

## FROM THE *NOTA BENE* EDITORIAL BOARD

Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society is proud to present the 24th edition of *Nota Bene*, the nation's only literary anthology featuring excellence in writing among community college students.

We are pleased to once again offer scholarships to outstanding *Nota Bene* authors. This year's Ewing Citation Scholarship has been awarded to the top overall entry, "Paper or Plastic?" by Mackenzie Edmondson, a member from Lone Star College-University Park in Texas. The authors of four other standout entries have been recognized as 2018 Reynolds Scholars.

When we first published *Nota Bene* in 1994, we were overwhelmed with the response from members who flooded our mailboxes with submissions and from the audience who enthusiastically read the book. Today we continue to see a fervent response to the call for submissions, and selection for publication remains a great source of pride.

*Nota Bene* takes its name from the Latin expression for "note well." We hope you will take note and be inspired by the good work of these exceptional authors. We are grateful for the continued opportunity to showcase the talents of Phi Theta Kappa members and to affirm our commitment to the recognition and academic excellence of students seeking associate degrees and certificates.

Sincerely,

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## **AWARDS**

The Ewing Citation Scholarship Award of \$1,000 is given to the author of the *Nota Bene* manuscript considered to be the most outstanding of all entries. It is named in honor of Nell Ewing, long-time Phi Theta Kappa staff member who was a driving force behind *Nota Bene*, beginning with its conceptual design and establishment. Ewing retired in 2012 after serving 26 years with Phi Theta Kappa.

The Reynolds Scholarship Awards of \$500 each are given to up to four authors whose manuscripts were deemed outstanding. These awards are endowed by the Donald W. Reynolds Foundation in Pine Bluff, Arkansas, and honor the memory of the late Donald W. Reynolds, founder of the Donrey Media Group.

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## PAPER OR PLASTIC?



**MACKENZIE EDMONDSON**

*Lone Star College-University Park  
Texas*

I was rifling through the ridiculously tiny coin pouch on my wallet, looking for the \$3.77 I needed to pay the gas station clerk. The pocket could barely fit five quarters, but somehow, I'd stuffed mine 'til it swelled with lumps like cellulite. I'd set the bigger coins on the counter to count up. I was still short. There might have been another dollar in pennies stashed away in my car's cup holders, but I was already drenched and cold from the rain and wanted to make as few trips in and out as possible. Should I have put something back?

"Ma'am," the clerk sunk down to catch my gaze.

"What?" I said. "What is it? What do you want?"

"I still need another \$2.47." I could hear his foot tapping behind the counter. He stood there with a grimace, looking as serious as one can in a pinstriped polo shirt.

"I'm looking, just gimme a second."

I glanced at my items on the counter: a screwdriver, a harmonica, a package of glitter, a jar of peanut butter, a fishing hook, and a bottle of shit-cheap whiskey. I couldn't afford them, but I couldn't afford to put any of them back, not now.

I met the clerk's eyes, defeated. "You have a tab or something I could start?"

He scoffed. "Lady, there are other people in line."

"I know, I know, but--"

"Just put something back," he said.

I clutched the edge of the counter, my knuckles turning white. "I can't."

He looked to my items and then back at me.

I took a deep breath, rested myself, and arranged my face. "Please. I can come back and give you the rest tomorrow, but right now I need these. Please-" My eyes flashed down to his name tag, "Johnny."

"Why?" he said without an ounce of belief in his voice.

"I can't say."

"You can't say?"

"No, I can't say."

"What are you on a game show or some stupid shit?"

God, I wish.

I shook my head and bit my lip.

I could hear the agitated whispers and groans of the patrons behind me.

"Just get rid of something." He slid the bag of items toward me. "Just take something out and I'll void it, 'kay?"

I pulled the plastic sack closer, looking down at its contents, reasoning with myself about what I could leave behind. It was too late to search for the extra cash. The other patrons were moments away from picking up their torches and forming a mob. Then it clicked; I had a third option. It's like my brother used to say: anything's free if you can run fast enough.

\*\*\*

As I drove, with the rain falling in sheets down the windshield of my old blue Chevy, I kept glancing in my rearview, just waiting to see the blue-red glare of police lights in the droplets on my back window. It hadn't rained like this in months, maybe even years. I stopped at an intersection, the light blinking red, and I heard my engine putter out.

"Oh come on," I cranked the key in the ignition, with only a response of the engine heaving. "Don't do this to me now."

I slumped back into my seat and put the truck in park, bringing my knees up to my chest. The red light flickered on and off and on again, blurred by the undulating water that flowed down my car. I unhooked my seatbelt and gathered the convenience store bags on my arm, being sure to grab the shot glasses out of my glove compartment, and left the keys and everything else in the truck. I was going to have to leave the car eventually anyway.

The cold rain didn't hesitate to seep through my brother's old gray hoodie and adhere clumps of my wet black hair to my cheeks. My eyes burned from my dissolving mascara as it ran off my lashes and into my eyes.

Should've brought your umbrella, huh, I could hear my brother saying. I smiled despite myself, remembering the last time he'd actually said it.

\*\*\*

That summer he'd promised to take me deep sea fishing. Not without me begging him to do so, mind you. Before the sun dared to rise on that early, early morning in late, late July, we'd packed up our thermoses filled with coffee and enough peanut butter and banana sandwiches to last a shipwrecked platoon three days. We'd stopped by the old underpass off of Highway 45 and grabbed the fishing rods he and his friend Beau used on weekends.

He pointed out all the crudely painted graffiti that had been layered on top of one another across the underside of the bridge over the years. He pointed to the one of a dog giving the mailman the finger.

"That one's mine." He'd smiled, swelling with pride.

When we got to the shore, the sun was finally breaking even over the horizon, and my coffee thermos was almost dry. I'd looked over at my brother and watched him pour some cinnamon whiskey into his thermos.

"No fair," I'd said. "Why do you get the good stuff?"

He smiled, "Tell you what, Ace: I'll stay on my best behavior, so that when your twenty-first rolls around, the captain will give me leave, alright?"

We threw the equipment and dad's old toolbox onto the boat. It'd broken before, and he wasn't going to take any chances.

"Did you bring the umbrella?" he asked. The sun glinted off the edge of his buzzed black hair and the ends of his eyelashes.

I looked up at the sky, where there was not even the slightest trace of clouds. "Why would we need one?" I asked. "It's supposed to be sunny all day. That what the blonde meteorologist said."

"Yeah," my brother said, "but I don't trust meteorologists, especially not the blonde ones."

We climbed on board, and he started the old motor up, yanking the pull-start cord like he was starting up a lawnmower, and as we cut through the waves the nose of the boat lifted up out of the water.

We found a spot where the waves moved barely above a soft ebb and the land was just a line on the horizon.

He handed me the jelly lure with pink sparkles deeply embedded in its belly and eyes the size of grapes and showed me how to tie it to the line. I already knew how, but I nodded and watched wide eyed because I knew it'd be at least six months before he could teach me anything else. I wish I'd listened harder. I wish he and I had talked about more than the instruments we wanted to learn in high school or why saying a word over and over makes it sound fake. I wish.

\*\*\*

Under the overpass off of Highway 45, I sat, soaked through and through, in front of a crudely drawn, half-covered mural of a dog giving the mailman the middle finger. I wrestled my wallet out of my back pocket, took the picture of my brother out from the slot where my driver's license should have been, and propped it up against the concrete wall, setting one of the shot glasses in front of it and the other in front of me.

Peeling the seal off the half-paid-for shit-whiskey bottle, I spun off the cap and dropped it in my lap, pouring each glass until it was only held in by the liquid skin that formed over the brim. I raised my glass, lightly tapping it against the edge of what would have been his. "Happy twenty-first to me," I said, then I downed the drink, which went down about as smooth as a mixture of sugar and gasoline. I shuddered and set my glass down on the concrete, reaching for the bags. I set the items under his urban artwork, setting the harmonica down last, on top of the peanut butter jar.

"Maybe now you can finally learn to play it," I said, picking up the photo and rubbing my finger across its bent edges.

"What are you doing down here, miss?"

I turned, a policeman with a stern mustache and scowling eyes stood right outside. His eyes flickered toward the pile of gifts I'd stacked against the wall.

"You're the one from the convenience store," he said.

"What gave it away?" I asked.

"It's a pretty specific lot of things to steal."

I held my wrists out to him, hanging my head. "You can go ahead and bring me in."

He shook his head, reaching for his cuffs. "Why'd you do it, kid?"

"I read somewhere that the Egyptians buried their kings with things they'd need in the afterlife," I said. "I figured my brother could use a few things up there too, ya' know? Something to remind him of me."

The officer paused. "Why not put them at his grave then?"

I looked down and shook my head with a slight laugh that burned my tongue like bile. "When a command ship goes down," I said, "there's hardly anything left to show for it."

I kept my head down, waiting to feel the cold metal cuffs around my wrists, but the officer turned my palm upward and placed something inside it. I looked at the crumpled \$20 in my hand, then met the officer's eyes. They were still stern, but something about them was softer.

"Go pay the cashier, kid." He patted my shoulder and turned to leave, then paused. "And buy yourself an umbrella."

## PAIN, LOVE



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$\text{pain} \in \text{love}$

$\text{love} = \{\text{empathy, conviction, obstinacy, consciousness, vulnerability, solicitousness, dignity, pain}\}$

$\text{love} \cap \text{happiness} = \{\text{empathy, conviction, dignity}\}$

$\text{love} \neq \text{happiness}$

$\text{love} \setminus \text{happiness} = \{\text{obstinacy, consciousness, vulnerability, solicitousness, pain}\}$

$\text{happiness} < \text{love}$

# DISSOLVING THE IRON CURTAIN: THE INFLUENCE OF SATELLITE RECONNAISSANCE ON U.S. COLD WAR POLICY



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The advent of high-altitude space-based reconnaissance in the 1960s caused major shifts in American policy by stripping away parts of the “Iron Curtain” covering the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. These flights gave successive presidential administrations “ground truth” on the Soviet’s military and industrial capabilities, allowing for formulation of appropriate U.S. policies to counter Soviet strengths while exploiting systemic weaknesses.

Introduction of the world’s first photographic satellite program, called CORONA, grew out of concern of the Soviets countering U-2 spy plane overflights with surface-to-air missiles. Worried that the Soviets would be able to shoot down a U-2 during intelligence-gathering flights, President Dwight D. Eisenhower directed the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) in April 1958 to develop a satellite-based camera that returned the exposed film to Earth in a recoverable capsule (National Reconnaissance Office, n.d.). The intelligence drawn from CORONA images would influence U.S. policies on countering the Soviet Union and would directly influence the outcome of the Cold War.

## **What Happened?**

With the looming threat of the Red atomic boogeyman, whether flying by aircraft or intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), U.S. defense spending between 1950 and 1953 tripled, from 5 to 14.2 percent (Department of State). Eisenhower was fiscally conservative, helping to balance the federal budget three times during his administration (National Park Service). He balanced the national security needs of the nation against his fiscally

prudent domestic strategy by cancelling weapons programs that were not delivering expected capabilities.

One system, Weapon System 117L, was touted in the press openly as a surveillance satellite system. It was cancelled in 1958, ostensibly because of Eisenhower's "Space for Peace" initiative and fiscal conservancy (Eisenhower). By design, however, portions of WS-117L were covertly resurrected and absorbed into the CORONA program under a surreptitious approach dubbed "Second Story" (National Reconnaissance Office, 1988).

As the U-2 was being developed in 1954, intelligence officials estimated that the Soviets would be able to shoot down one within 12 to 18 months (National Reconnaissance Office, n.d.). Their estimate was overly pessimistic, however, as the first U-2 shoot down didn't occur until May 1, 1960. After the political gaffe stemming from that shoot down of Francis Gary Powers' U-2 spy plane and the cessation of flights over the USSR, the U.S. government was prepared to bridge the intelligence collection gap with CORONA.

According to the CIA Office of History, the first film capsule from CORONA successfully recovered on August 18, 1960, "provid[ed] the U.S. with more photographic coverage of the Soviet Union than all of the U-2 flights together had" (2012).

## So What?

Over the 13-year span of the CORONA program, 144 flights were launched. Camera performance increased from a 24-foot optical resolution in the beginning of the program to less than six feet during the waning years. Photographic optical resolution is a measure of the minimum distance where the objects photographed can be distinguished as individual items and not one combined "blob." The first CORONA image, taken of the Mys Shmidtta airfield in 1961, showed little more than a thin-strip runway, a parking apron, and the coastline. The runway is 230 feet across and 8,200 feet long (up and down). The initial photograph was primitive, but subsequent snapshots were a boon to U.S. intelligence officials.

Increasing resolution in subsequent CORONA satellites allowed better fidelity on maintaining an order of battle for Soviet strategic forces. CIA photo interpreters maintained records of aircraft numbers per airfield, transferring information to "all-source" intelligence analysts to create National Intelligence Estimates (NIEs) for policymaker consumption.

NIEs were crucial for good policymaking decisions. Less adversary bombers and missiles aimed at the U.S. allowed politicians to shape the nuclear deterrent by balancing domestic requirements and monetary limitations, as well as international security needs. Succinctly put, satellite imagery allowed the U.S. to spend money on the "right" response based on the threat. For military forces, limited resources were re-oriented for more effectiveness, such as numbers of bombers or missiles to send to a particular region.

## Case Study: SAC in the 1950s and 1960s

An example of operational-level concerns predicated on a presumed Soviet nuclear response is the dispersal of Strategic Air Command (SAC) forces during the event of war. In the mid-1950s, the nuclear force dispersal plan called for "maintaining a portion of SAC's heavy and medium strike force on constant alert" (Strategic Air Command, 1961). It was assumed that Soviet Long-Range Aviation and Strategic Rocket Forces would target SAC installations in the initial volley, destroying a large portion of nuclear retaliatory assets. SAC's airborne fleet, approximately one-third of the overall bomber force, would provide an ever-present threat of offensive nuclear capability; however, planes still on the ground were vulnerable. By dispersing SAC planes to civilian airports and non-SAC military bases, the response force could survive the initial strike.

By 1961, the CIA released National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) 11-8/1-61, *Strength and Deployment of Soviet Long Range Ballistic Missile Forces*. The first paragraph is revealing, not in numbers of Soviet rockets and missiles, but in the incorrect assumptions that were rampant during the 1960 presidential election:



"New information, providing a much firmer base for estimates on Soviet long range ballistic missiles, has caused a sharp downward revision in our estimate of present Soviet ICBM strength..." (Central Intelligence Agency, 1961).

Even within the nascent intelligence community, the fact of satellite reconnaissance was a tightly held secret requiring special access. Synthesis of the information, with a glaring bottom line up front, **was** releasable within the NIE:

"We now estimate that the present Soviet ICBM strength is in the range of 10-25 launchers from which missiles can be fired against the U.S., and that this force level will not increase markedly during the months immediately ahead" (Central Intelligence Agency, 1961).

This critical policy change brought forth by the Kennedy Administration also preferred the use of unmanned missiles versus a crewed bomber. Once a sweetheart of the all-jet bomber force, the forced retirement of the B-47 medium supersonic bomber began in 1963, with the aircraft out of service by 1966. Conversely, the number of ICBMs grew significantly during the same period, ending with 1,054 missiles in 1966 (1,000 Minuteman and 54 Titan II). Financially, the move made sense. The original cost for one B-52 bomber was around \$53.4 million, while one Minuteman missile could be purchased for \$2.4 million.

In 1960, the start of successful CORONA missions, the number of SAC bases stood at 46. By 1972, coincidentally the end of the CORONA program, the number of SAC bases was 28. For public consumption, Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara would claim that the hundreds of base closures in the 1960s were due to "[t]echnological progress caus[ing] obsolescence not only in weapon systems, but also in the often highly specialized facilities constructed for their deployment and maintenance" (Shaw). Those individuals "in the know" about the satellite reconnaissance program and its products knew better.

### Better "Eyes" Make All the Difference

Modifications to satellite technology allowed updating the original intelligence "bean-counting" mission to a "rivet-counting" one. As Soviet technology improved during the 1960s, methods to counter the systems were required. The introduction of the KH-7 GAMBIT and KH-8 GAMBIT-3 ("GAMBIT Cubed") close-look satellites in 1963 and 1966 respectively provided analysts technical intelligence to create countermeasures against Soviet and Chinese weapons (Packard). Details on aircraft, such as refueling probes and propeller designs, would inform photographic interpreters about the flying range and possible mission sets performed by a specific airframe.

### Euphemisms

In March 1967, President Lyndon Johnson spoke to a group of teachers in Nashville, Tennessee. His off-hand comments about the "space program" were recorded by nationally syndicated reporters.

"We've spent \$35 or \$40 billion on the space program. And if nothing else had come of it except the knowledge we've gained from space photography, it would be worth 10 times what the whole program cost. Because tonight we know how many missiles the enemy has and, it turned out, our guesses were way off. We were doing things we didn't need to do. We were building things we didn't need to build. We were harboring fears we didn't need to harbor" (Clark, 1967).

Johnson made this off-the-record statement to demonstrate that initial U.S. estimates of the Soviet threat were too high. When it came time for arms limitation talks between the Americans and Soviets, satellite reconnaissance would play a central role, while remaining in the shadows. During the Congressional Space Medal of Honor Awards Ceremony at Kennedy Space Center on October 1, 1978, President Jimmy Carter stated,

“Photoreconnaissance satellites have become an important stabilizing factor in world affairs in the monitoring of arms control agreements. They make immense contribution to the security of all nations. We shall continue to develop them.”

President Carter made this statement at the Kennedy Space Center within the context of his speech, relaying how space technology has helped Americans and garnering public support for the second Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT II). The glaring admission of the “fact of” satellite reconnaissance in Carter’s speech was the unceremonious end to a tumultuous battle to keep the fact under wraps. Inside the first Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT I), the term “national technical means of verification” (NTM) appears, with no explanation to what they may be. Throughout the rest of the 1970s and into the 1980s, NTM was the euphemism for reconnaissance satellites monitoring the U.S. and USSR arms limitation treaties.

