

Ever since I was young, I had never been afraid to say that I was born in Mexico. On the contrary, I was proud to say it. Then one day when I was in 7th grade, when we were having a discussion on immigration in English class, my teacher asked me if I wanted to share a little since she knew of my situation. I began to talk, and of course I said that I was born in Mexico, but before I could finish, a girl shouted out, “He’s an immigrant!” The whole class laughed, and

I tried to giggle a bit so that no one would notice the impact her comment had on me, but I cut my participation short and just sat there quietly for the rest of the class. I felt just like Quiñones when he was put down by the owner’s son: “his reaction planted a seed of insecurity in me, really for the first time, about my accent and about being Mexican” (74). Even though nothing was mentioned about my accent, this incident still made me feel insecure about it. Since now everyone knew about my birth in Mexico, I thought that my accent would definitely be a reason for more laughter. Soon after that, I started to notice every once in a while when my accent would slip up. I had never noticed it before. This experience definitely made me

conscious about little things like that, and I would say that I still have some of these fears to this day even though I am fluent in English.

Another experience where I faced discrimination was an encounter my family had with a police officer. I was really young, probably around eight or nine years old, but I can clearly remember the moment when my dad was stopped by a cop for some reason. My dad spoke no English, and the cop spoke no Spanish, so I was asked to be the translator in spite of my youth. Although my English was good by then, the fact that the man was a cop

scared me. I began to cry and was pretty much of no help, so the cop got angry. And then I remember hearing him say, “fucken Mexicans” under his breath. At that time, I was barely even learning what these “bad words” were, so I didn’t pay much attention to it when it happened. As I grew up, I later realized how serious the situation had been, and it made me think of how badly we were treated in that moment. I don’t even remember what happened after that, but that day surely taught me that as a Mexican I would need to be prepared to face discrimi-

nation in this country no matter what.

My dad spoke no English, and the cop spoke no Spanish, so I was asked to be the translator in spite of my youth.

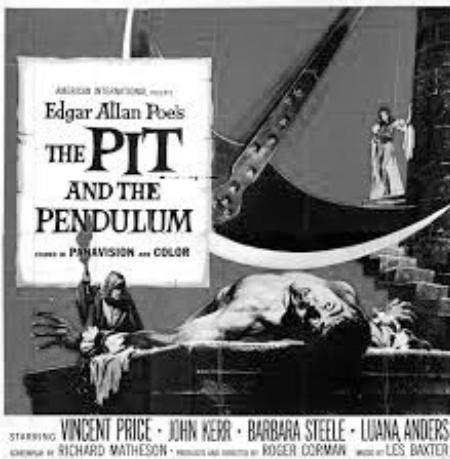
Thankfully, now we have programs like Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) for other undocumented kids like me, but who knows how long they will last? After all, our newly elected president wants to take them away. Perhaps if he took the time to read *Becoming Dr. Q*, Mr. Trump would have a better idea of what immigrants coming into this country are capable of achieving.



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Raymond Mahnke is a 38-year-old full-time student. A former amateur ice hockey goaltender and fifteen-year retail employee, Raymond returned to college in search of better career opportunities. A native of Stockton, Raymond enjoys movies, Disney trivia, and the Stockton Heat Hockey Club. Some of the authors that Raymond enjoys include Edgar Allan Poe, David Wong, and Dan Millman. After recently earning an Associate of Science in Computer Science, Raymond is now working towards an Associate in Art degree in English. The next step for Raymond will be to continue his education at CSU Stanislaus, where he plans to major in English. He credits his academic success to the support and guidance he has received from his wife.



UNRELIABLE NARRATORS IN THE WORKS OF POE

by Raymond Mahnke

With dozens of poems and over fifty short stories published, Edgar Allan Poe is one of the United States most prolific writers. In many ways, Poe's own dark and turbulent life mirrored the somber, gruesome, and melancholy tones that defined his works. Orphaned at a young age and addicted to both gambling and alcohol, Poe married his young cousin, but lost her to tuberculosis just a few years later (Baym 683-686). With such a dramatic life, is it any wonder that nearly all of Poe's writings had dark tones, often dealing with the loss of a beautiful woman?

Outlined in his work, "The Philosophy of Composition," Poe makes clear his desire to write for the maximum possible effect on the reader (Baym 687). Understanding and specifically tailoring his work for the audience, Poe "sought ways to gain its attention for stories that, aside from their shock value, regularly addressed compelling philosophical, cultural, and psychological issues: the place of irrationality, violence and repression in human consciousness and social institutions; the alienation and dislocations attending democratic mass culture and the modernizing forces of the time; the tug and pull of the material and corporeal; the absolutely terrifying dimensions of one's own mind" (Baym 687).

