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Skunk River Review 2009-10, vol 22

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THE SKUNK RIVER REVIEW

Volume 22

A collection of student writing
spanning 2009-2010

Thank you for purchasing the Skunk River Review. We hope you enjoy these selections, and we hope they may inspire your own thoughts and writing.

We encourage all DMACC writing students to submit to next year's competition, and we look forward to the creativity and diversity of style that makes this publication a proud celebration of student expression.



The front cover photograph was taken by a photography student from the Ankeny Campus during the fall of 2009 along the Skunk River in Iowa.

Welcome to the 2009-2010 edition of *The Skunk River Review*!

We received a record number of entries this year, making this volume one of the best and most competitive! We even added a new category called Art & Literary Analysis to include a growing number of submissions dedicated to inspiration and critique.

Each year we continue to receive many fine examples of student writing. Selection is a challenging process but enjoyable as the submissions range from a variety of topics and styles. Selected entries were only minimally edited for clarity.

The Skunk River Review focuses on students from various DMACC campuses. It includes selections from College Preparatory Writing classes, Composition I and Composition II classes. All entries generally begin as class assignments and are supported by the instructor.

We would like to recognize and appreciate the following people who contributed to this student publication:

- All of the DMACC students from College Preparatory Writing, Composition I and Composition II for their outstanding essay and research submissions
- All of the writing instructors at all DMACC campuses for their support and use of *The Skunk River Review* in their classes throughout the year
- Glena Johnson and Shirley Sandoval for their expert support and administrative assistance
- DMACC's photography department with the leadership Curt Stahr for providing excellent student photographs and creativity
- The scholarship committee of Lisa Ossian, Ben Parker, and Mary Torgoman for their time, judging expertise, and contribution to the selection of this year's scholarship finalists
- Dr. Jim Stick, Dean of Sciences and Humanities, for his leadership and contributions to help make this year's publication an overall success
- Department Chair, Dr. Alan Hutchison, for his direction along with Dr. Eden Pearson for her support

- We would also like to thank the following instructors who contributed time and effort in submitting their students' essays:

Mary Torgoman Marion Tonhouse Ben Parker Judy Hauser

Sarah Setnes-Dale Randy Jedele Eden Pearson Krystal Hering

John Raymond Janet LaVille Maria Cochran Eden Pearson

Julie Smith Kyle McCord Thomas Gavin Benjamin Bishop

Sincerely,

Roselyn Harbart

Shelaine Harbart

Editors

The Skunk River Review reserves the right to edit for minor corrections and clarity. Works cited have not been edited.

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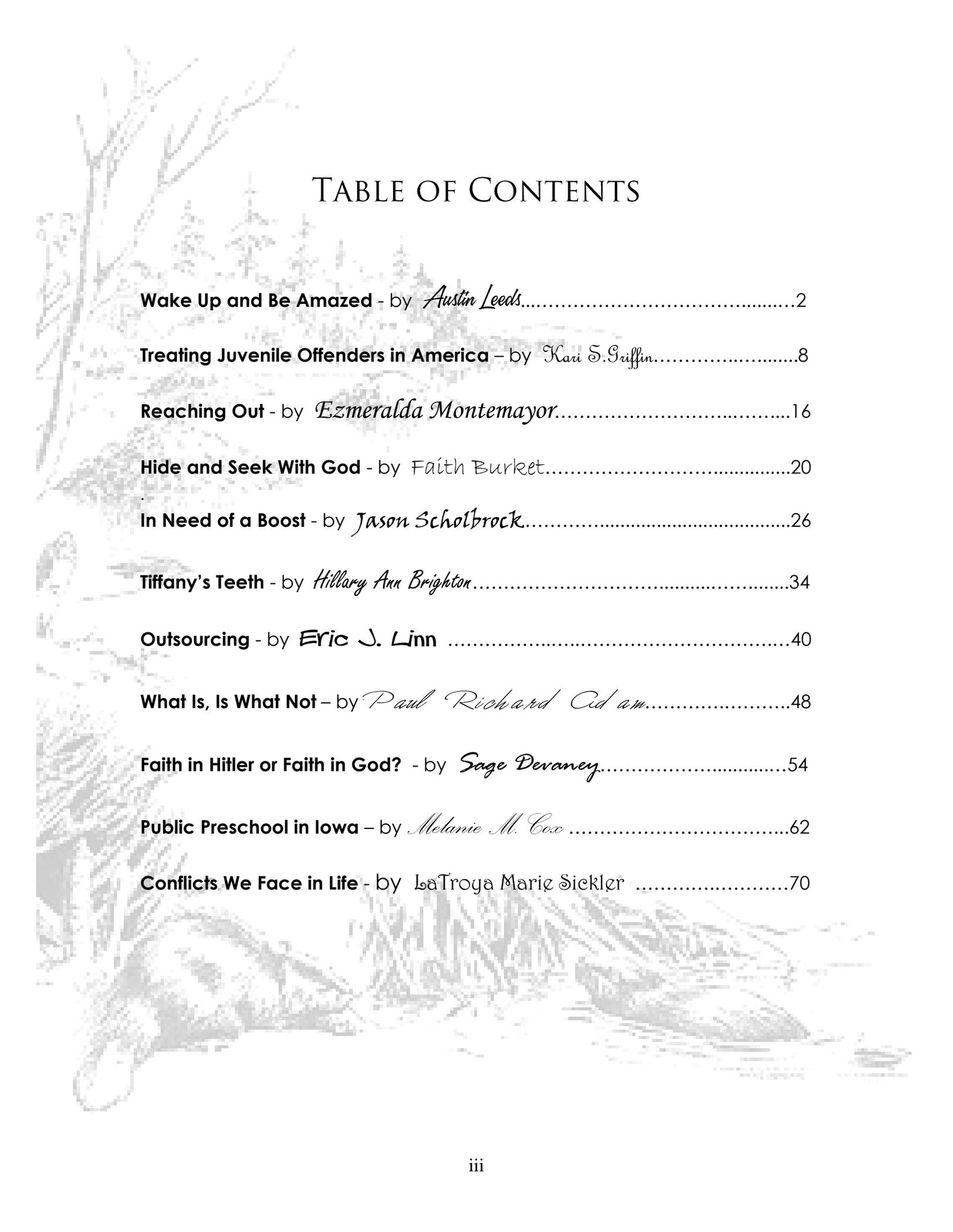


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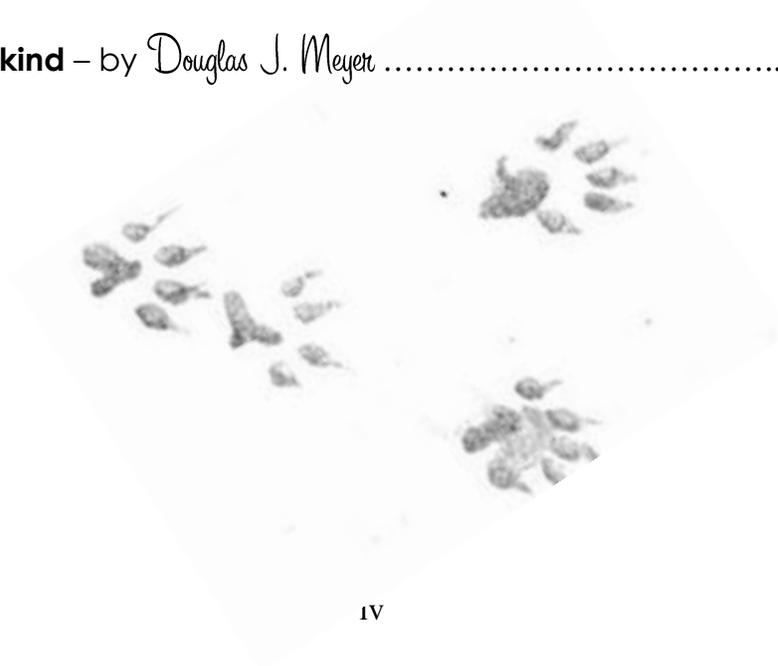
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Wake Up and Be Amazed

Two days and roughly 1,000 miles of sitting in our Ford conversion van after leaving home, we'd seen a lot of things. My younger brother, Cainon, had unflinchingly steered us through Sturgis, South Dakota, during the largest annual motorcycle rally in the United States. The imposing, dark, and jagged Rocky Mountains had bowed before the power of our Triton V8. The dry, dusty plateaus of Wyoming stretched far and wide behind us. Our goal was a large plot of land located in the northwest corner of Wyoming, stretching a short distance into Montana as well.

This ground, hallowed to conservationists, beloved by hikers and wildlife photographers, and briefly touched by millions of people around the world each year, had been named over a century before for the color of the rock lining its largest canyon. Fur traders and explorers brought back tales that were promptly discarded by established science as exaggerated. By the time of our visit, though, Yellowstone National Park had not only proven all myths and legends true—its fame had spread to the corners of the globe, bringing together Americans, Canadians, Mexicans, Japanese, Koreans, Australians, New Zealanders, and scores of others to celebrate one of the grandest locales in all Creation.

Our first day at Yellowstone started off apprehensively. Armed with my curvaceous Apple PowerBook laptop and the sporadic wireless Internet provided by Cody, Wyoming's KOA campground, I had noticed a severe weather alert for Yellowstone as I checked the forecast for my parents. As it

turned out, a wildfire had just broken out near Fishing Bridge in Yellowstone a few days before and had spread into nearby Shoshone National Forest. The fire was partially contained and the threat of road closure remained. Wary of any roadblocks, we set out from our lodge that day excited and somewhat nervous. As we drew closer to the hills the fire had scorched, the smoky smell of burnt grass and earth poured in through our air conditioning vents. The dry ground had only a short time before been ablaze; firefighters and their off-road vehicles were still at the scene, working hard to keep the dying flames contained. Up in the hills, faint, gray smoke could be seen rising out of nowhere.

Soon the scorched landscape gave way to a lush evergreen forest, overlooked by a high, flush-faced cliff to the right and split by a small, rock-filled river to the left. The road wound its way between the two, eventually breaking off and leading into a denser part of the forest. Here, we came upon three lines of cars that stretched around the bend and out of sight—toward the entrance. We picked the far left lane. Mom pulled out our camcorder and focused in on the upcoming sign: *YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK*. Then, as we inched toward the gate, she turned the camcorder on us: “Who’s ready to see Yellowstone?”

My youngest sister, Alaura, then six, answered apathetically “I am.”

Cainon then tried to rally us: “*We are!*”

After sitting in the van for an hour, and with the seemingly endless line of cars in front of us, the realization that we would be entering Yellowstone in the next few minutes hadn’t quite crossed our mind. However, our endless line only seemed so long because a large RV added three car lengths to it. Once it had passed, our line, consisting mostly of average-looking several-year-old sedans and minivans (except ours) scooted quickly past the other two. We checked in relatively quickly, or perhaps the cars before us had just taken a long time in deciding. In a couple minutes, we were on our way. Leaving the front gate behind, we passed into what seemed like another world.

The east entrance to Yellowstone, unlike the famous Roosevelt Arch and its rocky hills, was not so much imposing as it was captivating. Every clearing in the thick evergreens brought glimpses of glistening ponds and mountain vistas. The road, unlike the interstates, highways, and byways we had traversed to get here, was smooth and relaxing. One of our favorite songs was Steven Curtis Chapman's "See the Glory," the refrain of which runs,

"[When it comes to the grace of God, sometimes it's like]/

I'm Playin' GameBoy standin' in the middle of the Grand Canyon/

I'm eatin' candy sittin' at a gourmet feast/

I'm wading in a pond when I could be swimmin' in the ocean/

Tell me, what's the deal with me?

Wake up and see the glory!"

In retrospect, I can't remember who thought of the idea, but it was fitting when we turned on "See the Glory" on our Sony CD player as we descended toward Yellowstone Lake. Brand new sedans and GPS-fitted minivans were common in Yellowstone, and, in my opinion, the people driving them were really missing out on the unadulterated Yellowstone experience. Of course, my father had first seen Yellowstone riding in a nearly windowless, brown Dodge van with his parents ('the Box', as he called it), so our ride was pretty cushy by comparison.

Curving roads brought us through more fire-damaged areas, filled with flame-stripped evergreen trees and blackened grass. Here, the smell wasn't quite as strong as it had been in Shoshone National Forest—the moist, cool Yellowstone air had dampened the ashes and stifled the aroma. Against the fire and the destruction lay Yellowstone Lake. The lake itself was unlike any other lake I had ever seen before: cool and blue, like Lake Superior, but serene, like Brushy Lake.

The whole scene was surreal—the sky, the mountains beyond, and the lake itself blended into a magnificent three-tone composition, each reflecting off one another and producing an overriding coolness. It helped that the temperature was only 60 degrees Fahrenheit here, whereas Cody had been in the 70's when we left. Looking back, it seems silly, but we had the nerve to throw rocks in the lake—that peaceful lake whose surface was nearly flat as far as the eye could see—but the human urge to disturb what is all well and good was too much for my younger siblings. The blue water turned an ugly brown as ripples destroyed its pure reflection, if only for a moment. By the time my mother gathered us all for a family portrait, the blue had returned.

After leaving the lake, we continued on toward what was probably the most frequented landmark in the whole park: Old Faithful Geyser. As we pulled up to Fishing Bridge, we had our first encounter with the endangered species known the world over as the symbol of the Old West—the North American bison, sometimes referred to, improperly, as the buffalo. As majestic as they are made to seem in movies and some documentaries, they are really nothing more than hairy, overgrown cows, though some would probably argue with me on that. What seemed like an entire herd of them came romping down the inclines on either side of the road just beyond the bridge, then trotted across the bridge in staggered biker-like formation, seeming oblivious to the line of cars that sat waiting for them to clear the road.

One elderly woman had been caught off guard by the bison and was now standing on the incline just ahead and to our left, standing deathly still as the massive oxen slowly filed around her. She was directed by someone ahead—a ranger, probably, who was obscured by the line of cars in front of us—to slowly move down toward the road, where more people sat waiting, making very little sound or movement as the brown beasts passed. After a few tense moments, she made it to a bench away from the herd and sat down. Soon, the herd of bison had moved on, and so had the herd of cars.

Over lunch, we found ourselves closely watched by a flock of small birds, looking as if they could pounce from their tree perches at any moment and snatch our food in seconds. The riverside picnic area where we dined, however, was well frequented by people, and more than likely the birds had learned to be scavengers, waiting for people to leave before gobbling up the crumbs. A lone white seagull floated on the glistening river, looking just as anxious for a bite of our food as the other birds. At one point, it actually clambered up onto the shore, looked at us for a moment, then walked off in the opposite direction, apparently convinced we weren't going anywhere soon. It guessed wrong, though. In a few more minutes, we had packed up and were on the road again.

After taking the curvy road through the woods to the Old Faithful parking lot—which, at 3:00 in the afternoon, was packed—we decided to check out the Old Faithful Inn before the geyser went off. The Old Faithful Inn looks impressive from the outside—a massive wood structure stretching half a dozen stories up in the air, and it was much longer and wider than it was tall. It almost looks like two separate buildings, facing away from each other at right angles. On the inside, the complexity of the design of the one-hundred-year-old oversized log cabin becomes crystal clear. The lobby spans from ground level to the roof, surrounded by the various walkways that bring guests to their rooms. Polished wood adorns everything. There is even a faint smell of wood polish—PineSol, perhaps—in the air. Looking *up* could give one vertigo, which is usually achieved by looking in the opposite direction. The roof is completely made of logs, just like the rest of the structure.

After walking up and down stairways and venturing across the many walkways, we had absorbed enough wood essence to last a lifetime. Coming out of the Inn, we found a seat on one of the innumerable semi-circular benches surrounding the geyser and prepared to be wowed. By that time, the temperature had soared into the eighties, or at least the high seventies, making the treeless plains around Old Faithful, where the sun could shine unhindered, irritably hot. The foul sulfurous smell of

superheated steam floated faintly through the air as the pressure, and the suspense, grew. Five minutes before eruption, the concrete benches were completely occupied. As Old Faithful prepared to demonstrate its power yet again, billowing steam began pouring out of the geyser, filling the air with its hellish odor.

A small spout of water started spraying from the base, becoming larger, dropping off, then becoming larger still. Then, all at once, the geyser erupted, sending white, foaming water one hundred feet into the air. Moments later, it dropped off, then blasted up to its full height of one hundred and seventy feet, piercing the sapphire sky of Wyoming with its misty, silvery glow. A bit of warm moisture managed to reach us in the benches, and suddenly, this place became tangible: I was really here, really feeling the spray of this nearly mythical thing that I had only ever heard about, never seen nor even less felt. I felt as though I had come awake. *This* was Yellowstone for me.



Treating Juvenile Offenders in America

Dealing with juvenile delinquency is a problem that needs to be addressed in the American justice system. The problem is the way juveniles are treated within the system. The treatment of juveniles is left to the discretion of each state with the only stipulation being no capital punishment for juveniles. Outside of the death penalty, the states can then decide who will be tried as juveniles and who will be tried as adults. These decisions are mainly based on age, which leaves the type and severity of the crime out of the equation. In the state of Iowa for example, a child of 13 who kills someone will automatically be processed under the juvenile justice system, but a child who is 16 who commits burglary, with no immediate harm to another, will be tried and sentenced as an adult.

In 1974 the United States enacted the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act, which is an important act designed to protect juveniles and to get away from the punishments given to juvenile delinquents back in the 1700s, where no matter what the age of the offenders, everyone was treated exactly the same way. The idea behind the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act, among other things, is to protect youth from being subjected to the harsh nature of adult punishment, and the dangers of being subjected to adult criminals. Today, it seems law makers have moved toward the idea that getting tough on crime is more important than protecting and rehabilitating youth offenders, even if it means sending a thirteen-year-old child to prison for life.

The evidence speaks for itself in that most all states have passed laws making it easier to try a juvenile as an adult, even when the offense is non-serious. Marilyn Elias, author of "Is Adult Prison Best for Juveniles" claims "since 1992, every state but Nebraska has made it easier to try juveniles as adults and most states have legalized harsher sentences" (1). In addition, it is left up to each state to determine who will be considered "old enough" to be referred to adult court. That decision is no longer based on how heinous the crime, but instead is based on the minimum age in which children could be considered "responsible" for their actions.

The decision of accountability is up to the "discretion" of the individual(s) authorized to decide. Elias, author of "Is Adult Prison Best for Juveniles" reports "many states limit judge's discretion, sending all teens who commit serious offenses to adult courts, or allowing prosecutors to opt for adult prosecution" (1). Allowing prosecutors to decide does not ensure that the best interest of the children affected will be considered. In addition, allowing prosecutors the discretion leads to a question of fairness or equality in the American justice system and America must insist that the issues be addressed with uniformity across the States.

Today, there are thousands of juveniles serving time behind bars with adult offenders. Many experts would say there is a false sense of fear and panic on the part of the American public who have been led to believe youth crime is an epidemic that is continuing to rise and must be stopped at any cost. The truth is juvenile crime has not increased since the 1980s. J. Steven Smith, author of "Adult Prisons: No Place for Kids" indicates "the percentage of crimes attributed to juveniles has remained stable at just under 20% since the 1980s" (34). In addition, getting tough on juvenile crime in order to put these fears to rest is doing more harm than good. Ziedenberg and Schiraldi, authors of "The Risks Juveniles Face" maintain the following: "lock up a 13-year-old with murderers, rapists and robbers, and guess what he'll [sic] want to be when he [sic] grows up?" (1).