## Into a Digital Age

Inadvertent releases and intentional leaks of classified material within the U.S. Department of Defense in the early 1980s showed how good satellite resolution had become. During the 1984 budget hearings for the House Appropriations Committee, two high-detail images of Soviet aircraft were accidentally published and subsequently released to the public. A naval analyst provided stolen images to *Jane's Defence Weekly*, showing a Soviet aircraft carrier under construction. These images showed how resolution had improved over the decades. The modernized satellite systems included upgrades based on electro-optical technology.

These systems did not rely on film-based cameras, nor did they return film capsules back to Earth. Images were transmitted digitally, via satellite links, to ground stations for interpretation and dissemination. What previously took days to accomplish (e.g. recovery, film development, and dissemination) and was held at the highest classification levels now took mere minutes to hours and was “occasionally” released to the public.

## What Now?

The routine use, and “fact of” admission, of satellite reconnaissance forever changed the way the U.S. used collected intelligence to create domestic and international policy. The release of information from “non-reconnaissance” imaging satellites, such as LANDSAT, showed the type of information gathered from space. While LANDSAT was the first dedicated civil earth resources satellite, with a horrific 80-meter resolution, questions about “reconnaissance-like” characteristics appeared early in the program. Inside a 1975 study on U.S. National Space Policy, these concerns were highlighted.

Are the “reconnaissance-like” characteristics of certain civilian activities (e.g. the LACIE project to estimate foreign and U.S. wheat production) likely to increase international sensitivities to remote-sensing activities and thereby increase the risk of international objections to classified reconnaissance activities (Ogilvie)?

As the news media reported more and more on satellite reconnaissance activity in the 1980s, there was little to hold back the civil or commercial satellite capabilities any longer. In the 1990s, government restrictions on imagery resolution limits for civil and commercial satellites were lessened (*New York Times*, 1994). High-resolution products provided by LANDSAT and IKONOS, the world’s first commercial imaging satellite, became pervasive in policy and scientific circles, eventually trickling down to the general public.

## Ubiquity and Obfuscation

The 1998 Indian nuclear test went unobserved by U.S. satellites due to “conditioning,” or establishing a prior pattern to lull intelligence analysts into thinking the operations are routine. India had established its own satellite surveillance capability and ran a “red-teaming” of sorts, determining what could (or could not) be determined from orbit

(Defense Forum India). If patterns cannot be determined or tracked, such as the case of the Russian mobile intercontinental ballistic missile force, then patterns of behavior cannot be established with any high confidence (Katz, 1970). The aphorism “keep ‘em guessing” undercuts the ability of satellite reconnaissance to provide substantive information. Intelligence collection then becomes “historical research” to determine past behavior and link to current operations.

### Increasing Expectation vs. Decreasing Output

Contrary to President Carter’s comments on photoreconnaissance satellites becoming a “stabilizing factor in world affairs,” the current knowledge of their presence and countermeasures to defeat them have contributed greatly to geopolitical instability. Hiding from U.S. satellites and covering up observable characteristics provide countries like Iran and North Korea the ability to throw a “wild card” into the political process with nothing more than a \$100 camouflage net, lumber, and some nails. If anti-American influence ever spreads throughout Central/South America and Africa, knowledge of intelligence “mucking up” techniques will stymie the American policymaking process by taking away the intelligence required to make sound decisions. Planners and policymakers must decide if satellite-borne information still holds the priority it did during the Cold War, or if another intelligence discipline (Cyber? Human?) must be advanced to create the next intelligence “revolution.”

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## MARGINALITY AND ME



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When I was offered an opportunity in sociology class to earn extra credit writing an essay that concerned a time when I felt marginalized or in crisis, I felt compelled to finally write about something I had put off for years. It was about my experience as a child growing up in a racially hostile environment at a time when violence against blacks was ignored and sometimes even encouraged by a segment of the white majority.

I was born in Marion, a small town in northeast Indiana, in 1956. Since the 1930s, Marion had an infamous reputation as being what was known as a “lynch town,” a place where justice for African Americans would often be dispensed at the end of a lynch rope in the hands of an angry white mob. Initially, Marion got its reputation from a lynching that occurred in 1930 when two men were lynched on the courthouse lawn by an angry mob of white men. The man in front was Thomas Shipp, and the other was Abram Smith, my father’s cousin. At the time, my father was 11 years old, and my mother was 6. A third man, James Cameron, was beaten but spared when the woman who was allegedly raped told the crowd he was not involved. After spending several years in prison, Cameron was released and pardoned by Governor Evan Bayh in 1993, and Cameron went on to found the Black Holocaust Museum in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

In the 1950s our family was one of the most hated in the town, primarily because of my father, C. DeVall Banks, who was a World War II veteran and fought in the Pacific theatre in two of the most dangerous places there, Henderson Field in the Philippines and Okinawa. He enlisted with the promise of first-class citizenship when he returned, a promise that was made and broken after World War I. When he returned and started dating my mother, he decided to take her to one of Marion’s better restaurants, only to be told he couldn’t sit inside and would have to pick up his food in the back by the loading docks.

I believe the final insult came when he and the other African Americans were refused entrance to the public pool — a pool that was financed with taxes paid by all citizens of the town, including my father. By 1954 he had earned his B.A. in sociology and helped found the Marion Chapter of the NAACP. Shortly after, he was elected its first president. His first action was to file a lawsuit in federal court to open the pool for all citizens, a suit that was eventually settled in his favor.

Needless to say, he was one of the most hated black men in town, and so our family was hated as well. It became commonplace for our yard to be littered with garbage, lynch ropes hung from trees, and constant death threats made against my father and our family. One night after previously receiving a serious death threat, I remember my father crawling through the house pulling us out of our beds onto the floor and hearing something that sounded like fireworks. Several shots had been fired into our house by a truck full of locals.

I remember over the next few days my father and some of his army buddies sitting openly on the front porch cleaning their guns, a clear warning that they would not be intimidated and would fight back, even kill if it became necessary to protect their families. After all, they had joined the war effort and killed to protect this country, so killing to protect their families was just as important, maybe even more.

My story started about the time I was in kindergarten. Before that I remember we were never allowed to go any farther than our yard in view of my mother. We couldn't go to the park across the street or to a friend's house like the other children in the neighborhood. I never really gave it much thought until I was a little older. From kindergarten through the first grade, walking to and from school, I was frequently beaten by the sons of the same bigots who constantly harassed my family. They taught their sons well. After years of that kind of abuse, I became a mean, angry little boy who would fight at the slightest provocation.

However, the hatred I felt was not against white people in general. My father would not allow that. In 1963 when I was 7 years old, he made me watch Dr. King's speech from the march on Washington, D.C. He would always emphasize one particular part of the speech where Dr. King said, "I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character," and we were expected to do the same. He taught us that there were bad people of every color as well as good, and we should not hate an entire race because of the actions of a few.

After the many death threats my father received on his job, he was eventually fired because the management felt he was too much of a risk and the threats were becoming a distraction. It was difficult for him to find a job because of his reputation, and the best he could find, despite being one of the most educated men in that town, was as a janitor at the local Ford garage.

In 1966, through some contacts he made with attorneys he met during his lawsuit, he was offered a position with a city agency in Indianapolis, Community Action Against Poverty (CAAP), as its coordinator, a position that was equal to his level of education. We moved thinking that his reputation and the bigotry were behind us and we could have a new start. That's what we wanted to believe. But, unfortunately, that would not be the case.

Even before we moved, the bigotry started. My parents found a house in a middle-class neighborhood on the East Side, an up-and-coming area that was predominately white. They had an appointment to see the house, but when the realtor met them, suddenly the house had already been sold. My father immediately contacted one of his attorney friends, a well-known white attorney who was a partner in a major law firm. They employed a tactic called a "white fence," where his attorney friend contacted the realtor and told him he had a client that was interested in the house. Suddenly, the house was back on the market, and the realtor was overjoyed at the prospect of selling the house to one of his clients. He even gave the keys to my father's attorney friend and told him he could return them after his client had seen the house. No hurry. He took his "clients," my mother and father, to see the

house, which they eventually bought. My father said he wished he had taken a picture of the expression on the realtor's face when they showed up at closing.

It was only three years after we moved that the specter of bigotry reared its ugly head, and once again I felt I was in crisis. A friend and I were walking home from the local store when a car with about five young white men drove past us and called us "niggers" and some other choice names. We ignored them and they drove off, but a few minutes later they came back. This time they accelerated and I heard three or four loud noises that sounded like firecrackers. I felt something like a bee sting in my back and my friend who was with me screamed, fell down, and grabbed his leg. I helped him up and noticed he was bleeding from a hole in his leg. We were only a block from his house, and I helped him home. Of course his mother was in a panic.

She asked me if I was alright and I told her I was and that I was headed home, which was about eight blocks away. I started to feel dizzy on the way, and when I finally made it to my house, I passed out as my mother answered the door. I woke up several minutes later surrounded by a police detective, an ambulance crew, and my mother, who was a registered nurse. From the size of the wound, the police officer believed it was a .22- or .32-caliber weapon. I spent the next week in the hospital and several weeks after recuperating from the blood loss and the pain.

I can honestly say I felt I was in crisis and marginalized during most of my childhood. From the time I was 6 until 1972, when there was a race riot at the school where I was bused, I felt both in crisis and marginalized. I was finally granted a slight reprieve in 1973 when I dropped out of school at 17 and got my parents' permission to join the Air Force. During that time the military had a low tolerance for racism.

But even now, in the light of the Colin Kaepernick protests, that specter rears its ugly head and reminds us that the cancer of racism is still there, hiding in the shadows, waiting for an opportunity to do what it does best: divide and conquer.



# CONSERVATION OF MASS AND THE DARK SIDE OF CLIMATE CHANGE



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Imagine it's the year 2080, and the planet is enveloped in chaos, uncertainty, and a world economic collapse. Also imagine, if you will, famine and mass starvation running rampant. This is an entirely plausible scenario, should the Earth's temperature rise at least 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 F) more. If this happens, the Arctic ice would melt, thereby flooding many mainland cities across the world and accelerating the warming of the planet. According to an article published by the *New Republic*, "Some 12.3 million people live on U.S. land that would go underwater if the sea rises by 10 feet (Leber)."

Climate change is an urgent crisis that requires immediate attention and a further in-depth analysis. What is climate change exactly? To put it simply, the world is a bubble, and greenhouse gas emissions from the burning of coal and fossil fuels, as well as methane from animal agriculture (think factory farming), get released into the atmosphere and become trapped. The increase in carbon dioxide from these greenhouse gas emissions subsequently lingers in the atmosphere and thereby aids in increasing global temperatures.

Russia is already reaping the financial benefits, which is the dark side of climate change. The Arctic ice is already melting at an exponential rate, and its effects are widespread. Energy companies are exploiting this and using it to their economic advantage. The city of Murmansk, Russia, is the world's largest Arctic sea port. It is also a strategic location, as it has direct connections to some of the world's largest oceans and is also aptly named "the gateway to the Arctic." Since the ice has been shrinking drastically over the last 30 years, this opens up more trade routes. In doing so, ships are now using the northern sea route to haul cargo, which saves on shipping costs. Also, by using this route, companies can save up to 15 days in travel time. This also cuts the shipping distance in half, from 10,000 miles to 5,000.



Since the ice is melting, Russia now has billions, if not trillions of untapped natural resources they can mine. Because the land is more accessible, and these companies are able to ship more efficiently, they are ramping up production, therefore destroying the environment at a more rapid pace. Norilsk, Russia, is one of the most polluted cities on Earth due to the production of nickel. The production releases high amounts of sulfur dioxide, a deadly toxin that has destroyed local forests and rendered parts of the local region infertile.

The Russian media has not only recently tried to downplay the devastating effects of global warming, but they have put a positive spin on it, citing it as “financially beneficial for Russia.” Much of the land in the north that was once uninhabitable is now becoming more habitable. Moreover, with the rising temperatures in the northern region, the land can become potentially more lush and green, paving the way for animal agriculture and factory farming in the process (“Future of Firearms”).

Animal agriculture and factory farming are controversial topics that are often missed in the discussion of greenhouse gas emissions. The U.S. Cattle Industry alone is massive and leaves behind a highly visible carbon footprint, accounting for roughly 17 percent of total greenhouse gas emissions. Almost 91 percent of the world's rainforest loss is attributed to animal agricultural, as corporations pave the land for beef and other livestock. In fact, the primary cause of environmental devastation is due to agriculture. Raising cows, pigs, and chickens is incredibly water-intensive.

Approximately 34 trillion gallons of water are used for livestock on an annual basis. On average, 1 pound of beef can take up to a mind-boggling 2,500 gallons of water to produce. This is because factory farms use soy and grains to feed cows, which have to be grown first. On any given day, a cow can plow through 140 to 150 pounds of feed. Moreover, cows require an incredible amount of water to consume, up to 40 gallons per day. However, it's not only the production of meat that uses up vast amounts of water. Take cheese for instance — 1 pound of it can take up to 900 gallons of water to produce. Conservation of water is hugely important and can help slow down the effects of climate change.

Another unwanted contribution to global greenhouse emissions is the production of methane gas, which is quite the unintended consequence. On average, cows emit an estimated 150 billion gallons a day (Cowspiracy). I love meat just as much as most Americans, but one way to curb the disturbing effects of climate change and to slow down the environmental impact is through simple changes in behavior.

If all humans pledged to not eat meat for one day a week, this would have tremendous positive effects on the environment. There are 24 hours in a day, 8 of which are required for sleeping. This means that Americans only have to go 16 waking hours a week without consuming meat products. The National Chicken Council has kept records since 1960 on the amount of livestock Americans eat per pound on a yearly basis. The numbers have increased annually at a frightening rate. By the end of 2017, it was projected that Americans will have consumed as much as 217.8 pounds each (“Per Capita”). By skipping meat consumption one day a week, this could have the potential to help to shave off 31 pounds of meat and poultry annually.

However, it isn't only the rising temperatures and the potential catastrophic environmental consequences from fossil fuel production and animal agriculture that need addressing. There is also a growing movement of politicians and organizations who publish data and news articles attempting to debunk climate change. Exxon, a major player in the world's oil industry, has acknowledged global warming since the late 1970s. Global warming is “bad for business,” and Exxon has aggressively spent decades trying to spread misinformation, even preventing the U.S. from signing a 1998 international treaty that would help reduce global greenhouse gas emissions. A recent article by *Scientific American* described Exxon's tactic as “an approach many have likened to the lies spread by the tobacco industry regarding the health risks of smoking. Both industries were conscious that their products wouldn't stay profitable once the world understood the risks, so much so that they used the same consultants to develop strategies on how to communicate with the public (Hall).”

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has recently advised that roughly 57 percent of greenhouse gas emissions are caused by the burning of fossil fuels ("Global Greenhouse"). While oil, coal, and natural gas industries leave a monumental footprint on the environment, they also leave a huge footprint on the U.S. government. These corporations have an abundance of cash flow and legal resources at their disposal, and they know how to use it. The Center for Responsive Politics released a detailed report of political campaign contributions from 2015-2016. Koch Industries donated more than \$9.5 million to political candidates, and Chevron donated just over \$5 million. In fact, 99.8 percent of donations from Koch Industries went to Republican candidates.

Money and politics go hand in hand, and many politicians receive generous kickbacks. Coincidentally, many of these candidates do not believe that global warming poses a threat to America's future — this especially rings true for Republican politicians. President Donald Trump is one such example, having received over \$900,000 from oil and gas industries in the year 2016 alone ("Oil & Gas").

Ignoring the rising global temperatures, even by a few degrees Celsius, could have an irreversible detrimental impact on the way society functions as a whole on a daily basis. According to the Climate Reality Project, an education and advocacy group, the world is at risk for more brutal summers, drought, and massive flooding that could cause great financial losses for local communities ("The Facts About"). America is falling behind in regard to coming up with proposals to combat global warming.

One effective way to combat the potentially horrendous effects of global warming is the implementation of the Paris Climate Accord. The agreement "brings all nations into a common cause to undertake ambitious efforts to combat climate change and adapt to its effects...to strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change by keeping a global temperature rise this century well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase even further to 1.5 degrees Celsius. Additionally, the agreement aims to strengthen the ability of countries to deal with the impacts of climate change (United Nations)."

Signed by 196 countries in December of 2015, this is a historic document with noble intentions. Mainly, this document addresses the urgent threat that greenhouse gas emissions have on the environment. Recently, President Donald Trump deemed it necessary to pull out of the Paris Climate Agreement, which many feel is a step in the wrong direction. In fact, one solution to this major issue would be to stay heavily involved and for the U.S. to lead in adapting powerful and necessary changes so that other countries may follow suit. For instance, America can invest in more clean energy production, such as wind and solar power.

One way to assist in implementing this policy would be to decrease America's colossal military spending. Lately, Congress has argued that America is in debt and does not have the funds to fix our ailing infrastructure; it is seeking ways to cut Medicaid and other benefits for the poor. For the fiscal year of 2015, America spent roughly \$597 billion to fund its military, almost as much as the next 14 countries combined (Taylor and Karklis). The ultimate goal would be to allocate some of these funds and use them to invest in clean energy research and technology. Moreover, these funds can be used to provide government grants to businesses that thrive from using coal, fracking, and oil. Cutting military spending by only .05 percent would amount to a staggering \$29.9 billion in annual savings. Even reducing the military budget by .01 percent could have drastic differences, as these funds could be used for future investments. This is not only necessary, but also entirely plausible.

If human civilization does not act now, the consequences could be horrendous for generations to come. Famine, drought, water and food shortages, and severe economic impacts on government institutions could put humans at risk. The time to act is now, and it is up to the younger generation to make the necessary changes. The Law of Conservation of Mass dictates that matter cannot be destroyed, it can only be changed. Likewise, the planet cannot be destroyed, only changed. The challenge is whether we as a human race can adapt

to the growing changes. Mother Nature will always find a way to survive such harsh and brutal conditions, but can humans survive, let alone endure?

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# BATTERY OVAL

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*El tiempo tiene un miedo ciempiés a los relojes.*

*Time has aa centipedal fear of clocks.*

— César Vallejo

I.