To achieve his goal of affecting the reader, Poe employed several tactics and techniques. In some stories, Poe used setting to create the desired effect on readers. In other stories, imagery is heavily used to

create the feeling Poe intended. Poe was very clear in his belief that creating work of a specific length was also highly valuable in achieving the intended effect on the reader. In "The Philosophy of Composition," Poe states, "there is a distinct limit, as regards length, to all works of literary art—the limit of a single sitting" (qtd. In Baym 738). Using all of the tools—setting, plot, symbolism, and length, along with what I consider Poe's most distinctive tool, the narrator—Poe was able to create poems and short stories that still affect readers today.

The use of an unreliable narrator is one of Poe's favorite narrative techniques. Richard Walsh, in "Who Is the Narrator?" reminds us that "the need for a concept of unreliable narration arises when we wish to explain inconsistencies in the narrative without blaming the author" (505). However, the character of the narrator must have a logical and explainable reason to be inconsistent. Walsh states, "unreliability cannot simply be attributed to an impersonal narrator; it must be motivated in terms of the psychology of a narrating character" (505). Throughout many of Poe's works, the "narrators' confessions reveal the irrationality of their attacks on supposed adversaries" (Kennedy 541). It is the revelation of irrationality by a narrator who is rationalizing his actions that is most disconcerting to readers. Poe is a master at creating narrators who force readers to question the nature of sanity, both their own and the narrators', by clearly demonstrating

Poe is a master at creating narrators who force readers to question the nature of sanity, both their own and the narrators'...

the mental and physical stresses upon the narrator while placing smaller mental and emotional stresses onto the reader.

James W. Gargano, in "The Question of Poe's Narrators," addresses critics who mistakenly hold Poe responsible for the actions of his narrators. Gargano feels that too much criticism of Poe "is based, ultimately, on the untenable and often unana-

lyzed assumption that Poe and his narrators are identical literary twins and that he must be held responsible for all their wild or perfervid utterances; their shrieks and groans are too often conceived as emanating from Poe himself" (177). Instead, Gargano argues, the narrators are unique individuals who have their own motivations, fears, consciousness, and "limited comprehension of their own problems and state of mind" (178). With limits on the mental state of the narrator come limits on their believability and reliability. Gargano points out that "there is often an aesthetic compatibility between his narrators' hypertrophic language and their psychic derangement; surely, the narrator in 'Ligeia,' whose life is consumed in a blind rage against his human limitations, cannot be expected to consider his dilemma in coolly rational prose"

(178). The narrator in "Ligeia" is a raving madman who cannot express his feelings in his own words. As Gargano states, the narrator's "feverish futility of expression, however, cannot be attributed to Poe, who with an artistic 'control,' documents the stages of frustration and fantastic desire which end in the narrator's madness" (178). Thus, the completed action of "Ligeia," demonstrates the narrator's self-delusion and slip into madness (178).

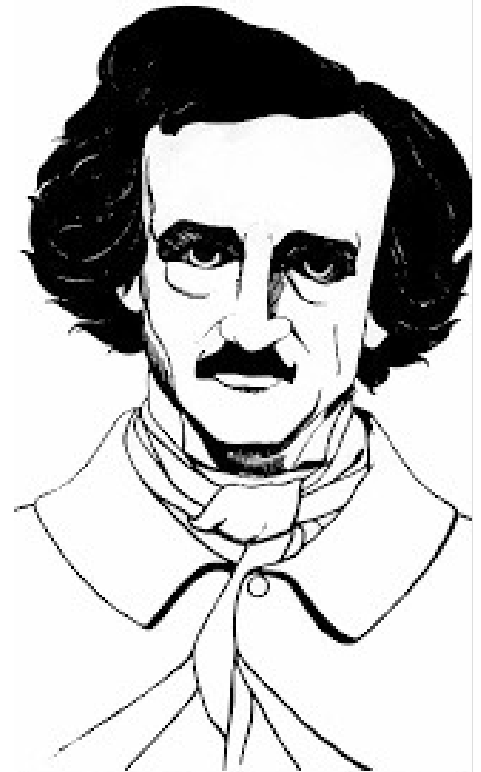
Similarly, in "The Tale-Tell Heart," the narrator's insistence on proving his own

sanity only reinforces the idea that he is afflicted with madness (179). In unburdening his actions via confession, the narrator is shown to be living in a "haunted and eerie world of his own making" (179). In this work, "a scrutiny of the structural unity of the tale reveals that what we have here is in effect the dénouement of dra-