Edward Meyer, author of "Get Tough on Crime, Not on Kids" indicates "treating young offenders like adult criminals is not tough on crime. In fact, it is an effective incubator for crime" (1). Research has shown that punishing juveniles under the adult system just makes them more likely to re-offend and the crimes tend to be more serious. In addition, the effects of adult prison on juveniles produce long-term and sometimes fatal effects. Long-term effects include the mentality of a child upon release in that the system may very well produce an even more violent and aggressive offender. But other long-term effects that some may not even realize is the inability of the offender to come back into society and obtain employment or get a college education, making life on the "outside" seem hopeless if not impossible (Ryan and Turner 63).

Additionally, rape of a juvenile in an adult prison is an issue that some may not consider fatal, but to a child, rape could have detrimental effects. Suicide is another fatal effect of housing juveniles in adult prisons. A study performed by Michael G. Flaherty, a researcher with the Community Research Forum at the University of Illinois, found that "the suicide rate among juveniles housed in adult jails is 7.7 times higher than in juvenile detention center" (Ziedenberg and Schiraldi 2).

The issue of how juveniles end up in the adult justice system is another alarming issue to be addressed. The fact is the American justice system no longer follows traditional methods in judicial review, where an impartial official, a Judge, hears the facts of a case and decides what action, if any, will be taken. Instead, "85% of the decisions to treat juveniles as adults are being made by prosecutors and legislators" (Smith 34). The problem with this practice is obvious. A judge is a neutral party whose job is to look out for the best interest of the parties involved. A judge reviews all the facts of a case in an effort to determine the best possible treatment for the individual, including facts like family background, level of education, past history of violence or delinquency, just to name a few. These issues are every bit as important as age is and needs to be considered to impose fair sentencing. In addition, Liz Ryan

and Seth Turner, authors of “New Report Highlights the Impact of Incarcerating Youth in Adult Facilities and Strategies for Reform,” report that “youth routinely waive their rights to counsel under the mistaken impression that this makes the case easier to resolve because it means less time, less inconvenience to their parents, and less cost” (62).

An impartial judge, is more likely to inform individuals of the facts and the individuals’ rights, whereas a prosecutor may not. A prosecutor is more interested in resolving a case and less interested in protecting the rights of the presumed guilty, whereas a judge must always be fair and impartial. Bryan Stevenson, Executive Director for Equal Justice Initiative, explains, “A study by the Equal Justice Initiative has documented 73 cases where 13 and 14 year olds were condemned to death in prison. Almost all of these kids lack legal representation and in most cases the propriety and constitutionality of their extreme sentences have never been reviewed” (United States 1).

There is a very simple solution here, and it is afforded to adults every day. If the justice system is going to allow children to be treated as adults, then these children should receive the same protections under the law as adults do. Some may argue violent juvenile offenders must be stopped at any cost in order to ensure societal protection. However, the cost should not include compromising the American justice system. The judicial process needs to be overseen by a judge, not a prosecutor or a legislator. A judge is always going to be better equipped to review the facts of a case and to be impartial on how a case should proceed. The American justice system cannot afford to eliminate the judicial process in matters of crime and especially not when a child is involved.

A solution to the dangers of putting juveniles in adult prison is having a uniform sentencing structure starting with the child’s age. Children under the age of 18 who commit a crime should be handled by the juvenile court system with the option of transferring the case when the child “ages out”

in order to finish a sentence for a more serious crime. In the state of Iowa, there is a proposal which would benefit all states. Tom Miller, Iowa's Attorney General, proposed the following:

youthful offender jurisdiction, currently available for youth age 15 and younger, allows a young person accused of serious offenses to be tried as an adult but sent back to juvenile court for sentencing in, presumably, a more developmentally appropriate program. At age 18, after a hearing, the youth may be moved back to the adult system to complete their [sic] sentence. (Iowa 15)

This practice will cover any offender, felony or misdemeanor, and the benefits would be great. Statistics show that the majority of juvenile crime is non-violent; however most states have gone to a system that dictates who will be treated as an adult simply based on age. Statistics also reveal that juveniles receive much better services than adults do and new research shows that "rehabilitative programs, including ones that treat serious, chronic, and violent offenders in the juvenile justice system, reduce juvenile crime" (Ryan and Turner 63). Most adult facilities don't have these types of programs. Therefore, juveniles are left to adapt and conform with little hope of treatment or rehabilitation.

The juvenile justice system has come a long way from the days when they used to torture and kill children for their crimes, but there is still more work to do. If children are committing criminal acts, it is in the best interest of society to find out why and to try and correct the problem. While some may not be able to be rehabilitated, they still deserve justice and equal protection by the law. Most can be rehabilitated as research has already shown, and the future of this country depends on the younger generation, so most would agree they are worth the investment.

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Reaching Out

In November 2009, when I was attending Des Moines Community College, I was invited by one of my instructors to attend the Seminar over “Domestic Violence.” There were several speakers there such as the police department, a social worker, a probation officer, a victim, and a representative from Children & Families of Iowa. As I was listening to all these speakers it brought back so many disturbing memories from my past; the memories of my abuse that I endured for several years.

In the 1980’s there were no laws in place to protect the victims and no shelters to provide you safety from your abuser. Today, there are laws to protect victims against domestic violence, shelters for women and children, and many resources to assist a victim in reaching out for help. These things were not available for me when I experienced domestic violence. That’s why I had to find the courage to leave all the violence and to stop living in denial.

I never knew that a person who could love too much could also easily hurt. I was nineteen years old; I had just graduated from high school, and I was married to my best friend, who I had known since I was five years old. The great news came on March 20, 1983, when I found out I was pregnant with my daughter Priscilla. My husband wanted to start having children right away, so I was sure that being pregnant would make him happy. However, that is when the abuse first started.

He would yell at me and call me everything but my name. Then it became worse. He started physically hitting me, but only in areas that could be covered by clothes. As I got deeper into my

pregnancy, my face got the worst of it. The abuse continued so much that he sent me to the hospital more times than I can count. Finally, the worst of the abuse came when he hit me so severely that after surgery I slipped into a coma for three months.

When I awoke, I did not know my name, that I had children, or that I was married. I had to go through extensive physical therapy for several months. I had to learn how to speak, eat, walk, and work on regaining my memory. Overtime, I had taken so many hits to my head that it did cause some memory loss. There are times when I have flashbacks of my memories; I can remember some things and some things are lost. In the thirteen years I was married I had more children, Tessie, and the twins Megan and Brandy. Eventually, he threatened to kill all of us; that is when I knew I needed to get my children out of harm's way. I finally realized the marriage was over, and I started planning my escape.

I had developed a plan to leave my husband so that my children and I could escape. My husband worked for one of the largest oil companies in the country, and he was leaving for Valdez, Alaska, to check on the pipeline. He would only be gone two days, but I felt it was enough time for us to get all our personal belongings without his family finding out. His family always watched me like a hawk and always wanted to know what I was doing and where I was going.

I was able to convince my husband to leave me more money this time. To my surprise, he left me eight-thousand dollars because I had been such a good wife the previous month. When he left that morning, I went to the U-Haul Trailer Center to rent a trailer, and I started loading it with all our belongings. Luckily my in-laws went out of town and would not return for two or more days. Two friends from my church came over to help us pack. Without their help, I do not think I would have had the courage to leave.

I moved to College Station, Texas, for about a month. Then I relocated to a small town right out of Billings, Montana. I became a stronger woman because of my experience. Once I had left my

husband , we all had to adjust. Mostly it was financial. We never had to worry about money when it came to my husband. Even though, I had money when we left I knew it wouldn't last forever. So I tried to find employment, but no one was hiring at the time. Eventually, the money ran so low that I had to visit a food bank to get food and some personal items.

Finally, a good friend from my church told me about the Billings Human Services Office. I was afraid that someone there would contact my husband and tell him where we were at. After watching my children not having enough to eat. I realized I had to reach out for help no matter how big or small it was. The next morning I drove over to Human Services Office and met my new social worker Mareska Jennings. She told me about all the programs I qualified for, so I signed up for all of them such as, food assistance, low income housing, AFDC; which was welfare for my children, Medicaid; health insurance, and she gave me a referral to Catholic Charities to assist with any utilities. I learned how the state and federal assistance worked. A week later, after leaving the one bedroom kitchenette apartment we were living in, my social worker placed us in a three bedroom apartment. This whole experience was all so very new to me. It was so hard for us in Billings, Montana, but we survived. A few years later my husband finally met someone else and asked me for a divorce. He decided to give us the house we both owned as long as I would return back to Texas, so I agreed.

Soon after a reporter named Carlos Tobias called me to ask if he could write my story in the San Antonio Times, I really didn't want to, but my daughter Pricilla convinced me. An attorney by the name of Marisol Stone from Austin, Texas, heard of my story and wanted to represent me pro-bono. When we first met, I was surprised to see her in a wheelchair. She explained to me that she too was a victim of domestic violence. After talking with Marisol, I felt she understood me, so I let her represent me in my divorce. I entered into therapy, as did Priscilla .

The judge ordered my husband to pay for our therapy and child support. I learned that the reason I stayed so long is that I no longer loved myself. I promised to never put myself in that position again. A few years ago I ran into my ex-husband, and he asked me to forgive me. He said he was very sorry for what he put me through. I told him that I forgave him a long time ago. I finally decided to put that energy an experience somewhere it was needed at the Battered Women’s Shelter in Des Moines. I’m a volunteer there and try to help the women, but there will always be those who are not so lucky. I feel truly blessed my children are all grown and all live good lives. I decided to go back to school to become a social worker to help not only the victim, but the abuser to reach out.



Hide and Seek with God

Is it common for people to deny or abandon their faith in God, and then later become a believer again? What literary techniques might be used to convey this or a similar spiritual message in a literary selection? In the poem “A Song Lost and Found Again” by Elie Wiesel, the three biblical figures Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob witness the suffering and genocide of the Jewish people at the hands of the Nazis, and struggle with the notion of abandonment and negligence by the God, and then ultimately regain faith in God. The techniques Wiesel uses to convey the theme of lost and found religious faith are metaphors, irony, and poetic repetition.

Wiesel’s primary tool for conveying the message of losing and then regaining religious faith lies in the use of important biblical forefathers/leaders, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as metaphors. Because of these three men’s powerful role in the Jewish faith, they are exemplary metaphors for the Jewish heritage and its belief and faith in God. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob also serve as examples of what the Jews felt was being denied of them, and the defeat and despair they experienced from that denial and false promises. For example, at one point Jacob says, “You promised me to watch over Israel— / Where are you? What of your promise? / You promised me blessings for Israel— / Is this your blessing?” (lines 14-17). These lines describe the negligence, false promises, and denial the Jewish people were feeling during their persecution. The ways that each of the men are used in the poem is also biblically symbolic,

either in the way in which they are mentioned or what they witness as they look upon the Holocaust, or even what actions they take as a result of seeing these horrors.

The first instance in which biblical metaphors are used is in the beginning of the poem, when Jacob first speaks. Jacob says, "See the immense ladder, a bridge to the sky. / An entire people, / Mine, yours, / Uses it to rise, / To vanish in the clouds" (8-12). These lines are a direct reference to Jacob's Ladder, where in the Bible, Jacob sees a large "ladder" climbing into the heavens, which has been thought to represent a link between man and God and the promise to Jacob that his descendants would inherit the promised land. The ladder's use in this poem symbolizes the great promise made to the Jewish people of a rich, happy life, and sets the stage for the subsequent lines that describe that promise becoming broken and shallow.

The first time Abraham speaks in the poem also expresses a biblical metaphor. Abraham says, "You commanded me, O Lord, / To leave my country, / My home, / And that of my father. / To start anew in the land of Canaan. / I did not know, my Lord, I did not know / That one day, one night, / The road would end in Treblinka" (24-33). Symbolically, this reference to the biblical story of Abraham's journey to the land of Canaan, leaving his homeland and everything he knew in the process, indicates that the Jewish people felt that they had endured an arduous journey, both themselves and through their ancestors, to have a better life and closeness to God, only to have their journey end in a place where they were persecuted and forgotten.

Another stanza in the poem also indicates these same feelings, as said by Jacob when he first speaks in the poem. He says, "You brought my descendants home— / I did not know, my Lord, I did not know then, / That every road / At dusk / Would lead to Auschwitz" (42-45). This, too, indicates a feeling of abandonment and betrayal by the Jewish people by the God that they had left their homes to please and worship, only to be massacred and abused by the Germans. These lines, voicing a horrid bleakness,

all help to convey a message of loss of religious faith and belief from the tragedies the Holocaust relentlessly poured upon the Jewish people, who lost all reason to believe, as a result of these endless tragedies that befell them because of the Nazis.

In conjunction with the use of the three biblical figures Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Wiesel also incorporates a subtle irony into the poem to help convey his theme. The first notable use of irony is when Isaac speaks of a crowd of Jews who surround “An old man / And his son” (135-136). Isaac watches and “They speak in a low voice. / The father believes in miracles: / Anything can happen, / Even at the last moment, / If only God wills it. / Avoiding his son’s gaze, / He tells him / That now, / More than ever, / One may not despair” (137-147). The irony in this is that Isaac was placed in a situation where God had commanded his father, Abraham, to kill him, but even until the last moment Abraham did not lose faith in God and what he had in mind for the two of them, and in the end, because of his strong and unyielding faith in God, Isaac’s life was spared. This situation, between a father and his son (though the context may be different), uses the irony of the situation to demonstrate how important it is to not lose faith and continue to have trust in God, even in the darkest of hours.

Another instance of irony is when Abraham is watching a group of mothers and their children are being herded along, and on impulse, he snatches one of the girls. “I snatch her from her mother / And I run / . . . And while I run, / I am thinking: / This is insane, / This Jewish child / Will not be spared. / I run and run / And cry. / And while I am crying, / While I am running, / I perceive a whisper: / I believe, / Says the little girl, / Weakly, / I believe in you” (203-224). Abraham, who was ordered by God to kill his son, Isaac, kept his faith in the Lord’s will and, in the end, was able to spare his son’s life, sees this child and how he is unable to save her; but despite the despairing, hopeless situation, the little Jewish girl seems to have been forced into, she tells Abraham she believes in him. Similarly, Isaac also trusted his father to the very end. This semi-parallel for Abraham’s story serves as an ironic metaphor for the

bleakness of the Holocaust. However, it, along with the other uses of irony in the poem, also serve to voice a message of continuing to believe in God, even in the face of great evil, setting the stage for the last half of the poem.

The tool Wiesel uses to finally describe retaking religious faith and belief in God is poetic repetition. The use of the phrase "*Ani Maamin*," which means, "I believe," is repeated many times throughout the poem. The meaning of the phrase itself, "I believe," is in itself very significant. The words are simple, but powerful in that simplicity, and therein lies their potency. By strategically placing this phrase near the end of the poem, Wiesel establishes that in spite of the tragedies of the Holocaust, there is still reason to believe in God.

Wiesel uses *Ani maamin* before or after the mentioning of some tragedy, further emphasizing how it is possible to believe, or even necessary, in spite of all of the destruction and meaningless death. Most prominently, during one of the stanzas involving the chorus, which states, "*Ani maamin*, Abraham, / Despite Treblinka. / *Ani maamin*, Isaac, / Because of Belsen. *Ani maamin*, Jacob, / Because and in spite of Majdanek. / Dead in vain, / Dead for naught, / *Ani maamin*" (302-310), These lines show that in spite of all of the tragedies that sprang from the Holocaust, there was reason to have hope, there was reason to believe. Despite hopeless odds, even with very small rays of hope, even if there was meaningless and tragic death, there was a reason to believe.

Finally, the final five lines of the poem also use the phrase "*Ani Maamin*" to convey a message of hope, which translates as "I believe in the coming of the Messiah, / And though he tarries, / I wait daily for his coming, / I believe" (336-340) to add a final, strong finish to the poem. This conclusion to the poem depicts a renewed zeal for the previously lost religious faith in God and the conviction to believe despite all of the evils and the anguish that was experienced.

To recapitulate, Wiesel’s metaphorical use of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, along with subtle irony, and the Hebrew phrase “*Ani Maamin*,” serves to symbolically depict a loss of faith in God after the sufferings of a great tragedy, and then the revival of that faith in God from the ashes of it all. The way in which this poem is told, using these tools of metaphor, irony, and poetic repetition, conveys the message that although it is possible, if not commonplace, to lose hope and faith during trying times of tribulation, it is also possible to once again become an avid believer through all of the anguish and suffering.

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In Need of a Boost

It is a typical Friday afternoon inside an average high school gymnasium. A physical education teacher instructs students to begin running around the perimeter of the gym. Slowly and unwillingly, the students begin to pound their feet on the hardwood floor. Gossiping about the cute substitute, several girls lag behind the rest. Some jocks move around the gym at the speed of snails, a much slower pace than their potential speed. This scene is like many physical education classes across the country. Unfortunately, students are not benefiting from the little involvement that physical education classes require. Whether it is the laziness of the students or the instructors, the lack of effort is an alarming trend. Laziness, coupled with other factors, has created a major issue. The lack of physical activities in schools can be directly related to the swelling percentage of America's young obese population.

Why are students less active? What has changed? Drastic changes in society's attitudes and actions have led to this dilemma. At one time, conditions were different. In David Zinczenko's book [Eat This, Not That! For Kids!](#) he compares the current generation to the past. The following statement optimizes the change in environment:

When we were kids, we cared more about fishing nets than the Internet, played our tennis games on actual courts instead of virtual ones, and even walked to our friends' homes on the other side of the neighborhood. Even the slackers and the rockers at

least got some exercise toting electric guitars and amps around town, instead of doing all their rocking out on Guitar Hero. (viii)

As Zinzhenko demonstrates, the change in environment is twofold: technology and the built environment, which includes transportation infrastructure and parks or green space. Modern conveniences, such as mechanized farming, have eliminated the need for as much manual labor. People once had to hunt for food or cultivate crops. Today, a short drive down the street provides a world of edibles. Decreased labor, however, is not the only reason for decreased body bustle.

Another root of less exercise among students is today's cities are designed around the automobile. Urban planning has transformed greatly over the past one hundred years. Whereas generations previously walked or biked to school, the modern generation does not have that option. Sidewalks are few and far between. Indeed, "changes in the built environment [have made] walking to school less desirable, less practical, less safe and less fun" (Westphal and Patil 133).

Many people blame a child's lack of physical activity on technology and entertainment. Video games and television are the two most commonly scrutinized causes for less active children. If given the choice, kids nearly always choose television over exercise. This sentiment is echoed in "The Role of Physical Activity in Obesity Prevention" by James Pivarnik. Today's youth have "finite leisure-time available, and these modern entertainment opportunities [e.g. television] may lead to less spontaneous physical activity" (38).

Society has the attitude that exercise is "bad" and "no fun." The media and advertising have encouraged the purchase of products that induce sedentary lifestyles, instead of healthy, active lifestyles. This sedentary attitude has crept from the household into the schoolhouse. Standards have been lowered. As stated in "The Simple Act of Walking to School" by Joanne Westphal and Sheetal Patil, "the reasons for this decline [in physical activity] are many, including reduced or eliminated physical

education requirements, diminished free-play periods (like recesses), and mandated busing requirements due to segregation or consolidation in school districts” (132).

Clearly, today’s society is ripe for shortages of physical activity and, consequently, increased numbers of overweight and obese youth. What are the results of decreased exercise? What are the issues facing overweight children today? Teresa Pitman and Miriam Kaufman list three significant health threats to overweight children in their book The Overweight Child: Promoting Fitness and Self-Esteem. These threats include respiratory, ligament and tendon, and cardiovascular concerns as a result of obesity (19). Due to their inactivity, students have lower metabolisms. Thus, their ability to burn fat is reduced. Therefore, the problem snowballs and the pounds continue to multiply.