Battery Oval

This pigeon is not a pigeon  
& this seagull is not a seagull.

A man passes with his dog.  
The dog has been dressed in an "I ♥ NY" shirt  
& he is lapping hungrily at the air,  
oblivious to the teeming throng of limbs.

A woman passes, moneyed & inebriated.  
You call attention to her and give me  
the disdainful words to paint her figure.  
As she heads toward our bronze islet  
i imagine her posing akimbo  
liberated & free in the virtual,  
yet caged in space-time still  
as a gull on a string,

(Which is not this gull,  
Who cannot be a gull.)

a great number of inorganic bodies —  
moving mannequin among mannequins,  
we agree  
& us, us too,  
on that we also agree.

i take a picture of the Statue of Liberty with my iPhone just to verify that i exist

The man is quickly disappearing  
& the dog is still a dog,  
inasmuch as a dog can be a dog —  
that much is certain.

"That tree is beautiful," you say,  
& i agree.  
For the sake of the word,  
I endure the burden of faith.







## NIGHT

AMY NARKIS

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A wraith wisp-like she wound her way  
Through whispering willows in lonely state  
She slipped silent through the sleeping night  
A fluttering ghost this sleepless wight  
To disappear before the day.

A clover-patch no trace revealed  
To betray her tripping stride before  
The lilies lightly looked away  
She smiled as she looked their way  
Past wood and grove and field.

A feathery touch upon the heath  
Floating, flitting, light as faeries go  
A silent pursuit following wild things  
Wild herself, she followed on wings  
Of silver, and silver feet beneath.

Her trailing train diaphanous swirled  
Tangling stems and twigs o'er which she went  
With soundless laugh, she mended their hurts  
With silent mirth she fixed her skirts  
And merrily the dew drops pearled.

A rose-hued finger heralded dawn  
Reddening, relentless rose the sun  
Startled, she swiftly fled the night  
Faster, faster, flying day's light  
The first cock crowed, and she was gone.

## THOSE WHO FEAR OKADAS: SOLVING THE TRANSPORTATION PROBLEM IN NIGERIA



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Public transportation is an essential service the government must provide to the citizens of its country. However, the availability of public transportation is still an issue faced in many developing countries like Nigeria. It is crucial for all countries to have a reliable, affordable, and outstanding public transportation system.

In Nigeria, motorbike taxis are popularly known as *okadas*. The name is derived from a Nigerian local airline, Okada Air, which is now defunct. This sort of transportation system is also present in other African countries such as Cameroon, Benin Republic, and Sierra Leone. Most *okada* drivers are men. In Cameroon, they are referred to as *bendskins*, and in Benin Republic they are called *zémidjans*. Since their ban in Lagos State, Nigeria, in 2012, there has been an ongoing debate on whether *okadas* should remain outlawed in Lagos State and if they should also be outlawed in the other 35 Nigerian states and in other countries.

The use of *okadas* has its advantages and disadvantages, but a compromise can be reached on the issue. Ultimately, they should not be banned; however, their use needs to be regulated, and many improvements need to be made to increase their safety and reduce the amount of problems they cause.

*Okadas* became a popular type of transportation in Nigeria in the late 1980s due to rapid urbanization and inadequate inner-city public transportation. They are an adequate response to the decline in the city's road networks and transportation facilities (Konings 39). Their use has contributed to solving the transportation problems in cities and to the development of neighborhoods. Likewise, *okadas* have created jobs and a relatively secure income for a number of youths; they have stimulated economic growth by providing services to others; and they are well adapted to local road conditions and people's income levels (Konings 37).

Some people feel the need to use *okadas* due to the increasing rate of robberies by taxi and bus drivers while the passenger is seated in the vehicle, especially at night. Also, *okadas* reduce the risk of daylight kidnapping because a passenger can quickly alert other passersby if an *okada* driver is trying to kidnap him or her.

They are an addition to the available means of transportation, and they can serve as private transports. The drivers usually charge reasonable prices, which are negotiable depending on the distance, the nature of the terrain, the amount of traffic, the period of the year, and any existing relationship between the driver and the passenger (Konings 40-41). Drivers may reduce the price for regular customers, but they may increase the price they charge customers if the journey to the destination requested was troublesome.

Many people may prefer to use *okadas* over taxis because “taxi drivers often refuse to go to any neighborhood that is not easily accessible or is far from the city center, and they often drop passengers somewhere along the road” (Konings 40). This makes the use of taxis inconvenient for some people. On the other hand, *okadas* can drop passengers right at their doorstep due to their small size (Konings 40-41). Also, they benefit their passengers greatly because they save time due to their ability to weave in and out of traffic jams during rush hour (Konings 40).

The number of taxis is usually insufficient to meet popular demand during rush hour, especially in highly populated cities; so, without *okadas*, one would have to wait for hours before he or she could find a taxi or bus. Likewise, they have promoted local entrepreneurship among those offering services and goods to them such as general repairs, petrol, engine oil, and spare parts (Konings 41). Other businesses do depend on *okadas* and vice versa.

During Cameroon’s economic crisis, driving people on *bendskins* or *okadas* acted as a job alternative and created opportunities for the unemployed youths. In highly overpopulated African cities, taxicabs and bus services are at most times inadequate due to the congestion and poorly maintained roads. Students, government workers, and businessmen and women use *okadas* in such troublesome cities to overcome traffic congestion because they are able to navigate roads that are inaccessible to automobiles. They can also drive through the bad roads of villages and urban slums, which are too difficult and dangerous for larger vehicles to ride on.

*Okadas* have a low purchase price for operators, and they have superior fuel efficiency, which is particularly essential during petrol shortages in Nigeria. Most people value them because they are fast and readily available. Furthermore, the use of *okadas* increases the competition between transport companies, so it also decreases the power of monopolies such as the state-owned *Société des Transport Urbains du Cameroun*, which has been enjoying a monopoly bus position in Douala, Cameroon (Konings 39). Business competition is important so that good quality goods and services at low, affordable prices can be offered to consumers.

On the other hand, the use of *okadas* has created several problems in cities. *Okada* drivers usually ignore administrative and traffic regulations, and they behave as if they are masters of the road, which other road users contest strongly (Konings 37). They contribute to air pollution, and they cannot transport groups of people like buses do. Traffic rules require *okada* drivers to take and pass a driving test; however, only a few actually follow these rules (Konings 41). Also, *okada* drivers face problems of their own. Most *okada* drivers see the job as a transitional phase to a future form of employment; they pursue other jobs in the transport sector for higher incomes because working as an *okada* driver can be very demanding and minimally rewarding (Konings 42).

Most *okada* drivers do not know the most elementary traffic laws, or they simply violate them, while others are convinced that they have the right of way anywhere on the road because they perform essential public services (Konings 43). They ignore pedestrians and



moving cars, forcing the pedestrians and the cars to maneuver cautiously, so as to avoid being knocked over (Konings 43).

Road accidents are very common. "In Britain and other western countries, the leading cause of accidental injuries and deaths is road traffic accidents" (Smith 1244). This is also the same with African countries, where there are several vehicles. Such injuries and deaths can be caused by reckless driving and speeding. *Okada* drivers are renowned for their reckless driving and for speeding while driving, and they ignore traffic lights; therefore, such behavior exposes themselves and their passengers to dangers (Konings 43). Several injuries and casualties are caused by road accidents. "The Laquintenie Hospital in Douala has even given the name *bendskin* to a ward that it largely reserves for victims of *bendskin* road accidents" (Konings 43). This type of transportation has indeed caused numerous road accidents, and most residents say they have no other choice than *bendskins*; to them it is a necessary evil (Konings 43). Some residents still want to use them despite the risks involved.

Many people have had bad experiences with *okadas* and *okada* drivers. There have been several complaints about the way *okada* men behave: They have bad attitudes toward road users who try to confront them, and they might attack them physically (Konings 44). A taxi driver from Douala, Cameroon, gave his experience about the way *bendskin* drivers drive on the road and about the way they behave: "...they come and encircle you like bees and attempt to lynch you" (Konings 44). Indeed, some *okada* men drive so carelessly on the road, which can put other road users' lives in danger.

During his stay in Makeni, Sierra Leone, Michael Büürge saw that *okada* men were depicted as rude, as lawbreakers, and as criminals (Büürge 61). Some armed robberies are successful because armed robbers escape on *okadas*, which can quickly squeeze through traffic. They have a bad reputation: "Their activities and their income from riding [are] considered unfavorable to the development of the country, as they [are] not sustainable" (Büürge 61). Most people went into this job as a last resort, and it is not very reliable.

In general, *okada* men are viewed as men who did not go to school, who do not work properly, who do not attend mosque or church, who spend money on useless things, who cause road accidents, who consume drugs and alcohol, and who impregnate girls (Büürge 61-62). Many people see them as men who live irresponsible lives. However, some *okada* drivers like Sembu, a driver from Makeni, Sierra Leone, have challenged such accusations: "We, the bike riders, make this place safe. People say we are rude, but it's not true. We just stand for our rights. Without us, Makeni is nothing; we are the economy of this place" (Büürge 62). He went further on to say, "We give young people a possibility to earn good money; otherwise they would idle around; they would steal, because they are disgruntled... But a bike rider is a serious person: he has responsibility — for his bike, for the community. But the government and the police, they don't take us seriously, they harass us every day..." (Büürge 62). Most people and some governments tend to look at the disadvantages *okadas* cause, and they pay less attention to their benefits.

In most places, a driver's license or a permit and formal training are not required to become an *okada* driver, and the drivers and passengers are not required to wear helmets. Passengers and drivers ride and drive at their own risks. Unlike Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) buses, *okadas* are driven on the same lane as cars and other vehicles, so this increases the risk of them having collisions with other vehicles. Furthermore, a long and expensive apprenticeship is not required.

On January 15, 2004, the local administration in Douala made some rules to control the *bendskin* drivers: their vehicles were to be painted yellow; they should have plate numbers; both drivers and passengers should wear helmets; and drivers should possess certain documents such as a driving license and a road tax sticker (Konings 47). However, most drivers ignored these rules because policemen were not inclined to enforce them strictly; instead, they were more interested in extorting money from the drivers (Konings 44). A taxi driver in Douala wondered, "Why should you bother to obtain these documents, for even if you have all of them, the police still request a beer" (Konings 44). Hostile relationships exist



between drivers, police, and other state agents due to fierce contest and power over the road, which results in protests, violent rebellions, and even police harassments (Konings 44-47). Some *okada* drivers feel mistreated by police, so they try to stand up for their rights by being rebellious and by protesting.

In order for the use of *okadas* to cause fewer problems, their drivers and riders need to wear protective clothing like gloves and helmets; stricter safety and design standards need to be made in order to reduce the risks of mechanical failures; and drivers need to be experienced (Sparron 1226-1227). New rules and regulations on how to increase their safety need to be made and enforced. Drivers must undergo proper driving lessons, and they must be licensed to drive. Any driver who is found driving recklessly, disobeying traffic rules, and driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol should be fined or imprisoned and their bike confiscated, so they are less likely to repeat such actions in the future.

Road accidents are one of the leading causes of death around the world, and it can happen to anyone, so it is very important to reduce the risks. Good ways to reduce the risks of road accidents are creating awareness, educating oneself and others, following safety procedures, and wearing protective clothing at all times. With these new rules and regulations set in place for *okada* use, the fear and resentment toward them is likely to reduce.

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## DEAR HUMANITY



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*For Yi Ma*

I.

During the Great Famine, my great-grandma was instructed by her father to watch the family ox. One day, a group of men came to the lonely cattle ranch and attempted to steal the ox. My great-grandma tried to stop them, but her bound feet could not keep up with their speed. She shouted and begged for them to return the animal. The men laughed at my great-grandma and called her a slave.

In Mandarin Chinese, characters are composed of radicals or *bushou*. Radicals dictate the origin of the characters and aid in language recognition. There are an estimated 214 radicals. The character *nu* (奴), which means “slave,” is composed of a female radical — *nv* (女). *Jian* (奸), another character that contains the female radical, connotes evil deeds. The human species could have used the knife or hook radicals to construct the terms “slave” and “evil,” but that never happened. I have always questioned the etymology of these words. Why are women associated with evil? Why are women slaves? I wondered: *What should I do if the established language is against women, against myself?*

II.

When I attended the local village school, I was not allowed to speak Fuzhou Dialect, a language that is spoken mainly in Fujian province. I learned the dialect from my grandma, who could not understand Mandarin Chinese. The school split languages into different social classes. Fuzhou Dialect was considered the “basest” language — the language of village

women, farmers, and uneducated people. The goal was to abandon, forget, and murder Fuzhou Dialect. Mandarin Chinese was a formal, middle-class language. Teachers reminded students that mastering Mandarin Chinese was the key to succeeding in the Chinese job market. English was described as high-class — a global and sophisticated language. The principal often said, “To become a millionaire, one has to know English.” Most children yearned to speak perfect English.

My English teacher, a pompous Chinese lady, once brought to class a perfume bottle she bought in New York. She opened the cap and convinced her students that the smell of America was hidden inside the tiny perfume bottle. I tried to sniff the perfume and sneezed. I said, in Fuzhou Dialect, that she could purchase the same perfume in a local village shop. My English teacher scowled at me, “I don’t understand you. Please speak in English.”

In the evening, the school put me in a dark detention room. I was supposed to *mian bi si guo* — reflect on my “mistakes.” However, the more I reflected, the more frustrated I became. I thought of the artificial perfume bottle and the liquid that was trapped inside it. I, too, felt confined, though not inside a bottle but within a vacuum of ignorance. When I reflected, I began to contemplate the murder of Fuzhou Dialect. Every rejected language undergoes a linguistic holocaust. When my language was dying, I — along with many villagers — was ignored and abandoned.

### III.

Chicana author Gloria Anzaldúa writes, “[People want] a language which they can connect their identity to, one capable of communicating the realities true to themselves [...] We needed a language with which we could communicate with ourselves, a secret language” (35-36). She is correct that language forms identities. All of us, regardless of gender and ethnicity, need a language, or a symbolic dialogue, to keep our identities and authenticity intact. If we are our language, then our souls are the structure of our linguistic dialogue.

I remember talking to my cousin Yan Yan when I was eight. She was crying. Her father abused her, again. We lived in an extreme patriarchal society and were often taught to think highly of men. On a trip to visit our ancestors at a tomb site, my uncle forced Yan Yan to pray that, after marriage, she would only bear sons, not daughters. Yan Yan refused to obey her father. Her language was defiant. As a result, Uncle slapped her face and verbally accused her of disrespecting our ancestors. I often thought of the irony of his words. I wondered, *How can we be faithful to the language of the dead if we disrespect the language of the living?*

So Yan Yan and I created a secret language that took us far away from the torture of reality, away from social obligations that were choking our throat. In our secret language, the words “evil” and “slave” did not have female radicals. “Dui” — acceptable — became “Bu dui” — unacceptable. We were not as prone to obeying senseless commands. When Yan Yan and I spoke our symbolic dialogue, we were fearless and resolute, eager to defy patriarchal conventions and maintain our own dignity.

### IV.

Lately, I have been contemplating the word “illiterate.” My relatives always called my grandma an illiterate. I, too, said the same word on several occasions. However, the word “illiterate” goes beyond the inability to write and read. The term also denotes a lack of education or unfamiliarity with a specific language. But that is not my grandma. She never received a formal education, but she was extremely knowledgeable about the Fuzhou Dialect and the history that fostered the language.

Fuzhou Dialect — a language without a written form — came to my grandma’s life in the arrangement of songs and lyrical poetry. Grandma was a farmer’s daughter. As a child, she

would learn news from listening to her father sing in a rice field. During the Second World War, her father would sing sad, mournful songs that echoed the pain of victims who died in the war. Later, the dialect became a tool for survival. My grandma was 26 years old when the Cultural Revolution began. Red guards from around the country would break into homes and abuse those who attended school or valued education. A young widow at the time, she utilized the dialect to create secret codes to save her children from foreign red guards. The red guards did not understand *ming yi* — hide yourself — but her children did.

To respect language, we must respect the bearers of the language. In order to develop such a viewpoint, one must understand that the act of sustaining a language requires sacrifice. My grandma had been laughed at several times for only understanding Fuzhou Dialect, but she had never forgone the language. *Ya tu*, very low-class, my aunt once complained. But Grandma was unwilling to stay muted. She was the exact opposite of an uneducated person.

We shape our language, and our language defines who we are. When I was a toddler, I spoke my first words in Fuzhou Dialect. “Yi Ma,” I said. *Grandma*. I remember hearing her joy. The way Grandma embraced me is how I wish we could all embrace the speakers of diverse languages. Although we may not understand one another completely, we can still try. If language is twin skin to our identity, then let us take care of each other.

Let us not be silenced.

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# THE REALITIES OF THE GAP YEAR



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As you enter the auditorium, the air itself seems to crackle with excitement and opportunity. The dazzling displays of the gap year fair whisk you away to places you once thought you would only visit in your dreams; but the vibrantly colored tablecloths remind you that, somewhere over that rainbow, your dreams are about to come true.

The plethora of possibilities is staggering. Will you swim with the dolphins or sled with the dogs? Will you work on sustainable energy projects or learn the art of Thai massage? The range of choices is bewildering, but one thing seems certain: Your gap year will be the perfect cocoon for your long-awaited butterfly transformation.

The gap year, a transition year between high school and college, has seen a surge in popularity here in the United States over the last decade, and it is easy to understand why. The year promises unmatched, pivotal experiences that sound all too luxurious to today's burned-out teens.

Making the gap year sound even more appealing are the seemingly endless anecdotes singing its praises. For example, according to the article "Time Out or Burn Out for the Next Generation," many students at Harvard who took advantage of the school's deferred enrollment option in order to take a gap year "speak of their year away as a 'life-altering' experience or a 'turning point,' and most feel that its full value can never be measured and will pay dividends the rest of their lives." Such commendations affirm that taking a gap year can certainly be fruitful for some students. Nevertheless, my research shows that taking a gap year is inadvisable because postponing college limits access to vital resources that enable students to complete their degree.