matic irony with a significant ethical dimension: the narrator-protagonist is the only hypocritical person in the tale, and it is his own dissimulation that leads to his ungrounded suspicion of the policemen's dissemblance, which in turn leads to his downfall" (Shen 329). This type of narrator can be found throughout the works of Poe. Shen quotes another critic, Paul Witherington, who states that readers act as an accomplice to the crime, after the fact (338). In participating with the story, rather than just reading it, the reader has a stronger connection to the tale. In the aforementioned tales, as well as "The Cask of Amontillado" and "The Black Cat," the narrator's confessions and explanations for actions "provide an unmistakable clue to his protagonist's psychic deterioration" (Gargano 180). Even in his newly created detective writing, Poe uses the tactic of

unreliable narration. In "Murders in the Rue Morgue," Poe challenges readers to "untangle what the unreliable narrator has tangled for us" (Bryant 32). With narrators who cannot be believed at the end of their tale, what rationale exists for believing them at any point in their story?

In "The Pit and the Pendulum," another tortured and shocked narrator is found. Awaking after the shock of receiving a death sentence in the Spanish Inquisition, the narrator first seeks to gather his mental abilities before trying to gather his physical abilities (Ballengee 27). To create a sense of doubt in the reader, Poe nev-



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er makes clear the “narrator’s particular crime, nor is it indicated that he himself knows his crime” (Ballengee 30). Ballengee reinforces the

unreliability of the narrator due to his mental and physical state; “isolated

within his dungeon chamber, the narrator undergoes horrifying bodily discomfort and pain that simultaneously suggest and provoke an experience that eludes rational knowledge and communicability. Such a moribund state, of course, remains not far from the awareness of the narrator of the story. In fact, a close proximity to death opens ‘The Pit and the Pendulum’—‘I was sick—sick unto death with that long agony; and when they at length unbound me, and I was permitted to sit, I felt that my senses were leaving me’ and then continues to recur, as the narrator experiences a series of swoons and awakenings over the course of the story” (30). After the multiple swoons and returns to consciousness, “what remains to him [the narrator] of this moment are merely lingering suggestions of what it might have been: a sense of horror and stillness” (31). As vivid recollection fades from the narrator, Poe introduces an experience that “falls into neither consciousness nor unconsciousness” (31). Ballengee feels that in the resolution of this particular tale, “the story teller, the narrator, moves forward to meet the danger, standing on the brink of the abyss; in his transgressive attempt to communicate this experience aesthetically, he occupies simultaneously the position of criminal and detective, tortured and torturer” (38). The narrator is not just being tortured, but in his actions, he is causing torture to the reader. In this example, it is the narrative style itself that creates a mood of dread as much as the threat of torture.

By creating these narrators, who are unreliable due to their own faults, often clearly stated within their respective story, Poe is able to force the reader to question the validity of everything within the story. In

doing so, readers are left with a sense of uneasiness and a lingering need to question the physical world around them. After all, if seemingly normal people in Poe’s works can be driven to madness, perhaps, we as readers are just as close to crossing the line between sane and insane. More than ravens, evil eyes, disfigured cats, and being walled alive, the idea that our own perception is flawed and that we may be seeing our own version of the world like Poe’s narrators do, is the ultimate fear.

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HE NEVER SAID HE LOVED ME

by Avigail Eve

He pushed me away toward my crying mother and pulled my brother towards him saying, "Women are the jinx of my life." I was five years old then when my father, drunk as usual, had just finished beating my mother for some reason I can't remember, nor is it even important now. I still feel the emotional and physical pain vividly whenever I think of that memory. Writing about this right now puts me right back in that corner where

my mother was curled up shaking. I remember the smell of the

old house, hear the howling of the neighborhood dogs at midnight, and feel the anguish of my mother's quiet sobs. It was a terrible and painful experience I wish I could delete from my memory, but I cannot. My father was fiercely jealous, abusive, unfaithful, domineering, alcoholic, authoritarian, stubborn, and rancorous—and that's if you ask the neighbors to describe him. He demanded respect from all of us by enforcing control over our every action and decision. His favorite ultimatum was, "Don't push it or you will be borrowing the monkey's face." It sounds nonsensical or even funny now to some, but to anyone who knew my father's character, it made perfect sense, and it wasn't funny at all. When you're

beaten to purple, you would rather borrow the monkey's face than go

out into the world with your own face.

Somehow I never feared him in spite of the ultimatums and beatings. People are often shocked when I tell them this, but the paradox of our relationship is that I found a way to love him. Friends and family mem-

bers believed that I was just as stubborn as my father and that he finally found his perfect match in me. This was a common joke among them when they were talking behind my father's back. I just smiled at them and never uttered a word because I thought it was cool that I was indeed not afraid of the man. I had valid reasons why I was not afraid of my father that no one else outside our home ever witnessed.