Chronic diseases are often the worst results of overweight or obese children. Many youth are experiencing diseases previously seen only in adults. One of these diseases is type 2 diabetes, a serious disease. According to the book Underage & Overweight by Frances Berg, “diabetes is the seventh leading cause of death in this country and a major contributor to health problems” (13). Besides diabetes, obesity is also increasing the number of cancer cases. In fact, “a recent study at Harvard found that obesity may soon surpass tobacco as the number-one cause of cancer deaths” (Zinczenko viii). Those who argue obesity is not a major issue are definitely wrong. They say the nation as a whole is healthy. While their claim may be true today, it is quickly changing. Visibly, obesity has completely changed children. Their bodies are so stressed that they can barely function. A life of obesity and its complications is no life at all and certainly not a good life for a child.

Fortunately, there are options. If the problem is realized, kids can attain greater happiness. The country and world would benefit from healthy lifestyles and greater longevity. People would have more confidence and greater self-esteem. The risk of cancer and chronic diseases would be drastically

reduced. Through changes in attitude, policy, and environment, society must adjust to encourage and enable youth to live more active lives.

The place to start these changes in attitude, policy, and environment is the school gymnasium. The best way to overcome this problem is through education. Teachers should employ activities that include the entire class, letting both athletic and amateur students participate (Berg 325). Instructors must also focus on what is being taught in class. Is it relevant or useful to growing children?

In Management of Childhood Obesity, authors Elizabeth Poskitt and Laurel Edmunds promote teachers “recognize that PE includes a broad range of activities and not just competitive sport [and] develop an ‘engaging’ PE curriculum which offers opportunities for dancing, aerobics and other individual activities” (178). Teachers must also encourage and support their students, whether skilled or not. Showing favoritism decreases participation and self-esteem. When more skilled students are encouraged by instructors, less athletic students feel left out. They feel inadequate and thus, lose confidence in themselves.

Parents are protective of their children; they are concerned for their children’s well-being, especially in school and around their peers. They want their children to fit in, but they also want them to have high self-esteem. Worried parents can relax. For example, students may be anxious or apprehensive about swimming in PE class. However, learning to swim could be a potentially life-saving skill. It cannot be argued that a little embarrassment is worth it in order to learn a survival skill. Besides, swimming is also great exercise. If students actively partake in class activities, they will be fitter. If they are fitter, students will have more confidence and greater health. Thus, engaging physical education classes are a win-win situation.

Furthermore, the modern urge to be sedentary must be overcome in order to live healthier, longer lives. Stating it simply, “behavioral lifestyle changes and interventions must occur to counteract

the otherwise inevitable gains in weight that technology and affluence has provided us” (Pivarnik 27). Society, in general, has distaste for healthy lifestyles. The media rarely supports healthy living. People are made to believe it is unrealistic or too hard to get the proper amount of exercise. While exercising regularly is difficult, it is necessary for good health. If advertising were moderated, people would be less likely to purchase unhealthy products. The government should encourage physical activity and parents must also promote an active lifestyle because their children are likely to follow suit.

However, getting children off the couch or sidelines is not the only problem. The amount of exercise students receive is also an issue. Regulations, like attitudes, are too relaxed. It is no surprise that “a mere 36 percent of kids are currently meeting their recommended levels of activity each week” (Zinczenko viii). Noticeably, children are not placed in an environment of physical activity enough. Classes must meet on a daily basis for a decent amount of time. Furthermore, students should be actively exercising for a majority of the class. School administrators must monitor the classes and ensure stricter policies are being followed. With the right curriculum and adequate time, physical education classes can effectively reduce the prevalence of childhood obesity.

Great strides can be made in the area of urban planning too. As the population flockes to metro centers, now is a prime time to renovate cities into pedestrian friendly communities. If people are placed into a built environment that is conducive to exercise, they will likely exercise. This idea is expressed in the essay “Built Environments: Planning Cities to Encourage Physical Activity in Children and Adolescents” by Igor Vojnovic: “If policy analysts are to address concerns of sedentary lifestyles in the United States, urban environments will need to have basic pedestrian requirements incorporated into their physical structure” (124).

Encouraging students (and workers alike) to walk to school would add valuable time to burn calories and utilize muscles. With gas prices and pollution from automobiles on the rise, today is the

perfect time to begin integrating walking and biking. People need to be less concerned with having the latest, fastest, coolest car. They should be worried about safe streets and the public health. The “green movement” is growing and should be used to promote more active lifestyles. Healthy living would be greatly aided by a smarter, better designed environment.

Naturally, healthier American children will come at a cost. First, people must forgo their stubbornness and ignorance of this health issue. They must realize obesity is a major problem that needs to be solved as quickly as possible. Companies, such as video game and junk food manufacturers, could lose business. Thus, those companies will resist changes that benefit the health of children. However, companies can still prosper by adapting their products and the use of their products in order to promote more active lifestyles. The game controller needs to be swapped with a ball, and the couch swapped with a bicycle.



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Tiffany's Teeth

Among many of the buildings at DMACC, stands Building Number Nine. Building nine, although appearing the same as every other building at DMACC, contains a dental clinic for the public at one end. As well as a dental clinic, this building also holds opportunities for the young dental hygiene students. A young lady, age 25, mid-height with a medium build gives her assistance every Tuesday and Thursday at this clinic. She has been a hard working and compassionate student for several years now. Although she has been through many personal life-changing events recently, and she is feeling very anxious about her board exams in the spring, she still keeps her composure very well.

Board exams are tests the state requires, which must be passed in order to complete certain programs, further allowing a student a license to work. These tests can create a great deal of stress for a student. I realize all of these attributes of this woman I am watching because she is my sister, Tiffany Thorson. She allowed me to observe her working on a patient one afternoon, and I found out about my sister's many characteristics I had never noticed before.

Walking in the doors of the dental clinic, it appeared as any other dental clinic would. There were the typical flossing posters hanging on the wall with various Colgate, Crest, and other dental brands conveying their messages on personal hygiene. There were not any other people in the office area besides me. As a normal office appears, it was very clean and organized with outdated magazines lying

on a coffee table to my right and a TV showing the noon news. Soon, a familiar voice sounded my name and as I looked up at my sister. She greeted me wearing purple scrub pants and a white lab coat.

I studied the familiar individual standing in front of me. Usually she is wearing a t-shirt and jeans but, today she looked very professional and ready to do her work. As we walked into the work area of the clinic, I saw all of Tiffany's classmates. They were all wearing the same outfits, everyone looking just as professional as the next in their scrub uniforms and name tags. I noticed that the environment I had just entered was a busy one.

Everyone was running around as if they hadn't been able to sit for what seemed like hours. We approached a cubicle where Tiffany would be working and the space was small, like in a normal dental office. It had a sink, a computer, one of those huge chairs that move in many different angles, and of course, dental tools. I could see that she had recently finished up with a different patient by the remenance of cleaning supplies surrounding the area. The smell of alcohol and sanitizing solution, a very potent and cleanly smell, filled the small cubicle where Tiffany would soon be working on another patient.

I asked Tiffany, "Why are you cleaning everything and putting tape or plastic wrap over all of these surfaces?"

She replied, "We have to use p.p.e's (personal protective equipment) to keep ourselves and the patient from being exposed to any germs or other harmful bacteria."

With this in mind, her center aisle helper (another student that helps out when Tiffany might need supplies or other help) grabbed Tiffany her mask, gloves, and eyewear she would be using when examining her patient. All of this was done very quickly and professionally. The girls looked as if they had been doing this type of work for years. I watched as she carefully placed all of her dental tools on a

cart very professionally. I saw many types of tools being placed on the cart. Among them were shiny metal ones, rigid, pointy, and sharp ones; everyone one of them ready to serve a purpose in the mouth of a patient.

After the setup procedure was completed, Tiffany's patient arrived. She was in her mid 20's and a bigger woman. She had long brown hair and was wearing a sweat-pant outfit. Tiffany told me she had worked on this patient before, and the two chatted together and giggled as if they were lifelong friends. Tiffany was herself around the patient and that was a very pleasant atmosphere to be around, not only for me, but for the patient as well.

"Hi, welcome back," Tiffany said.

The patient smiled nicely. I'm glad I get to see you again," she said.

Tiffany made sure that it was okay that I was there observing. The patient agreed and Tiffany started her normal procedures.

She started out with a health history in which she just asked if anything had happened in her health lately that she might need to note. The patient did not have any recent health problems to note.

I noticed a specific statement that my sister is always asking her patients, "Are you still flossing once a day?"

Her patient replied, "Yes,"

And my sister, smiling, was very pleased. One of the main activities dental hygienists like people to do is to floss their teeth. According to education-portal.com, a dental hygienist is defined as: They remove deposits such as plaque and tartar from the teeth of patients. They also check a patient's gums for any signs of disease." Educational-portal.com also states that, "A dental hygienist is a licensed dental

assistant who works with a dentist and is trained in preventive dental care. Most hygienists are certified in administering anesthesia and help with teeth cleaning, root planning, sealants, scaling and x-rays (education-portal.com).”

I observed as a blue blood pressure cuff was put around the patient’s arm. As in any clinic, vitals must be taken before the examination continues. This particular patient was a bit on the obese side. I watched Tiffany’s expression change when she was the patient’s blood pressure review on the cuff. I could tell by the worried look on her face that she was not pleased with her patient’s blood pressure.

A normal blood pressure is 120/80, and this patient’s blood pressure was reading somewhere around 170/130. Being a student, Tiffany must have each procedure checked off by a teacher before a new task can be strated. Tiffany put her name on the board as soon as she completed her tasks, showing a professional and responsible attitude. She did not know if she would be able to gon on with the appointment because of the patient’s high blood pressure, but she did not give up. She continued to go on as she was taught, leaving no room for a patient to consider her skills unprofessional.

Dr. Marv, a retired dentist, in his mid 50’s showing gray and also showing signs of great experience in dentistry, came over to check Tiffany’s patients and the steps she had completed so far. When Tiffany stated that her patient’s blood pressure was high, Dr. Marv told her to try with a regular blood pressure cuff, as the one she was using was battery operated. I watched Tiffany’s face as she looked as if she might have trouble reading a non-battery operated blood pressure cuff. None-the-less, she still continued to do as she was told. She was committed to finding the most accurate blood pressure reading so that she could successfully get through an appointment for this patient. She strapped the cuff around her patient’s right arm and began to pump.

She replied, “It was hard for me to hear the results, it was very faint.”

Dr. Marv then told Tiffany's center aisle helper to give it a shot. She didn't appear to get a result either. Tiffany was worried, but never once let her frustration or emotion be portrayed in front of her patient. Dr. Marv told the patient that she would have to get her blood pressure checked by a physician before she could have her teeth examined at the school. The patient was very understanding and actually humorous about the matter, handling herself rather well, where as some people may have gotten upset that they had driven to the appointment for no reason.

The patient felt very comfortable, as if she could be herself around my sister. My sister does a great job of making her patients feel good in the setting of a dental appointment. Although I did not get to see the full extent of an appointment that day, I took a great deal with me about the dental hygiene profession and about my sister. I noticed that she is an extremely hard working individual who is very dedicated to her schooling and her desire to be a dental hygienist. I also found her to be very empathetic. She is always showing interest in her patients and their emotions. She is very kind and understanding in every task she does. She is under so much pressure with her board exams coming up, and I am proud that she can keep her composure in such a stressful time. Not only am I proud to say that she will soon be a successful dental hygienist, but I am also very proud she is my sister.





Outsourcing

Outsourcing is a term used to describe modern business practices in which American workers are exchanged for cheap foreign labor. Outsourcing is a problem that has originated from the birth of the Internet. Every day the world is becoming more interconnected. Information and ideas can be shared across borders and oceans with just a few key strokes. More manufacturers and businesses are outsourcing because it is now convenient and seemingly cost affective to do so via the Internet and other communication technologies. American businesses are exploiting educated workers in foreign countries by hiring them for only fractions of what American workers would make doing the same job.

Dan Neuendorf, the president of Modern Die Systems Inc., explains the cost difference between manufacturing in America and manufacturing in China: "One of our customers in Indiana asked us to give him a quote on some metal stamping dies. We quoted a price that was as low as we possibly could go and still make any profit. But they could get it for one-fifth of our price from Red China" (qtd. in Jasper 36). Bob Davis, the general manager, remembers saying, "I told the customer that there is no way that we could match that price, but that it would be unfair and immoral for me to ask free men to work for the same wages as slaves" (qtd. in Jasper 36). Manufacturing is more expensive in the U.S. for more reasons than just labor wages alone. Things like taxes, employee medical insurance, and labor unions drive costs up, which make it harder for companies to compete internationally (35).

International competition is not the only factor cutting into the American's ability to work. The steady hardship of Americans trying to find work, between hiring illegal immigrants and outsourcing jobs overseas, makes it easy to see why unemployment rates are so high. Jasper, a reporter for the *New American* magazine, expresses the problem by saying, "America's white collar work force is facing the same twin battering rams of imported cheap labor and exported production that have ravaged our country's blue collar work force for years. Millions of American jobs in basic resource industries . . . have gone to alien workers (both legal and illegal) here in this country, while millions more jobs have been outsourced to foreign lands" (35). Outsourcing and foreign competition also affect job creation rates. On the subject of job creation Piatak writes the following:

As shown by the February and the March [2004] job figures, the growth areas in our free-trade economy are government and areas subsidized by government, such as education and health services (which together accounted for 36,000 of the 46,000 jobs added in February), and areas insulated from foreign competition, such as retail trade, leisure and hospitality, and construction (which, together with government-related employment, accounted for over 70 percent of the job growth in March). Although the more robust March job figures are good news, this remains the slowest recovery in terms of job creation since the 1930's. (188)

Piatak then describes problems related with unemployment stating that "four million Americans have run through unemployment benefits without finding a job, and inflation-adjusted hourly wages have barely risen over the last year—even though the economy was growing during that entire time" (189).

Outsourcing affects unemployment, but it can also affect the U.S. (Gross Domestic Product) because the types of jobs being outsourced aren't always on the low end of the income spectrum.

Economist, Alan S. Blinder, illustrates this point by saying:

In some recent research, I estimated that 30 million to 40 million U.S. jobs are potentially offshorable. These include scientists, mathematicians and editors on the high end and telephone operators, clerks and typists on the low end. . . . It's going to be painful because our country offers such a poor social safety net to cushion the blow for displaced workers. Our unemployment insurance program is stingy by first world standards. American workers who lose their jobs often lose their health insurance and pension rights as well. And even though many displaced workers will have to change occupations—a difficult task for anyone—only a fortunate few will be offered opportunities for retraining. All this needs to change. (76)

Businesses outsourcing jobs on the higher end of the income spectrum can cause American students to choose different majors in order to grab less globally competitive job markets. Drezner describes how many white collar jobs are in jeopardy by stating that “the McKinsey Global Institute estimates that the volume of offshore outsourcing will increase 30 to 40 percents a year for the next five years. Forrester Research estimates that 3.3 million white-collar jobs will move overseas by 2015” (667).

Even some of the foreign employees who have benefited from outsourcing say they understand why Americans would be angry with the problem. Vidya Ramathas, a 24-year-old Indian call center agent who worked for an American Internet company in Bangalore, stated that “I would be mad too if somebody took away my job. . . . I love my job. It has brought me freedom. I moved out of my parents' home. I don't ask them for money anymore. I do what I want to. I don't have to ask for their permission. . . . In that sense, I am like an American” (qtd. in Yellin 158).

Some like Gregory Mankiw, the chairman of the President's Council of Economic Advisers, believe that outsourcing is good for the U.S. economy. He maintains that “outsourcing is just a new way of doing international trade. . . . but it's something that we should realize is probably a plus for the

economy in the long run” (qtd. in Dobbs 102). Although, as Dobbs points out, “there’s no empirical evidence to support that position. We do know that workers who have lost their jobs to overseas outsourcing are finding new jobs that pay only about 80 percent of their original wages. And we do know that there are tremendous costs to the government to provide unemployment benefits and retrain these laid off workers” (104). Outsourcing is the ball and chain that is dragging the U.S. economy deeper into the economic recession, but how does America convince businesses to put their money back into the hands of the American worker when it costs them so much?

The only way to stop American businesses from outsourcing is to improve the education system, convince politicians to stop the outsourcing, and create more jobs for the American worker by rebuilding a strong manufacturing base. The first step is to rebuild the education system, so that America’s youth can be more competitive in the global market. Buffington, a board member of the MBA program at the University of Denver, points out many of the problems with the education system stating that “it’s clear that today’s teacher is ill suited to drive world-class performance through his or her training and in class budgets. Not many schools have sufficient math, science, foreign-language, and geography programs to compete in this hypercompetitive world. . . . There aren’t bonuses for better student results, and lesson planning is so centralized that it cannot be anything other than unimaginative” (139).

According to Eric A. Hunushek, a professor at Stanford University, if America raised its performance in science to that of Western Europe within a decade, our Gross Domestic Product growth would be 4% higher by 2025, and 10% higher in thirty years” (qtd. in Buffington 140). Parents must be more involved with their children’s education. School lessons and teaching methods should encourage innovation and emphasize the importance of math, science, reading, and writing skills.

The next step is to convince politicians to create more mutually beneficial trade practices and to drop current trade contracts that are increasing the U.S. national debt. Dobbs explains how to compromise between free trade and protectionism by creating a “balanced trade, in which we negotiate trade agreements that are reciprocal in benefit—unlike the World Trade Organization or trade agreements like NAFTA. That experience shows that free trade is not working for the United States. When one side—namely, the United States—is carrying a half-trillion-dollar trade deficit, it’s clearly not benefiting us” (109). Dobbs also supports that since China, Japan, and the European Union all exercise obstructed trade practices and have trade surpluses, then the U.S. could make the same gains by using the same practices (109). Practicing a balanced free trade policy would restrict businesses from outsourcing jobs without sacrificing free trade.

The final step is to rebuild the American manufacturing base. Jeremy Leonard states that “a 2003 study . . . found that U.S. manufacturers had a 22.4% structural cost disadvantage compared to its nine largest trading partners. These high structural costs include the following: 1. High marginal corporate tax rates 2. Employee benefit costs 3. Tort litigation 4. Regulatory compliance costs (environmental, workplace, tax)” (qtd. in Buffington 160). Manufacturers are outsourcing jobs to compensate for high costs in the short run. Manufacturers do not realize that they are outsourcing the knowledge that could make the U.S. a leading manufacturer again. Buffington emphasizes this point by stating that “In many cases, these companies are actually outsourcing thinking by outsourcing manufacturing, and they don’t even understand. . . . the future of all of this is manufacturing. Manufacturing will take the next economic superpower into the lead, as it has done time after time in recorded history” (162).

Through education reform, trade policy reform, and creating a manufacture friendly national market place, the U.S. can vastly decrease business outsourcing. Simply put, businesses are outsourcing

because the American public education system isn't supplying proficient employees. Businesses are outsourcing because politicians have made it easy for them to reduce their costs by hiring cheap labor. Businesses are outsourcing because doing business in the U.S. has become too costly. By fixing these three causes the U.S. can cure itself of the outsourcing virus.