The further removed students are from high school at the time of college application, the less access they might have to helpful academic resources. Resources are important because,

after all, applying to college can be a complicated process. The thought of tackling these applications often strikes fear into the hearts of even the most capable students, who sometimes feel as though they are stuck battling a dragon while armed with only a spoon.

Making sense of the vast array of majors, schools, requirements, and due dates can seem impossible to rookie students. Fortunately for seniors, powerful resources in the form of teachers, mentors, and guidance counselors can be easily accessed within the very walls of their high schools. This invaluable support team can offer customized help as it guides a student through the often-intimidating application process. These experienced professionals understand how to navigate what can seem like uncharted territory to high school students. In fact, this team is so important to the college application process that even CEO and co-founder of the gap year program Thinking Beyond Borders, Robin Pendoley, urges students who are pondering a gap year to apply to college while still in high school.

Pendoley explains why applying during this time is so crucial in the article “Gap Year” written by the National Association for College Admission Counseling. In this article, Pendoley cautions, “All of the resources are there, the guidance counselors are there. All of the people you want to get letters of recommendation from are there.” If students take a gap year before applying to college, they risk cutting themselves off from those who can offer them the most help during their application process. For this reason, Pendoley advises students who are planning a gap year to make use of their chosen college’s deferment option by applying to college in their senior year. Deferment (an option more commonly offered by expensive, private schools) is a key resource that grants gap year students a seamless transition from graduation, to gap year, to college.

Unfortunately, many students cannot afford the type of institutions that offer deferment for gap years. Students who find themselves limited to state schools may be putting their admittance to college at risk by taking a gap year. As Berkley High School advisor Angela Price points out in Christina Schoefer’s article “Oh, the Places You’ll Go: The Benefits of Taking a Gap Year Off Before College,” for these students, taking a gap year is ill-advised. This is because, most of the time, state schools “don’t encourage or defer admission for gap years” (Schoefer).

In light of Pendoley’s advice, the lack of a deferment option poses a threat to students who take a gap year with the hope of attending a state school afterward. Without the security offered by deferment, taking a gap year could ultimately hurt a student’s chances of being accepted to college later. Students who do take a gap year prior to being accepted by a college will undoubtedly face a tougher application process due to their limited access to essential resources. This extra challenge could deter some overwhelmed students from even attempting to apply.

Furthermore, in order to complete their degree, some students depend on scholarships, which are often closed to students who delay college in order to take a gap year. Because scholarship resources are integral to degree completion for lower-income students, Price warns this group of young adults that “most of the scholarship programs that support low-income or first-generation students would be unavailable if the student took a year off and returned to school.”

Consequently, for students who rely on scholarships in order to complete their degree, the benefits associated with taking a gap year are unlikely to outweigh the potential risks associated with such a year. Indeed, Price’s words should not be taken lightly. Students who choose to take a gap year face serious hurdles to degree completion, especially when the students come from low-income families who depend on things like state schools and scholarships in order to attend college.

In addition to dealing with limited access to resources, students who choose to postpone college often face significant life changes that make completing a degree even more challenging than it normally is. By its very nature, college demands a student’s full attention. If a student has to split time between school and other major obligations, such as raising a

family (which is more likely to happen among delayers than on-time students), academics can suffer. This conclusion is drawn in an article written by Johns Hopkins University Professor of Sociology Stefanie DeLuca. In her article “Delay is a Disadvantage,” DeLuca relates the findings of an eight-year study performed by Johns Hopkins University, which “followed more than 11,000 members of the high school class of 1992.” She said, “Delayers were more likely to attend less than four-year institutions and more likely to get married or become parents before entering college.” This quote demonstrates that earning a bachelor's degree can be far more difficult to achieve for “gappers” than for traditional students.

DeLuca offers further proof of this claim when she shares additional findings of the study, which state that “those who postponed enrolling in college a year after finishing high school were 78 percent less likely to complete a bachelor's degree than those who enrolled immediately after high school.” These findings support the notion that a gap year can be truly detrimental to a student's success in attaining a bachelor's degree. This conclusion should not come as a surprise, considering that most students cannot afford a comprehensive gap year experience that would truly augment their future studies.

Still, it could be argued that a gap year taken by a more affluent student could yield more positive results. However, the university's study reveals that not even the wealthy are immune to the gap year trap, as the “finding holds for affluent, high-achieving students as well as those with limited resources.” The university's study helps shed a brighter light on the realities of the gap year than current magazine headlines do. If nothing else, this evidence shows that students need to exhibit caution and weigh their options carefully when considering taking a gap year.

Despite all this information, a case could still be made in favor of the gap year. After all, as anecdotal evidence suggests, there is much to be gained from a gap year that may not otherwise be attained. An appeal to this line of thinking is put forth by Fred Kaelin, executive director of Dynamy Internship Year, who claims that “the adventurous few who take time off are richly rewarded. Taking time off before college gives you the gift of time to learn about two essential things: yourself and the world around you” (“Gap Year”). The value in such a quest is easy to appreciate. To wonder at the world around oneself and to test how one fits into such a world are certainly noble pursuits. However, is a gap year, as implied by Kaelin, the only means to such an end? An organic college experience could equally be capable of affording such opportunities.

This is precisely why colleges require general education courses — to challenge students to open up and see the world in new ways and to transform them into more thoughtful, productive members of society. Earning general education credits at a local community college while participating in job shadowing experiences could be an excellent alternative for young people who are considering a gap year due to indecision about their major. This choice would provide students a chance not only to work toward their degree, but also to expand their worldview and explore their career options in professional environments.

In addition to offering meaningful insight through general education courses, college offers an abundance of opportunities to those students seeking Kaelin's “essentials” without taking a gap year. For example, students who find themselves aching for time abroad have the option of participating in student exchange programs. Those hoping to make a difference in the world can choose to participate in clubs that involve community service projects. Additionally, those students can decide to use their time off during summer and winter breaks to volunteer for causes that are dear to them.

Students desiring some solid work experience in the hope of meeting new people and earning some money for school can apply for a job, either on or off campus. Even the authors of the article “Time Out or Burn Out for the Next Generation” admit that an “old-fashioned summer job that provides a contrast to the school year or allows students to meet others of differing backgrounds, ages, and life experiences is often invaluable in providing psychological downtime and a window on future possibilities.” If students are shown the

facts and are reminded that options like these exist, they may begin to see that it is possible to have the best of both worlds. To discover oneself (and many other amazing things too) by entering college straight out of high school is possible.

In conclusion, considering most, if not all, of us have the same goal — to achieve happiness and success for ourselves — we cannot afford to ignore the negative impact that taking a gap year can have on a student's likelihood of attaining a bachelor's degree. Although evidence in favor of taking a gap year certainly exists, it is, as DeLuca reminds us, "based on anecdotal evidence, not social science research." The research reveals that DeLuca is justified in warning "against universally encouraging the gap year as an educational practice if the ultimate goal is a bachelor's degree." Students should be wary of trusting their future to a collection of carefully curated success stories popularized by profit-driven media outlets.

Is taking a gap year truly worth the risks, especially when the goals of such a year can certainly be met in a college setting? For students whose priorities include obtaining a degree, a rewarding career, independence, and ultimately, success, the answer is decidedly no. Students who follow the traditional path of moving straight from high school on to college have a better chance at earning their bachelor's degree, and, therefore, a better chance at success.

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## WHAT CAN'T BE SAID

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I'm not going to tell you.

Instead, I'll wish for your return.  
Share carnival cotton candy,  
The crystallized sugar sticking to his fingers  
like water on his shoulder after a shower,  
a shower to wash away my touch.

I miss feeling  
minor chords in my ears whenever  
he sang to me  
the hairs on my arms screaming joyfully.  
Dissonance between our voices.

I can't tell what must be said,  
because it is useless.  
I don't know what has been learned,  
yet I know the pink duck on the hood of your  
blue sedan is slightly lighter from the bright sun  
pouring liquid gold from a tin can into your windshield.

Just leave a note under the door this time.

## RED

ERICA ROSENTHAL

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It was the fourteenth day of the shortest month.  
A day full of happy, excited smiles,  
red hearts, chocolate, and love.  
If you ask me, it's a day full of fake relationships  
with false expectations and too much emotion.  
Everywhere you look there's  
scarlet and red decorations.  
I never liked the color red,  
today is no  
    exception.

My biology teacher announces the end of the period  
for some reason the bells aren't working today.  
A fire alarm sounds in place of the lunch bell.  
Today is a weird day.  
Then I hear it,  
I don't know what it is, but I hear it,  
followed by screams, a lot of them.  
Suddenly I'm running down the hall  
tripping over bodies that shouldn't be there.  
Over the intercom I hear  
    CODE RED.



Red footprints track my path,  
a teacher I don't know,  
lets me into his classroom.  
He fumbles with the keys  
before I hear it again.  
I now realize what "it" is.  
                    gunshots.

I dive behind the teacher's desk  
as scarlet liquid puddles around my feet.  
Surrounded by it, I become an island.  
Isolated, alone, afraid,  
my senses are heightened.  
All I see is  
                    red.

A policeman enters the room.  
He tells us it's safe to come out  
but I don't hear a word he says.  
All I hear is ringing in my ears and sobs.  
All I'm seeing is red.  
Somehow, I exit the building with my hands up.  
I walk home and enter an empty house.  
My phone is ringing  
but I can't differentiate the sounds.  
When mom comes home,  
she holds me close and tells me  
everything will be  
                    okay.

I don't know what that word means anymore,  
but I know that's not anything I will feel  
for a long time.  
When the impact of it all  
seeps in like blood on my sneakers,  
all I see is  
                    Red.

But this Red is different.  
It's the Red of an angry community  
that had to spill blood yet again before anything changed.  
Seventeen lives lost.  
Seventeen families with empty chairs at their tables.  
I may only see red for the rest of my life,  
but it will be a new Red.  
                    Justice.

PIERCING THE JUNGLE CANOPY:  
USING U.S. REMOTE-SENSING DATA TO REDUCE  
LATIN AMERICAN RURAL FOOD INSECURITY



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**Abstract**

U.S. policies toward Latin America will remain focused on cooperative security and economic arrangements, while societal issues such as food insecurity undermine these on-going efforts. Current efforts to assist food production are aimed at regions, not individual food-producing locations such as personal farms and cooperatives. Use of U.S.-generated remote-sensing satellite data can assist families in remote farms and villages in boosting crop yields. This data can also help villages create food resiliency processes, preparing for unexpected natural disasters that may wipe out stores and growing crops. A brief case study is presented, comparing two Latin American countries already receiving U.S. economic aid and the effect of this policy on current efforts. The conclusion recommends a policy trial period in the “best case” country to assist in food security efforts at the local and regional levels.

**Purpose**

The purpose of this paper is to recommend a policy change regarding the dissemination of satellite imagery to assist U.S. efforts in Latin America aimed at helping rural farmers in the personal agricultural sector ward off food insecurity. While environmental data distribution projects currently exist, such as NASA’s SERVIR, their focus is on hub network modeling and delivery of data to a central point for collection and analysis. Scarce information exists on solutions to the problem of the “last 100 feet” — the final steps to delivering information to the end user, such as local farmers.

Decision-making support tools and processes already exist to assist community leaders and policymakers with using environmental data to benefit society at large. However, the analytic tools and data reside at specialized sites aimed at intensive study of climate change and large-scale applications. The delivery of information to the end user is not always effective, nor usable.

The target audiences for this policy recommendation are the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the lead U.S. government agency responsible for administering civilian foreign aid worldwide, and U.S. Southern Command (USSOUTHCOM), the Combatant Command responsible for providing contingency planning, operations, and security cooperation for Latin America.

## **Problem Statement**

As stated by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Latin America is one of the world's leading food-producing regions. The overwhelming problem, however, is:

“...not a lack of food, but rather the problems that the poorest members of society face in gaining access to that food.”

Among the most vulnerable portions of the population, such as rural women and indigenous peoples, over 60 percent of their income is spent on food. A large share of food consumed internally in Latin America is created by family farming. Over 80 percent of the agricultural holdings are run by small farmers and contribute between 30 and 40 percent of the region's agricultural gross domestic product.

Climate variability plays an integral part to food production and, by extension, food security. As an example, increasing amounts of rainfall (or conversely, a scarcity of rain) can provide shock and stress to an already climate-sensitive agricultural system. Lack of timely and effective notification may allow catastrophic events to create adverse impacts on food security.

Additionally, personal agriculture production fosters employment in areas where poverty reigns and food insecurity is at its worst.

## **SERVIR: A Successful Start**

SERVIR, a joint venture between NASA and USAID, provides state-of-the-art, satellite-based Earth monitoring, imaging and mapping data, geospatial information, predictive models, and science applications to help improve environmental decision-making among developing nations. SERVIR, Spanish for “to serve,” currently focuses on eastern and southern Africa, the Hindu-Kush region of the Himalayas, and the lower Mekong River Basin in Southeast Asia. Plans to expand SERVIR to Central America are currently underway, as of early 2017.

SERVIR strengthens the ability of governments and other development stakeholders to incorporate Earth observations and geospatial technologies to respond to natural disasters, improve food security, safeguard human health, and manage water and natural resources. The team has already created 40 custom tools, collaborated with over 200 institutions, and trained approximately 1,800 regional staffers on developing local solutions and linking regional centers around the world into an interactive network.

Based on the material reviewed, there are few concrete examples of clearly delineated space-to-farmer processes or products currently in use.

## **Case Study: Honduras and Guatemala**

The following case study of the proposed policy action uses two neighboring Latin American countries — Honduras and Guatemala — as the “best case/worst case” courses of action, respectively. The monikers “best” and “worst” are subjective, relating to the level of acceptance of U.S. economic aid and policy recommendations to national and local leaders.



The immediate proximity of both nations shows an overlap of agricultural area with similar climatic conditions and crops grown, providing constant factors when comparing test cases.

As the “best case” example, the Republic of Honduras maintains close relations with the U.S. and has supported U.S. policy in its neighboring countries of Nicaragua and El Salvador. As described in the Department of State factsheet on bilateral relations, Honduras:

“...is an ally of the United States, and its population registers some of the highest favorability ratings in the hemisphere toward the United States.”

Internal threats to Honduran security and economic development are so severe that Honduras has openly requested international assistance to address them. Sixty-two percent of the population lives at or below the poverty line.

As the “worst case” example, the U.S. provides diplomatic engagement and assistance to Guatemala but does not consider them an ally. U.S. policy objectives in Guatemala include supporting the institutionalization of democracy and encouraging respect for human rights and the rule of law. According to USAID, 54 percent of the Guatemalan population lives in poverty and 13 percent lives in extreme poverty. Half of all children under 5 are chronically malnourished, the worst level of malnutrition in the Western Hemisphere. A USAID situation analysis on Guatemala states that:

“Food security is of grave concern. One of the primary reasons for such high levels of chronic malnutrition is that families lack resources to produce or buy nutritious food...[However], Guatemala has tremendous potential for expanding its agricultural production, which would lead to rural economic growth, job creation, and poverty alleviation.”

Subsistence crops grown by locals include corn, dry beans, rice, wheat, and fruits and vegetables.

### Case Comparison

Using a Political, Economic, Social, and Technological (PEST) matrix, comparison of the two cases via the aforementioned factors can be subjectively ranked via four questions:

- Is the country open and willing to U.S. assistance, based on current bilateral relations?
- Are the country's economic factors stable enough on their own, not requiring assistance?
- Is the population educated enough to understand provided data, based on literacy rates?
- Is the population technologically advanced enough to use provided data directly?

The PEST model (also known as PESTLE or STEEPLE) is used in business analysis and was more appropriate than the traditional DIME (Diplomatic, Informational, Military, Economic) model, since military factors were non-existent and diplomatic issues were moot, as aid from the U.S. was already accepted.

The two remaining factors, Informational and Economic, create the core of the comparison matrix. The economic stability of Guatemala is strong, with coffee, sugar, and bananas as the main exports. Honduras, in comparison, contains extensive narco-related money laundering, and there are reports of government corruption, undermining the country's economic strength.

Informational factors are turned inward, measuring the ability of the population to read and access technology, since these are critical for receiving and interpreting satellite-borne data. The total adult literacy rate in Honduras is 85 percent, while the corresponding rate in Guatemala is 76 percent. The technological index, measured with the Networked Readiness

Index (NRI) from INSEAD and Cornell University, measures the cultural absorption of information and communication technologies. Guatemala ranked 103 out of 139 countries, when rated over 53 individual indicators; Honduras ranked 94.

	Honduras	Guatemala
Open and Willing?	+	-
Economically Stable?	-	+
Educated Population?	+	-
Technologically Advanced?	-	-

Test Case Selection

Therefore, based upon subjective analysis in the PEST matrix, Honduras is the ideal location to enact these procedures. The willingness of the government to accept U.S. help, along with the money, will provide a receptive audience. The high literacy rate of the population decreases the level of effort into changing instructional products to a lower reading comprehension level. Challenges with using Honduras as a test case include the country's economic stability, which directly impacts food security, and the technologic aptitude of the population. However, with the two positive factors of a literate and willing population, these limitations can be overcome.

If a comparison test case is desired, using a common region between Honduras and Guatemala (they are regional neighbors with a shared border) with similar climate, crops, and farming situation would offer the best pair-wise comparison case.

Concept

The intent of the proposed policy change is to establish successful space-to-farmer processes by increasing interaction with the end user, directly impacting personal crop production over the span of the growing season. A simplified concept of operations is providing data from satellite to farmer, in a usable and understandable format, ready for interpretation and implementation. For example, rainfall maps and overhead imagery of a land plot will show the best location to plant specific crops. USAID and local agency interaction will teach the farmer how to use the maps and imagery before planting season to maximize crop yields.

Recommendation

Therefore, it is recommended to initiate a trial period of one year (encompassing one full growing season) for the development of procedures and the creation of relevant maps and terrain data products to targeted local populations in Honduras. After the identification of key population sectors in Honduras that would most benefit from satellite-based imagery, climatic, and terrain data, USAID will provide print imagery along with any person-to-person assistance via established efforts, such as training of farming and land-clearing techniques for the purposes of food production of companion crops. Companion crops are different plants residing in close proximity for pest control and pollination, providing habitat for beneficial creatures, and maximizing use of space to increase crop productivity.