Writing about this right now puts me right back in that corner where my mother was curled up shaking.

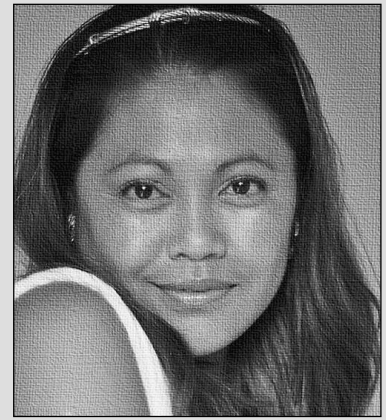
thunder rolled so loudly that it felt like it was going to destroy our old tin roof. As expected, there was a power outage, and the whole house went pitch black. I could hear my father walking around the house, checking all the windows and doors to make sure they were locked. As his footsteps drew closer to my bedroom, I pretended to be deeply asleep. I could hear him murmuring about the mosquitos while fixing my mosquito net and tacking its edges under my mattress. This tender early memory kept me from fearing and hating him too much.

In my high school years, I was always on the run. I rarely stopped to notice the

indulgence my siblings and I enjoyed because of my father's care.

Each morning he woke us up with the table already set. The delicious aroma of our breakfast and the smell of the dark coffee he brewed permeated the entire house. My plate was set with a tall glass of warm milk next to my packed lunch box (mind you, I'd still get knocked on my head every time I neglected to

One very cold night during my childhood, a storm came and



Avigail Eve was born and raised in the Philippines and migrated to the U.S. in August of 2004. She is in her second semester at San Joaquin Delta College, working towards finishing her Architectural Drafting Associate Degree.





drink that milk). My father was an excellent cook. Adobo mushrooms and sautéed freshly picked vegetables from his garden were some of my favorites. In doing laundry, he was the only father I knew who segregated the whites from the colored clothes like a pro. My uniforms and socks were always as white as new because he meticulously separated the heavy soiled from the rest of the clothes. His domestic skills made him a kind of role model way ahead of his time.

Unfortunately, he was also a role model in less positive ways. Like him, I became an alcoholic and a chain smoker at a very young age, and I was sexually active with my boyfriend without adequate precautions. At twenty-two, a few months before graduation from college, I got pregnant. I told my father I did not wish to marry my boyfriend, and I wanted to break up with him instead. I never told my father why marriage was not an option for me, and he never

asked. He summoned my boyfriend and his mother anyway, allowing them to acknowledge my pregnancy. My father respected my decision for not marrying. From the moment he learned that I was pregnant, he served only nutritious vegetables and fruits on the table. He bought me attractive maternity dresses and sandals. These even raised eyebrows of my social-climbing peers who secretly hated me. When my beautiful son was born, my father spoiled him with food, clothes, shoes and toys. He adored him. I could have been jealous if I were not the mother.

A few years after my mother and I came to the U.S., my father suffered his second stroke back in the Philippines and was confined to his wheelchair. He became so grumpy and violent that no caregiver would stay for too long. My mother would have stayed with him if she could have, but

she needed to keep working here to cover his medical expenses. At that time, my father needed the care of his family the most, but we were never there at all. He spent his last months with his caregiver, who listened to all of his con-

As his footsteps drew closer to my bedroom, I pretended to be deeply asleep.

fessions for his sins toward his family. He kept asking the caregiver to tell us to come home and visit, but we never had the time. A week before he passed away, my father told his caregiver to tell his daughters how sorry he was and that he hoped to see us soon. That week, he kept on telling him stories about us when we were still young. His memories were already failing, but he remembered his own past mistakes and abuses in detail. When we came home for his wake, these reflections were all the caregiver could relay to us, which was devastating. I was broken hearted but was also relieved to know that my father realized his abuses towards us. While he was suffering, all I could think of was perhaps his physical strength and mobility were taken

away from him because he had abused us. It never occurred to me to come home to take care of him, even for just a while. My guilt for that prevented me from properly grieving his passing. My father did the things that I loved and hated. In his home, I saw both heaven and hell.

My son is my most precious treasure. I would never want him to go through what I went through at my father's hands. I always remind my son to hold himself accountable for his every decision and action. I promised that I would listen with open mind and heart. I promised myself that I would not use physical force in enforcing the house rules. I have kept that promise, and I have a solid relationship with my only son. Most importantly, I made sure I told my son I love him—the words I never heard from my own father.