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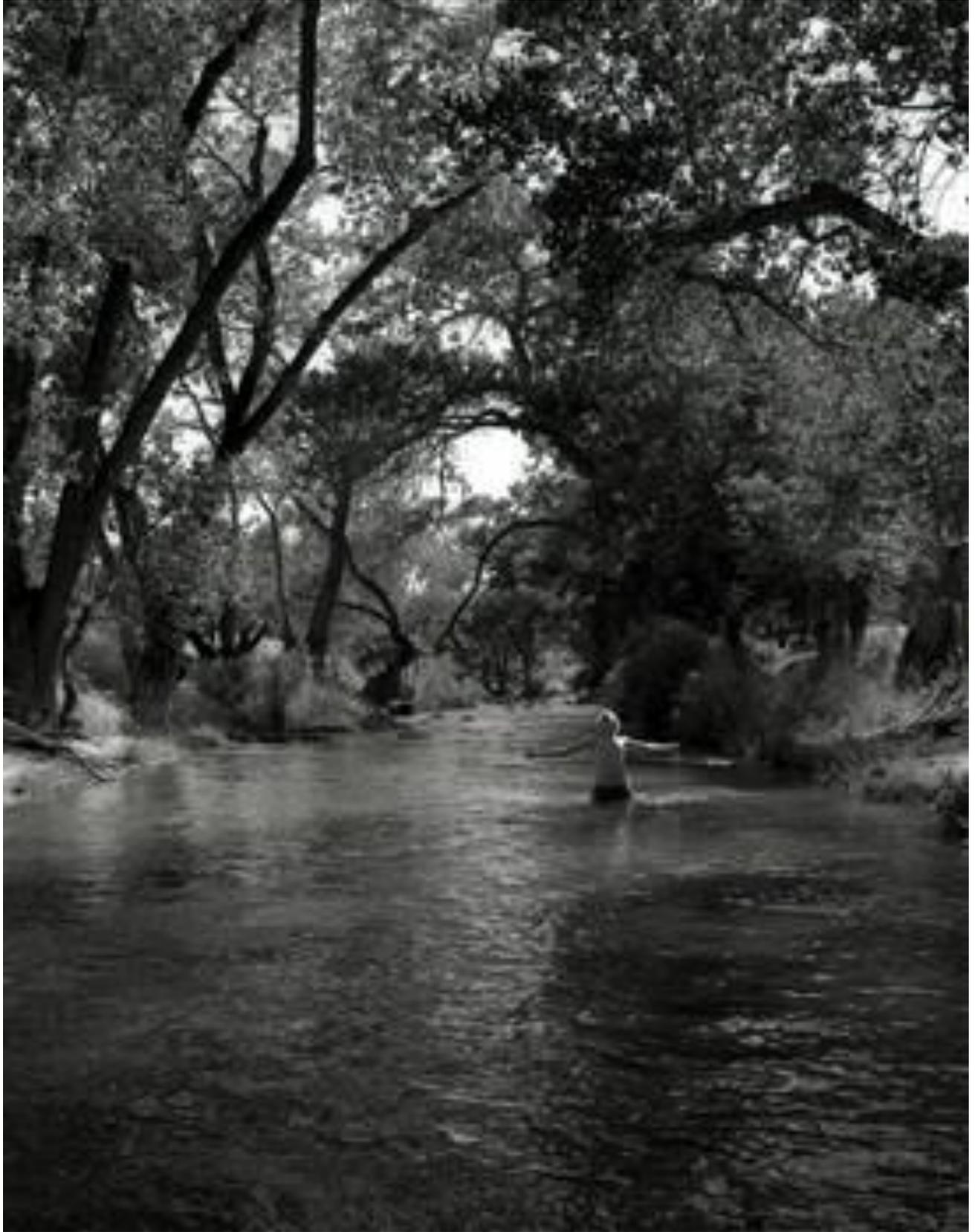
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Informative Essay

What Is, Is What Not?

On Sunday afternoon, September 27 around 12:00 pm, my friend Brad and I decided to check out the grand opening of the Pappajohn Sculpture Park of Des Moines. While doing some reading about the art sculpture on the way there, we discovered that it was the single largest gift that anyone has given Iowa. When we arrived on Tenth and Locust, we parked and walked a couple blocks to the park. We started talking and thinking of what this investment will bring to us. We wondered if it would attract people and what their responses to the pieces would be.

As we looked up, we instantly saw a 27-foot tall sculpture with no face, feet, or legs and filled with foot long letters that were randomly placed and painted white called the *Nomade*, made by Jaume Plensa. As we walked into the entrance of the sculpture, it reminded me of a jungle gym, from the interior curves of sculpture that made one want to slide down, to the possible footholds created by the spaces in the letters. At that very second, a little girl looked up to her father and asked, "Father can I climb it? Please!" That was the exact same thought I had too. As we moved on, we remained dazzled and astonished by the pure height and beauty that the *Nomade* sculpture brought to us.

The orderly crowd moved us out of the sculpture and onto the sidewalk. The sidewalks for some reason were placed far away from the sculptures, as if they didn't want us to be next to the sculptures. To be reassured this wasn't to be true, a nice tour guide in dressy pants and shirt with a

button that said “tour guide,” encouraged us to walk on the grass. As we walked towards a sculpture in the bright 70-degree weather, we were able to see the fine detail that it held.

We got up next to a sculpture named the *Pentagon*, made by Richard Serra. Confused, we looked at the *Pentagon's* rusted slabs of steel more closely to see if there was a pattern on the five pieces of steel. Nope, it was five pieces of steel welded together. With the impression of utter disbelief that someone would pay so much money for that sculpture, a person passed by and commented something that we had been thinking, “I could have made that in my garage!” However, I learned that Richard Serra meant for the sculpture to be admired from above, to see the true beauty in his artwork, and not from the ground.

As we moved on, we came across a white plastered tree with every groove, notch, stem, branch, and scar, done with precise detail. As we were gazing at the tree, a female tour guide in her mid-fifties came up to us and asked if we would like to complete a little quiz, and we answered yes. The quiz contained black and white pictures that were to be matched with the description of each sculpture on the paper. In return, we would get a free button with a picture of a sculpture of our liking. Four questions, no problem, but we had to ask why someone would spend such precision and accuracy to cast a split tree that looked as though it was ready to be cut down. She responded that it was a cast of the oldest living tree in the world. The tree is a 2,000-year-old olive tree and is located in Italy. Some might say it has character with its sad looking state.

Looking at the quiz and wanting to complete it, we had to move across the park quickly to ensure that we could get a button showing a picture of a sculpture, since the line was filling up with eager visitors: fathers, mothers, and business people, all to receive a button. In order to cut across the park, we had to climb past these rolling hills that had a cement wall, located on the other side of the hill. Ms. Torgoman told me, who was told by Jeff Fleming, director of the art center, that the hills are meant

to represent the rolling hills in Iowa. The hills separated the art into categories too, which was helpful to keep track of what type of artwork we were looking at.

As we were walking across the squishy grass, I noticed two sculptures made out of random pieces of wood, placed masterfully into the shape of horse. As we reached the sculptures, we found it was actually made out of driftwood cast into iron. The artist, Deborah Butterfield, assembled the *Juno and Ancient Forest*, then disassembled the driftwood and made a cast and formed it into bronze and reassembled the pieces and painted the metal with patina paint. This paint gave the wood a realistic look. The artist didn't use the driftwood, because of the wood could rot and fall apart, leading to major repair problems. The casted metal looked remarkably realistic, something worth spending money on.

My friend Brad didn't believe the tour guide that the horse were not made out of wood, so to be sure, he leaned over to touch the horse. As my friend did this, the tour guide yelled, "Sir, stop where you are and pull your arm back! Do not touch the sculpture!" He had a disgruntled look about having to say this about a hundred times. His red v-neck shirt matched his face at that moment. The man pointed out the security on the small driftwood horse. The security had: lasers, camera, sensors, and a speaker to tell viewers to back up, showing how important and expensive these sculptures are. The *Des Moines Register* stated that five years worth of security valued at \$300,000 for 4.4 acres, has been donated by Nationwide Mutual Insurance Company .

We finally got back onto the sidewalk and walked to the white tall tents that had been set up. The packed tent was filled with people and contained long brown tables to serve hundreds of guest's food, but none was seen. It was hard to move past some of the people that were blocking the way. As visitors were talking casually, the tents blocked the view of some of the art sculptures.

When we walked in, we noticed a sound coming from the back end of the tent. It was the sound of beating drums and it turned out to be a drum line of very young adult African males and females. The

drum line was dressed in blue and white outfits, with women wearing white gloves and dancing ecstatically to the music, waving their hands as they passed. One kid in the drum line stood out as he surprised people. He looked to be only ten and was throwing his drumstick into the air and playing his solo with such ease.

As we passed by we went to view a piece that is purely abstract. It had the name *Reclining Figure*, by Willem de Kooning. People didn't seem to know what it was because they were throwing money into some of the curves of black, dark steel that collected water as if it were a wishing well. The piece had so many twists and turns that it looked like it was from outer space, landing here on the ground

We made our way around to the end of the park. There was no one there, only big pieces of red painted steel welded and riveted together, named "T8" by Marc di Suvero. I have to say, that it took another trip to fully understand this piece, if then. The artist Marc di Suvero was a welder who had fallen down an elevator shaft and broken his back. While staying in the hospital, he had to rebuild all of his skills, including welding.

When he got back on his feet, he decided to build sculptures. From this story, I began to see his ideas, which were to dream big with the size of the 24-foot piece of steel. He also wanted us to be creative in the sense of the odd angles of the steel, and to never give up, shown by the pure strength in the art. The sculpture also shows the growth of the city by the sculpture sitting as the frame of the Des Moines city. It nicely sat in front of the construction of a new building and the skyscrapers of Des Moines.

The crowd was leaving the park around 3:00 pm, and the crowd gave off an impression they found inspiration. The feeling of encouragement in the meaning of Iowa's largest gift would be here in the futures to come. The sculptures still pose many mysteries. The sculpture park will never be finished

expanding, but also expanding the minds of others. It offers a short, inexpensive way to enjoy a weekend for the young and old. Sculptures are to be questioned, but never answered; many ideas are to be disputed, but never solved; but most importantly, these conflicts will keep bringing us back.

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Faith in Hitler or Faith in God?

“I have more faith in Hitler than in anyone else. He alone has kept his promises, to the Jewish people.” (Wiesel 81). Can a person compare a man to God, or is God too great an entity that a person cannot make judgment on the decisions God makes? Elie Wiesel is a boy who suffered the trauma of enduring life at a concentration camps during the end of the Holocaust. Wiesel tells his story in the book *Night*. Throughout the book *Night* Wiesel faces a battle with his belief in God. The theme of the loss of faith in God is developed by using the Jewish calendar, references to Jewish culture and religious tradition, and the metaphor of night.

Wiesel’s loss of faith in God is depicted by events prevalent in the Jewish calendar. First, there is the event of Passover that occurred in the story. “The Bible commands us to rejoice during the eight days of celebration, but our hearts were not in it.” (Wiesel 10). During the celebration of Passover, Wiesel struggles with having a reason to celebrate. Instead of rejoicing, Wiesel feels he had to fake his happiness for the Jewish holiday.

Passover is meant to be a time for Jews to celebrate their liberation from bondage in Egypt (Patai, “Passover”). Instead of feeling a sense of liberation, Wiesel starts to feel as if he were being taken back into bondage. In addition, on the second and seventh days of Passover, work is forbidden (Patai, “Passover”). The seventh day of Passover is when the Germans arrested the Jewish leaders in

Wiesel's community (Wiesel 10). Wiesel started to question his faith in God as a result of the unfilled and interrupted celebration of Passover. The Germans had taken advantage of the Jews in their time of celebration and made them work on their day off.

Another event that occurs in the story is Shavuot, which is a Jewish holiday that celebrates the laws that were given on Mt. Sinai and is celebrated in the form of a feast ('Shavuot'). "What was the meaning of such a long session?" (Wiesel13). In the same manner the Jews wait for Moses' return from Mt. Sinai, where Moses was given the laws of from God, Wiesel waited for the news his father would bring about what would happen to their people ("Shavuot"). As the people waited for Moses to return from Mt. Sinai, they began to lose their faith and thought that Moses would not return.

As Wiesel waited for his father to return, he began to feel that God was no longer on his side and would not be protecting him from the power of the Nazis. The waiting took place two weeks before Shavuot. The waiting feeling anticipated by Wiesel is the same that the Jews waiting for Moses to return went through; both received news that they did not want to hear and both tested their faith in God. When his father returned, Wiesel wanted to hear a positive message from his father. Instead, the news Wiesel received devastated him even further and further diminished his faith in God.

Next, the Jewish New Year, Rosh Hashanah is a time to recognize God's creation is continuous and that God will triumph over evil ("Rosh Hashanah"). Wiesel feels that God has abandoned him and begins to question God's intentions. "I was the accuser, God the accused" (Wiesel 68). Wiesel loses his faith in God. He no longer believes that God will triumph over evil. Instead, Wiesel believes that God is evil and begins to accuse him of wrongdoings. Wiesel does not understand how God could turn his back on the Jews and keep silent and continue to let them be tortured in concentration camps.

Yom Kippur is another event depicted in this story taken from the Jewish calendar. Wiesel demonstrates his loss of faith in god by refusing to fast during Yom Kippur. "As I swallowed my ration of

soup, I turned that act into a symbol of rebellion, of protest against Him” (Wiesel 69). Yom Kippur is a time that Jews are supposed to fast and repent their misdeeds in order to receive God’s forgiveness for the New Year (Patai, “Yom Kippur”). Wiesel believes that God has performed misdeeds and the Jews are suffering from God’s misdeeds. Wiesel is angry and feels as though he is punishing god by eating his meal.

In addition to the Jewish calendar, Jewish culture and religious traditions are questioned by Wiesel, which also suggest his loss of faith in God. First, Wiesel is an Hasidic Jew. “By day I studied Talmud and by night I would run to the synagogue to weep over the destruction of the Temple” (Wiesel 3). Wiesel’s faith in God in the beginning of the story is strong. An Hasidic Jew is an individual who believes God is everywhere and involved in everything (“Judaism”). As the story progresses, Wiesel distances himself from his religious studies. Wiesel’s loss of enthusiasm for studying the Talmud and engaging in the prayer demonstrates his loss of faith in God. Wiesel feels God is not listening and feels there is no longer a reason to practice his religion in the way he did before the Nazis took over.

Another religious tradition that further leads to Wiesel’s loss of faith in God is the Sabbath. “Saturday, the day of rest, was the day chosen for our expulsion” (Wiesel 21). According to Jewish religion, Saturday or the Sabbath is a day of rest where working is forbidden and prayer is mandatory (“Judaism”). Wiesel follows orders given by the Nazis on his day of rest, instead of following the orders of God in which he was to rest and pray. Wiesel has more faith in what the Nazi commanders would do to him than in his belief in God.

Wiesel’s faith in god further diminishes through the destruction of the Synagogue, which is the traditional Jewish house of worship. Wiesel is forced to spend Saturday at the Synagogue before being shipped off in a cattle car (Wiesel 22). The Synagogue resembled a train station depot, rather than a place of worship (Wiesel 22). Instead of praying throughout his day at the Synagogue, Wiesel is forced

to see that his place of worship was no longer a place of worship. Instead, the Synagogue had become a place to wait for departure (Wiesel 22). The Synagogue was being destroyed before Wiesel's eyes, and God did nothing about it.

Kaddish, a prayer that is spoken at the burial of a close relative, further demonstrates Wiesel's loss of faith in God ("Kaddish"). "And three days after he left, we forgot to say Kaddish" (Wiesel 77). Wiesel becomes more focused on his own well being than saying the prayer for a man who was sent to the incinerator, a man whom he had promised he would pray for.

However, Wiesel's faith in God has diminished, and he no longer believes that praying will do any good. "No one recited Kaddish over them. Sons abandoned the remains of their fathers without a tear" (Wiesel 92). Even Wiesel does not stop and say a prayer for all of the abandoned bodies; he just keeps marching on following the orders of the Nazi commanders. Wiesel does not believe God is going to help the men who have died or the living who remained.

And finally, the metaphor of night also encompasses the feelings Wiesel has towards God and why he loses his faith in God. An image of a dark sky that is burning with flames is one way that is used to depict the image of night. "The stars were but sparks of the immense conflagration that was consuming us" (Wiesel 21). Wiesel feels that he has lost power and that God is not listening to his cries for help. Instead, the Nazis have the power and their power is stronger than the powers of God. Wiesel feels overwhelmed and consumed by the powers of the Nazis.

Another image of night is depicted in the emptiness of Wiesel's soul. "The days resembled nights, and the nights left in our souls the dregs of their darkness" (Wiesel 100). Wiesel feels miserable and unwanted by God. Wiesel's soul is empty and God is gone. Silence is another way that night is described. "Never shall I forget the nocturnal silence that deprived me for all eternity of the desire to live" (Wiesel 34). Wiesel feels abandoned by God. Wiesel wants God to do something other than

remain silent, but God does nothing, and Wiesel loses the desire to live because he no longer has faith that God will pull through and protect him.

Also, night is described as smoke. “Never shall I forget the small faces of the children whose bodies I saw transformed into smoke under a silent sky” (Wiesel 34). The smoke is the people who were tortured and burned to death at the camps. Wiesel does not understand how God can turn his back on the smoke that is filled with death, including the death of innocent children. Wiesel loses his faith in God and believes God has give up on Jews.

Jewish holidays, Jewish culture and religious tradition, and the metaphor of night lead Wiesel to question his faith in God. The book *Night* by Elie Wiesel follows Wiesel through his struggle with faith in God. Wiesel makes the mistake of judging God as equal to man. He loses faith and fails to realize that God is a greater entity than man and can not be judged by man. God may have the ability to stop tragedies from occurring, but God did not cause the Holocaust. Man caused the Holocaust.

Throughout the story, Wiesel has more faith in Hitler than in God. Wiesel believes that Hitler follows through on his promises, whereas God remains silent and does not come to his rescue. As further readings written by Wiesel indicate, Wiesel has regained his faith in God and no longer judges God as an entity equal to man. Wiesel realizes his flaws in judging god and regains his faith.



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Public Preschool in Iowa

The No Child Left Behind Act has changed kindergarten. Prior to No Child Left Behind, kindergarten curriculum allowed kindergarteners to learn primarily through play. However, days once spent exploring and learning through play have been replaced with kindergarteners being required to sit in their chairs completing worksheets and busy work. Sharna Olfam, author of All Work and No Play...How Education Reforms are Harming Our Preschoolers, describes the change in kindergarten by stating, "The first-grade curriculum has become entrenched in the kindergarten" (26). No Child Left Behind has drastically altered kindergarten and the expectations of kindergarteners as well.

Along with the new kindergarten curriculum, No Child Left Behind introduced entrance exams demanding skills, knowledge, and a maturity level, which thirty years ago were learned during the kindergarten year. When children do not do well on the entrance exams, the children's parents are highly discouraged to enroll their children in kindergarten. There are other options which have been made available, such as optional kindergarten, a condensed version of kindergarten, or extra-year classes. However, from a parent's perspective, and backed by the National Association of Early Childhood Specialists, "children do not benefit from retention or delayed entry or extra-year classes.

The case has been made that children are placed in double jeopardy when they are denied, on highly questionable premises, the same educational opportunities as their peers" (United States 12).

Children who are not allowed to enter kindergarten with their peers suffer from guilt and lowered self-esteem. The first experience with school causing negative emotions and a reduced level of self-esteem is not healthy, advantageous, nor fair to the children being denied entrance to kindergarten. Children beginning their education with scathed self-esteem are an inexcusable problem, which if left ignored would be disastrous to the future.

An obvious solution to the problem the new kindergarten curriculum is causing would be to have future kindergarten students attend preschool. Unfortunately, the solution is not that simple. There are three different income classes which need to be considered: those who would be able to pay for preschool privately, those whose low incomes would qualify their preschoolers for Head Start, and those who are in between the two income levels.

The families which fall in between the two income levels do not qualify for Head Start because their incomes are too high; however, their incomes may be too high by only \$20 per month to qualify for Head Start. Therefore, their children are not offered the opportunity to attend preschool and be prepared for the kindergarten entrance exams. The children who are not afforded the preschool education are left vulnerable to being denied the entrance to kindergarten with their peers, and a new group of children beginning their educational careers have been negatively affected.