Indicative measures of effectiveness are the gross production of food, the amount of income spent on outside sources of food, and the nutritional intake for the farmer's family. These metrics will determine if there is an increase in food produced locally and nutrition obtained, with a corresponding drop in expenditures for food from outside sources, such as supermarkets or local vendors.



## Implications

If penetration of these processes into the local farming culture is successful, follow-up efforts using satellite-derived information can assist in construction methods for housing, agricultural production of textile commodities, and assistance in raising livestock. The sequel projects may use the same remote-sensing data, or they may require additional information from U.S. space assets.

Geospatial data from GPS satellites, climatic data from meteorological systems, and multi-spectral imagery are only a few of the future sources of information that can assist efforts in Latin America.

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## MAKING SENSE OF MODERN-DAY WHITE SUPREMACY IN AMERICA



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Since the very beginnings of our country's history, nationalism has been an integral part of the American identity. Moreover, this identity "is implicitly synonymous with being white," according to a Harvard University study.

America, a symbol of freedom and equality, was founded on racist principles — our forefathers intended this nation to be for people of white, European descent. The country operated on the backs of slaves for close to three centuries, as the majority of Americans believed that whites were, in all ways, biologically superior to blacks. To quote George Hawley, author of *Making Sense of the Alt-Right*, "White supremacy was formally institutionalized throughout most of American history."

Anti-immigration policies, systemized segregation, and organized nationalist groups exemplify the country's incessant priority to maintain a dominant white culture. This conservative American mindset, along with a corrupt sense of nationalism, has contributed to the ever-growing presence of white supremacy groups then and now. Although we have made tremendous social progress over the last century, the fight for "White America" still exists today. Through hate propaganda, acts of racism, and violent tactics, white supremacist ideologies legitimize the preservation of white culture. Not only does this put minorities and counter-protestors at risk of being harassed or assaulted, it contradicts the social progress of our democracy.

When speaking about white supremacist groups, it is important to address that they are not "underground" organizations — within the past year, in particular, they have made their presence quite known. The most notable incident occurred in Charlottesville, Virginia, on August 12, 2017. On that day, Americans saw one of the most violent demonstrations of racial bigotry in recent U.S. history.

The “Unite the Right” rally was intended to protest the removal of the city’s statue of Robert E. Lee. It attracted hundreds of neo-Nazis, members of the Alt-Right, and the Ku Klux Klan. The white nationalists marched through the streets with Confederate flags and swastikas, chanting slogans like “Jews will not replace us,” “white lives matter,” and “blood and soil.” They were met by counter-protesters of all walks of life, carrying signs with the words “solidarity,” “black lives matter,” and “no h8,” to name a few.

David Duke, a former Ku Klux Klan leader, declared that this was an effort by Unite the Right protestors “to fulfill the promises of Donald Trump” and to “take our country back.” In doing so, they did not hesitate to use extreme measures of force and violence. In the midst of the turmoil, a car plowed through a mass of counter-demonstrators, resulting in the death of 32-year-old Heather Heyer and the injuries of at least 35 other people.

The rally was not just about defending a statue. For white supremacists, it was about defending a culture that, to them, is being threatened by minorities, immigrants, and liberals. Their reprehensible display of hatred gravely resembles acts of anti-Semitism implemented by the Nazi regime during the reign of Adolf Hitler, which ultimately resulted in the mass execution of over 6 million Jews.

The core concept of white supremacy is centered around Nazi ideology that originated in post-World War I Germany. Hitler and his followers believed that the Aryan race was being threatened with extinction due to the growing Jewish population in Europe. The phrase “blood and soil” is derived from the Nazi-coined slogan “blut und boden.” It was used by nationalists who sought a pure German race (blood) throughout the entirety of the land (soil). This mentality was extremely pervasive and influential and contributed to the rise of the Nazi party. As history has shown, the “blut und boden” conviction had catastrophic consequences, not just in Germany, but throughout most of Europe.

The white supremacists that protested in Charlottesville explicitly chanted an idea that led to one of the largest mass genocides in world history. This mindset is dire and dangerous, as it promotes fascist ideologies that directly contradict modern democracy as we know it today. Hitler writes in *Mein Kampf* that individuals are not rationally fit to govern themselves in a democracy. He insists that in order to create an undefeatable state, there must be one totalitarian leader that controls all aspects of culture and economy. Citizens would be forced to comply and sacrifice natural freedoms such as the right to vote, speak, and assemble.

Hitler’s idea of an undefeatable state embraced a purely Aryan population, which he believed to be genetically superior to all other races. His strategy was to exterminate the assumed cause of Germany’s problems: the inferior race, the Jews. Through militarized force and the operation of death camps throughout Europe, the Nazis carried out a massive genocide.

White supremacists, including neo-Nazis and KKK members, are all adherents of this nationalist ideology. They envision a purely white, Anglo-Saxon America and condemn minority groups. These groups include blacks, Jews, Latinos, Muslims, the LGBTQ community, and so on. Any minority group that does not worship the evangelical Christian God or come from Anglo-Saxon ethnicity is perceived as a threat to the livelihood and preservation of white American culture.

White nationalists strategically use violence and terrorism to promote their goals, as demonstrated in Charlottesville. However, these organizations do not stand unopposed. They are met by activists that stand against civil injustice, bigotry, and racism. It is crucial that these people continue to stand against hate in defense of our country’s sovereignty and progress.

Hate groups appeal to their cohorts for a variety of reasons. They give individuals an outlet to express anger, resentment, antipathy — more importantly, they offer “a sense of belonging.” Being a part of something bigger than oneself promotes human connection on a deeper level, something we all integrally crave. Hate groups, in particular, foster a “sense of power” in their affiliates, which they often lack in other aspects of life.

Traumatic childhoods seem to be a characteristic that hate group members have in common, according to the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism. This suggests that people may join these organizations for more deep-seated reasons besides just ideological beliefs. Childhood trauma is linked to an array of long-term effects, including lack of self-worth, difficulty forming healthy relationships, and increased feelings of isolation. All of these consequences make an individual more susceptible to the profound influence of hate groups. For people trying to combat feelings of isolation and powerlessness, these groups are a place of retreat. They make the timid feel strong and the loners feel accepted.

However, this feeling of strength that resonates within so many white supremacists is exactly what leads them to feel justified in chanting hateful slurs and causing violent chaos in the streets. There is nothing to justify expressions of hate and racism except the perpetrator's own ignorance.

Minorities should not have to fear being harassed in their own country because of the color of their skin. They should not have to be routinely reminded to watch what they say or "not act out of line," otherwise they can be faced with assault or police brutality. Yet, this is a reality for so many Americans today. Protests like the Unite the Right riot in Charlottesville reinforce people's implicit bias: racist beliefs that aren't always outwardly expressed, but are most often beyond one's own awareness.

White supremacists don't just wear white hoods and swastikas — they wear suits and badges. They have positions in business, law, and government. They jeopardize the freedom of not just minorities, but of all Americans. When people are fed up with the current system, they will always find a scapegoat. For white nationalist groups, it has always been non-whites. When these groups gain enough status and attention, and people are looking for someone to blame for their problems, it becomes quite convenient, even appealing, to follow the crowd.

Today, we live in a country that grants individuals freedom of speech and the right to stand up against displays of hate. But if no one stands up, white supremacists will gain more traction, and society will continue to move backward. When ordinary people believe in white supremacist ideologies, they elect political leaders that hold similar views or that give consent to their radical demonstrations. Social dissonance will grow, as will policies that limit the freedoms of minorities.

In the words of Barack Obama, "No one is born hating another person because of the color of his skin or his background or his religion." Hate is learned. It is spread through words and actions. It produces inequality, war, and genocide. It reverses decades of social progress.

But if we speak out, stand up, and educate each other, our voices can, perhaps, silence hate's chants.

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## THE BOHEMIANS I MET DOWN THE STREET



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Extremes holler  
for attention when you live close to them.  
Too much, too little,  
never in between is their alma mater.

Stacks of music she recently composed  
Hidden among her stash  
of half-empty bottles of cheap whiskey.

Cloudy room, smog propagated by the handful  
of cigarettes that burn  
through these confined spaces, and bounce through  
the lumps in their lungs.  
Coughs heard throughout the narrow hallway.

Alcohol: a numbing substance,  
aka that toxin that inhabits and inhibits you, while it keeps your  
maximum musical ability out of reach.

Or perhaps to the bohemians,  
Alcohol: the blessed fermented juice that heightens their artistic  
sensibility and connects them to Divinity.

Such beautiful words swift away from your mouth  
into the air, although  
their power lessens as the stench of vomit  
reaches those around you.

My olfactory system alarmed at such repugnant smell  
hints at me to turn and face away.  
Rotten tomatoes, spoiled milk, leftovers from yesterday's  
excess in food & drink.  
Indigo child where have you gone?

Land & Sea.  
Silk skirt, tight tattered top and a reckless serenade.  
Sea & Land.  
Auburn hair with rays of sun, restless face, wondering wild eyes.  
Sea & Fly.  
Untamed soul whose spirit flies afar.  
Fly and Sea!

Half a handful of cigars are passed around,  
while the rest of them are merrily sippin' on yesterday's flat beer.  
Tossing cans to that dark past,  
to the sorrows, to clear her darkened soul.  
But honey,  
drinking only makes you numb momentarily!

The smell of liquor: intoxicating scent,  
to them, a purifying nectar brought from the heavens.

Her breakfast: guitar picking and a fourth of a dozen fried eggs.  
You would never comprehend! Musician's fuel is not necessarily food.  
Good company, a few power chords, some riffs, perhaps a broken string,  
now that's nourishment!  
"I will make beats until my heartbeat ceases." "You feel me?"

"You too, hear the melodies of life,  
so darling let your voice flow with the wind, let your heart explode and sing just as the trees  
ruffle, the leaves rumble, and as the night passes."



# THE BOUZOUKI



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It took every ounce of my small frame to push open the door. I barely noticed the chill that rushed to meet me. The tumbledown stepladder grumbled, and I swayed as I craned to collect my prize. It was fast asleep, lying next to the mandolin and a ukulele. The unwanted instruments sighed as I ignored them once again. But the bouzouki seemed to have a warmth all its own, almost glowing in the cold, dark room as it woke. Its long neck was encrusted with mother of pearl and the round body was sculpted from a beautiful, exotic wood. I froze in the brisk air, suddenly aware of the room around me.

I heard faint, distant screaming from behind the strange animal-print settee. The furniture seemed to move in closer, like a pack of hyenas stalking their prey. I backed away slowly, shielding the bouzouki from the violence of the ottoman and the blood-curdling cries coming from the armchair. *What was that?* I swear the upholstered arms almost caught my sleeve as the heavy door slammed between us. But it was okay, I had my treasure safely in my hands.

Visits to the music room were always a quick trip, in and out, not lingering to take in the bizarre surroundings. I never stopped to think why no one ever went into this room. It was the only place in the house that was always cold and dark, closed off from family activities. No holidays, no summer picnics, no joy entered this place. No reason to ever enter this room or even mention it, except for my trek to rescue my beautiful bouzouki. I never stopped to wonder why no one ever tried to rescue me.

I sat in the little dining nook next to the kitchen. The yellowing plastic encrusting the chair crinkled and crackled like the static on my transistor radio. My grandmother, Yaiya, looked on from behind the kitchen counter. She was scrubbing potatoes to boil, the faucet occasionally hissing when she opened the tap.

"Play something pretty for us!" Her voice was harsh, stabbing my ears like prickly weeds.

I plucked at the strings, trying to get up the nerve to play.

Her words bit through the heavy summer air, "We all played instruments, my sisters and I played by ear. I could play the piano and the violin, we all could! Papou was so proud!"

I was half listening, trying to twist the little mother of pearl screws back into tune. The bouzouki seemed like a rare treasure, carried all the way from the Old Country. I always had to ask permission to go into the music room to get it. She never said no.

I heard her voice clearly over the hissing water. Her words felt like a damp towel covering my face. "That's wonderful, my good girl plays such beautiful music! I am going to leave that bouzouki for you in my will, you know!"

I felt like I couldn't breathe. *What was wrong with me?* I kept playing.

The strings vibrated between my fingers: each note floating away, sprouting tiny wings and flying out the window. Like little butterflies they danced over the flower bed. Blue, pink, and purple petunias smiled and waved at the visitors. They drifted off into the forest, slipping away from the shadows of the house.

The music resonated through the kitchen. The carved wooden fork and spoon hanging on the wall jumped to the countertop to dance. Hand in hand, they waltzed carefully among the peppermill and the tall narrow jar filled with preserved fruit. The spoon daintily sidestepped a puddle of orange juice that had escaped its glass prison. Fresh lemons in a wire basket glared sourly at the dancing utensils. My great aunt swept up the dour fruit to make lemonada, sweet lemonade. She called me her little poulaki, *little birdie*, and always had a present for me on my name day. *Oh!* My daydream was suddenly shattered as shards of lemons and slivers of wood tumbled to the floor.

A dish crashed as it fell into the sink, making a loud clatter. Papouli's rage shattered the tranquility of the dancing kitchenware and floating butterflies. "Why isn't breakfast ready! You can't do anything right!" His voice shook the window panes.

I tried to sink into the chair, wishing the brittle plastic could hide me. I wanted to fly away, far away. But there was nowhere to go. So, I tried to look really small. I imagined myself becoming so tiny that I was invisible. The wooden fork seemed to whisper *run, run while you still can!*

When breakfast was over, I lingered by the wall to look at the medals. Each one lined up precisely at attention behind the glass. I was so proud of my grandfather. Papouli fought to protect everyone, he even lost his leg! He was a good man. Wasn't he? I ran outside to play. The sun burned away my doubts. The trees wanted to play, so I disappeared into the woods.

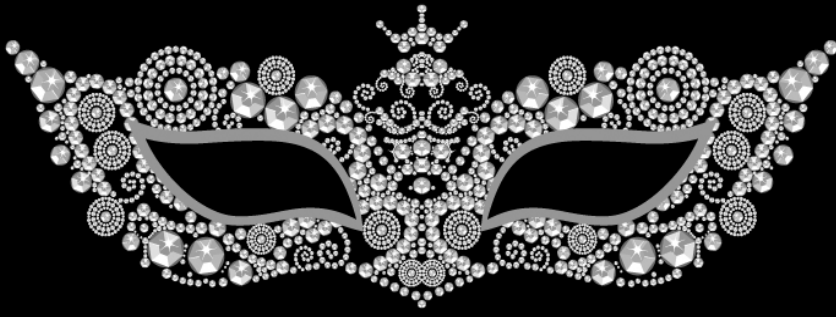
Later, after the sun ran away, we watched movies. The sofa and chairs were hemmed in by large picture windows with no curtains. It was always stiflingly hot, the opposite of the music room. I stared at the painting that dominated the wall across from Papouli's special chair. An elegant woman sat at a grand piano, forever playing an unknown note of an unheard song. *What were you singing? Was it a happy song?*

The paint was tinged green and blue with mildew from the moist air assaulting the brushstrokes. The lady in the fancy dress was unable to escape the passage of time. No longer singing, her jaw was locked open in a silent scream. The mildew crept out from beneath the heavy doorway to spoil sunny dispositions, overtaking the sunshine and eclipsing childhood laughter. This surely was the portrait of my family. This was the encroachment of their sins into the sunny world that most people saw.

My young mind found ways to fill in the gaps. I fought to make it seem normal. It wasn't until I was older and safely thousands of miles away that I would start to remember the horrible life I had escaped. I somehow stayed sane, protected by a thick, greasy spackle of lies. I lived the life that they tried to steal from me. Now I realize that they could never steal it. Not even

the scary settee or the grip of the angry armchair could steal my hope. I will not die alone in the cold, dark music room. *My song is not finished.*

I don't know what ever became of the bouzouki. Perhaps someone collected it from that old house, and somewhere a child is learning how to play, blissfully unaware of the history, of my story. If I close my eyes, I can hear the notes: happy music drifting across a clear blue sky, made whole again in the joyous sunshine.



## WARNING: SHAPE SHIFTER ON THE LOOSE

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They call her Chameleon Firefly!  
Scrupulously hemmed costumes she camouflages as quotidian attire.  
Masks, ties and fine jewelry, all custom designed to her request.  
It's Halloween year-round with Chameleon as your friend!  
The terrific public exhibition of her selves,  
an eerie look from those dandelion eyes,  
followed by the lingering resonance of her haunting voices.

Even mirrors are unable to withstand the rapidness of her shapeshifting.  
As a result, they shatter as she gets near them.  
Ah, my dear,  
Have you noticed your personality drifts with the zephyr?  
Do you recall that minimal wind disturbances transform you?  
Acquaintances define her as a whirlwind of inconsistency.  
They make emphasis on her volatile nature and unpredictable variability.

Not even the most knowledgeable meteorologist can extrapolate Chameleon's next move.  
With her, storms arise without prior warning.  
Never granting enough time to prepare for the disaster.  
As she gallantly strolls on by, she leaves behind: droughts, inundations, and wildfires.  
When will the volcanoes erupt, miss?  
Should we expect earthquakes or typhoons this season?  
Will we sense drastic change in tide, increased humidity, and perhaps decimation in rainfall?

Countless characters she brought to life confront each other  
as they duel for a decisive role in her life.  
However, she disregards their pleas of staying within.  
Fantasies of fictional characters repel her from your genuine self.  
What an impressive match of charades she puts on every day!  
You became a collage of photographs, each collected from your past fabrications.  
Never having the luxury of possessing a definite identity is her ultimate sacrifice.

Chameleon Firefly, a puzzle with fragmented pieces and a mosaic of an enigma.  
Her recipe for mystery is a concoction of a myriad of spices,  
none of which belong exclusively to her.