The true solution to the problem the new kindergarten curriculum is causing is public preschool. All children would be granted the opportunity to attend preschool, regardless of income, with public preschool. In What Children Need, author Jane Waldfogel shares the following: "A number of experts in the United States have called for universal preschool or prekindergarten for three- and four-year-olds, as a way to ensure that children receive preschool of higher quality and more uniform quality prior to entering kindergarten at age five" (114). In the article "Elementary Principals Go to School to Learn

About Pre-K Practices,” Linda Jacobson claims, “Almost 40 states now operate public pre-K programs” (1). Unfortunately, for Iowa’s children, Iowa is not one of the forty.

Public preschool is not a program where half of the students are being funded through Head Start and the other half are private pay; it is a program where each child is able to attend without the monthly tuition fee. Making preschool available to all children is extremely beneficial for everyone. With public preschool, all children would be granted the same preschool opportunity as their peers, and hence, the same opportunity to enter their educational careers in a positive manner. Public preschool would foster positive self-esteem in regards to schooling once entering kindergarten because all children would have equal experiences in a classroom environment and would have the opportunity to develop the skills necessary to succeed in kindergarten.

Iowa can not afford to continue to ignore the need for public preschool. Linda Jacobson, author of “State-Financed Pre-K Shows Positive Effects, New Research Says” states:

Children in state-financed prekindergarten programs make learning gains through the year and continue to show academic growth in kindergarten, concludes research presented here this month at the annual convention of the National Association for the Education of Young Children. Researchers from three universities have been studying the structure and child outcomes of public pre-K programs in six states: Georgia, Illinois, Kentucky, Ohio, and parts of California and New York. By looking at test-score results by family-income level, they’ve found that nonpoor children in state-financed pre-K programs perform at roughly the national average, while poor children start out scoring below those averages but then bring their scores close to those of children from higher-income families. (1)

According to the author of “The Big Picture,” James E. Ryan, “access to publicly funded preschool looms as the next big issue in education law and policy” (723). It is time Iowa took public preschool seriously. The studies prove that public preschool is working. In “The State of Preschool

2008,” Christine A. Samuels makes the following statement: “The 2007-08 school year saw expansion in state-funded preschool programs. . . . From 2006-07 to 2007-08, enrollment increased by more than 108,000 children. More than 1.1 million children attended state-funded preschools in 2007-08, and 33 of 38 states reported growth in their preschool enrollments” (1). With statistics such as those shared by Samuels, how can Iowa deny children and their families the equal opportunity to attend public preschool?

With many school districts already offering a preschool program, it would not be as challenging to implement as opponents may believe. The biggest challenge would be the financial aspect. Christina A. Samuels, author of “Stimulus Providing Big Funding Boost for Early Childhood” writes, “he [President Obama] made another nod toward the importance of early-childhood programs in his Feb. 24 address to Congress. ‘Already, we have made an historic investment in education through the economic-recovery plan,’ the president said. ‘We have dramatically expanded early-childhood education and will continue to improve its quality” (1).

With President Obama’s support for early-childhood programs and the recent \$787 billion economic-recovery plan, finding the money for public preschool is feasible. Samuels quotes Superintendent Jerry D. Weast when she argues that the fear of funds drying up can not deter Iowa “from doing the right things for children” (2). Children are Iowa’s future. Children in Iowa deserve this opportunity. Tax payers in Iowa who do not have children would still benefit from the possible increase in taxes to aid in funding public preschool.

There is also the concern that public preschool would be mandatory. There are parents who have chosen to stay home with their children during the younger years and do not want their children to attend school until kindergarten. This group of parents believes that their children should be taught pre-school skills within their homes. What these parents need to remember is that there are many

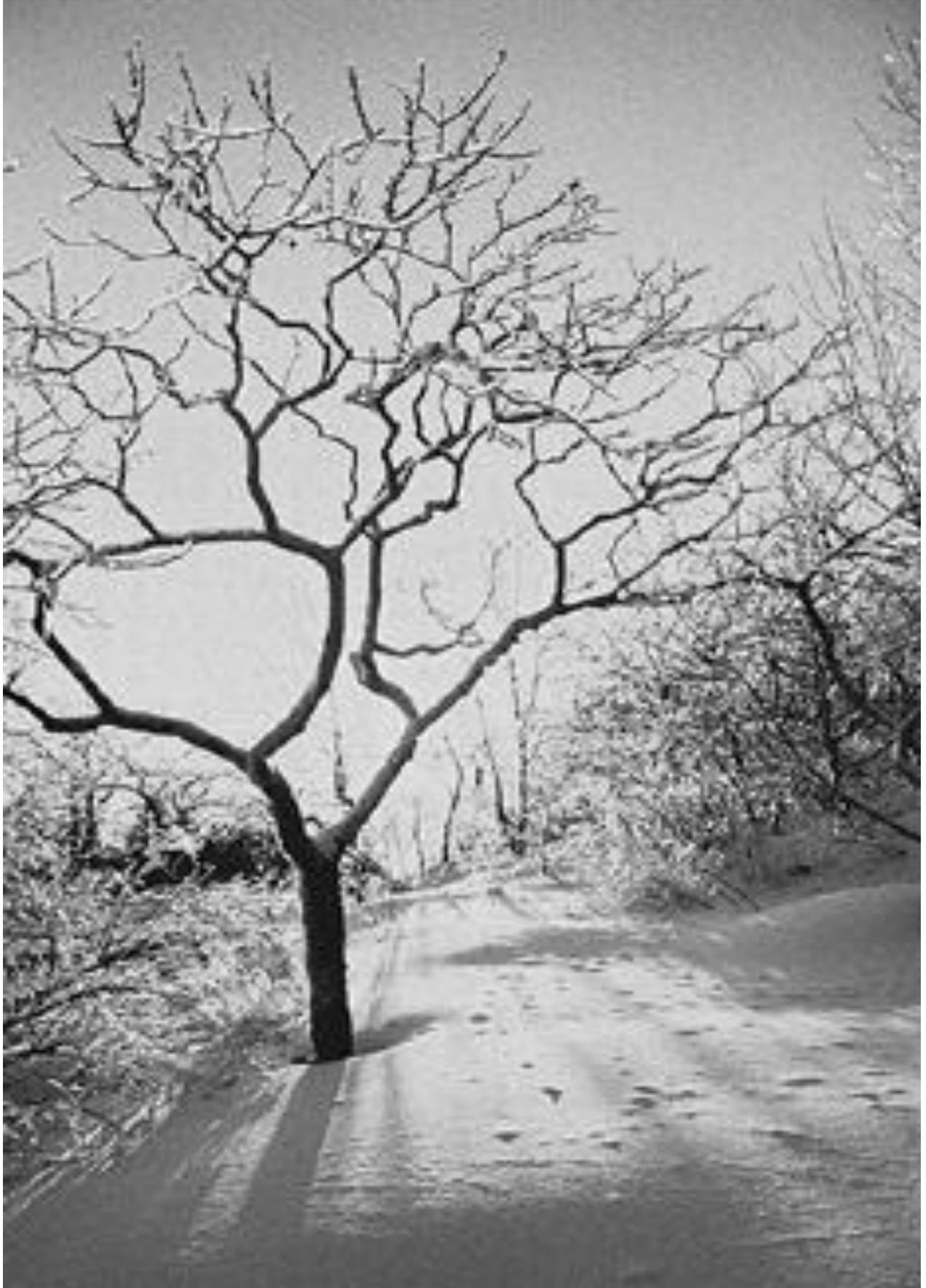
children, of various ages, who are home schooled. If they want to home school their children for preschool, it is an option available to them. As of now, the states offering public preschool offer it at a non-mandatory level. By keeping the same non-mandatory policy, Iowa could model the states which have successfully moved forward with public preschool.

The government decided it needed to play a more active role in policing public schools and presented America with No Child Left Behind. Public schools are now given a more aggressive curriculum than they followed before, courtesy of No Child Left Behind. If the government is going to place this type of aggressive curriculum into kindergarten classes, then they need to step up to the plate and ensure all children have the opportunity to pass the entrance exam and be prepared to succeed with this curriculum. Public preschool is working in forty states. It is time for Iowa to make this next big issue a positive issue for Iowa's children by adding one more state to that roster.



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Conflicts We Face in Life

In life we all face conflict on a daily basis. The conflict can be internal or external. We can acquire conflict from other human beings, the stress of a career, and also just everyday life. Everyone faces conflicts; it is the way we cope, forgive, and deal with problems that define our character. There are three different types of conflict.

One form of conflict we face daily is an internal conflict dealing with our emotions. We as human beings naturally doubt ourselves. When we walk out of doors every morning, we face the challenges of bills, money, grades, and careers among many other things. It is not how we face these conflicts, but how we cope with them. Some people may break down and become emotionally drained. If you learn to prioritize your thoughts and idea, life will come together much easier.

The second form of conflict that we often see is external conflict dealing with the outside appearance. In relationships, the way our partner behaves towards us can be very stressful and take a toll on our bodies, causing weight to fluctuate, or increase poor habits as in drinking, smoking, and drugs. Conflicts can also result in physical abuse, which is no way to live. Some people may look at external conflict as being easier to deal with than the internal. Although the bruises and pain are on the outside, it doesn't make the healing process any easier on the mind.

Throughout our lives we meet people who do not have our best interest at heart. The final form of conflict would be with others. They can make you sad; they can make you happy; they can even make you feel offended, and they can make you feel inferior. We all judge situations and people whether we do it unknowingly or not. This can cause conflict with people we do not even know. If we were to see two people talking amongst themselves and they burst out with laughter, we might automatically assume they were talking about us. This can be embarrassing if you try to resolve a problem that was never even there.

Throughout life it is inevitable that we will come into many conflicts. Whether it is internal, external, or conflicts with others, it is how we resolve the conflict that will define us as individuals. One lesson in life that has been taught to us since we were young is we cannot sweat the small stuff. Once we overcome one issue there will always be another. When one door closes, another one always opens. So be strong and hold your head high.



One Soldier's Story

On January 3, 2008, I received a call that would change my whole life. At the time I was working as a billiard table technician at a small retailer in Ames, Iowa, not really sure where I was going in life or if I had the guts to get there. I was recently engaged to my fiancée Christina, and we had moved in together in August the previous year. I was worried about marriage and had the “cold feet” I had heard about. When my platoon sergeant called me, I thought it was a routine call just giving me the information for our upcoming drill weekend. I was wrong.

He said, “Specialist Dalaba, I need you to report to the Armory at 1800 hours to receive classified information; this is a Raging Bull Message.”

Hearing those words made my heart skip a beat and I knew what they meant. I was going to war. I didn't know if I should call Christina and tell her or wait to find out more details, but I called her anyway. When she picked up the phone she instantly knew something was wrong with me. I told her my platoon sergeant had called and I had to go to Boone right away. I'll never forget the tone in her voice when she said, “You're going to Iraq, huh?” I told her I wasn't sure yet and not to get worried until I got more information.

When I got to the Armory, a few of the guys were there milling around and everyone seemed in good spirits. Deployments were nothing new to our unit. In fact, it was the third deployment in seven

years. Many of the guys knew the routine and were looking to mentor us younger soldiers through the process. Sergeant First Class John Shannon was the one to break the news to us. He said, "Boys it's happened again! The Iowa Guard has another opportunity to make itself known in the combat theater. We're going to Iraq this time. More information will be put out when we have it, but all we know for now is we're going sometime in May. If you have any questions, I'll be in my office."

My stomach was doing flip flops and I didn't know if I should be happy or sad. One of my best friends and mentors Gary Wierson approached me and asked, "You going to be alright kid? This isn't a big deal for us. I couldn't see going to war with a better bunch of guys. You will be alright." His kind words made me feel better, but I still had the task of telling my fiancée.

The drive home to Ames felt like an eternity. I could only imagine the look on Christina's face when I told her. When I walked inside our apartment, she was waiting on the couch, already almost in tears. I told her she was right and we were going to Iraq. Immediately, she began crying harder than I had ever seen anyone cry before in my life. I held her tight and told her everything would be okay. I stole Gary's line and said I couldn't see going to war with a better bunch of guys.

I guess my calm attitude and tone of voice helped things as she started to slow her crying. I told her to look on the bright side and think of all the money we would make and how much it would help in the long run. The hardest part of our conversation that night was when she asked me if I still wanted to get married. Our wedding was planned for September that year. I didn't know if I wanted to get married and have to worry about her being faithful while I was gone, or the fact that if I died, I would be leaving her a widow, but I knew I loved her and that if I were going to risk my life in a warzone, I would want to have her support every step of the way.

The months leading up to the deployment flew by. It seemed like every week was a minute and every month was a day. We tried to keep the deployment out of our heads but everyday something had

to remind us. Some days it would seem as if Christina were drifting away from me, slowly trying to separate to ease the pain of me leaving. I tried to keep all leisure activities lively and fun, but it seemed even movies we used to enjoy brought up thoughts of death or cheating spouses. I was extremely worried about some other guy stepping in and filling my role in her life while I was away. One day Christina sat me down and explained that nothing was going to happen and I was worrying for nothing. It helped to see the look in her eyes while she spoke and I could tell she was telling the truth.

Just a few days after our wedding I was headed down to Camp Dodge in Johnston, Iowa, for our home station training before we left for pre-mobilization training. The month spent at Camp Dodge was to get us used to being away from family and friends and to start getting us in the mindset of being deployed. We went through countless IED (improvised explosive device) training lanes and building clearing missions. I was also chosen to attend Combat Lifesaver School to learn battlefield first aid and to evacuate a casualty. My superiors saw a leader in me and I didn't know if I were ready to step up to the challenge. When they pinned sergeant rank on my chest, I knew I didn't have a choice. I was now going to be one of the leaders responsible for bringing someone's kid, wife, husband or friend home from war.

After our month at Camp Dodge, we had a community send off in Boone. My last few minutes with my wife and family were very difficult. My wife's tears were salty as I kissed her cheek. My father had a look of pride on his face. I had never seen him look so proud. I was his second son to go to Iraq; my brother had gone there in 1991 during the first Gulf War. When I gave my final hug to my father before I left, he started to cry and said, "You just come home safe. I'm proud of you, son. Look at that beautiful woman waiting for you. Look at all these people here supporting you. Look at all these people that are depending on you to get their loved ones home. You just come home safe."

As my father and I had one more handshake he raised his hand to his brow and gave me a crisp salute. I returned it with tears rolling down my cheeks. I gave my wife one final hug and a kiss that seemed to last forever. I didn't want to let go of her. I knew soon my nose would long for even a brief smell of her perfume and my skin would miss her touch. My commander yelled for us to board the bus for the next leg of our journey, and just like that we were gone.

Ft. Sill, Oklahoma, was the site of our pre-mobilization training. With 100 degree plus temperatures and lots of sand, there was no better place to prepare for Iraq. We would go through battle scenarios for hours and watch countless training films to get the battle drills burned into our memory. Everything we did had a purpose to get us ready for war. Our training missions also included a three day bivouac in the middle of a village set up to be like an Iraqi town. There were "locals" who were actors hired to assault our camp and plant simulated bombs on our patrol route.

This exercise gave me an eye opening view of what war was really going to be like. Little things such as a wire on a roadside or a pothole could kill me. Incoming mortars could land anywhere and kill me. Seemingly meaningless things I never thought to look for before began to stand out to me as potential threats. I could tell the training was working and I was ready to go. One last bus ride on American soil led us to the Lawton International Airport where an enormous Boeing DC-10 aircraft waited to take us overseas.

We landed in Kuwait in the middle of the night. A sandstorm greeted us as we exited the plane. The hot wind and sand felt like a hairdryer being held directly in front of my face. I loaded my gear into a bus and we quickly left for shelter from the storm. Immediately I could tell that combat driving was far different than back home. The road from Kuwait City International Airport was packed with local drivers that quickly pulled to the side of the road when our fully armed escorts approached them. We approached a small armored gate and were quickly shuttled inside to what looked like a city of tents.

Inside the tent, the wind roared and even though we were inside the sand was everywhere. Looking around that tent, I could see the difference in the guys who had been here before. They seemed calm and at peace, some even played cards or caught a nap. I followed their example and settled in for some sleep. The time flew by in Kuwait and before I knew it, I was on a plane headed to Balad, Iraq.

Balad was much different than I thought it was going to be. Expecting to get shot at immediately or have incoming mortar attacks, I exited the plane clutching my rifle and wearing my body armor. To my surprise, people were running and riding their bikes on base just like a normal American city. I quickly settled into my room and made my way to make a phone call to my wife to let her know I had made it to Iraq. As I was on the phone with her, I had my first experience with a mortar attack.

We were having a casual conversation about how things were and life back at home when a voice over the loudspeaker boomed, "INCOMING INCOMING INCOMING RED ALERT! PROCEED TO NEAREST BUNKER IMMEDIATELY!" I was terrified and I hung up the phone, grabbed my rifle and ran to the bunker outside the phone center. I heard a loud BOOM and knew the mortar had landed just a few hundred feet from me. After they sounded the all clear, I called my wife back and told her I loved her, and I meant it more than ever before.

The next year went by so fast it's almost a blur now. I found ways to keep myself occupied during my off duty hours. I went to the gym or the pool and volunteered at the Air Force Theater Hospital, where I talked to wounded soldiers about their experience and helped some really great guys make it through some tough times. I learned that even when I am down and think all is lost, there is always something worth fighting for. One soldier who had lost a leg in an IED explosion told me of his daughter and how she was 8 years old; this was his third deployment to Iraq and he felt bad for missing so much of his daughter's life. He was excited though, because he was going home to stay and would be there for his daughter from now on. I also interacted with local Iraqis and heard stories from

them about Saddam era Iraq. Hearing their stories made me feel good inside because I knew we were there to help.

Helping in the hospital and talking to my fellow soldiers helped me become a better communicator. Being apart from my wife also helped us progress in our marriage, even though I was deployed. We learned never to hang up the phone when one of us was angry. Talking through problems made our marriage very strong. I often found myself talking to other soldiers in my unit and helping them through tough times. Marital problems or financial issues were often the source of the majority of stress. Talking with them made me realize that life is always going to throw me curve balls. It's how you handle these situations that make me a better man.

The Warrior Ethos are core values every soldier should possess.

"I will never quit."

"I will never accept defeat."

"I will never leave a fallen comrade"

Having lived these words overseas, they ring true to me every day of my life. Helping others through their issues made me realize there is always a way to fix a problem I might have. It might involve a little give and take with my spouse; or having the personal courage to drive on in the face of adversity. However, having the skills I learned while deployed will forever help me be successful in my own life when returning home.





Insomnia

Night throws its light-strangling cloak of darkness upon a small city, but there is still a stirring throughout the town. A business man churns in his bed attempting to vanquish his thoughts of the approaching day. A housewife runs endlessly on a treadmill attempting to exhaust herself, so she can get some sleep. The reading lamp in a college student's room pushes back the darkness as he crams for an upcoming final exam that he is worrying about so much he can't sleep. A young child awakens after a few hours of sleep, and to his parents despair, he is wide awake and unable to sleep anymore.

If you have ever had any of these experiences, you are not alone. "The National Sleep Foundation poll from 2003 found that forty-eight percent of Americans surveyed reported having one or more symptoms of insomnia at least a few nights per week" (Catalona viii). Due to this, insomnia is a well known sleep disorder. Insomnia is a debilitating disorder that has three distinct types: transient, short-term, and chronic. What is insomnia, what can happen if you're sleep deprived for long periods of time, and what can be done to stop insomnia from happening?

In order for us to understand the problems that lack of sleep can cause, we need to understand exactly what insomnia is. Insomnia is defined as difficulty of initiating and maintaining sleep (Szuba, et al. 9). Defined like this, insomnia would include an extremely large category of sleep disorders, so it would make sense to split this all encompassing category into smaller categories. "The three categories of Insomnia are transient insomnia (which lasts for several nights), short-term insomnia (lasting for up to three weeks), and chronic insomnia" (Reite, Ruddy, and Nagel 47).

We all have experienced days where we have only slept for three or four hours, but what would happen if we stayed awake for a few days, a week, or a month? Most people have stayed up for at least a day once in their life. On these occasions, we felt like we had no energy, occasionally nodded off, and sometimes would develop a headache. After a full night's rest, we return to normal and show no lasting effect of our sleep deprivation. Long periods of sleep deprivation could have a long lasting or even fatal result. In a study in 1989, Allan Rechtschaffen and Bernard Bergmann deprived rats of sleep for a month; the rats involved in the study eventually died due to a loss of the ability to control their body temperature and multiple organ failure (Reite, Ruddy, and Nagel 42). Although, most people wouldn't stay awake for a month straight, the study would lead you to believe that regular loss of sleep could eventually harm a person's body.

Keeping in mind the possible adverse effects of loss of sleep, it makes sense to explore the different categories of insomnia and how they are treated. Transient insomnia is the most common form of insomnia. It only lasts for a few days, but it can lead to short-term or chronic insomnia if the cause of it is not addressed ("Insomnia" 20). The majority of the causes of this category are stress related. People tend to worry so much about the problems of the day, or the one that will follow, that they simply cannot stop themselves from thinking about them long enough to sleep. An example of this would be a student being unable to sleep the night before a test.

Other causes of transient insomnia are change in sleeping times (jet lag, shift work), going to high altitudes, and in some cases during illness (Reite, Ruddy, and Nagel 47). Insomnia due to jet lag or working the overnight shift is due to people working against their circadian rhythm which is called your internal clock by most people (Catalano 90). When you work against your internal clock, your body tells you that you don't need to sleep or you need to sleep at the wrong time resulting in insomnia. To treat these types of sleeping disorders, people are told to recondition their sleeping habits and in some cases

are given a mild sedative for a few days (Reite, Ruddy, and Nagel 47-48). Sleep reconditioning may be an old concept but it is still one of the most effective ways to treat mild cases of insomnia:

Sleep reconditioning was developed in the 1970s; people are taught to associate the bedroom with sleep. People are told to only use their bed for sleep or sex, go to bed only when their sleepy, if they cannot fall asleep move to another room and do something relaxing, do not nap, and wake up at the same time everyday ("Insomnia" 21).

Sedatives can be used to induce sleep but there is a risk of day time sleepiness, addiction, and insomnia rebound. Day time sleepiness may accrue if the effects of a dosage taken at night continue into the waking hours (Catalano 179). If sleeping pills are taken for a long period of time, the person using them could eventually become dependent on them. In some cases, discontinuation of a sedative medication, particularly after high doses, may result in a few nights of sleep disturbances that is more severe than was present before treatment (Catalano 180). This withdrawal effect is termed "rebound insomnia." Due to these risks, people with insomnia are urged to try nonmedical treatments to cure their insomnia first.

Now that we have covered insomnia that only lasts a few days, we'll go on to insomnia that lasts longer. "Short-term insomnias (up to 3 weeks in duration) are caused by severe and/or persistent stress, such as major surgery, illnesses, or health concerns; significant loss or bereavement; and serious family, job, or relationship problems" (Reite, Ruddy, and Nagel 47-48). Most people have experienced any number of these problems in their life, but how you choose to deal with them can affect whether or not they will affect your ability to get a good night's rest.

A person who is going through a divorce could have problems sleeping due to the ongoing stress of a breakup and financial problems, but if they took the time to read a book or do some other low stress activity to take their mind off of it, they could have an easier time falling asleep. Based on the

description above, you can draw the conclusion that this category of insomnia is very similar to transient insomnia but is caused by stronger stimuli. The methods of treating this type of insomnia are the same as transient insomnia.

The last category is chronic insomnia which is most often caused by ignoring your insomnia. By ignoring their insomnia, people end up having conditioned "learned" insomnia ("Insomnia" 20). You basically learn to associate your bed with lack of sleep over time. Most insomnia sufferers end up with this type of insomnia if they do not seek treatment for the lesser forms of insomnia (Reite, Ruddy, and Nagel 49). An Article "Desperately Seeking Sleep" that appeared in Natural Health, states that "One in ten Americans suffer from chronic insomnia"(1). This may be an alarming finding, but if you take into account how often people you know refuse to seek medical treatment, it makes sense. To choose a treatment to chronic insomnia, people are asked to give a history of their sleeping problem, when it started, if anyone in their family has sleeping problems, if they feel severely stressed and if they use drugs or alcohol to get to sleep (Reite, Ruddy, and Nagel 47-48).

Insomnia can be an awful thing to have. It can add stress to an already stressed person, but it is important to find ways to counteract it so it doesn't progress from transient to short-term into chronic insomnia. Most people ignore the problem that they have sleeping, but it is important to seek help for any health problems that are persistent. So instead of tossing and turning all night, people can get the sleep that they desperately need.



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On the Menu: Childhood Obesity in School Lunch Programs

Obesity is an ever-growing national problem. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), from 2003-2006 the number of overweight and obese children grew substantially from what was reported two decades before. In fact, according to the CDC, “for those aged 6-11 years, the numbers increased from 6.5 percent to 17.0 percent, and for those aged 12-19 years the number increased from 5.0 percent to 17.6 percent” (“Childhood” 1). Whether the main cause for obesity is genetic factors, behavioral factors or environmental factors, schools are a major part of any child’s day and lessons learned do not always come from the classroom.

Good eating habits can be learned in the cafeteria. Adding to the obesity problem, between busy schedules and commercial influence, parents are feeding their children more fast food and prepackaged foods than ever before, while hoping that the school lunch program will make up the difference. Are public schools providing the best food possible? The answer depends on a variety of factors, but most schools simply are not making the grade. Since the majority of public schools participate in national school lunch programs, cafeteria managers will serve the required free and reduced rate lunches supplemented by government commodities, which actually cost more to prepare than they make in revenue (Kelleher 64).

The goal in any school district is to at least break even on the budget, schools will compensate for the deficit in the school lunch program by á la carte items or prepared foods from fast-food franchises washed down with soft drinks from vending machines (Tartamella et al 83). As a result, America is faced with an ever-growing population of malnourished, overweight children who subsist largely on a seemingly never-ending supply of fast foods. How did the National School Lunch Program – a program designed to provide healthy meals to growing kids – contribute to such a problem?

Created in 1946 and enforced by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the National School Lunch Program was meant to manage farm surpluses and supply every child with a hot, nutritious meal (Dalton 101). Unfortunately, the program has changed little since its inception and therefore runs under generic, outdated standards. According to Margo Wooten, the director of nutrition policy at the Centers for Public Interest (CPI) in Washington, D.C.,

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) hasn't updated standards for school meals since the mid-1990s, and those standards are too easy to meet. Lunches can have no more than 30 percent of their calories from fat and no more than 10 percent from saturated fat; they must provide a third of the daily allowances of protein, vitamin A, vitamin C, iron, calcium, and calories. With no regulations for reducing sodium and trans fats or increasing whole grains, school standards aren't even on par with current federal Dietary Guidelines for Americans. (Kelleher 65)

Recognizing that the National School Lunch Program needed improvement, the Child Nutrition and Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Reauthorization Act of 2004 required schools with federally funded school lunch programs to initiate wellness policies (Wechsler 1). The law requires that schools adopt policies that address a variety of factors in combating childhood obesity that include setting goals for nutritional education and physical activity programs, conforming with nutritional guidelines for

school meals that meet federal nutritional guidelines, establishing plans for measuring implementation of the plan overseen by a wellness coordinator, and – most importantly – stressing the need for parents, students and the community to become actively involved in the program (Weschler 1). Faced with losing their funding if they did not comply with the new law, most schools adopted the policies, but did not necessarily follow through with all the guidelines.

To assess school compliance with the new guidelines, two independent non-profit organizations, the Action for Healthy Kids (AFHK) and the School Nutrition Association (SNA), conducted analyses of participating schools and found that while the program is off to a good start, not all schools are meeting all of the components required by law. The AFHK found that “many of the policies they analyzed lacked timeframes and measurable objectives to evaluate; 40 percent of the policies did not specify who was possible for implementation” (Weschler 2).

In a separate analysis, the SNA discovered “37 percent of the districts had a broad policy with no procedures for implementation included, while 35 percent included some specific procedures, and 26 percent included a great deal of specificity about procedures for implementation” (Weschler 2). Essentially, only four of ten schools are meeting every provision of the law to ensure the health and wellness of schoolchildren. Schools are still filling the budgetary gap caused by cafeteria operating expenses by relying on revenue from outside sources.

One of the chief sources contributing to childhood obesity in schools today is the presence and abundance of vending machines. Major corporations such as Coca-Cola® and Pepsi® are willing to pay millions of dollars to hard-hit school budgets for schools to endorse and sell their products. Sharron Dalton, a Registered Dietitian states, “Vending machines provide money for 98 percent of public high schools, 74 percent of middle schools, and 43 percent of elementary schools, according to the Centers for Disease Control” (100). Stocked with soft drinks, candy, potato chips and commercially prepared

baked goods, vending machines provide a great temptation to kids flooded by advertising from corporate marketing executives. According to Dalton,

As one report noted, food manufacturers spent over \$7 billion [in advertising] in 1997. Most of this advertising focused on highly processed and highly packaged foods . . . rather than foods that meet dietary recommendations. In fact, only \$333 million was spent on nutrition education, about half the amount spent advertising soda alone (101).

In 2005, the government took notice and the CDC created the National Center for Health Marketing (NCHM) to explore potential ways to direct attention away from commercial advertisements and toward nutritional awareness of fruits and vegetables in a healthy diet (Gerberding 2). The NCHM's aggressive educational and marketing strategies resulted in a new inter-school campaign program called "Fruits and Veggies – More Matters." As part of the program, schools were encouraged to provide nutritional information on lunch menus, place educational posters in hallways, and place nutritional information in school publications and announcements.

While most schools did well in the "More Matters" campaign, "one third of all school districts allowed soft drink companies to advertise soft drinks in school buildings (35.8 percent) and almost half of all school districts allowed soft drink companies to advertise on school grounds, including on the outside of school buildings and on playing fields (46.6 percent)" (Gerberding 2). The fact remains that big name corporations in the vending industry bring in revenue that school districts lack, which directly impacts schools' compliance with promoting self-sustaining nutritional awareness programs.

While vending machines provided by big business are bringing money in, most school menu programs are doing anything but. Low operating budgets have resulted in schools relying on easily prepared, cheap, bulk foods like frozen French fries, chicken nuggets and canned fruit cocktail that

require little storage, preparation or staff assistance (Tartamella et al. 83). Tartamella states that according to a 2000 CDC survey,

More than 20 percent of schools sold McDonald's hamburgers, Pizza Hut pizzas, or other brand-name fast foods. A separate survey of California high schools, also done in 2004, found that 95 percent sold fast foods á la carte—that is, separate from the main school lunch and any government scrutiny—including many foods from big-name franchises. (Tartamella et al. 78)

While the Federal School Lunch Program regulates the amount of fat and sugar content allowed for food prepared by schools in order to receive funding, most á la carte foods – foods prepared by school cafeterias such as chicken nuggets, hamburgers, French fries and pizza – are not subject to such standards. When they are, they have been nominally modified in fat and calorie content to meet the government's maximum standards (Dalton 103). So with so many factors seemingly working against school programs, how can childhood obesity be prevented?

Childhood obesity is preventable through active participation and involvement in school policies. Kelleher suggests that parents visit schools and see exactly what is being offered and served to students. Concerned parents can get involved with each other and school officials to initiate change, then meet with school lunch directors with ideas and suggestions on how to implement healthier food choices. Items in vending machines need to educate children on nutritional content and help influence individual choice by labeling items as "healthier" or "healthiest." Most parents agree.

Nutritionists Lisa Tartmella, Elaine Herscher and Chris Woolston cite a recent study on parental opinions of food choices in schools: "The Robert Wood Johnson study on school food and exercise trends found a whopping ninety-two percent of teachers and ninety-one percent of parents said they favor converting the selections in school vending machines to healthy foods and drinks" (94). The

results of the study brought about major changes in some schools. According to Tartamella, Herscher and Woolston, “By 2004, twenty states [Iowa is not one of them] had already restricted students’ access to junk food in vending machines” (94). With this kind of success, it is likely that the other thirty states can adopt the same mindset to eliminate junk foods and soft drinks in their schools as well.

Healthy school lunch programs work. Tartamella, Herscher and Woolston highlight a case study in Florida public schools in which a registered dietitian hired to oversee the county’s school program eliminated menus based on sugary drinks, high-fat, fried foods and replaced them with healthier alternatives including milk, juice, and lower fat entrees. Not only did the children benefit through better nutrition, but also the new program resulted in turning the county’s school lunch program budget deficit into a surplus. School budget issues will always be a concern, but banning or restricting fried foods and food from major franchises and still making a profit is possible.

In San Francisco, dietary manager Al Schieder completely remodeled the cafeteria and banned à la carte foods and soda, replaced student favorites such as pizza with lower fat portions, and introduced fresh fruits and milk with all meals served. Though skeptics thought his program would result in financial ruin for the school, the reverse happened. While his food and labor costs increased slightly, his sales more than doubled and were more than enough to cover the nominal charge increases in supplying fresh foods and the people to prepare them (Tartamella et al. 97).

While vending machines are a fixture in schools because of the revenue they generate, their contents could be supplemented with more nutritious options. Registered Dietitian Sharron Dalton agrees; offering healthier foods and drinks makes sense because the schools will still profit financially from the income the machines generate, while kids will benefit from improved food choices and lower rates of obesity (100). While the CDC acknowledges no single cause or factor is to blame for childhood obesity, they agree that community involvement is critical to success. The battle against childhood

obesity can be won if parents, school officials and legislators unite to get actively involved in developing effective strategies in making nutrition in schools a priority.

If faced with a child suffering from a deadly medical condition, there is no question that parents would exhaust every resource to educate themselves on the disease. Armed with these facts, parents would confront every available specialist and medical professional to set a treatment program that might offer hope for a cure. Childhood obesity is this generation's deadly disease. Left untreated, it leads to asthma, sleep apnea, arthritis, cardiovascular disease and Type II diabetes. School lunch programs can play a pivotal role in being one of the specialists in a parent's arsenal to fight and win the battle against the epidemic of childhood obesity.



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Remembered Person

Mary Lynn

She is a woman that stands five feet four inches tall with a natural, dark complexion. She is very slim, weighing about one hundred twenty-five pounds, but she has athletic, muscular arms from all the hard work she's done. She has fine, dark brown, layered hair that likes to flip out and is cut just below her shoulders. Her eyes are blue and green but change colors with her mood. She rarely wears make up and when she does, it's only on her eyes. She has a smile that can brighten your day! She is constantly doing things to make other people happy, rather than thinking of or doing for herself. She has a big heart and an open mind. Her family has molded her into who she became.

She came from a family of 10 kids, 6 brothers and 3 sisters. She was the eighth out of ten children born. Her mother was a stay at home mom and her jobs consisted of raising children, cooking, cleaning, and growing and maintaining a garden. Her father was a WW2 Veteran, who drove a cement truck for a living. She didn't have much growing up. Her family raised pigs and chickens, and had a garden in order to keep food on the table. Each child had to put forth work and do their chores. If they didn't, they would have to sit at home and not allowed to go anywhere. Her parents never really showed or told her that they loved her, no hugs, no kisses, or any sort of affection; it was more of a tough love relationship.

Who is this person I have been describing? She is my mother, Mary Lynn Johnson-Glick. She has had many obstacles and accomplishments in her life. Within a year after graduating high school, she had

moved away from home, married her high school sweetheart, and was expecting her first child. She has had many life lessons following thirty years after graduating high school.

Within those thirty years, she had three children. She was a stay at home mom for fifteen out of the thirty years. She had been separated five times from my father. Us kids went back and forth between our parents throughout the years. My mother had to learn how to be independent and self-sufficient. On the twenty-ninth year of my parents' marriage, my mother filed for a divorce. The divorce was finalized after their thirtieth anniversary. The divorce was taken as a shock and it tore my family apart. Many things in all of our lives have changed.

Growing up, she taught me to respect my elders and to treat people how I want to be treated. She taught me to use my manners and to always be polite. She always told me to look out for the less fortunate and that good things happen to good people. She always said, "You can do anything you set your mind to," and, "Be the best you can be." She says, "Everything happens for a reason." She taught me to stand my ground and never back down if I know I'm right. She taught me to be independent, and to never let anyone control me. My mother always has my back, one hundred percent.

She has not only been a mother, but a friend. She has always been there to talk about the good and the bad, no matter the circumstances. My mother has been there since the day I was born, caring for me and encouraging me. Since that day, she took care of my every need and has protected me. Today, she still tries her best to take care of my needs, still not at a full realization that she has made me into a strong-willed, independent woman.

Today, she is a hard working, independent woman who is never controlled by anyone but herself. Throughout her life, she's gone through many things, and every little thing has helped make her a stronger person. She lives with no regrets, and always looks forward to the future. One of the big changes my mother made in her life, besides the divorce, was quitting smoking. She had been smoking

for thirty-three years, and made it her New Year's resolution to quit. After she quit smoking, she decided to save the money she would usually spend on cigarettes, and buy herself a Harley. She bought her Harley four months after quitting smoking, and she has been smoke-free for 14 months. That choice she made, made her a happier and healthier person.

She is a fun-loving, caring person, who always likes to have a good time, and is up for any challenge. Her motto is, "Live daily, laugh often, and love always!" I think every child needs a mother like mine; she is only a phone call away. She is always there for me, with open arms. I will always cherish the moments we have had, and our memories will never fade. I thank God that I have a mother like her, because she helped me become the woman I am today.





Persuasive Analysis

Social Paradox of Connecting While Also Disconnecting

Every day, we are bombarded by advertisements, television programs, and various technological devices. It's uncommon now to be without a cell phone, and those without a Facebook are regarded as social lepers. While technology, advertising, and television programs all serve to connect us to some degree, they also disconnect us from real life society. We are connected through advertising giving us a common vocabulary and common goals, as well as television allowing us to vote and have a say in what happens on certain shows. Cell phones gives people internet access as well as texting and calling functions now, keeping us further connected by allowing us to talk on the phone and surf Facebook simultaneously. However, along the same vein, all of these things are disconnecting us too.

It's easier to screen calls and texts with cell phones, and more difficult to get in touch with someone who doesn't have one. Advertising gives us common goals, but also tells us that if we don't buy the product, we won't be "cool" and part of the "in crowd." Television keeps us isolated by getting us so absorbed in a program that we blow off friends and family to sit on our couch and stare at a screen. It's a social paradox – what should make us more connected is, in fact, also serving to disconnect us from each other as well.

When Facebook was founded by Mark Zuckerberg in 2004 (Carlson), it's popularity was almost instantaneous. Six years later, the site currently has over 400 million members who actively use the

site—by sending messages to other members, updating their status (what they're doing at any particular moment), or uploading pictures, and so on—each month from all over the globe. It's no longer just for the collegiate crowd; the age group that had the most users between January 2009 and January 2010, according to one demographic study of Facebook users, is the 35-54 year old group, meaning working professionals and parents are now getting in on the Facebook action (Corbett).

The age group with the most growth overall, however, was the 55+ group which grew 922.7% between January 2009 and January 2010 (Corbett). Older adults are using the site to reconnect with old classmates from high school and college. It's almost expected of college age students to have an account on the site and many high school students are members as well. For many people my age (18-24 year olds), it's difficult to figure out how we kept in touch before Facebook existed.