A unique complex polyhedron representing her multiphasic "selves."  
The plethora of possible combination locks to her personality.  
Her act reaches a point in which she becomes unable to halt the spinning.  
Incapable of ceasing the twirling around the indecisiveness of self.  
Is her masquerade party really worth it?

## CORRUPTION AND CONTRADICTING COMMENTS



Nick Anderson Editorial Cartoon used with the permission of Nick Anderson, the Washington Post Writers Group and the Cartoonist Group. All rights reserved.

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Inequality between classes in this country is evident in day-to-day life, but one particular image brings attention to the realities people face in the economy. Nick Anderson's cartoon titled, "Your Greed is Hurting the Economy!" published on December 10, 2013, displays two men facing each other. One stands on the ground with a couple dollars and coins at his feet, while the other stands on an enormous mountain of cash.

The first man is dressed in a casual manner, standing at the edge of the pile, holding a sign that requests, "Raise the Minimum Wage." Whereas, on the other hand, the man opposite the protester is dressed formally in a suit and shouting down, "Your greed is hurting the economy!" He points an accusing finger at the man standing on the ground, his face twisted in anger, with his left fist clenched by his side.

The background consists of a gradient of purple, going from dark to light, from the ground to the sky. It gives the viewer an even greater illusion of the height difference between the two men. Clearly, there are two different classes present, each with a different goal, but Anderson's art appears to side with the working class by portraying them as peaceful people hoping for a change, while the businessman is a greedy, selfish, and inconsiderate person.

This image as a whole conveys the theme of inequality and inconsistency of paycheck amounts for the working class and the upper class. The distinct gap between the man on the pile of cash and the man with a few dollars and coins is Anderson's way of bringing attention

to the realities of the economic situation at the time, including what the workers resort to doing: protesting for higher pay. Businessmen as well as other members of corporate interest shout down and deny these rights to those who work hard and are deserving of these rewards. The exploitation of labor and corruption of the “big guys” are shown to the public with the work of this artist.

The purpose of this cartoon is to convey the inequality of income between those who are considered wealthy in this society and those who are of lower class, struggling to make it through. The artist effectively conveys this theme by appealing to the emotions and realities of those who understand this situation, including the struggles of the lower class in the United States, and depicting the rich as corrupt and selfish. The satire of the businessman reveals more of the gap between upper-class people and the greed they possess.

The lower class struggles to make enough money, resulting in protests by the people so they may have the chance to pay off what they owe. In the cartoon, the man with the sign is clearly confronting the businessman to demonstrate the changes that need to happen in the economic system and how it operates. He does this by putting forth the idea of raising the minimum wage.

Writer for the European Journal of Political Research Maria Grasso comments, “The economic crisis that started in 2008 has led to growing unemployment... in those countries worst hit by economic recession, large protests took place...” (Grasso). The decrease in the amount of jobs available and the increase in costs were not a good combination, thus drastically affecting the economy in an adverse way. The national gross domestic product (GDP) of the country fell because of the increase in unemployment.

Countries are categorized by GDP to reflect their economic standing — a higher GDP implies that the country’s economy is doing well, while a lower GDP means the opposite. Anderson reflects the worker’s point of view by depicting the man on the ground protesting for that higher wage, reinforcing what the journal stated about the recession and the protests. Overall, the economic growth was slow and people in the lower classes found it difficult to keep up with the changing economy, resulting in their protests for equality in their rights.

The businessman represented in this image is refusing to allow the rights of the worker to be honored, justifying his argument by saying that the worker’s demands will hurt the economy. In actuality, the businessman gains more than the worker and doesn’t want to lose it. According to the Congressional Budget Office, “[The] increase is expected to result from a rise in income because of a growing economy... whose full impact of revenues will... increase in tax rates on income above certain thresholds...” (The Budget).

In other words, since the economy is projected to increase in the future, the taxation system changed so the rich would contribute more to national funds. Except, it did not happen. In this image, the businessman argued against the person under him, about limiting the wages of the workers, so the businessman can make the same money he made in the past. He constantly shouts over the voices of the people who want change because, in the end, it is his decision that determines the future of the wages for the workers.

Due to the businessman’s actions, the lower class represented in this cartoon is not given enough money to change their reality and how they live. The image depicts the limited funds the people have because of their jobs and the businessman’s motives. The Congressional Budget Office reports in 2013, “Such high and rising debt would have serious negative consequences... total wages would be lower than they would be if the debt was reduced... Finally, such a large debt would increase the risk of a fiscal crisis...” (The Budget). Overall, the report discusses the degrading effects that the economic changes have on the people, including raising the interest rates on debts.

The increase of an aging population still working also causes a rise in health care costs, which still negatively affects the working class and is not reflected in their wages. Additionally, according to the Bureau of Economic Analysis report “Regional Data,” the average income in 2016 was \$44,462, only \$200 more than the previous year. However, with the inflation of so

many goods and prices going up, it did not help the lower class at all. It just contributed to more debt and increased their dissatisfaction with the economic and business system.

The rich are hoarding the funds they gain, which is represented by the large pile of cash the businessman stands on. The government has explicitly shown favor to those with money, and the taxation and economic system in place leans toward them and allows them to stay on top. Writer for *The Guardian*, Emma Seery, states, "The tax system should be progressive and limit rather than exacerbate inequality... the extremely wealthy can use tax havens and financial secrecy to put their money where it cannot be taxed..." (Seery). In total, the wealthy did not pay their fair share in contributing to the nation's economy by using loopholes to prevent the loss of money. This defends the idea in Anderson's image by showing the greed of the people and the corporate interests and the inequality between the poor and the rich.

The final point in showing the effectiveness of the image in conveying inequality is the clear difference in position and wage of the top 1 percent and the lower classes, the remaining 99 percent. The gap between the two men as well as the cash they have under them is evidence of this fact. A report written by Bruce Drake about a survey done by Pew Research in 2013 saw that 65 percent of Americans believed that the gap between the rich and the poor was widening. The year before, 76 percent of Americans thought the same thing. Even though it seems that the number of Americans who believed this decreased for the time, the reality was that the gap was in fact increasing, and it was represented distinctly in this cartoon.

However, when this image was reposted in 2016 during the presidential election, this art took on a similar but different meaning. Donald Trump was the new candidate for the Republican Party. One of his most controversial comments concerning illegal immigrants in the country was, "They are not our friend, believe me. They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists..." (Reilly) continuing with an idea that they are taking the jobs from the American people who actually deserve it. This is reflected in the image with the businessman and the worker; although not directly, the connection can be made.

Trump is the man who is shouting down at the worker; he uses them to make his buildings, minimize his expenses, and build his "empire." He exploits them for labor, yet uses them as a scapegoat to make his point. Just like the businessman in the cartoon, the worker is blamed for the trouble that happens in the economy in order for the businessman to justify his decision of keeping the money. When things like this happen, the meaning for the image changes and applies to so many more people than the image was first meant for.

Overall, the artist makes the point of revealing the inequalities in the economic system for the lower class and how the top 1 percent get the say in how the government operates. This action ultimately leads to unrest from the workers and protests for them to gain the fair share they are owed. The current tax cuts under the new president, Donald Trump, have continued this trend. Projected numbers from the *New York Times* political writer Alicia Parlapiano indicate that even though the tax cuts for all the classes are large now, those will decrease, putting the 1 percent even further up the ladder, and leaving the other 99 percent behind. The President's remarks, as well as his plans for the American future, certainly side with the businessman's point of view and will lead to more agitation in the future. But Anderson, not knowing of the future at that time, drew that image, showing that this is a reality the American people face over and over again.

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## BETWEEN THE PAGES



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66, 67, 68, 69... Pages reveal their faces for a short minute only to come back to the tenderness of each other's silky cheeks. The count is firm and grounding. 70. Another poem about love is finished. 71. Acknowledgements. 72. The end of the book. 783rd book of one's lifetime, 274th written by a female author, 111th with the pain of sexual assault, 52nd book of poetry, 19th by an African American author. "Measurable" feels explainable. It is conquered by reason, made to fit and put to work like a numbered mechanical wheel. But it is hardly the only task we need to commit to once we touch the hard-covered body of a writer's work.

Books are not created to satisfy one's desire to say, "I have read," but to stimulate, to think what is there to be learned. In his 2009 interview with Zadie Smith, Michael Silverblatt, the host of the show "Bookworm," exposes the idea that "reading [is] an instruction on how to be human" (Smith). This concept reminds us of the power that reading gives us — the luxury to live through thoughts, beliefs, and feelings that do not directly belong to us. The words of a story form a body that hosts us through the lives we would never experience otherwise. It carries us through ages, countries, social levels, races, and genders, bringing to our eyes landscapes we would never see.

However, learning is never a one-way process. Passivity, detrimental to cognition, brings the poignant smell of decay to shared knowledge. Without the vigor of curiosity, without love for the unknown, a book remains the lifeless, soulless carcass of mere information. Zadie Smith supports this notion when she says, "You can take out of reading only what you put into it" (Smith). By bringing effort to our learning process, we give it energy that fuels our transformation.

Reading can be seen as a journey, as an act of traveling from surroundings acutely familiar to the grounds bright with novelty. And so much like traveling, it can be an act of pure

consumerism — merely a shallow gaze that slides over the shapes, whether they are patterns of landscapes or rows of letters. We often perceive traveling as a virtue when it is just another way out of many to experience the world. The number of photos and passport stamps we possess does not add to our value. They are not tokens of sacred knowledge.

Battling the idea of consumerism on the surface by declaring that we invest into experiences instead of material objects, in reality, we fuel the core furnace of it with our deeds. Simple actions of buying, seeing, and using — typical for wanderlust fashion — lack creation, giving, and deep analysis that are necessary companions of self-exploration. As with so many things in our lives, traveling is simply a tool that has the ability to shape how we see the world. However, it is doomed to change the face of the planet. For better or for worse, that is defined by our actions.

What can we bring with us on our journey to make it the experience that enriches our understanding of the world? I believe that first we need to succumb to our senses; to give the world, whether it is written or not, our presence; to let it in, so it can plant the seeds of images, saturate us with impressions that later grow into blooms of meanings. And then, after thoughtful cultivation, we can harvest the fruits of knowledge that become a part of us. But too often we forget that it is a process; we cannot pick what has not been sown. We hide our faces behind the screens of smartphones, greedily stretching out the free hand only to find the emptiness.

We may fail to see a person of another culture or a writer as a source of change, as someone whose perspectives, though different, are valuable for our growth. Instead, we habitually look for familiar cues that support our worldviews, making everybody and everything we encounter a mere entertainment. And how often do we forget to give something back? To invest into somebody else's growth, to support the development, and to protect a community or a habitat. How many of us even try to serve as a mindful antidote to a corrosive nature of tourism?

When Cicero writes, "If people have buried themselves in books, if they have used nothing they have read for the benefit of their fellow men, if they have never displayed the fruits of such reading before the public eye, well, let them by all means be ashamed of the occupation," he opens up the way to the argument that each of us is obligated to not only learn but also to use our abilities for the good of the society we live in (Cicero 84). The development of one should serve the development of many. This idea is often overlooked in the modern individualistic era, but it proposes the answer to many contemporary questions by prompting us not to change the world but instead alter our sense of responsibility.

None of us exists in a vacuum. We are intertwined in millions of ways with people around us. By juxtaposing ourselves to the rest of the world, by yelling "I don't care," we succumb to the greatest lie out of all — that complete independence is a natural and ultimately desirable state for an individual. While very few recluses have succeeded in achieving this goal, the vast majority of the human population is highly interdependent. As a social species, we heavily rely on each other in our survival through a complex hierarchy and a system of divided responsibilities that, ideally, guarantee access to the necessary resources such as food, shelter, and security. However, we often use the rhetoric of independence to mend or fuel our pride, which in the words of Vaclav Havel, "is precisely what will lead the world to hell" (Havel).

It blinds politicians and whole countries to put themselves above the rest of the world, to seek profit at the expense of the less powerful. It impairs every one of us when we turn to measurable signs of our advancement: money, titles, brands, pages, publications, followers, likes... Shouldn't we ask ourselves what we compromise in the process? Whether our actions have consequences that are harmful or favorable for our society?

Our obsession with gadgets and brands echoes through the planet, influencing the labor markets and natural habitats. The consuming preoccupation with food creates waste that fills the dumps with lives created for nothing while mothers still cry over the bodies of starved

children. The fixation on social media creates the culture that values looks and presentation above living, thought, and sincerity.

As Vaclav Havel points out in his Harvard commencement speech, the harmony of the world lies in the unity of autonomies, “in allowing them to be more completely themselves” while accepting “a basic code of mutual co-existence, a kind of common minimum we can all share, one that will enable us to go on living side by side” (Havel). Although he uses this notion to question the current structure of the world’s politics with its insatiable hunger for power, I see it as a cursor for individual development as well.

Fueled by excessive information on what we could be, what is the norm, and what the others presumably are in the age of social media, we are trapped in constant comparison of each other’s outward development. We blindly succumb to the fashion without giving it a deeper thought of possible application of our skills to the greater good. We read books, articles, and posts on how to be smarter, healthier, nicer, and more efficient. We work hard on discovering the authentic selves but forget to consider how our personal journey might benefit those around us. We fail to “humbly accept [...] our responsibility for the world” (Havel).

People are born to be social, but they mature into being prosocial. Reading is a unique education on how to be human — it enlightens our minds and hearts, but only if they are ready for the careful reflection. It is not a one-day or one-week process, since “becoming a human being [...] is an exercise and it takes your whole life” (Smith). The life filled with voices, experiences, and meanings. So, maybe, the next time we open a book, we need to try to listen to the cry of the world that yearns to be heard. And then one day, when we turn the last page, we might be able to answer it.

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## REALITY OF A MIRACLE



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As a child I was told  
That every birth is a miracle  
A new story, unfolded throughout generations  
An untold path unimaginable from the beginning  
With numerous promises, diverging journeys  
Of an aspiring surgeon  
Or a possible alcoholic

In less than a wink of time  
With the phenomena of a birth  
Come fruitful opportunities.  
To be born prosperous  
Or to be set upon poverty  
*I have seen both.*

An infinite number of possibilities  
How a child can grow and be nurtured  
By loving mothers, devoted fathers  
And cross one street later and see a neighborhood  
Of oppressive fathers and overworked mothers  
Spawning confused yet wonder-eyed children.

*I have experienced*  
The gift that is life  
At the hands of fate and destiny  
A dash of childhood sadness and  
A spoonful of innocent happiness

*I know that there are two sides.*

There is hunger and unemployment  
Abuse, neglect, disorder, pain  
In a small southern town that I call home

*But then*

There is the side who was blessed in wealth  
The ones who had the most luck in their miracle  
Doctors, lawyers, college graduates  
Some who see this uncanny divide  
But somehow take it for granted instead

How can this be a miracle?

When we are set in a world that is foretold  
To be loving, yet to our surprise  
Hateful at the same time  
To win the lottery of lotteries  
Only to be set through a game of dice  
Of who's who and who isn't  
In a clash of classes, a community divided by years of hatred,  
Lies, racism, and judgement  
Given as an example of what is magnified  
In larger cities, in larger countries

Hurt is magnified, but love is modest.

Hurt can teach others  
The wonder of life, what is truly worth living for  
From the pain, goodness *blossoms*

A strained family  
Laughing through worn faces of long-told stories  
Or a toddler that is hastily enjoying the warmth of the sun  
Before the first rainfall of the year

An array of the wicked, yet the realization and culmination of  
Creativity, love, generosity, and full expression of the soul  
Through true grit and the bitter history of pain  
Perhaps this is  
The true miracle of life

## UPROOTING THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST: RESISTING SECESSION IN CASCADIA



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Throughout the Pacific Northwest, one might notice a strange flag posted proudly on the front porch of many houses or plastered on bumper stickers of Subarus and Hondas alike. The blue-, white-, and green-striped flag with a Douglas Fir tree standing boldly alone in the center is known as the Doug Flag. In general, the Doug Flag is an emblem of pride in this geographic location and promotes a healthy sense of good stewardship throughout Cascadia. However, certain political parties and organizations such as CascadiaNow! and the Cascadian Independence Party (CIP) have started using this flag as a symbol for their groups, attaching associations of their own desire to secede from the United States and Canada.

Alexander Baretich, Portland native and educator of geopolitical and cultural geography, designed the flag in 1994 to represent the Cascadian Bioregion and had no association with secession. The CIP and CascadiaNow! have been dominating the flag as a way "to symbolize the nation of Cascadia — a proposed independent country consisting of British Columbia, Washington, Oregon, and sometimes northern California" (Sears). In the weeks following the 2016 election results, executive director of CascadiaNow! Brandon Letsinger bragged about the spikes in volunteering and website traffic, stating it was "one of the biggest spikes in interest we've ever seen" (Sears). Certainly, many Pacific Northwestern residents have felt especially isolated and alienated from the duality of the Hillary/Trump campaign.

Bioregionalism is a collection of regional ecosystems based on environmental, political, and social/cultural similarities and therefore has no definitive boundaries. Due to many complexities that the proposed secession of Cascadia does not address, an independent nation-state of Cascadia cannot handle the full weight and political burden for meeting needs and cultural demands of the diverse populations and environments throughout Cascadia. No matter what your political beliefs are, bioregionalism has been historically



unrepresented and undefined in an applicable and tangible political paradigm. Secession of the Cascadian Bioregion creates borders where they do not belong.

The origin of bioregionalism comes from the notion that environmental or ecological borders are more sustainable for the political, social-cultural, and environmental systems within them. The concept of bioregionalism is relatively new as far as political ideologies go; however, a steady increase in popularity and acceptance was notable in the 1970s, and bioregionalism spread as a concept, taking root throughout Cascadia. Simply put, bioregionalism is intended to "...encourage populations to live in a way that is defined by our natural areas (where we live, eat, work, etc.) rather than our political boundaries" (Thayer). Bioregions encourage people to more fully immerse themselves and participate within their communities and environments. Bioregions ask humans to recognize the dynamic relationships within our lives and to seek opportunities to create symbiosis rather than prolong competition and autonomy.

Upon closer examination, an independent, nation-state secession agenda threatens the very ideals of bioregionalism itself. Even top educators, who seem to have an overall enthusiasm for bioregionalism, remain stumped by the inability to find a balance or potential solution to unending political sprawl and natural resource management. Trying to group states and territories such as Idaho, Washington, British Columbia, and more into one independent nation-state is too dismissive of the existing dynamic relationships already happening within and outside of Cascadia.

Hanna J. Cortner, a professor at The School of Renewable Natural Resources at the University of Arizona, states, "...the framework for natural resource management... does not currently fare well under critical assessment. It is not sufficient for achieving either ecological sustainability or democratic sustainability. A politics of expertise, a politics of maximum sustained yield, and a politics of interest have created inaccessible bureaucracies staffed by aloof civil servants, resource depletion, and interest group polarization" (Cortner). Essentially, the existing systems undeniably contain obstacles and present ever-changing and complex problems for America and Canada alike. However, the notion of Cascadia seceding from America and Canada and becoming an individual bioregion is counterproductive to what is best for Cascadia and the nations as a whole.

Segregating such a large section from neighboring Canada and America would jeopardize food, water, energy, and other resources inside and outside of Cascadia, especially for lower-middle and impoverished working-class populations. Susan Cutter writes, "Food security is a complex and intertwined problem of reliability, quantity, and affordability of nutritious food, including the costs of production. It is a problem in developing and developed nations alike, where deficits in the availability and quality of food lead to hunger and malnutrition, impairing the health of millions. The global interdependence of food supply chains is well known — when one part of the food production chain is affected the consequences reverberate globally, with reductions in supply and increased prices" (Cutter). A lone bioregion cannot sustain itself without the support and symbiosis of the excluded bioregions, and the history of secession movements throughout the world have not come without great loss of life, resources, and democracy.

The desire for continuous autonomy within and outside of Cascadia creates additional barriers toward finding a collective and fair solution to global matters at stake. Secession movements take away from the resources available to those outside of secession boundaries, neglecting to consider the spirit of solidarity, abhorring the unity instilled in true bioregionalism. By collaborating, we must work with what we have, and remain a unified nation in order to achieve any semblance of harmony inside, or outside, of Cascadia. "Democracy is dependent on statecraft as well as individual and community responsibilities. The way society chooses to deal with its public problems will necessarily shape how ecosystem management fares in the next century" (Cortner).

There is too much at risk to rob America and Canada of their Pacific Northwestern resources

and citizens, and there is too much potential for the loss of shared resources Cascadia relies upon from its easterly counterparts. All throughout Cascadia, bioregionalism is encouraged and embraced among citizens of all backgrounds and cultures. However, the goals of the organizations that seek out secession are destructive to the philosophy and practice of bioregionalism itself and threaten the access to resources currently and potentially available to the residents inside and outside of Cascadia.

“The way propounded by Ecotopian ideologues leads away from the former greatness of America, unified in spirit ‘from sea to shining sea,’ toward a balkanized continent — a welter of small, second-class nations, each with its own petty cultural differentiations. Instead of continuing the long march toward one world of peace and freedom... the Ecotopians propose only separatism, quietism, a reversion toward the two-bit principalities of medieval Europe, or perhaps even the tribalism of the jungle. Under Ecotopian ideas, the era of the great nation-states, with their promise of one ultimate world-state, would fade away” (Callenbach, *Ecotopia*). Cascadia as a bioregion should not seek to secede from America and Canada. The focus should be on unanimous collaboration toward a more sustainable, equalized, and unified world, celebrating differences as an opportunity for interdependence.

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# GOING HOME

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Walking down the steep hill of 75th street,  
wet fall leaves wallpapered the pavement  
and the sky was overcast in slate and cement grays as if in remembrance.

It smelled of sadness,  
like pine needles and sandalwood.  
Memories like photographs,

of all the things I left behind.  
Peach roses trellising up the tea-green siding of the house  
looked like flowers on a grave.

The pavement out front next to the holly bushes  
that scraped my knees when I was five,  
seemed to still be stained with my blood.

I could hear the blue glass from the ornament  
I knocked off your Christmas tree  
clinking like wind chimes as you dropped it into the trashcan.

The hay-like shag carpet in the living room  
made the perfect net for the sewing needles you always dropped  
as you hemmed my clothes.

Your mother's white lace table runner that divided us at holiday meals  
made every plate passed across its borders  
look like a peace offering.

The velvet evergreen couch we curled up on  
as we entered through the wardrobe to Narnia,  
and trembled to the beating of the Tell-Tale Heart.

Walking down the steep hill of 75th street  
back to the old house,  
back to what I left behind.

## SHADES OF INNOCENCE



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My mother always told me I was colorblind. Because I can see all the colors in a rainbow, it took me years to understand what she meant.

Colorblind, for me, has always been a term of endearment. It was just a lighthearted taunting, the kind everyone gets as they grow up. As my younger brother turned out to actually be visually colorblind, you can probably imagine how confusing this was. Though our conditions are nothing alike, mine has proven to be both beautiful and disturbing.

Years before I was born, my Aunt Marcia, a white woman, widowed and caring for two young daughters, married my Uncle Jack, a black man with three young sons. Go ahead, I'm sure you can hear it in your head too: "That's the way we all became the Brady Bunch."

Since it was the 1960s, interracial marriages were still not very common, and they were simply unheard of within my family. Growing up I was taught that my aunt and the girls were white, and my uncle and the boys were black. This had been taught to me not as an issue, just as a fact. So, I accepted those labels even though I knew I was seeing many shades of brown, not black or white.

My uncle and his sons were not all the same shade of brown. Uncle Jack was a dark-skinned man, similar to a Hershey bar. The mother of the two oldest boys was Japanese, giving them a complexion that to this day reminds me of dark toffee. The youngest boy, having come from a "white" mother, was more in the mocha color range. While I never saw my uncle or the boys as black, I also didn't understand why my aunt, my female cousins, and even my immediate family and myself were all lumped in as "white." There too I saw vanilla, almond, even beige.

My cousins all fought and loved each other, no different than any other siblings. For about the first 10 years of my life, I only knew that this was my family, and we were special.

Growing up in the 1980s in a logging town full of beige and vanilla faces, I was not the norm. My friends would make jokes that, as I got older, would include things like the N-word. I understand now, of course; this was just what they were taught. They were just as naïve as I was, just in a very different way.

It was not until my third-grade year that I finally realized I was probably not blood related to my Uncle Jack or the boys. I was in class one day, and the teacher was giving a watered-down lesson on something pertaining to black history, probably either Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. or Rosa Parks. Back then we didn't get many details on the subject.

I remember proudly telling my teacher, "I'm part black." He laughed and assured me, "No, you're not." "Yes, I am; my uncle is black." I explained my family makeup to him and he, rather harshly, explained to me how second marriages work. The news devastated me. I believed I was special because I had such a diverse genetic background. Years later I would come to realize I was special because I didn't know the difference.

Not knowing the difference and not seeing the difference are very different things. As I got older, I thought of colorblind as just a silly childhood memory. It seemed so cute that a child just wouldn't understand people's racial judgements. Then one day I was at a local gas station, filling up the truck for a trip to the hills to look for snow. It was a bright sunny day, the kind we rarely see late in the fall.

As my roommate went inside to get snacks and pay for the gas, a girl, probably in her late teens, pulled up to the pump next to mine. She was standing just a few feet from me when I looked over and saw that she had on a camo t-shirt that had the words "BOOTY CAMP" across the chest. We made eye contact, laughed about the shirt, and she disappeared into the store.

When my roommate came out I said, "Did you read that girl's shirt?" He then asked, "Was it the black girl?" You could have heard a pin drop. I did not notice that her skin was any particular color. The only thing I noticed was the cute shirt. After quite a bit of racking my brain, all I could think to ask was, "She was black?" This was the moment I truly understood that colorblind held many meanings for my family. While my little brother couldn't see certain colors, I was unwittingly choosing not to see them. "Good thing she wasn't robbing you," my roommate pointed out. At the time he was joking, but he was right.

I really do not know if I would ever be able to pick someone out of a lineup. Fortunately, I have never been the victim of a serious crime. If a bank I am in ever gets robbed, or my car ever gets hijacked, I would have little faith in my ability to give a description other than, "He had a nice smile." Even today when I meet a new person, the next day I could probably tell you what kind of clothes they were wearing, maybe what cute glasses they had on, but their skin color is probably not going to come to mind.

On the surface this seems like a great thing, and overall it has been. However, even more so as I write this, I start to worry, "Am I too colorblind? By growing up oblivious to the racial tensions in the world, am I subconsciously avoiding the color of people's skin?" I think there may be some truth to that. Noticing the color of someone's skin somehow became taboo in my mind. With all these lovely colors around us, it seems an injustice to not see them.

What I do see, both in my family and in our country, is that the colors are fading. My family would be considered normal by today's standards. Interracial marriages have become part of our culture. My cousins have gone on to marry and have had children of their own, their spouses ranging from ivory to cinnamon. The children they produced are an even broader range of browns. Even though my aunt and uncle have both been gone for years, the lessons they taught us remain. We all still love each other, simply because we are family. "By marriage," "step," "half" — these are terms we choose not to acknowledge.

Now that I'm older, I understand that a childhood filled with ignorance may not have been the best solution. Although a brief lesson on genetics may have saved me a bit of embarrassment, and I may never make a great eye witness, overall, I think it worked for me.

From ivory to espresso, my colorful clan never let me see what intolerance looked like. Some people will always choose to judge others by their skin color. However, I choose to celebrate the colors among us. I see the many shades, and I embrace them. With all the racial tensions still emerging daily in this world, I am happy to know my mother will always say I'm colorblind.

## STILL I STAY



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A flash of light spreads across the dark starless sky, illuminating the fields for half a second as if it were daytime. Then it's gone faster than I can blink an eye. It's followed by a loud clap a few seconds later. There's a low rumble in the distance that's steadily growing closer. The air is hot and sticky...heavy. It smells like soil and grass, the fields still fresh from the past week's plowing.

"It's going to storm," Dawson says, clearly stating the obvious. His body is tense and his posture rigid. He hasn't moved a muscle in the hour we've been sitting out here, watching the clouds roll in, heavy with raindrops waiting to be released. Dawson just stares expectantly out into the black nothingness toward the driveway.

His twin brother, Dobson, scoffs at his remark before lifting the bottle to his lips for another swig. He sits comfortably in the rocker, his legs stretched out before him, crossed at the ankles. The twins look exactly alike, identical in every way but their personalities, but I can tell them apart easily. That's the consequence of growing up with them.

I sit on the other end of the screened-in front porch, looking out over the vast fields, lit for a second at a time from the lightning that flashes without rhyme or reason. We've been waiting for the rain for over two weeks now, preparing the fields from sunup to sundown.

I sigh and shift my weight, moving my knees closer to my chest, my arms wrapped around my legs tightly. The humidity has caused my hair to stick to my neck and face. I've grown accustomed to its annoyance and don't even bother to move the stray strands that have fallen there.

Another 15 minutes go by, dragging as if time doesn't want to pass. Dobson has finished his third bottle by now, his cowboy hat pulled low over his eyes as the slow rise and fall of his



chest indicates he's asleep. Dawson still scans the driveway. Only his eyes move. I've been watching him, and for all that I am in this world, I can't figure him out. I've never been able to, actually. Dobson, on the other hand, is easy. He's rash and bigheaded, but he's also reliable and constant when you need him to be. For being twins, Dawson is nothing like his brother. Dawson doesn't laugh and rarely smiles. He rarely even talks unless he absolutely needs to. I've grown accustomed to it and can understand why, now that I'm older. But tonight seems different. Dawson isn't just quiet; he's on edge, and I'm afraid he'll snap unexpectedly.

As another 10 minutes go by, my body begins to protest from sitting in the same position, the hard wooden planks uncomfortably prodding me. After working out in the fields all day, sitting still sounds like the best thing in the world, but even that becomes tiring after a certain amount of time, like it has now.

Pushing myself to my feet, I knock Dobson's hat off his face as I walk by and he stirs, batting his hand in front of his face, but he doesn't wake. I laugh to myself.

Dawson doesn't move. Doesn't even acknowledge I've moved.

"Are you going to tell me what's wrong or do I have to pull it out of you?" I ask, sitting down beside Dawson on the steps. I cup my hands together and place my elbows on my knees as I lean forward to mimic his posture.

He continues to stare down the driveway. He doesn't turn to look at me when he answers, "If it rains too much, the mudslides will wash away the northeast fields and we'll lose that crop."

"We won't lose the northeast field, Daw," I tell him, hoping that he'll at least register that I said something this time.

"But we might," he counters, finally turning to look at me. His shoulders are broad, his facial hair unevenly trimmed. The dark grey of his eyes matches my own as they do our father's.

"Please, tell me what's wrong," I say again, quietly this time. Getting information from Dawson is like trying to ride a horse that isn't broke yet. It just doesn't happen. Dobson, on the other hand, offers information, private or not, like it's dust to the wind.

"I've been thinking..." he starts slowly. "But maybe it's time for you to move on, Soren."

"What do you mean?" I ask in confusion. But at the same time, I feel hurt by his words.

He doesn't look at me, again. He only has eyes for the driveway. "I mean, there's nothing left for you here anymore. You deserve the best, and you won't get that here." He pauses for a long minute. "Mom and Dad are gone now."

"That doesn't mean I'm leaving, too," I reply between my teeth as I re-situate myself, straightening my back.

He doesn't say anything else. He just looks back out over down the driveway, rubbing the stubble on his chin with his thumb and forefinger. I try not to get annoyed with his closed off personality, but I'm not doing such a great job at it right now.

Even before he mentioned it, I've actually thought about leaving. I dream of going off and experiencing the world outside our little farm haven. However, I can't leave. And what's worse is that I don't know why.

Another flash of lightning fills the sky as I turn to Dawson, no longer able to keep myself quiet, even if he can. "Do you want me to go?"

He shrugs, as if I didn't ask him such an important question. "I can't offer you the chance to live your life to the fullest."

"I'm already living to the fullest," I mutter.

"No!" he snaps. "There's so much more out there for you! I will not have you wasting your life in a field!" He breathes in deeply and holds the breath for a moment before slowly letting it out. "You should go."

His statement, the fact that he wants me to leave, makes me angry. I don't look at him when I reply, "I don't want to go."

"There's nothing for you here."

I swallow my anger, physically and mentally. "There's nothing for me out there, either."

"Yeah, there is. You just don't know it yet." He sounds so certain that I find myself believing him for only a second.

Dobson snores quietly behind us, unphased by our seemingly imperative conversation. I'm sure he'd be on my side if only he were awake to be a part of it. Where Dawson lacks the ability to relate to other humans, Dobson more than makes up for it. Dobson would understand why I want to stay despite the variables against me.

The wind is here now, cooling everything off and whipping wisps of my hair around my face. My eyes begin to water, but I'll say it's from the wind.

"Are you going to leave, too?" I ask Dawson. I clamp my jaw shut as another gust of wind blows, chilling me to the bone whereas I was sweating 20 minutes ago. I blame the shift in conversation.

"Nah." He shakes his head, his eyes narrowing down at me.

"Then I'm staying." I say it strongly, daring him to argue with me.

"I can't leave," he says.

"Why not?"

"But that doesn't mean you shouldn't leave," he continues as if he didn't hear me.

I know I can leave. I could have left a long time ago, too. But I didn't. I wouldn't leave then, and I won't leave now. I've been putting up with my older brothers and the hard work and the weather ever since I could put boots on my feet. I will not leave just because he wants me to, but I don't know why I stay either.

When Dawson stands, it startles me, and I jump to my feet as well. Headlights bounce along the dirt road leading to the house, the roar of the engine silent with the storm closing in.

Dawson swears under his breath and then slaps Dobson awake. "Go inside, Soren," he commands me. His eyes flash with fear and concern, but then it's gone the next second.

"Maybe that worked when I was 10, but you can't make me leave," I snap back. I don't know if I was talking about leaving to go inside or leaving this place like we were talking about earlier. I suppose I meant both.

The twins march off the porch in unison, hands in fists by their sides as they go out to meet the car that's pulling up next to the barn. I follow them, jogging to match their long strides.

When the driver steps out of the car, the engine still running, I don't recognize the young man even in the dark. There's a buzz of energy in the air and I can feel it running through my veins.

"What the hell are you doing here, Foster?" Dobson barks at the man who is standing on the other side of the car.

Dawson holds his hand out to calm Dobson. "Is there a storm coming?" Dawson says. As if in response to his statement, lightning shoots across the sky and a crack of thunder follows, making my ears bang inside my head.

Foster looks up at the sky and then nods. "Yeah. It's already here." Both the twins curl their hands into fists at the same time. "I just came here to warn you," Foster says, looking at my brothers, but not at me. "They're coming for real this time," he repeats, his eyes flicking to mine for just a second.

Dawson turns on me and marches until he's right in my face. "I told you it was coming," he whispers to me.

I shake my head and furrow my brows in confusion. I don't know what he's talking about. Nothing he's said all night makes sense. "What?" I ask back.

I watch as Dobson rushes back to the house and Foster nods his head in my direction before entering his car and driving off, leaving Dawson and me alone, surrounded by only the wind.

"Dawson, what's going on?" I demand.

"I told you to leave! I should have made you leave earlier," he tells me as he places his hands on my shoulders and stares me down. "I should have made you go like I was supposed to. Instead, I held onto you. I couldn't let you go." His eyes flicker down the driveway when he looks away from me. He's still looking for something or someone.

"I don't understand. I never wanted to leave," I say.

"I know, but now you don't have a choice," he says as he begins to escort me toward the house.

I duck, slipping from his grip as I stop walking. "No! What are you talking about? Why can't I stay?"

"There's no time, okay! I'm sorry." He reaches out and grabs me into a hug, the embrace tight until his hands fall from my back.

Dobson returns, two shotguns in his hands as he loads the shells. He hands one firearm to Dawson before placing a hand on my shoulder. "I'm sorry things worked out this way, sis. But there's nothing we can do about it." He knocks me in the jaw playfully. "Now, get out of here, Soren."