The connections that can be made on Facebook are endless. One can reconnect with an old friend that moved away in elementary school (as I have, myself), or start a social or political movement. An article in USA Today from March 26, 2010 talked about how Facebook helped a 17-year-old in Minnesota campaign for a skate park in his hometown of St. Cloud. "Facebook is becoming a core component for social movements, from constituent outreach for political campaigns to building support for causes" (Unze 03a) the article goes on to say. Barack Obama, the president of our country, used Facebook and Twitter extensively during his campaign.

It's easier than ever to plan events such as graduation parties; invite the people you want to attend, and they can RSVP on the site without having to do more than click a mouse. ""Facebook allows us to promote and organize events in a whole new way,"" (Unze 03a). While Facebook has given us the ability to be connected like never before, there's also a disconnection happening due to the social networking site and others like it.

In college classes, many students with their laptops out won't be focusing solely on their class – they'll be surfing Facebook. Some with cell phones will be doing the same thing. Commenting on the “wall” of a person's Facebook profile is very easy – type your message and click the “post” button. It's easy to be absent-present now thanks to cell phones and laptop computers, meaning that physically a person is in the room but mentally they are somewhere else. “For many Americans, there are few times and places that cannot be filled with the distraction provided by the latest gadget” (The Editors 5).

Instead of focusing on school work, many students opt to fill their time with gadgets such as cell phones and video games. I had a friend who had to drop out of college because he stopped going to classes and instead sat in his dorm room all day playing video games, specifically World of Warcraft. A study done by Todd and Ralph Stinebrickner for the National Bureau of Economic Research found a connection between a college freshman's study habits and video games in their dorm room.

An article was published in USA Today in September 2007 about their research that said, “First-year students whose roommates brought a video game player to college studied 40 minutes less each day on average...Those 40 minutes of lost study time translated into first-semester grades that were 0.241 points lower on the 4.0 scale” (Naseef 05d). The disconnect from face-to-face social interaction that video games and other technology bring into our lives is startling.

Never before have Americans been able to interact in so many ways with television programs. We are now able to vote for our favorite celebrity dancer on the ABC show *Dancing With the Stars* and vote for our favorite singer on *American Idol*, which helps to connect us to the people on the television. It also helps us connect to other people who also want to vote for the same people we do; it gives us common ground to stand on. Friends of mine in high school used to organize groups to vote for a particular dancer from *Dancing with the Stars*. Reality television shows are never without testimonials or interview segments from the stars on the show telling what they were thinking at a particular

moment in time being shown on television. We learn more about characters on reality shows through such testimonials than we do about characters in a normal television show where they don't come on camera and share personal details about how their lives were while on the show. Such shows highlight struggles and triumphs in the lives of people by filming them 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and then cutting and pasting clips together to find the episode that will ultimately end up on television.

Frankie Abernathy was a cast member on MTV's *The Real World* in 2004; she had cystic fibrosis and was a cutter (meaning she intentionally harmed herself with knives or razors), which helped bring both issues to the attention of the show's audience who may have previously been unaware of one or both. "Abernathy — who had said at one point during her time on 2004's "The Real World: San Diego" that "Tomorrow is a privilege, so live today like tomorrow isn't happening" — helped put a face to the disease" (Harris). Abernathy died of cystic fibrosis in June 2007. During her stint on *The Real World: San Diego*, she cut herself with a knife in full view of the ever-present cameras, and her mother said in an article published after Frankie's passing:

"I know several people weren't aware of the cutting epidemic at the time" — Abernathy cut herself intentionally with a kitchen knife during the show's taping — "and I know several people wrote Frankie and thanked her. She was a different person for 'The Real World' realm, and I think she touched a lot of people and made an impact on a lot of people's lives." (Harris)

By being on the show and in the public eye for even a short time, Frankie was able to show other self-harmers how detrimental the problem is and that they need to get help.

Television also brings disconnection into focus. Television used to connect everyone together when there were only a few channels and as few shows on. Fifty years ago, everyone watched the same

shows, so everyone had the same vocabulary and the same basis of knowledge about the shows. Now, there's the option of have hundreds of different channels, meaning that connection we once shared by knowing all about the same shows is decaying.

“Growing up we all watched the same programs because there were just the few channels and we all had a shared experience. Now with 5 billion channels –or whatever it is—we all watch different stuff and we're not as bonded as a family or society” (Love) writes Carl Love in his column for The Press-Enterprise, and he makes a valid point. My mom tells stories of growing up watching shows like *Petticoat Junction* and *The Andy Griffith Show*, and she often tells me how she and her friends would talk about those shows the next day at school. Now, people have a multitude of choices for things to watch, and as Carl Love goes on to say, “Connectivity can be lost in subtle ways in our high-tech world -- if you ever stop long enough to think about it” (Love). Television has given us ways to connect but it also has caused us to become more disconnected.

Advertising has begun sending similar messages. Advertising, instead of simply sending us messages to buy certain things or go certain places, now has begun trying to send helpful messages to troubled and stressed out people. It is now beginning to even further connect people than it has in the past. A campaign began in March to try to prevent teen suicide, which a USA Today article about the campaign says “is the third leading cause of death among 15- to 24-year olds” (Hellmich 04d).

The tragic suicide of 15-year-old Phoebe Prince has been on the news since it was discovered that she hung herself to escape the constant torment and bullying she was dealing with at her school. The ads are trying to prevent tragedies such as Phoebe's untimely passing from happening to other teens and their families. “The aim is to help teenagers cope with very normal feelings or stress, loss, and confusion,” (Hellmich 04d). Advertisements like this one can help teenagers who feel hopeless by giving them options – call the suicide hotline, hear stories similar to theirs, or tell someone close to them what

they're dealing with. Advertising brings everyone together through campaigns like that one, by bringing the issues to the front and giving us common ground when we start to deal with these problems.

Advertising has always been directed at the consumer, the one with the buying and spending power. It's given us a common vocabulary for products and services – for example, most everyone knows what a “Snuggie” is because the ads have been on television for months – and given people common dreams. Teenagers want I-pods, the latest and greatest cell phones, and clothes from specific stores. Adults are no different. “Everyone is looking for the smallest phone, the cable provider with the most channels and the television with the biggest screen” (Smith).

Partially due to this effect of advertising, everyone is guilty to some degree of “keeping up with the Joneses”, that is to say, having to have the newest and nicest gadgets and clothes because the people they know have it already. Lisa Smith wrote an article for Investopedia.com called “Stop Keeping Up With The Joneses – They're Broke” in which she discusses that phenomenon and lists one of the factors leading to it is “Prolific advertising and product placements” (Smith). Having to have all of these new gadgets and whatnot has made material objects more important to people than other people, including friends, family, and coworkers.

People text while in business meetings, talk on Bluetooth headsets while out shopping, and interact less with others face-to-face. Advertising, through being everywhere and connecting us via these common goals and dreams has also disconnected us from other people in society with whom we may have interacted had we not had our I-pod headphones in or a conversation going on a cell phone while in the check-out line at the grocery store. Unavoidable in their nature, we have to learn to bridge the gap between the connection advertising can bring and the disconnection it also can cause.

Technology, television, and advertising all serve to connect us together, but they also have the effect of pushing people apart – a massive and broad disconnection from society. People are connected

by Facebook because it's an easy way for people to keep in touch, but then on the same vein, also are disconnected by the networking site because they'd rather spend time on Facebook than visit face-to-face with their friends and family.

Everyone is guilty of being absent-present; physically in a room but mentally elsewhere because they're on Facebook, playing a game on the internet, or texting on their cell phone. We are now more connected to people on television because we can vote for them on shows or watch their interviews during a reality show. People are disconnected from their friends in real life due to television because people would rather sit on their couch and stare at the television instead of spending time with the people closest to them. The paradox that exists due to these various gadgets, websites, advertisements, and television shows is unavoidable; in trying to be more connected with these things, we're all becoming more disconnected.



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A Down Turn in My Life

My life has been a chaotic experience that has resulted in everlasting change for the worse and for the better. Childhood was a lonely existence for me that helped me engage in behavior that was inappropriate and illegal. Because I acted out in an illegal fashion, I eventually was caught and went to prison for three years. Through my endeavors over time, I have grown as a person to better understand myself and make changes to my life and to be a better person.

My youth was a lonely and destitute life that I had to deal with. I never really made any friends in elementary school; and I only had one friend in high school, and he used me. I was picked on, bullied, made fun of, and beaten up throughout my youth. The time I had was spent mostly at home though my parents did try to get me involved in social activities. My only outlet was in fantasy and science-fiction related materials. By my early teens, I spent my time with computers and learned as much as I could about them. Because of that thirst for knowledge, it took me through roads of an underground world.

The underground world that I speak of is that which deals with illegal software and pornography. I started getting into pirating software, illegally downloading and violating copy right laws, when I was 16 years old. Going to websites that dealt with illegal software also meant that I was around pornography. I started downloading adult pornography at the age of 17. Even at my current age of 28, I have never had a girlfriend and I have never engaged in sex before. The pornography was like a high for me, and I would keep searching for more extreme things related to pornography. This culminated in my

doing the unimaginable and downloading child pornography; I was 18 years old. I started viewing child pornography my senior year in high school. Knowing full well that my actions were wrong, I still could not seem to stop myself.

This behavior went on for 2 years, until I was 20 years old. By that time, I was going to college at Iowa State University. This is when I was apprehended by the campus police with the child pornography. It actually felt like a relief to have been caught. For the next year, I was on pretrial release and was ordered to take a group therapy session every week. Finally, I was sentenced on October 14, 2003. I went to Federal Prison for 3 years.

The first prison I went to was Forrest City, Arkansas. It was a hard experience at first. I remember that first day very clearly. I was crying my eyes out, which in turn the correctional officer had me in a single cell, away from the other inmates while processing me into their system. That first month I hardly left my cubicle. There were 3 buildings that housed the inmates and each building was comprised of 4 wings. In each wing there were at least 150 cubicle sized rooms that housed 2 inmates to each cubicle. The other inmates knew I was a rookie, but I was lucky that a couple of the inmates checked in on me from time to time. The sad truth is I eventually became used to my surroundings.

While I was there, I had to work. The first job I had been assigned to was in food service. Finally, I was put to work as a cleanup detail person for the visitor room. During that time I took Adult Continuing Education classes that were taught by the inmates. Some of the classes I took were self help, accounting, and a car repair class. Not only did I take those classes, but I also enrolled in the local community college and took a couple classes. I spent a year and a half there. After that, I transferred to another prison in Butner, North Carolina.

The reason I transferred to the other prison was because there was a voluntary Sex-Offender Treatment Program that the Bureau of Prisons offered. This prison was not like the other one. It felt

really weird the first time I arrived there. The North Carolina prison looked like a college campus. There were trees and bushes all around the area, and the buildings were covered in open glass panels. The prison was what was called an Administrative Prison. It was built to house different treatment programs such as the drug treatment program.

The sex-offender treatment program was housed in one building which held about 100 inmates that all had some kind of sex offense on their record. The treatment program was meant to last eighteen months, and was generally reserved for those inmates that were about to get out of prison. The program went on all day long. There were 8 trained psychologists that also held PhD's which ran the program. The 100 inmates were broken up into two groups, an A.M. group and a P.M. group. I was in the P.M. group, so in the morning I worked at the HVAC facility.

The program consisted of: regime of 5 phases/classes that lasted for 3 months each; a community meeting time where issues and confrontations could be presented; a discussion group, where new topics were introduced to talk about, and the most intense part, the Process Group. Process Group consisted of about 8 other inmates in a room where 2 psychologists confronted our issues. I could easy write a book about what went on during Process Group. There were many times I had my feet to the fire and the psychologists would not let up. I learned a great deal about myself and about the other inmates there. Each phase we learned something new such as: our thinking errors, victim impact, empathy, and how to have appropriate intimate relationships.

The treatment program was intense, but it was also the only place I felt accepted. The staff and inmates were like a family to me. I actually miss it. The inmates knew me and liked me for who I was. I had people to talk to that cared about me. I do not have that kind of support network anymore. I try to be social to my fellow classmates but no meaningful relationships have developed yet. I ask questions and try to get to know fellow classmates, but it seems that my classmates are not interested in me. I do

not have anybody to hang out with. I go the extra mile with people, like taking class notes and emailing them to students, but again I come up short. It is hard for me. Every day I think about going back to prison because life was so much easier there.

I cannot get a job because nobody wants to take a risk in hiring a sex offender. I am a social outcast which is funny because that is what I was in my youth. I am finding myself getting into old patterns of behavior; I do not go out anywhere. I tried social events while I was on probation, after I got out of prison, but with no luck. I still do not have any friends to hang out with and I really do not have much of a family support system. My father passed away last year from kidney cancer, and that event caused me to reengage with my mother and sister.

My mother and sister do not show that they really care about me, and they do not want to invest in having a really healthy relationship with me. The only people I can talk to now are my Therapist and Psychologist at a mental-health clinic in Des Moines. Again, that is really sad, that the only people I have to talk to are treatment people. I know everybody has issues and problems, and I am here to say that I would more than gladly support people and take the time to get to know people if those people gave me the chance.

The crime I committed was a terrible crime. I do my best to put myself in my victim's shoes and remind myself the harm I have caused by looking at pictures of children engaging in sex acts. Those children, now adults, have to live with the horror that their pictures are out in the "either" for anyone to see. Those children are continually being abused every day with the knowledge that somebody is looking at pictures of those children being abused.

With that said, the only thing I can do to make things better is not to reoffend. Though the odds are stacked against me in relation to the way the laws are written and how citizens treat me. An example of this hardship was when the Iowa law had the 2,000 foot rule in place. The 2,000 foot rule

doesn't make any sense and if law makers are going to do something like that then I am all about equal opportunity. Would it make sense if there was a 2,000 foot rule on drug offenders, burglars, and or alcoholics? Meaning an offender couldn't live within 2,000 feet of a drug store or a place where alcohol is sold? Could a person honestly say that law would keep drug offenders and/or alcoholics from committing crimes? It does not make sense and all it does is give a false sense of security.

The other major problem I face is employment. It is completely legal to discriminate against felons and especially sex offenders. I have tried every place of employment in the Des Moines metro area with no success. Employers do not want to take the chance on hiring me. All of these disadvantages weigh against me and help create an environment where I may act again and I do not want that to happen. Even the Des Moines Area Community College does not want to hire me. This college will take my money for classes but this college will not hire me for any type of work study. End to end the odds are against me at every turn.

After everything that I have learned from treatment, I have done my best to apply to the real world. In treatment, the other inmates and I learned that we needed to follow the three pillars of a healthy life. Those three pillars are honesty, responsibility, and integrity. For four years I have lived those main principles. I am honest with other people about what I am thinking and how I feel. I do my best at living a responsible life and holding myself accountable to my actions. Lastly, I act with integrity. I am the same person with everybody, and I do not hide behind a false sense of bravado. My road is a difficult path with certain barriers that need to be overcome, but I am willing to go the extra mile. There are days that I feel like giving up but I persevere. In those dark moments I realize that my journey is not over and that there is still more to learn and experience.



Annotated Bibliography

8:15 am: The Beginning of an Epidemic

Faced with a daunting decision, President Harry S. Truman looked up from his desk and peered through his glasses in a rigid manner giving the sign to send the atomic bomb to Hiroshima, Japan. Releasing the military team composed of Captain William S. Parsons, Major Thomas W. Ferebee, and Colonel Paul Tibbets, Jr., Truman had no faltering notions of what power he was about to discharge on Japan. (Takaki 65) The Enola Gay military plane loaded up its 15,000 metric tons of TNT power into the cargo space labeling the uranium bomb “little boy.” (United States 22)

After taking off into the lucid sky, the team had no coherent thought that they were about to be responsible for freeing what would instantly kill roughly 100,000 innocent and unsuspecting civilians. Approaching the targeted city of Hiroshima with a population of 250,000, it was described as a beautiful and, ironically, peaceful Monday morning. (Frank 18) At 8:15 am, the American B-29 bomber liberated “little boy” from its holding space and into the thin air. More than 46 seconds after the detonation of the bomb, the cloud erupted reaching over 2,982 degrees Celsius. (Poolos 19) Looking back onto the black explosion, Captain Robert Lewis exclaimed, “My God, what have we done?” (United States 15) Knowing the aftermath that would follow the tragic event in Hiroshima, is it safe to say that

this bombing fit under the “military necessity” clause? How did this bombing and discovery effect our new age of nuclear warfare today?

To save half a million American lives. The sole reason for the two atomic blasts lay upon that questionable statistic as if it was actually proven to be accurate. General George Marshall agreed to be the aim at which Truman threw his fictitious, but impressive numbers towards. (Poolos 46) This assured the American public, the very few that knew, and the countries involved with the plan that it was completely justified and was going to bring an end to this absolute war with Japan.

The Potsdam Conference took place in the year leading up to the atomic attacks on both Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Three leaders represented the three most powerful countries involved in cooperating with one another to bring a solution to this war crisis. Harry S. Truman of the United States, Joseph Stalin of the Soviet Union, and Prime Minister Attlee of Great Britain gathered together to discuss on how to negotiate a termination of war with Japan’s empire. Currently under the command of Emperor Hirohito, Japan looked as if they were a driving force that wouldn’t stop fighting for anything, even peace. (Langley 52)

Taking this view into mind, the three devised the master plan of a surprise attack on Japan. Noted for being a bit into retribution, Harry S. Truman might have chosen that form of attack as a rebuttal from Pearl Harbor just 4 years earlier and the main reason for the U.S. being in the war. Reaching the final decision in July of 1945, Truman took to American military preparing them for what is to come. (United States 43)

August 6, 1945 at 8:15 am was a day in which the world will forever derive feelings of vengeance, regret, grief, alarm, and revulsion. Three days later, another B-29 bomber dropped a 9,700 pound plutonic bomb on the city of Nagasaki killing 75,000 civilians instantly. (Frank 25) Americans felt sickly empowered by the destruction caused to a country that happened to attack a piece of our home

years before. Feeling that as pure justification for the rising toll of deaths due to radiation sickness for generations to come, a surprisingly low number of people felt it was excessive.

Many now saw the United States as an unconquerable powerhouse that will shake any country to the ground if they aren't willing to succumb to the demands and needs of the commander in chief. "There is no flag large enough to cover the shame of killing innocent people," Howard Zinn. (Miles 16) President Harry S. Truman virtually had no reaction to the devastation caused to those two cities. The significance of that was due to the fact that these atomic weapons were just created and detonated on a city of actual forms of life for the first time in history and he had no noticeable remorse until years later.

"The buck stops here," Truman always said. He used this expression when explaining who had the final say in dropping the bombs without any form of warning to Japan. He accepted full responsibility for the events before and after they happened and later wrote to his sister in his memoirs stating, "On that trip coming home [from Potsdam in July 1945] I ordered the atomic bombs to be dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It was a terrible decision. But I made it." (Takaki 9)

With over 8 countries presently holding this atomic weapon in their arsenals, the grand total for atomic bombs created since that dreadful year of 1945 reaches a staggering number of well over 30,000. (Poolos 12) The creation and discovery of the splitting of atoms in relation to nuclear explosions has ceaselessly impacted our way of waging wars in our present day. Back then it was seemingly unheard of threatening one another with such nuclear weapons but today it is unfortunately occurring almost on a daily basis as a mode of defense.

The U.S. now has more than 12,000 uranium and plutonic bombs waiting to be used at the right moment. (Frank 89) What is wrong with this perilous method? The world has already seen what can come of a single detonation of the atomic bomb, yet the military still finds it necessary for the same reasons that Truman believed back in 1945. So with his regrets on the decision to drop the bombs

paired with more deaths than what was once expected to come of such events, atomic warfare is in any case alive and well today. (Langley 23)

August 6, 1945 at 8:15 am was a day filled with terror and death which resonates with all Japanese people to this day and yet these same weapons that we've seen such destruction from are now being used in a game called war. Hiroshima, renamed "the city of peace", came to construct a peace memorial park to reflect on the many lives lost on that fateful day. (Frank 16) It is undoubtedly difficult to judge whether or not that day rationalized "military necessity" when today martial forces everywhere are using this as if it wasn't proven to be an inhumane way of killing off hundreds of thousands of people at one time.

Our defense may be so weakened over time that we back ourselves up with such nuclear force knowing the world recognizes the United States as the only country to have used them as a form of attack. (Langley 44) The beauty and unsightly sides to history contain those events in time to which one man or woman made a single verdict which would haunt and revolutionize the world as we know it. A personal assessment can last eternally while being responsible for more deaths than what came from the original incidents. The bombing of Hiroshima, Japan forever changed the lives of everyone in the world today. Because of that crucial decision of Harry S. Truman, war became infused with more muscle power and control than what seems comprehensible.

So even if one doesn't feel connected to the year 1945 and the events that transpired from it, all of our lives currently lie on the fine line of the creation of atomic nuclear warfare. The bombing of Hiroshima deserves the given title of "Doomsday" for the fact that history would be changed in a dramatic but forceful way that would place danger in many of the wrong hands in modern day. In the words of Albert Einstein, "Peace cannot be kept by force. It can only be achieved by understanding." (Miles 35)

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Being Family: On the Far Side of Genetics

In Sue Monk Kidd's novel, *The Secret Life of Bees*, several topics of discussion hide in the context of the tale. The topic of what is or is not a family is one of much debate. Many agree that the attachment and commitment we feel towards our parents or siblings, along with our blood ties, is what makes us a family. However, the concept of non-blood relatives being true family is now widely accepted even though it is not a new family phenomenon (Benokraitis, 2008). In fact, sociologist and author Nijole Benokraitis suggests that a family is any group of two or more that "share functions and close emotional ties" (p. 5). This broader definition of familial structure may even help to strengthen the individual components within a family by allowing one to look outside of genetic makeup for care and support through all of life's demands.

Sue Monk Kidd, author of *The Secret Life of Bees*, offers an inside look at how adopting broad ideas and being open minded about family can help support people through difficult transitions. *The Secret Life of Bees* is a story set in South Carolina during the civil rights movement of 1964. Kidd's tale follows the emotional journey of fourteen year-old Lily as she searches for forgiveness for the death of her mother. Having a tumultuous relationship with her father, T.Ray, Lily considers Rosaleen her only family even though she is the African American housekeeper hired by her father.

After years of bewilderment surrounding her mother's death, Lily realizes that she may have been the one to cause the tragedy. Among some of her mother's belongings, Lily is drawn to a picture of the black Virgin Mary with "Tiburon, S.C." written on the back. In search of her true identity and a luring force by the ever-powerful figure of a black Mary, Lily willfully decides that this is the time to learn about who she is and who her mother was, tricking Rosaleen into blindly going on the lamb with her. At this point, Lily is completely unaware that the black Mary will become a staple in her life, eventually even telling black Mary that she is her "mother" and "the mother of thousands" (Kidd, p. 164). From here unfolds a story of fate, healing, and the strength of love, all of which is held together by August, the wise mother of this non-traditional family.

Benokraitis (2008) argues that a fictive kin relationship is one where "non-relatives are accepted as part of the family" and that these relationships may be "stronger and more lasting than the ties established by blood or marriage" (p. 6). Benokraitis' assertion that a relationship that is not formed because of a legal contract or blood relation is legitimate and extremely valid because it offers insight into how deep the relationship between Lily, August, and Rosaleen truly is. Lily asserts that, "if August is the red heart of Mary's chest, Rosaleen is the fist" (Kidd, p. 182). This is a statement that one cannot easily disregard, the symbolic nature of Lily likening August Boatright to the heart of the Virgin Mary and Rosaleen to the fist of the Mary suggests that this is a relationship with deep meaning and value. This possibly even hints that these two women may be Lily's key to undoing the emotional chains that bind her to the guilt surrounding her mother's untimely death.

Historically speaking, African families often have a broad definition of family, which has been connected to the strength of the African American families (Jones, Zalot, Foster, Sterrett, & Chester, 2006). This open-minded definition can be helpful in reducing tension with rigid familial roles, reducing household friction and offering more egalitarian patterns (Benokraitis, 2008). Throughout Kidd's novel,

chores are shared between the Boatright sisters, with each one offering a pivotal role in the composition of the family. With the unannounced appearance of Lily and Rosaleen into their lives, the roles were not disrupted, but merely shifted slightly in order to offer a fair amount of chores and work for them to bring to the family. Without importance placed on equal distribution of work, a hierarchy of power and duty could be formed, thus creating weakness in the formation of important bonds.

According to a journal released by the Department of Psychology at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, studies of parenting disregard the importance of non-genetic “parents” and family in raising children, especially in the African American community. Often times these African American “single” parent families are compared to European American families with two genetic parents (Jones, Zalot, Foster, Sterrett, Chester, 2006). The strong kinship bonds expressed in traditional African families and seen in the Boatright family in Kidd’s novel give a vibrant example of how such family studies are not only unfair, but also show a limited viewpoint of what family is. It is doing a great injustice to families by proclaiming that a legitimate family is only that of two genetic parents instead of two or more people who offer care and support and fit the Benokraitis definition of family, in which a family shares functions and close emotional ties. By recognizing such limited views on family as false and considering more progressive definitions, humans are opening themselves up to the possibility of support from many aspects of our lives.

Kidd spiritedly expresses how respect and commitment can offer equally as strong of a base for family as genetic makeup can. For example, T. Ray comes to the Boatright house after searching for Lily and tries to force her into coming back “home” with him. At this point, Lily chooses to stick with her newly adopted fictive family, the Boatrights and Rosaleen, instead of giving in and going with her biological father. After the run in with T.Ray, Lily realizes that she has all of the family she will ever need and has even begun to heal the wounds caused by her mother’s death. After realizing this, Lily claims

that she has eight mothers (Kidd, 2002), a deafening realization that family is not about genes, but rather about love and respect.

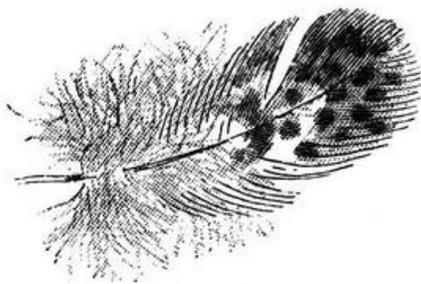
Our society places a large emphasis on the importance of family. With terms like “blood is thicker than water,” it’s engrained in us from the beginning of our lives that genetics are stronger than fictive kin. Nonetheless, this is not always the case. While biological family should be regarded with respect and love, there are other aspects that make up a family structure. A true family consists of separate members coming together in order to form a well-rounded unit that embodies trust, respect, love, and support.

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30 Miles to Gila Bend

Leaving town on a cross-country trip, under the omen of a total lunar eclipse, would prove to be a poor decision on my part. When the moon is covered by the Earth's shadow, everything is dark for a short period of time. We are afraid of losing the ability to see our surroundings, as sight makes up the largest part of our reality, "Seeing is believing." Light is good, dark is bad.

Thursday, April 4th, 1996, the moon passed through the center of the Earth's shadow. My best friend, Ruben, and I were flying to Iowa to drive my car back to San Diego, where I lived at the time. Ruben was the best friend a guy could ask for. I spent a lot of time with his family, who had emigrated from Mexico to the United States. I knew they saw me as being different than themselves. But they had some seriously good *carne asada* searing on the grill, and that was well worth a few awkward reservations I may have had about Mexicans. They took me into their family, giving me the nick-name of *Way-dow*, "White Guy".

Upon arriving in Iowa, I showed Ruben the inverse of living in *The Barrio*, (The Mexican Ghetto). I introduced him to all of my friends and family members. They accepted him and gave him the nick-name of, "The Mexican", or "The Mexican named after a sandwich." We sat at the table drinking my Father's home-made brew, until the wee hours of the morning. Needless to say, "The Mexican" and his chips and home-made salsa, received the bona fide stamp of approval. He was in the circle of trust.

The next morning Ruben and I departed for San Diego in my 1978 Chevy Malibu. This car had a 327 cubic inch engine which produced an excess of 350 horse power @7500rpm. I had spent many hours

with my father building this engine from scratch. As a rowdy, authority-bucking teenager, this car was the middle ground, where we both seemed to see eye to eye. That car was the emulsifier which held the oil, water and tempers together.

Driving at 95 miles per hour, we made quick time through Nebraska and Colorado. In our minds, we were on some kind of cross country race, passing everything on the road, except the gas station. I drove until just before the New Mexico border; exhausted, I then threw the keys to Ruben. Ruben had never been behind the wheel of anything remotely close to a muscle car. I could see after only five minutes of driving, my friend *Rube*, had the horse power bug. Ruben would later build several muscle cars of his own.

After careening through a few foothills of the Rocky Mountains, Ruben opened up the throttle on the flat openness of the high desert. It didn't take long to attract the attention of the New Mexico Highway Patrol. He was lying in wait, like a sand-covered sting ray, waiting to thrust his barbed tail into Ruben's chest. "Play the Stupid Mexican Rube," I suggested, as the super-trooper walked toward the car. "Tell him that you were reading the numbers on the tachometer, instead of the numbers on the speedometer! This isn't your car, so I think he'll buy it!" I could tell by the inflection of the trooper's voice, that this guy was running with the bait, like a trophy sized Pacific marlin. He wanted to believe Ruben was "The Stupid Mexican". I could see his mind working overtime, "Oh, I can't wait to tell the boys at the station about this stupid wet-back, drivin' almost twice the speed limit; cause he thought 5500rpm was 55mph!" The "Stupid Mexican" got off with a warning and an almost humorous admonishment.

After the scare with Roscoe P. Coltrane, we slowed down through Arizona to about 75mph. It was dark and the full moon was reflecting from the pavement of Arizona's Interstate 8, outlining the saguaro cacti, Joshua trees and ocotillo bushes, as we drove through the Sonoran Desert. I was tired, and closed my eyes for a little sleep. In an instant, a deer jumped out in front of us, and was hit by the

car. I remember the windshield was covered in some alien green goo, which turned out to be the stomach contents of the now, liquefied deer. After pulling off to the side of the road, I could see that all of the engine coolant had drained from the engine. We were stuck in the middle of nowhere, 30 miles from Mexico, and 30 miles from Gila Bend, AZ.

I was angry about my car being destroyed, but was glad we were unharmed. Ruben and I passed the time, talking to each other. I sat in the driver's seat of the now immobile car, to somehow reassure myself that I had control over the situation. Ruben started to go on, about illegal immigrants sneaking across the border. He described them as being ruthless, and would kill you for supplies or money. These were clearly not the same Mexicans who had invited me over for barbecue.

At this time, I was on full alert. I could see everything, because the moon was so bright. I could see everything that was there; and also, from the corner of my eye I, saw everything which was not there at all. By this time I was legitimately scared. I kept thanking myself for the foresight to bring my hand-gun along. These are the times when no one would argue the relevance of a handgun for self defense. It was simply a bit of well needed protection.

Just as I thought the level of fear could not get any higher, a dark silhouette of a man began walking toward us on the highway. It was surly one of those evil Mexicans Ruben described and I doubted that the "*Play the Stupid White Guy*" trick was going to work here. As the lawless Mexican Killer, who's to steal my life and belongings moved closer to the car, Ruben and I got out to confront him before he came too close.

I learned how to say hello, good evening , and how much does this chicken cost, in Spanish class. They never taught us how to confer with a desperate Spanish speaking psychopath who is clearly after blood! Without any effort, Ruben began talking to this stumpy disheveled desert man. *¿Yakka por chakka que tango e may walka?* Ok, I'll leave the talking to the two Mexicans. I will just keep the

universal language of Smith& Wesson pointed at this dead man walkin', through the pocket of my jacket.

Ruben translated the seemingly indecipherable gibberish, and said, the man's rented Penske truck had broken down, and he is walking to the next town. He had hit a deer, just as we had done, and was just trying to get to a phone to call his AMERICAN family. It seems Paco-Del-Taco, the ruthless Mexican marauder, was really just an average Mexican-American guy from Phoenix, who was dealt the same misfortune we'd been dealt. Seeing is believing, but in this instance, seeing was deceiving.

Fear can easily contort reality into something, it clearly is not. When we see people in a certain environment, or in certain clothing, our preconceived notions fill in the blanks for us. We are all guilty of this. There is however, a surefire way to overcome these stereotypes: laugh, live, and by all means, when offered, have some carne asada.



Head of Mankind

There was no way for me to know when I walked through the door of the Des Moines Art Center that I would learn something about myself, something unexpected and profound. After all, I had seen art before, here and there. I had noticed it in office buildings, in museums, in hospitals, and even in the homes of friends, family members, and acquaintances. I had witnessed art, or at least noble attempts at art in airports, schools and on the streets of town, but I realized something new and important that day; the acts of seeing art and participating with a work of art are two entirely different things. The first tells us a little about the artist. The latter tells us a lot about ourselves.

Picasso's *Tete de Femme* (Picasso), which translates to "Head of Woman" (Des Moines Art Center), appears less than fantastic at a distance. As a matter of fact, even up close it is dull, drab, and utterly uninspiring. In comparison with some of the paintings that surround it, full of bright colors and extravagant forms, the Picasso screams "amateur." It is relatively small, only eighteen-by-twenty-four inches and as I approached the work, it's obvious that the painting is that of a face, with two eyes, a nose, a mouth, and hair. It isn't a face as one might imagine, but quite distorted. This is not what I would normally consider art. Imagine my surprise when, as I intend to move towards the door that exits the West Gallery, I am suspended in mid-step. I am shackled to the painting by some unmentionable force, something formerly unseen.

The work consists of only three base colors delivered in oil paint: dark gray, brown, and light pink. The entire background, including the hair and bust of the woman, is the color of a chalkboard.

The slate gray color is not uniform, but rather like a blackboard after a busy day of writing and rewriting in a fifth grade classroom. The hair, unrecognizable but for the thick black strokes that outline it, consists of two shapes: one, a sail or large capital letter “D,” written backward and narrow; the other, a charcoal gray beret resting atop her forehead. The two shapes dominate the right side of the work.

My eyes are then pinned to a particularly disturbing feature that continually agitates my mind. A large, brown, horn-shaped detail centers the painting, the nose of the distorted face. It resembles that of a rhinoceros horn or the tusk of an elephant. The sharp end points up and to the left. The rest curves down and to the right and ends in a rounded, blunt edge. From there, my eyes move to the surrounding features. Again, the painting is very simple in its appearance, almost like an image hanging on the refrigerator of a proud kindergarten parent. Still, there is something strange about it, something with the effect of magnetic force that holds my eyes hostage for an unmeasured period of time.

Across the bottom, a thick black line arcs up from the bottom right corner, kisses the triangular chin of the woman in a tangent collision of geometry, and touches back down in the bottom left corner. Sheltered beneath the slightly unbalanced arch hide her breasts, represented by two round shapes; the right one considerably larger than the left. All throughout the deep gray spaces, broad black strokes persistently sweep the eyes back to that horn-shaped nose and the pale pink features that flank it.

The longer I look, the more my mind flirts with new and creative interpretations of the work. The eye on the right is shaped like a perfect football, outlined in a consistent, thick black line. In the center, a large black dot floats in pale carnation pink, the same pink that fills the right side of the woman’s face. The other eye appears as an angle of about forty-five degrees, with the open end facing the eye on the right. It squints, ever-so-slightly, as if straining to see past the brown, horn-shaped nose that divides them. This eye on the left also swims in pink, just a shade less pale and the pink on the right. Each side of the face, containing its own unique eye, is shaped like a drop of water, as though it

were raining from the ground up. These upside-down teardrops melt together to resemble a pink abstract heart, slightly leaning to the left, and broken by the ravine of the brown, horn-shaped nose.

My eyes are then drawn down by way of the palest of the pink objects on the piece. This shape is triangular, undoubtedly representing the mouth and chin of the woman. This pale, blushed icicle hanging from the left side of the heart-shaped face pulls my gaze down like gravity, back into the dark, where it is recycled back through the work in the same order.

So what does it mean? What was Picasso saying when his imagination put his hand to work in creating this image in 1943? If he was simply painting the portrait of a woman, surely his talent and artistic ability could achieve that task in a much more realistic and aesthetically pleasing manner. Thus, I am inspired to believe that there is so much more, something much deeper than the image of the woman portrayed here. Why does one eye look to the side revealing a profile, while the other stares back in absolute astonishment?

The more I participate with the painting, the more I begin to see that this isn't a portrait of some random Spanish woman after all. It is an intricate scene, describing in perfect stillness as much action and drama as I have witnessed in any one act of any play or film. The stark contrast between the dark gray surroundings and the pale pink heart-shaped focal point creates a "keyhole" effect, both literally and figuratively. As abstract a keyhole as it may be, it is a keyhole none-the-less. The eye on the left is not the partner of the eye on the right, but rather the observer of it. Through a peephole it peers at the figure beyond, which is surprised and astonished at being gazed upon.

The gray, all that deep dark charcoal gray, indulges this interpretation. Through a keyhole, or a peephole, the eye can only see what lies beyond. The rest of the world fades into the dark obscurity of the peripherals. The sharply contrasting images, that of the deep darkness and that of the fragile pale pink heart, offer evidence of solitude as well. The wide eye is all alone in the world, innocent, exposed

by the one peering in. The observer, or voyeur, is also alone, alone with his obsession, which is symbolized by the overall shape of the figure: a heart broken by the masculine horn of desire.

All of this I see in the painting without knowing if it has any merit according to its creator. What does that say about me? Am I the voyeur or the innocent? Am I the observer or the observed? Perhaps I'm both. Perhaps we all are. Each of us has experienced the cold solitude of longing for someone or something that we cannot obtain. We gaze at it from a distance. We peer at it secretly, with tunnel-vision, the object of our obsession becoming our sole focus, calling to attention and amplifying all of the five senses.

I suspect that each of us has been the innocent as well, captured by surprise, shackled by fear, and imprisoned by guilt. When the iris of the eye is visible in its entirety, and the blankness that surrounds it surrounds it completely, certainly that eye belongs to someone who is afraid, someone who is alone. Should this painting suddenly jump to life, I am certain that in its animation, this eye would remain stoic, stable and unblinking, paralyzed with shock of being watched, the shock of being known in the most intimate of ways without consent.

So what of that horn-shaped nose? This shape divides the heart and separates the perverse from the innocent. What does it symbolize? What could it mean? Simply put, the horn is "desire." Although masculine in shape, it is asexual in context. It simultaneously stands for the yearning of the observer and the overwhelming desire to be observed.

This work of art, which I am now convinced is exactly that, is as rich and deep in meaning and subject matter as it is simplistic and drab in form and content. To portray this extravagant and intimate exchange on a small, two-dimensional piece of canvas, using less than a handful of colored oils, is truly the accomplishment of a genius. I can only hope that in my lifetime I learn to express myself, in any form, as abundantly as Picasso has done here. Describing Picasso as an artist, some would comment on

his use of oils, brushes and canvas. Other would remark on his use of abstract forms and cubism to create his art. His art combines all of these things with something far more profound, something we all have access to. He creates works of art using his own heart's imagination; the truest form of expression.

Picasso himself once said, "Art washes away from the world the dust of everyday life" (Artquotes.net). How many of us are coated with this "dust?" How many of us can't see but for what is in front of our eyes? In order to appreciate true beauty, we must do more than see it. We must allow it to "wash" away our own expectations and limitations. Our own hearts must be opened up, allowing beauty to envelop us. Only then can we truly experience beauty. Art has an impact on all of mankind. This good works, *real* works of art, get into the heads of man and have a lasting, lifelong effect. That is what art is all about. It is all about us.

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