I shake my head back and forth repeatedly. My voice doesn't want to work. I'm choked up with emotion anyway.

Not until the red and blue flashing lights in the distance are visible do I begin to run. This is what they were waiting for. Dawson and Dobson urgently shove me toward the fields, yelling at me to leave. I don't know why my body listens to them and not to me, but I sprint off into the freshly tilled dirt. I glance back repeatedly, the red and blue lights getting closer to the house every time I look.

I only make it halfway across when my knees give out and I fall to the ground. My lungs burn and my chest heaves from exertion. I crawl on hands and knees toward the house where I can see the two figures of my brothers standing side by side, shotguns in hand. The authorities have arrived by now, but I can't hear the piercing siren over the pounding of my heart and the drum of the storm. I can only see the flashing lights, casting eerie shadows on everything.

I know I'm supposed to leave. I shouldn't stay. They told me to leave, tried to get me to leave, but I can't. I have to stay. I don't want to watch what happens next, but I stay. I stay because I'm scared. I stay because I don't understand. I stay because I don't want to leave.

My vision blurs as warm tears fall down my cheeks in a cascading waterfall. There's gunfire that rises over the sounds of the storm. Shouting rings in my ears as the authorities yell commands, but I can only hear Dawson wailing because Dobson is in a heap on the ground. I watch Dawson fall to the ground over our dead brother as the authorities advance. I stay and watch.

I need to leave. I can't stay. But I have to stay. I need to watch. I need to know.

The authorities advance and tackle Dawson to the ground before lifting him up and throwing him into the back of their squad car. I'm not close enough to see, but I know he's crying and bleeding. I'm crying too. Because I don't understand and because I want to stay when I know I should leave.

So, I stay, and I watch them take my brothers away. I stay until the red and blue flashing lights leave and I stay until long afterwards. I stay as the sky opens up and water droplets begin to fall on top of me in sheets of piercing, cold rain. I stay, and I force myself to my feet and back toward the house.

## ANATOMÍA DE UN BESO MENTAL



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Dulces besos que extraño  
Labios suaves tanteando  
Cuerpo carnoso hurgando  
Aurículas y ventrículos latiendo  
Corpúsculos de Meissner sintiendo  
Y los de Ruffini ardiendo.

Qué no daría por sentir tu palma en mi pecho  
En mis oídos percibo el estruendo  
Del golpe del fluido en la pared arterial  
Tan rico lo que se emana al respirar

El cuerpo necesita enfriarse  
Disyuntiva entre seguir y parar  
Sabiduría en la flexibilidad  
Así se puede disfrutar y sudar

No sé cómo incitar al próximo paso  
Ahora viene la mente a sabotear  
Otra vez mi amiga con su disyuntiva  
Creo aquí no va a haber flexibilidad  
Tonta se lo pierde, dice mi pana en su mente  
Especulando el momento en que se le  
vuelva a dar.

### Translation: Anatomy of a Mental Kiss

Sweet kisses I miss  
Soft lips groping  
Fleshy body poking  
Atria and ventricles beating  
Corpuscles of Meissner feeling  
And the Ruffini ones burning.

What I would not give for feeling your palm  
on my chest  
In my ears, I hear the rumble  
From the blow of the fluid in the arterial wall  
So rich what is emitted when breathing

The body needs to cool down  
Disjunctive between following and stopping  
Sapience of flexibility  
Then you can enjoy and sweat

I do not know how to embolden the next step  
Now the mind comes to sabotage  
Again, my friend with her disjunctive  
I think there's going to be no flexibility here  
Silly girl loses it, says my friend in her mind  
Speculating when that moment will be  
given again.

## LIFE IN A *DOLL'S HOUSE*



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Playwright Henrik Ibsen once declared during a speech, "I have been more of a poet and less of a social philosopher than one generally appears inclined to believe" (Moi). Indeed, discussion of Ibsen's work was often overly political during his time, relating to social movements and intellectual schools of thought (Moi). That said, the cultural and social impact of Ibsen's work is notable.

More recently, he has been cited as a social reformer in the area of gender (Klok). His play, *A Doll's House*, is an excellent example of his commentary on the subject. In *A Doll's House*, Henrik Ibsen shows how a couple's conception of their individual gender roles in marriage kept them from truly connecting.

The character Nora represents a typical wife for the period. Her life is centered around the home, and her relationship with the outside world is fairly limited. Nora's interactions with her husband, Helmer, are predominantly superficial.

Early in the play, Nora deceptively asks Helmer for money to pay a debt. She pretends the money is for holiday spending. As a result, Helmer characterizes her as being foolish with money and calls her a spendthrift (Ibsen 33). Her true motive reveals Nora to be far cleverer than Helmer perceives her to be.

Likewise, Nora has a complex inner life to which Helmer is oblivious. Underscoring this, toward the end of the play, when Nora and Helmer have their falling out, Nora asks, "We have been married eight years now. Does it not occur to you that this is the first time we two, you and I, husband and wife, have had a serious conversation?" (Ibsen 137-138). Clearly this couple lacked true intimacy and mutual respect.

Throughout the play, Helmer denies Nora financial autonomy. Instead, she is relegated to an allowance and does not participate in the family's affairs. In addition, Nora does not

manage the upbringing of her own children. Though she plays and spends time with them, their instruction and care is left to a maid. This lack of responsibility and absence of utilitarian concern is reflected by Helmer's ideal of what is good and beautiful. Toril Moi illustrates Helmer's ideal perception of a wife's role in "First and Foremost a Human Being: Idealism and Gender in *A Doll's House*:

He [Helmer] enjoys seeing Nora beautifully dressed, but he "can't stand seeing tailoring" (314). He prefers women to embroider, for knitting "can never be anything but ugly [uskønt]" (344). In these lines, Helmer also manifests his social class: knitting is ugly because it is useful, embroidery is beautiful because it is a pastime for leisured ladies.

Helmer's affection for Nora stems exclusively from her beauty, and he has a distaste for all that he perceives as being unattractive. This quote also illustrates how social class and economic status contributed to gender roles within marriage in the late 1800s. Helmer is the breadwinner for the family and can afford for Nora to be unconcerned with household labor or the work of caring for the children. This is left to hired help. Nora is, therefore, dependent upon Helmer, much like one of his children. She is not given the opportunity to develop skills of her own and is left to leisurely pursuits as a direct reflection of Helmer's wealth.

Helmer characterizes himself as a caretaker and sees Nora as being delicate and helpless, calling her "his little skylark" and various other nicknames (Ibsen 33). Although to him they are affectionate, Helmer's nicknames for Nora reveal his narrow and condescending view of her. This effect is multiplied during his monologue toward the end of the play, where he calls her "my frightened little singing-bird" and "my scared little helpless darling" (Ibsen 136-137).

Helmer's view of his wife, himself, and ultimately of marriage do not reflect reality. Rather, Helmer lives in a fantasy that includes his and Nora's idealistic identities. As Moi astutely observes, "Helmer's sense of masculinity depends on Nora's performances of childlike femininity." As such, it is not surprising that when Nora's secret debt comes to light, Helmer is jolted out of his fantasy. He falls apart, no longer feeling in control.

It is Helmer's graceless response to Nora's indiscretion that causes her to realize that she too has not been living in reality. At this point, Nora concludes that her marriage has lacked true connection and she and her husband do not truly understand each other. Nora also begins to realize that her sheltered life has prevented her from fully understanding the world around her. Her act of forgery in securing her debt ultimately led to Krogstad's blackmail, opening her eyes to her ignorance regarding the law. Likewise, Nora comes to realize that she lacks the education to teach her own children.

Nora also feels she does not understand her religion, as she has never had the occasion to ponder or study it. As with her religion, Nora sees that her marriage has lacked real meaning and understanding. She chooses to leave her husband in order to pursue education and find her true self. In the end, however, Nora believes she is leaving her marriage because she no longer loves Helmer after discovering who he truly is.

In *A Doll's House*, Henrik Ibsen illustrates how Helmer and Nora's unrealistic perceptions of gender and marriage are at the root of their failing marriage. When a true challenge arises for the couple, they are unable to communicate genuinely or effectively to forge through the turmoil together. Ironically, moments before their undoing, Helmer is feeling romantic after the party they just attended. He dramatically proclaims, "You know what, Nora — often I wish that some imminent danger threatened you, so that I could risk life and blood, everything, everything for your sake" (Ibsen 130). When such a crisis arises, however, Helmer is found wanting.

The crux of the play is delivered in Nora's line: "I believe that before all else I am a reasonable human being... ..or, at all events, that I must try to become one" (Ibsen 141-142). In *A Doll's House*, Henrik Ibsen alludes to the importance of both spouses in a marriage allowing one another the freedom to be human, imperfect, and genuine.



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## CHILE ROJO



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"Get the ristra on the end," my abuelita encouraged while pointing to a long line of red chile ristras that were hung from a large wooden rafter.

A ristra is a bundle of red chile pods tied together with twine, dangling at varying lengths. We came to a little pop-up stand on the side of the highway near Chimayo; they sold chile ristras, dried herbs, honey, and various fruits and vegetables.

We were there strictly for their chile pods, but I eyed a golden honey stick with a serious yearning. I wasn't going to ask for it. I could hear my mother in my head telling me, "Don't you ever ask anyone to buy anything for you, it's rude."

I glanced at the coveted sugary treat one last time, imagining the explosion of flavor on my tongue; I thought about maybe even getting my little brother one and imagined his excitement.

As I daydreamed, dark clouds rolled in overhead and the thunder boomed with such greatness the ground shook. My abuelita looked up at the ashen sky through her spectacles and hastily murmured, "On that note, mi'jita, we better get going."

While paying, the rain began to come down. I remember looking out onto the horizon and thinking the mountains in the distance looked as though someone had poured a bucket of watered-down purple paint on them.

I overheard my grandmother, "These three ristras, a pound of cherries and...two honey sticks." I looked over at her small frame — she wore a baby blue cardigan that had tiny crocheted flowers lining the collar, each colorful flower had a pearl sewn into the center of it. She didn't look back at me, just passed the brown paper bag to me and headed to the car.

The rain began to come down heavily. Looking out the window, I wondered how these roads were created through these enormous mountains.

The Sangre de Cristo Mountains are some of the most sought-after hunting and fishing areas in New Mexico, with vast canyons, stunning lookout points, and pine trees as far as the eye can see. The locals never crave for the coasts of the world because when the wind blows through the trees it sounds like crashing waves. This is God's Country.

My eye caught a pair of water droplets on my window. I imagined that they were in some sort of championship race as I fixated on two that were sliding down my passenger-side window. The droplet on the left was much bigger than her competitor on the right, I rooted for the underdog until they collided and became one big glistening puddle on the edge of the car door.

We journeyed through the mountainous terrain, exchanging small talk and singing along to traditional New Mexican-Spanish music. I held on tightly to the brown paper bag that kept two amber-colored honey sticks within its depths; I wondered who they were for.

As we pulled into her dirt driveway, her giant Saint Bernard greeted us by jumping up onto the hood of the car. "Yes, we missed you too, now get off!" she ordered.

I asked sheepishly, "Abuelita, who did you buy these honey sticks for?"

She glanced at me from the corner of her glasses and whispered with delight, "One for you, and one for your brother." I beamed.

I walked to the front door of her tiny adobe house. The door was a large wooden heavy kind of door; my grandfather had painted it red for my grandmother. I took in a deep breath — it smelled of fresh-cut hay and the spearmint plants that had found their way all the way around my grandma's house. Something about being in northern New Mexico and spending time with my abuelita had me feeling at peace with myself. I always knew everything would be okay as long as I was in Mora and with her.

She called to me, "Jess, let's get started. This is the perfect day to make Chile Rojo."

Red chile is something magical that can only truly be cooked and eaten in New Mexico. In our family, it is a dish that is served at every occasion.

With our family being so chile-oriented, there are the chile snobs at every party. My tía was the worst.

"Did you taste the red chile? What did you think?" she'd inquire. "Who made it? Oh, she did! Hmmm, I make it better," as she slurped down the last spoonful from her bowl.

Today was a special day — my abuelita was going to show me how to make Chile Rojo. It was such an honor to be able to learn from her.

After my grandmother had me wash my hands at her big, white cast iron sink, she lectured, "First we must cut the stems off the chile pod and take out most of the seeds — not all of them, but most of them."

I stood just tall enough to see over the enormous wooden butcher's block we were preparing things on. My big, brandy-colored eyes peered over the top, and I saw a mound of the red chile pods. They were various hues of deep red, dried out so they had a bit of a frail texture.

I brought one to my nose and inhaled deeply and then let out a giant sneeze. "Achooo!! Excuse me, grandma. I'm sorry."

All the while she had been watching me, she giggled. "Salud, you better get to work, mi'jita. Let me show you how."

Her hands were petite yet bigger than mine. They seemed to tell a story of their own, delicately wrinkled in all the right places and calloused from the harsh environment of the mountains. Her wedding ring was a simple gold band, how I admired it.

As we sat and cut the tops off the pods, music played in the background on a little transistor radio my grandpa gave me for my birthday. "Oye Como Va" got us in the mood to dance. We sang along and grandma even threw a little frisky hip action into her step.

She called out as she talked over the radio, "Now the next step, mi amor, is to throw these pods and some water into the blender. While that is blending, we will dice up some pork and brown it in some oil!"

I attentively waited for my orders and absorbed the sights and marvelous smells that swirled around me. She cut up cubes of pork meat and threw it into the pan, then the sweet sound of the sizzle could be heard. She shook some garlic, salt, and parsley onto the meat. The smell was pure intoxication.

"This is one of the most important parts, mi'jita, you must brown some flour with the meat." She gently shook some flour over the meat and cooked it until it became a golden brown.

"Now for the chile, pour it over the meat," she said lovingly.

I carried the blender full of the aromatic crimson liquid slowly across the kitchen as if I were carrying a precious ruby.

"That's it, not too fast so it doesn't splash. Now we let it boil awhile," instructed my grandmother.

We cleaned up our mess and did our dishes — she washed, and I rinsed. I loved gazing at my grandmother, I studied her every wrinkle, every curl in her hair, and appreciated every laugh she shared with me. I could tell that she loved me for who I was; she valued me.

As the red concoction in the pot came to a slow boil, the heat of the chile began to sing to us. It was the song of the chile plant and the Pueblo and Hispano people who have been cultivating it for thousands of years. The strong aroma danced all around; I remember smiling for no reason, as if the chile had powers over me. I was so excited!

I tippy toed and my eyes were able to reach just past the top of the pot. I observed what seemed like a lake of red chile. As each little bubble popped, I blinked, and my long eyelashes grazed the handle of the black cast iron pot.

My grandpa, with his booming stature, came in from his wood shop. "I think I heard somebody yell it was quittin' time," he grinned as he took off his dusty hat and sat at the table. He must have smelled the chile.

Next was my dad. "Did you cook this all by yourself?" he asked as his smile beamed.

"No, dad, I had help." My smile was from ear to ear.

Lastly, my cousin and my little brother wrestled into the kitchen. Beneath the dirty hands, arms, and baseball gloves that were clambering into seats around the table, one hollered, "She doesn't know how to cook! She likes to be under cars with her dad!"

I promptly stood up and headed straight for the two with a closed fist, but for some reason I was walking in place. My dad had me by the back of my overalls. "Sit down, JR, they aren't worth it," he said as he gave them a glaring look.

Aloud, and to no one in particular, I raised my voice, "Well I guess I'll have to keep this extra honey stick abuelita bought for me. Man, oh man, is it good. Mmmmm mmmm!!"

My little brother ran over in a jiff. "Jess, we didn't mean it, I'm sorry!" he said, batting his long eyelashes.

My abuelita spooned a few servings of chile into turquoise-painted bowls. She had homemade yeast rolls and tortillas prepared every day — those were put out alongside butter and capulín jam.

We sat down to eat, and my grandpa began making sounds like he was sweating, “Ooooooooo eeeeeee, dios mio, why do I do this to myself? It is so hot yet so good.”

Then my father chimed in, “Mom, you threw yourself.” The men in our family came up with this saying — it means you did an amazing job cooking.

I looked over at the two boys across from me, and they were both drinking milk in between bites so it wasn’t so hot for them. Neither of them could bear to admit it was spicy.

I looked around the table and realized what red chile meant to me...it meant family. I had tears in my eyes, I was so proud of myself.

I brought my heavy silver spoon up to my mouth. It had delicate little flowers embellishing the handle; it was my favorite spoon in grandma’s silverware drawer. I dipped my spoon into the bowl and took my first bite. Its warmth filled my mouth, the thickness slid down my throat, and the spice touched my heart. It was a perfect medley of savory and heat. My mouth was on fire, and yet I yearned for more.

My grandma and I met eyes and we smiled; it was perfect. She reached over the wooden table, grabbed my hand and caressed it with her thumb. I could never get over how soft her hands were. She gently said, “I love you so much.”

“I love you too abuelita,” and I kissed her hand, leaving traces of my glitter lip gloss sparkling in the light.

After my abuelita passed away, I was never the same. Chile Rojo means love, warmth, and food. My abuelita truly showed her love for her family through her cooking.

Not a day goes by that I don’t think of her and wish she was still here. I have that ball of tears stuck in my throat thinking about all she has missed, and I pray she sees all I have become.

When my family comes together to have a meal at my house, of course there is always a pot of boiling red chile inviting everyone in. From its myriad of red hues to its spicy taste, and not to mention the various aromatics that flutter through the air when you pass by a ristra or boiling pot of chile — everything about it lures me and my family in, we are so proud of our red chile.

My tías and tíos stand over the pot and waft the warm steam toward their face to take in the smell. Even my children clumsily push over a chair to the stove and say, “Mama let me see, let me smell.”

My red chile brings my grandmother to life. The warmth and the spice make me feel as though she is there wrapping her arms around me, comforting me.

When our family meals are done, and everyone is kissing and hugging goodbye, I hear a few of these: “JR, you threw yourself.” In that moment I know I got it just right.

She is with me, rubbing her soft thumb on my hand, telling me she loves me.

Chile Rojo, the soul of my life.